

A Longitudinal Experiential Learning Design for Negotiation Education Through 谈判 Megagame

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Abstract: Negotiation education requires students to move beyond conceptual knowledge and apply strategies in dynamic situations involving uncertainty, interdependence, communication, and cultural differences. This study examines the implementation of a ten-week longitudinal experiential learning sequence in an undergraduate International Business course and the role of the Tánpàn 2.0 megagame as its culminating application experience. An institutional course design was adapted so that formative simulations, role-playing exercises, oral reflections, and debriefings progressively prepared students for a sequential intercultural negotiation involving a Chinese manufacturer, a German exporter, and an Australian commercializer. Nineteen students completed identical nine-item conceptual tests before and after the megagame, with items presented in randomized order. Sixteen students completed a post-activity perception survey, and complete negotiation outcomes were recorded for six three-person teams. Mean test scores increased from 7.74 to 8.32 out of 9. A paired-samples comparison did not reach statistical significance, and high initial scores, the limited range of the instrument, and the timing of the pretest constrained interpretation. Nevertheless, all six teams completed the sequential negotiation and reached agreements, producing joint utilities between 2,534,000 and 2,880,000 simulation units. Survey responses indicated that students perceived the experience as challenging and reported applying course learning. A descriptive thematic content analysis highlighted interaction, application of concepts, continuity between negotiation phases, collaborative trade-offs, and initial difficulties understanding the multi-phase structure. The findings position the megagame as an integrative performance environment rather than an isolated source of cognitive gain. The study also demonstrates the need to align the assessment of experiential learning with observable performance, decision-making processes, and reflection rather than relying exclusively on short conceptual tests.

Keywords: Higher education, Educational innovation, Experiential learning, Game-based learning, Megagames, Negotiation education

1. Introduction

Negotiation education faces a persistent tension between knowing negotiation concepts and being able to apply them under conditions of uncertainty, interdependence, and interpersonal pressure. Students may be able to define concepts such as the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA), the zone of possible agreement (ZOPA), distributive bargaining, integrative negotiation, and cultural dimensions while still encountering difficulty using them in live interactions. Negotiators must interpret incomplete information, adapt to the other party, manage emotions, communicate across cultural differences, evaluate trade-offs, and make decisions whose consequences may only become visible later in the process.

Experiential learning has therefore become an important component of professional education. Instead of positioning students as passive recipients of conceptual information, experiential approaches engage them in concrete situations that require action, reflection, conceptual interpretation, and subsequent experimentation. Contemporary reviews describe experiential learning as a broad instructional landscape that includes simulations, role-playing, field experiences, problem-based activities, and reflective practices across multiple disciplines (Azeez and Aboobaker, 2024). Simulation-based learning has similarly developed into a substantial educational field, particularly in areas in which learners must connect disciplinary knowledge with decisions and professional performance (Hallinger and Wang, 2020).

Negotiation is especially compatible with experiential and simulation-based learning because the subject involves behavioural and relational processes that cannot be fully represented through lectures or written cases. Negotiation games allow students to practice claiming and creating value, disclose or protect information, identify interests, construct agreements, and experience the consequences of their choices. Ade et al. (2018) argue that negotiation training should address not only technical knowledge and skills but also orientations such as curiosity, creativity, and collaboration. Mann et al. (2023) similarly demonstrate the value of structured practice for developing negotiation processes in collective bargaining contexts.

Game-based approaches can expand these opportunities by giving learners objectives, constraints, feedback systems, role identities, and consequences. Rua et al. (2021), for example, developed *NegotioPoly* as a multi-party and multi-round negotiation game designed to connect negotiation theory with realistic practice. Their work emphasizes the importance of allowing learners to experience distributive, integrative, intra-organizational, and attitudinal dimensions of negotiation rather than practicing isolated techniques. Research in entrepreneurship and business education also indicates that game-based activities can support decision-making, strategic thinking, collaboration, and professional competencies when aligned with instructional objectives (Casau et al., 2023; Bach et al., 2023).

