FACEWORK STRATEGIES AND INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATES AND MALAYSIAN INSTRUCTORS AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Framed by the face negotiation theory and intercultural conflict management concepts, this study aims to identify the facework strategies used by international undergraduates in intercultural conflicts with Malaysian instructors at a private university, and investigate the preferred effective conflict management procedures for Malaysian instructors in managing intercultural conflicts with international undergraduates. This study uses a descriptive cross-sectional design using questionnaires for data collection. A total of 317 participants were involved: 105 Indonesian undergraduates, 106 Chinese undergraduates, and 106 Malaysian instructors. The results showed that both Indonesian and Chinese undergraduate groups have similar tendencies for integrating strategies, although they differ in avoiding and dominating strategies. For intercultural conflict management procedures, the most favourable procedure is mediation and the least favourable is ombudsman service. These findings provide instructors with first-hand data for subsequent teacher development on face-saving application. By applying

the appropriate facework strategy and ways to enact it, instructors can further develop their teaching skills by creating a healthy student-teacher relationship with international students.

Keywords: dominating strategies; face negotiation theory; integrating strategies; ombudsman; third-party facilitation

Introduction

In recent years, the number of international students in Malaysia has increased due to its popularity as an education destination. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014), there are five predominant factors influencing international students' choice to study in Malaysia, namely, cultural comfort, low cost, value for money, the language of instruction (English), and good quality of life. In 2019, there were 136,497 international students in Malaysia, with 43% studying at private universities and colleges and 57% at public universities (Abdullah & Chung, 2021).

For Malaysian instructors, interacting with foreign nationals is inevitable. The interaction between people of different cultures and mother tongues is commonly known as intercultural communication. Although Malaysians are in general familiar with this concept because the country is a melting pot of cultures, misunderstandings in communication may still arise due to cultural misunderstandings, which in turn creates conflict. It is how instructors manage these perceived intercultural conflict situations with the international students that significantly impact the pedagogical purposes of the classroom (Arasaratnam, 2004; Flaherty & Stojakovic, 2008; Spitzberg, 2000; Wiseman, 2009).

Mahmud et al. (2010) observed that the main challenge international students face is typically related to cultural factors. Examples include language barriers, differences in cultural values, and linguistic ideologies. There is little interaction between international and local students, which affects the quality of contact and friendship (Pandian, 2008). Pandian's (2008) study also suggested that while international students want to establish more significant contacts with local students and reap the positive social, psychological, and academic benefits, they could not do so because of the cultural gaps.

Exacerbating the challenge of cultural gaps is the possible ignorance of locals. One example is the way Indonesians are addressed by the local Malaysians. WOB Partner Content (2019) reported that a lot of international students experience these problems daily in Malaysia. For example, an Indonesian student said that the term "Indon" has a negative connotation. She found it offensive that it is still used to refer to Indonesian students even though their government banned the term in 2007.

Shekarchizadeh et al. (2011) asserted that because international students have different linguistic ideologies, facework expectations, and facework attitudes. It is the understanding of these facework expectations and facework strategies of international students that will help instructors in the host country to narrow the cultural gaps.

More importantly, Cornille et al. (1999) found that instructors can have limited knowledge of the procedures. Meyers (2003) also found that instructors are often ill-equipped to handle classroom conflict effectively. As such, it would be beneficial if continuing education can help instructors to better determine the appropriate procedures of conflict management in cross-cultural settings. By recognising the value of the different procedures available, the instructors can also benefit from gaining goodness of fit in various conflict situations.

Additionally, researchers have made various studies on facework strategies used in intercultural conflict situations (Guan & Lee, 2017; Krishnasamy et al., 2014; Lukman et al., 2009; Oetzel et al., 2008; Qian, 2014; Rahim et al., 2014). However, researchers (Guan & Lee, 2017; Rahim et al., 2014; Qian, 2014; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991) found that most studies concentrated on identifying the facework strategies used, its advantages and disadvantages, and the effects. There has been little research conducted on proposing possible management procedures for intercultural conflicts.