Megagames extend these principles by combining role-playing, simulation systems, multiple actors, asymmetrical information, and interconnected decisions. Unlike a short role-play involving two parties and one agreement, a megagame can include several groups, parallel processes, and outcomes that emerge from the interaction between individual and systemic decisions. Palha et al. (2025) describe megagames as collaborative environments suitable for complex and ill-structured problems in higher education. Such environments can expose learners to conflicting interests, incomplete information, multiple possible solutions, and the consequences of decisions across a wider system.

Megagames have also been used to explore complex public and societal issues. Uhrqvist et al. (2021), for example, examined participant perspectives in a climate-change megagame and emphasized the importance of debriefing for transforming participation into learning. This point is relevant because immersion alone does not guarantee learning. Learners also need opportunities to interpret their decisions, compare strategies, examine outcomes, and reconnect the experience with conceptual frameworks.

The first implementation of the *Tánpàn* megagame explored immersive negotiation in higher education through a simulation involving the international commercialization of a device manufactured in China (Castillo and Caudillo, 2024). That implementation indicated that students valued interaction, immersion, and the opportunity to apply negotiation concepts. However, it was conducted as a bounded activity. It did not examine how a megagame might function when embedded within a longer sequence of experiential preparation.

The present study examines a second implementation, *Tánpàn 2.0*, situated within the ten-week course *Negotiation Across Cultures*. Instead of treating the megagame as an independent instructional intervention, the course was adapted as a progressive experiential sequence. Students completed formative negotiation exercises, communication activities, cultural analysis tasks, oral reflections, and debriefings before participating in *Tánpàn* as the final formal evidence of application.

This distinction creates an assessment challenge. When a final simulation is preceded by several weeks of instruction and practice, a test administered immediately before the simulation cannot serve as a baseline for the complete course. In addition, a short multiple-choice test may capture conceptual recognition but not the quality of preparation, interpersonal adaptation, strategic decision-making, or value creation demonstrated during a negotiation. The alignment between learning objectives, instructional experiences, and assessment is therefore central to interpreting the results.

The study addresses the following research questions:

*RQ1: How was an institutional negotiation course adapted into a longitudinal experiential learning sequence culminating in the *Tánpàn 2.0* megagame?*

*RQ2: What do conceptual test scores, team negotiation outcomes, and student perceptions reveal about the role of *Tánpàn 2.0* as a culminating application experience?*

2. Methods

2.1 Study Design and Context

The research followed a descriptive implementation design with a formative mixed-method evaluation. The purpose was not to establish a causal effect or compare the approach with a control condition. Instead, the study documented the adaptation of an instructional sequence and examined different forms of evidence produced before, during, and after its culminating megagame.

The study was conducted in *Negotiation Across Cultures*, an intermediate-level undergraduate course within an International Business program. The course was aligned with a competency-based institutional model and

addressed intercultural communication, distributive and integrative negotiation, conflict management, strategic planning, and cultural frameworks.

The course lasted ten weeks and included two two-hour sessions per week, resulting in approximately 40 contact hours, in addition to 40 hours of asynchronous work. Nineteen students were enrolled and completed the pretest and post-test records included in the analysis.

2.2 Adaptation of the Institutional Instructional Design

The institutional implementation manual proposed a sequence of negotiation activities, simulations, quizzes, and three formally assessed negotiation activities. The proposal explicitly allowed instructors to adapt the instructional components according to their professional judgment and the characteristics of the group.

In the implementation analysed in this study, the activities associated with the institutional evidence were retained as formative exercises, but they were not graded as separate formal evidence using their original rubrics. Tánpàn 2.0 replaced their formal assessment status and became the principal culminating evidence of the course.

The activities were adapted and connected to prepare students progressively for the final megagame. After each negotiation exercise, the instructor conducted an oral reflection and debriefing. These conversations asked students to examine their preparation, strategies, communication choices, agreements, difficulties, and possible alternatives. The debriefings were part of the pedagogical design but were not graded, recorded, or analysed as research data. Table 1 summarizes the sequence and its relationship with Tánpàn.