Similarly, there is also a limited number of studies in Malaysia using the face-negotiation theory. According to researchers (Kim et al., 2012; Oetzel et al., 2000; Oetzel et al., 2008; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003; Ting-Toomey, et al., 1991), studies using the face-negotiation theory were mostly conducted in the United States, Japan, Germany, South Korea, Taiwan, and China. Thus, this study will serve in helping to close these gaps, contributing to future studies in Malaysia in the field of interlanguage pragmatics and other related areas.

This study aimed to identify the facework strategies used by international undergraduates in intercultural conflicts with Malaysian instructors at a private university, and investigate the preferred effective conflict management procedures for Malaysian instructors in managing intercultural conflicts with international undergraduates.

Literature Review

Facework

Facework, also known as facework strategies, is both a verbal and non-verbal behaviour involved in face-negotiating processes. Goffman (1955) suggested that facework is the actions performed to make whatever one is doing consistent with face. It is also a way for an individual to protect oneself when threatened during an interaction. This view is shared by Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987), who pointed out that facework has an essential influence on how messages are constructed. Facework is a crucial and lasting component in all interpersonal relationships in classroom communication (Qian, 2014). It is a phenomenon shared by everyone but distinctive from one culture to another.

Oetzel et al. (2008) referred to facework as specific strategies that people use on their claimed image before, during, or after the conflict and describe it as how people think above and beyond goal assessments. Oetzel et al. (2008) utilised 11 facework strategies that have been shown to provide some understanding of facework

management during intercultural conflicts. The 11 facework strategies are categorised under three main strategies, namely, avoiding, integrating, and dominating, which have been verified by previous research (Oetzel et al., 2008; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). The avoiding strategy includes giving in, pretending, and third-party. The dominating strategy consists of using passive/direct aggression, expressing emotions, and defending, while in the integrating technique, there are five strategies, that is, apology, private discussion, remaining calm, problem solving, and respect.

Conflict

There is a common ground in intercultural and cross-cultural communication studies such as investigating the causes of conflict situations and ways to manage them. According to Jackson (2014), there are 10 types of conflicts, which are 1) intracultural; 2) intercultural; 3) intergroup; 4) organisational; 5) interpersonal; 6) interracial; 7) interethnic; 8) international; 9) interreligious; 10) intergenerational. For example, Krishnasamy et al. (2014) investigated the intercultural interaction experiences of international Arab students and Malay instructors in a tertiary level institution in Malaysia. They discovered that intercultural conflicts often arose because of language barriers and the different interpretations in the meaning of certain words. Their findings suggested that these barriers could be easily overcomed if the participants were to learn more about each other's cultures and languages.

Theoretical Background

In this study, the researcher adopted the face-negotiation theory. Other theories which contributed to the formation of the face-negotiation theory are briefly discussed, that is, the speech act theory (Searle, 1976), the politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Building on the works of Austin (1975), Searle (1976) proposed five categories of speech acts based on broad classes of illocutionary force. The five are representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Representatives commit the speaker to the truth value of a proposition. Directives try to get their addressee to do something. Commissives is an intention that the speaker performs future actions. Expressives describes the speaker's attitude towards the propositional content of the speech act. Declaratives are performative utterances that change the reality of the world through their usage.

Unlike the Speech Act theory, which examines speech acts, the Politeness theory is a framework constituted from different politeness strategies, devised to investigate the effects of politeness speech acts on people. For that purpose, Brown and Levinson (1987) identified two types of face: positive and negative face. Positive face is one's desire to gain other's approval, while negative face is the desire to be clear from other's actions. Negative politeness strategies cater to "the negative face *wants* of the addressee", whereas positive politeness strategy is used to "construct and maintain the positive face of the addressees" (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p. 257).