Table 1: Longitudinal experiential sequence

Stage	Main focus	Experiential activities	Contribution to Tánpàn
Week 1	Negotiation foundations and self-awareness	Negotiation profile and introductory activities	Recognition of individual negotiation tendencies
Week 2	Distributive negotiation	Used Car exercise and pressure-tactic activities	Claiming value, setting limits, offers and concessions
Week 3	Integrative negotiation and BATNA	Pakistani Prunes and GTechnica–AccelMedia	Interests, value creation, BATNA and trade-offs
Week 4	Planning and strategy	Sally Soprano and Exclusive Tourism Experiences	Preparation, multi-issue negotiation and strategic planning
Week 5	Integration of foundational knowledge	Review activities and midterm assessment	Consolidation of negotiation concepts
Week 6	Perception, emotion and conflict	Perceptual-distortion and conflict-management exercises	Recognition of emotional and interpretive barriers
Before Johari Window	Participation and performative confidence	That Sound Game	Low-stakes public participation and increased willingness to engage
Week 7	Communication and cultural intelligence	Johari Window and Galáctica SUV reflection	Feedback, self-awareness, communication and adaptation
Week 8	Intercultural negotiation	Cultural-framework cases and regional negotiation analysis	Application of Hall, Hofstede and related frameworks
Weeks 9–10	Culminating application	Tánpàn 2.0	Sequential, intercultural and interdependent negotiation

During the first half of the course, the instructor observed that some students were reluctant to participate in performative activities and appeared concerned about embarrassment in front of their peers. An additional commercial party game, *That Sound Game: A Noisy Game for Weird People*, was introduced before the Johari Window activity. Students took turns producing sounds in front of the group in a deliberately playful and low-stakes context.

Following this session, the instructor observed greater voluntary participation and less visible reluctance during subsequent activities. Students appeared more willing to treat role-playing tasks as games rather than

only as graded academic performances. Because no systematic observation instrument was used, this change is reported as an instructor observation and not as an independently measured outcome.

2.3 Tánpàn 2.0

Tánpàn 2.0 was designed as a sequential international supply-chain negotiation involving three roles: a manufacturer based in China; an exporter based in Germany; a commercializer based in Australia.

Each participant received confidential role documents containing objectives, negotiation priorities, cultural information, BATNAs, constraints, utility structures, and private information. Participants were instructed not to disclose their confidential materials.

The simulation consisted of two connected phases. In Phase 1, the Chinese manufacturer negotiated with the German exporter. Negotiable issues included price, quantity, payment conditions, technical considerations, and warranty conditions. In Phase 2, the German exporter negotiated with the Australian commercializer. This second agreement included sales price, volume, delivery conditions, and other commercialization considerations.

The German exporter functioned as a pivot between both negotiations. The conditions obtained from the manufacturer affected the exporter's possible outcomes with the commercializer. Consequently, participants could not treat the phases as unrelated bilateral exercises. Decisions made in the first negotiation influenced the available range, costs, and potential value in the second.

The megagame extended from the end of Week 8 through Week 10. Students received the scenario and roles after completing the pretest. They then prepared, negotiated, revised conditions, reached agreements, and recorded the final economic outcomes.

2.4 Data Collection

Four forms of evidence were considered.

Conceptual pretest and post-test - The original question bank contained ten items. Item 5 was excluded from both administrations; therefore, the implemented pretest and post-test each contained the same nine multiple-choice questions. The order of the items was randomized for each administration.

The questions addressed conceptual knowledge related to distributive and integrative negotiation, BATNA, interests and positions, intercultural communication, conflict-management approaches, Johari Window concepts, and the sequential structure of Tánpàn.

The pretest was administered at the end of Week 8, after students had completed the preceding experiential activities but before they received the Tánpàn roles and scenario. The post-test was administered in the final session after the simulation. The instrument therefore represents an immediate pre-post measure for the culminating activity, not a baseline measurement for the complete ten-week course.

Negotiation outcomes - The final agreements recorded the economic outcomes generated by each role and the resulting joint utility for each team. Complete outcome records were available for six three-person teams, representing 18 role-level records. These results were used as evidence that the teams completed the sequential negotiation and produced differentiated outcomes inside the simulation.

The negotiation utility values were not treated as direct measures of learning. Higher utility could result from multiple factors and does not necessarily indicate greater competence. The outcomes were instead interpreted as authentic performance data generated by the activity.