Face-negotiation Theory

The face-negotiation theory was developed by Ting-Toomey (1985; 1988) in an attempt to understand the intercultural conflict from a collectivistic, Asian orientation. It was built on the foundation of existing, individualistic, western-based conflict approaches to expand the theorising process. Face-negotiation theory is based on how cultures define face and use facework. Ting-Toomey (2005b) came up with seven assumptions that have been verified by her previous studies (Ting-Toomey, 2005a). The first two assumptions focus on the face concept and its problems. The consecutive four are based on cultural values. The last one defines intercultural facework competence.

Intercultural Conflict Management Procedures

There are many intercultural conflict management procedures, models, and frameworks that can help contribute to the production of a healthy learning environment for students. Choosing the appropriate approach is crucial in resolving the perceived conflict between international students and instructors. The US Department of Justice (1994), for instance, reported three effective approaches schools use to manage and resolve conflict: mediation, classroom, and comprehensive approach. Shahmohammadi (2014) proposed mediation as a way to reduce conflicts in classrooms and workplaces, and mentioned that teaching students practical conflict management and resolution skills could help them solve conflicts more effectively and smoothly.

Meyers et al. (2006), using a sample of 226 faculty members, provided constructs that correlated with classroom conflicts, such as the differences in the cultural background of the students and instructors. In contrast, Bronstein and Farnsworth's (1998) findings suggested that the levels of conflict were not associated with instructors' demographic traits. However, conflict appeared to be associated with teaching styles, methods, demeanours, and the reactions and responses towards challenging situations. Borg et al. (2011) studied how conflicts arose within group work in higher education and how they were perceived and managed by teachers. They focused on the root causes of conflicts and how to manage and resolve conflicts. The study showed the importance of setting expectations, rules, and consequences before transferring the responsibility for conflict resolution from the teacher to the students.

Adrian-Taylor et al. (2007) investigated conflicts between 55 international graduate students and 53 faculty supervisors and they recommended the following conflict management procedures:
1) Negotiation - a discussion among disputants to bargain a deal without outside help to manage conflict;
2) Third-party facilitation - when a consultant steps in to work with the disputants to clear up miscommunication, diagnose the problems of the relationship, and facilitates problem-solving;
3) Mediation - the third party involved has knowledge of the objective or issues and is able to help settle a negotiated settlement;

4) Arbitration - a process which involves an authoritative third party who has control over the outcome; and

5) Ombudsman - an intermediary who steps in to communicate the concerns to restore the relationship when the communication process between the two parties breaks down.

Adrian-Taylor et al. (2007) found that the international students favoured the ombudsman service while faculty supervisors preferred to use negotiation. In both groups, arbitration was the method less likely to be used. Moreover, both ombudsman service and negotiation were rated higher than mediation by the international student group but rated lower than negotiation, third-party facilitation, and mediation by the faculty supervisor group.

The conflict management procedures recommended by Adrian-Taylor et al. (2007) encompass simple procedures that students can utilise to help manage straightforward conflicts to complicated ones, which may include lawsuits. In addition, the five procedures can be applied to both international students and instructors, unlike most conflict management models that are limited to handling students only. As such, it is applied in the present study.

Methodology

Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents. Before selecting the sample, the population was stratified based on nationality so that specific characteristics of individuals were represented, as the sample needs to reflect the exact proportion of the population of individuals with those characteristics (Fowler, 2014). The researcher stratified the population using the search function on CourseNetworking (https://www.thecn.com/). The international undergraduates were stratified based on the country to determine the number of international undergraduates per country. A total of 730 international undergraduates from 67 countries were identified. Only countries with a value greater than or equal to 40 undergraduates were included in the study because some countries such as Afghanistan only had two students, a total that is insufficient to represent the country. From the total number of international students in the selected private university in the year 2020, the number included in the study were: 106 from the total of 110 Chinese undergraduates, 105 from the total of 140 Indonesian undergraduates. Altogether, 106 Malaysian instructors participated in this study.

There were two sets of questionnaires (Set A and Set B). Questionnaire Set A was administered to identify the facework strategies used by international students in intercultural conflict situations with Malaysian instructors. This questionnaire contained 63 out 87 items from Oetzel et al. (2008). Questionnaire Set B, adapted from Adrian-Taylor et al. (2007), was administered to both international students and Malaysian instructors to propose possible procedures for instructors in managing intercultural conflict situations with international students.

There were three sections in Questionnaire Set A. Section A involved demographic items while section B required the international students to recall a situation they perceived as a conflict. They had to respond to a series of questions about how they reacted during the conflict. For section C, the international students were introduced to a short intercultural conflict scenario of an international student with a Malaysian instructor and descriptions of five possible methods for managing the conflict. They were asked to rate to what extent were they willing to use each method to resolve the conflict.

There were three sections in questionnaire Set B. Section A involved demographic items while Section B required the Malaysian instructor to rate how many times they have experienced demeaning and aggressive behaviours from students in an intercultural conflict. In section C, the Malaysian instructors were asked to read a short intercultural conflict scenario of a Malaysian instructor with an international student and descriptions of five possible methods for managing the conflict. The instructors were then asked to rate their extent of willingness to use each method to resolve the conflict.

Data were collected online via self-report questionnaires that were generated using Google docs. This kind of data collection has been found to be less stressful for participants because the presence of a fieldworker or observer can often be intimidating (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A Google form link directing to the questionnaire was provided to the international undergraduates, whereas hardcopies of the questionnaire were used to collect responses from Malaysian instructors.

For the data analysis, the frequency of facework strategies used by international students were calculated. The ratings on the willingness of the international students and Malaysian instructors to use the five conflict management methods were also computed.

Results

In this section, the results on facework strategies and instructors' preferred conflict management procedures are described.

Facework strategies

Table 1 shows the mean for 11 facework strategies used by Chinese, and Indonesian undergraduates.

For the "giving in" strategy, the Chinese undergraduates had a higher median (Mdn = 3.67) and less variation (IQR = 1.33, range = 3.33) compared to Indonesian undergraduates who had a lower median (Mdn = 3.33) and higher variation (IQR = 1.00, range = 3.67). There was one outlier who preferred not to give in. This suggests that Indonesian undergraduates are less likely to give in during an intercultural conflict with an instructor compared to Chinese undergraduates.

Table 1

Central Tendencies and Dispersion Values of Facework strategies by Indonesian and Chinese Undergraduates

Undergraduates		Facework strategies										
Indonesian (n=105)	Chinese (n=105)	Integrating					Dominating			Avoiding		
		RES	REM	PRO	PRI	APO	VER	DEF	AGG	TPH	PRE	GIV
Indonesian	Mean	3.76	3.77	3.67	3.68	3.66	3.62	3.54	3.04	3.51	3.40	3.49
Chinese		3.79	3.72	3.68	3.69	3.63	3.68	3.60	3.42	3.63	3.69	3.65
Indonesian	Median	3.67	3.80	3.63	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.11	3.60	3.40	3.33
Chinese		3.83	3.80	3.63	3.60	3.60	3.75	3.62	3.44	3.60	3.60	3.67
Indonesian	Std. Deviation	0.64	0.64	0.52	0.60	0.75	0.67	0.61	0.90	0.74	0.66	0.76
Chinese		0.56	0.65	0.54	0.69	0.65	0.67	0.51	0.73	0.64	0.66	0.73
Indonesian	Range	3.17	3.00	2.50	3.00	3.80	3.75	3.25	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.67
Chinese		2.33	2.80	2.75	2.80	2.80	3.00	2.88	3.67	3.00	3.00	3.33
Indonesian	Interquart ile range	0.83	0.80	0.63	0.60	0.80	0.75	0.75	0.89	0.90	0.80	1.00
Chinese		0.71	1.00	0.75	1.00	0.80	0.75	0.66	1.22	0.80	0.85	1.33