Post-activity survey - Sixteen students completed a post-activity survey. Two closed questions asked whether the activity was challenging and whether students believed they had applied course learning. Responses used agreement categories ranging from disagreement to complete agreement.

The survey also included an optional open-ended comment. Fourteen responses contained substantive or evaluable text; blank responses and "NA" were not coded.

Instructor observation - The instructor's observation regarding increased participation after *That Sound Game* was used to describe the adaptive implementation process. It was not combined with the formal outcome data.

2.5 Data Analysis

Pretest and post-test scores were matched at the individual level. Descriptive statistics included means, standard deviations, score differences, and the number of students who improved, remained unchanged, or obtained a lower score.

A paired-samples t-test was calculated to estimate whether the mean difference was distinguishable from zero. Because the scores were discrete, bounded, and concentrated near the maximum, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was also calculated. Cohen's d_z was computed using the mean paired difference divided by the standard deviation of the paired differences.

The survey agreement items were summarized using frequencies. Open-ended comments were examined through descriptive thematic content analysis. Short statements were coded by meaning, and a response could contribute to more than one category. The analysis was intended to organize the feedback rather than produce a comprehensive qualitative interpretation.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The institution maintains a general policy permitting educational research using course-generated data. Students were explicitly informed that their responses and academic results could be used for research purposes and agreed to their inclusion. Records were anonymized before analysis and reporting.

3. Results

3.1 Conceptual Pretest and Post-test

Nineteen matched pretest and post-test records were analysed. The mean pretest score was 7.74 out of 9 ($SD = 1.56$), equivalent to 85.96%. The mean post-test score was 8.32 ($SD = 1.49$), equivalent to 92.40%.

The mean increase was:

$$8.3158 - 7.7368 = 0.5789 \text{ points.}$$

Expressed as a percentage of the nine-point scale:

$$\frac{0.5789}{9} \times 100 = 6.43 \text{ percentage points}$$

Five students obtained higher scores in the post-test, 12 obtained the same score, and two obtained lower scores. Changes were discrete because each correct response represented approximately 11.11% of the total scale.

The paired-samples t-test did not identify a statistically significant difference:

$$t(18) = 1.68, p = .110.$$

The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranged approximately from -0.15 to 1.30 points. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test produced a similar interpretation:

$$W = 4.00, p = .088$$

The paired effect size was:

$$d_z = \frac{0.5789}{1.5024} = 0.39.$$

Although this effect size indicates a small-to-moderate standardized difference, it should be interpreted cautiously. The initial mean was already close to the maximum score, 12 of the 19 students showed no change, and the pretest was administered after eight weeks of instruction and experiential practice.

Table 2: Pretest and post-test results

Indicator	Result
Matched students	19

Indicator	Result
Pretest mean	7.74/9
Pretest standard deviation	1.56
Post-test mean	8.32/9
Post-test standard deviation	1.49
Mean increase	0.58 points
Percentage-point increase	6.43
Students who improved	5
Students with no change	12
Students with lower scores	2
Paired Cohen's d_z	0.39

3.2 Team Negotiation Outcomes

Complete negotiation records were available for six teams. All six completed both stages of the supply-chain negotiation and reached agreements involving the manufacturer, exporter, and commercializer. Joint utility ranged from 2,534,000 to 2,880,000 simulation units.

Table 3: Joint utility produced by each team

Team	Manufacturer utility	Exporter utility	Commercializer utility	Joint utility
1	550,000	864,000	1,120,000	2,534,000
2	600,000	980,000	1,300,000	2,880,000
3	313,131	979,797	1,313,130	2,606,058
4	550,000	980,000	1,300,000	2,830,000
5	550,000	864,000	1,120,000	2,534,000
6	450,000	972,000	1,215,000	2,637,000

Team 2 generated the highest joint utility, followed by Team 4. Teams 1 and 5 produced identical joint outcomes despite being separate negotiation groups. Team 3 produced the highest commercializer utility but the lowest manufacturer utility, illustrating that strong results for one role did not necessarily correspond to an even distribution of value.

These records demonstrate that the teams resolved the sequential structure and produced quantifiable outcomes. They also show variation in how value was distributed across the three roles. However, the data do not establish whether the differences were caused by preparation, negotiation ability, role conditions, group dynamics, or other factors.