Note. A. Multiple modes exist due to unknown factors. RES, respect; REM, remain calm; PRO, problem solve; PRI, private discussion; APO, apologise; VER, verbal expression; DEF, defending; AGG, aggression; TPH, third-party help; PRE, pretend; GIV, give in

Next, for the "pretending" strategy, Chinese undergraduates again showed a higher median (Mdn = 3.60) and lower variation (IQR = 0.85, range = 3.00) compared to Indonesian undergraduates who showed a lower median (Mdn = 3.40) and higher variation (IQR = 0.80, range = 3.00). Overall, Chinese undergraduates are more likely to pretend that conflict never happened when compared with Indonesian undergraduates.

As for "third-party help", the Chinese undergraduates recorded the same median (Mdn = 3.60) but less variation (IQR = 0.80, range = 3.00) when compared to Indonesian undergraduates (Mdn = 3.60) who recorded a higher variation (IQR = 0.90, range = 4.00). Generally, both groups were willing to seek third party help strategy.

For the "aggression" strategy, Chinese undergraduates scored a higher median (Mdn = 3.44 and lower variation (IQR = 1.22, range = 3.67), compared to Indonesian undergraduates who scored a lower median (Mdn = 3.11) and higher variation (IQR =0.89, range = 4.00). Most Chinese undergraduates are more likely than Indonesian undergraduates to take the aggressive approach in a conflict with an instructor.

The Chinese undergraduates are more willing than Indonesian undergraduates to defend their argument in a conflict. Chinese undergraduates obtained a slightly higher median (Mdn = 3.62) with lower variation (IQR = 0.66, range = 2.88) compared to Indonesian undergraduates (Mdn = 3.50) who obtained a higher variation (IQR = 0.75, range = 3.25). It is therefore possible that

Chinese undergraduates are more willing than Indonesian undergraduates to verbally express themselves in a conflict with an instructor. Chinese undergraduates were found to have a higher median (Mdn = 3.75) and a lower variation (IQR =0.75,

range = 3.00) compared to Indonesian undergraduates who showed a lower median (Mdn = 3.50) and a higher range (IQR = 0.75, range = 3.75).

It was observed that for the "apologising" strategy, both the Chinese undergraduates and Indonesians undergraduates shared the same median (Mdn =3.60), but the variations differed. Chinese undergraduates showed a lower variation (IQR = 0.80, range = 2.80) while the Indonesian undergraduates showed a higher variation (IQR = 0.80, range = 3.80). This indicates that both groups were willing to apologise during or after a conflict with an instructor.

Both groups exhibit the willingness to use private discussion strategy. For this strategy, both the Chinese undergraduates and Indonesian undergraduates shared the same median (Mdn = 3.60), but with different variations. Chinese undergraduates showed a higher variation (IQR = 1.00, range = 2.80) whereas Indonesian undergraduates showed a lower variation (IQR = 0.60, range = 3.00).

For the "problem solving" strategy, again both the Chinese undergraduates and Indonesian undergraduates had the same median (Mdn = 3.63) but differed in variations. The Chinese undergraduates showed a higher variation (IQR = 0.75, range = 2.75) than Indonesian graduates who had a lower variation (IQR = 0.63, range = 2.50). This demonstrates that Chinese undergraduates may be more willing than Indonesian undergraduates to use the problem-solving strategy when in conflict with an instructor.

As for the "remaining calm" strategy, the Chinese undergraduates and Indonesian undergraduates again shared similar median (Mdn = 3.80), but with a minor difference in variation. Chinese undergraduates had a higher variation (IQR = 1.00, range = 2.80) while the Indonesian graduates exhibited a lower variation (IQR = 0.80, range = 3.00). The Chinese undergraduates are more likely than Indonesian undergraduates to use the remaining calm strategy in a conflict with an instructor.