3.3 Student Perceptions

Sixteen students completed the survey. For the statement that the activity was challenging, 13 students selected “completely agree” and three selected “agree.” For the statement that they applied what they had learned during the course, 15 selected “completely agree” and one selected “agree.”

Table 4: Closed survey responses

Survey statement	Completely agree	Agree	Total
The activity was challenging	13	3	16
I applied what I learned during the course	15	1	16

The open-ended responses produced six overlapping descriptive categories.

Interaction and dynamism appeared in five comments. Students referred to spontaneous interaction, working with other participants, open negotiation, emotional reactions, and the dynamic character of the exercise.

Application and integration of course learning appeared in three comments. Students explicitly mentioned using concepts studied in class or applying negotiation abilities to reach an agreement.

Continuity and multi-phase negotiation appeared in three comments. One student valued the continuity between negotiations, while others discussed the experience of completing two connected negotiation stages.

Challenge and contextual complexity appeared in two comments. Students valued the context and considered the available negotiation options demanding.

Collaborative trade-offs and mutually beneficial agreements appeared in two comments. Students described sacrificing certain individual conditions so that the final agreement could benefit the complete team or value chain.

Initial confusion and instructional improvement appeared in two comments. One participant was initially confused because the activity involved two negotiations and suggested using only one. Another reported initial difficulty understanding the instructions but subsequently worked with the team to reach a mutually favourable agreement. A separate participant suggested increasing the number of available negotiation options.

These comments indicate that students' positive perceptions were not limited to general enjoyment. They also referred to the application of course concepts, the interdependence of the negotiation phases, collaboration, trade-offs, and adaptation after initial uncertainty.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was not to demonstrate that a single megagame independently produced negotiation learning. Instead, it examined how *Tánpàn 2.0* functioned as the culminating experience of a longitudinal experiential course and what could be learned from conceptual scores, team outcomes, and student perceptions.

The first research question concerned the adaptation of the institutional course. The implementation preserved the original theoretical content and many proposed simulation activities while changing their assessment role. Exercises that had originally been designed as separate formal evidence became formative opportunities for preparation, practice, and oral debriefing. *Tánpàn* became the principal formal culminating experience.

This progression moved from relatively bounded negotiation concepts toward a sequential and intercultural system. Students first practiced distributive negotiation, value creation, BATNA, planning, communication, conflict management, and cultural interpretation. The final game then required them to combine these elements while acting under role-specific constraints and asymmetrical information.

The design aligns with experiential perspectives in which learning develops through repeated cycles of action, reflection, conceptual interpretation, and further application. It also reflects negotiation pedagogy that emphasizes multi-party and multi-round practice rather than isolated conceptual knowledge (Rua et al., 2021). The oral debriefings were especially important for connecting experience with the conceptual content, although their lack of systematic documentation meant that they could not be analysed as evidence in the present study.

The introduction of *That Sound Game* also illustrates the adaptive nature of the implementation. The activity was not part of the negotiation syllabus and did not directly teach BATNA, value creation, or cultural frameworks. It was introduced because the instructor observed a participation barrier. Following the activity, greater willingness to participate was observed in subsequent role-playing sessions. Nevertheless, this interpretation remains an instructor observation. Future implementations could document participation systematically before and after similar low-stakes activities.

The second research question concerned what the three formal data sources reveal about the role of *Tánpàn*. The conceptual test scores increased by an average of 0.58 points, equivalent to 6.43 percentage points. However, neither the paired t-test nor the Wilcoxon test reached conventional statistical significance.

The absence of statistical significance should not be interpreted as proof that learning did or did not occur. Several characteristics restricted the sensitivity of the analysis. First, students already had a high mean score before Tánpàn. Second, the pretest was administered after eight weeks of instruction, simulations, and debriefings. It was therefore not a baseline for the longitudinal instructional design. Third, the test contained only nine scored items, meaning that one response represented more than 11 percentage points. Fourth, the questions measured recognition of conceptual principles and their application to the simulation context but did not directly observe negotiation behaviour.

The original interpretation of the study placed excessive weight on a conventional pretest - post-test comparison. The revised analysis indicates that such a test can provide information about conceptual understanding but cannot independently evaluate complex competencies such as communication, adaptation, strategic planning, collaboration, or value creation.

The negotiation outcomes complement the test by showing what participants produced inside the simulation. All six teams reached agreements and completed the two-stage value chain. The differences in joint and role-specific utility indicate that participants made distinct decisions and produced different distributions of value.

For example, Team 3 generated the highest commercializer utility but the lowest manufacturer utility. Team 2 produced the greatest joint utility, while Teams 1 and 5 reached identical totals through separate negotiation processes. These differences demonstrate that the activity did not lead to a single predetermined solution.

At the same time, utility should not be equated directly with learning. A team could generate a high utility because of strong preparation, favourable concessions, role-specific decisions, group interaction, or other unmeasured factors. Utility represents authentic in-game performance, but a competency-based assessment would require additional criteria, such as the quality of planning, identification of interests, adaptation to cultural information, communication choices, management of relationships, and justification of the final agreement.

Student perceptions provide a third perspective. All survey participants agreed that the activity was challenging and that they applied course learning. Engagement alone is already widely associated with game-based and simulation-based activities and is therefore not presented as the primary contribution of this study. More relevant are the specific aspects described in the comments: students mentioned continuity between negotiations, spontaneous interaction, application of concepts, collaborative sacrifice, and agreements that benefited the larger team.

The comments about confusion are also educationally useful. The two-phase structure was one of the central features that distinguished Tánpàn from a conventional bilateral role-play, but it also increased instructional complexity. Future implementations should provide a clearer visual explanation of the value chain, the transition between phases, the role of the German exporter as a pivot, and the relationship between individual and joint utility.

Taken together, the results suggest that Tánpàn functioned primarily as a space for integrative performance. The game required students to act on knowledge developed during the course, but the available evidence cannot isolate how much of that knowledge was acquired during Tánpàn, during the preceding eight weeks, or before the course.

The main methodological implication is the need for stronger alignment between instructional objectives and assessment. If the intended outcomes involve performance in complex negotiation, assessment should include direct observation and structured evaluation of that performance. Future studies could use a competency rubric addressing planning, BATNA, interest identification, value creation, cultural adaptation, communication, collaboration, outcome quality, and reflective reasoning.

Future research should also administer a genuine baseline at the beginning of the course and collect evidence at several points. Repeated performance tasks could make it possible to examine progression across the semester. Recorded debriefings, structured reflective journals, observation protocols, and delayed follow-up assessments could provide evidence of how students interpret experience and whether learning transfers to later contexts.

The study has several limitations. The sample was small and came from a single course. There was no comparison group. The conceptual instrument was brief and had a restricted scoring range. The pretest was administered after substantial prior instruction, and the same items were used in both administrations, although their order was randomized. The open-ended survey responses were short, and no interviews were

conducted. Debriefings and instructor observations were not recorded systematically. Finally, the negotiation utility system generated meaningful performance data inside the game but was not a validated measure of negotiation competence.

5. Conclusions

This study documented the adaptation of a ten-week negotiation course into a longitudinal experiential sequence culminating in Tánpàn 2.0. Institutional simulation activities were retained as formative practice, while the megagame became the principal final evidence of application. The conceptual scores showed a descriptive increase, but the high initial performance, timing of the pretest, limited number of items, and absence of a comparison condition prevent causal attribution. The team records provide complementary evidence: all six teams completed the sequential negotiation, reached agreements, and produced differentiated individual and joint utilities. Students also reported applying course learning and described interaction, continuity, trade-offs, challenge, and collaborative agreement-making. Tánpàn should therefore be understood not as an isolated intervention that can be evaluated through a short knowledge test, but as an integrative environment in which students apply competencies developed through prior instruction and practice. Future implementations should combine conceptual measures with competency-based observation, structured reflection, longitudinal assessment, and delayed evidence of transfer.

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AI Declaration: The authors used OpenAI's ChatGPT to assist in organizing ideas, for grammar and style editing without generating content. Additionally, the Scite platform was employed to perform intelligent searches for relevant, recent papers indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. Outputs from these tools were used solely to inform structural organization and language refinement; all analytic content and interpretations remain the authors' own.

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