Finally, for the "respect" strategy, the Chinese undergraduates are more willing than Indonesian undergraduates to use the respect strategy during or after a conflict with an instructor. Chinese undergraduates had a higher median (Mdn = 3.83) and lower variation (IQR = 0.71, range = 2.33) compared to Indonesian undergraduates who had lower median (Mdn = 3.67) and higher variation (IQR = 0.83, range = 3.17).

Intercultural Conflict Management Procedural Preference

Table 2 shows the summary of the statistical values of Chinese, Indonesian, and Malaysian instructor's willingness to use the five intercultural conflict management procedures.

For the first intercultural conflict management procedure, "negotiation", both Indonesian and Chinese undergraduates shared the same median (Mdn =4.00) and variation (IQR = 2.00, range = 4.00). However, for the Malaysian instructors, there was a lower median (Mdn = 3.00) with the same variation (IQR = 2.00, range = 4.00). This shows that both Indonesian and Chinese undergraduates are more likely to adopt the negotiation strategy, compared to Malaysian instructors. These findings are in contrast

with Adrian-Taylor et al. study (2007), whereby they found that faculty supervisors preferred to use the negotiation strategy, possibly due to the different cultural value of the participants.

Table 2

Chinese Undergraduates, Indonesian Undergraduates and Malaysian Instructors' Intercultural Conflict Management Procedural Preference

Undergraduates		Negotiation	Third-party facilitation	Mediation	Arbitration	Ombudsman
Indonesian (n = 105)	Mean	3.82	3.58	3.58	3.25	3.48
	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.50
	Std. Deviation	1.06	0.84	1.04	1.07	0.95
	Range	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
	Interquartile range	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Chinese (n = 106)	Mean	3.63	3.73	3.90	3.37	3.57
	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00
	Std. Deviation	1.06	0.99	0.91	1.09	0.92
	Range	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00
	Interquartile range	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00
Malaysian instructors (n = 106)	Mean	2.66	3.31	3.72	3.16	2.98
	Median	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00
	Std. Deviation	1.22	1.17	1.08	1.26	1.19
	Range	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
	Interquartile range	2.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00

Note: Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown. A higher mean score indicates a stronger willingness to use the procedure.

Secondly, the "third-party facilitation", both the Indonesian and Chinese undergraduates shared the same median (Mdn =4.00), but with different variations. Indonesian undergraduates showed a lower variation (IQR = 1.00, range = 3.00), compared to Chinese undergraduates who had a higher variation (IQR = 2.00, range = 4.00). For Malaysian instructors, the median was the lowest (Mdn = 3.00) with variation (IQR = 1.00, range = 4.00) compared to the other groups. There were five outliers – two in the Chinese undergraduates' group and three in the Malaysian instructors' group. This finding suggests that Malaysian instructors, compared to Chinese and Malaysian undergraduates, are less likely to adopt a third-party facilitation procedure, which again contradicts Adrian-Taylor et al. findings (2007).

Thirdly, the results on the use of "mediation" as an intercultural conflict management procedure was different for the groups. All three groups shared the same median (Mdn = 4.00), but with different variations. Indonesian undergraduates had a lower variation (IQR = 1.00, range = 4.00) compared to both the Chinese undergraduates

(a higher variation (IQR = 2.00, range = 3.00) and Malaysian instructors (IQR = 2.00, range = 4.00). This shows that Chinese undergraduates are more likely than Indonesian undergraduates and Malaysian instructors to opt for the mediation procedure and Malaysian instructors are more likely to utilise mediation compared to Indonesian undergraduates.

Fourthly, for "arbitration", all the three groups shared the same median (Mdn = 3.00), but with different variations. Both the Indonesian and the Chinese undergraduates shared the same variations (IQR = 1.00, range = 4.00), whereas Malaysian instructors had a higher variation (IQR = 2.00, range = 4.00). This finding implies the possibility that most Chinese and Indonesian undergraduates would be less willing than Malaysian instructors to use the arbitration procedure. Although they shared the same median, there existed some slight variations in their approach to use the arbitration procedure to resolve conflicts. The findings showed that the Indonesian and Chinese undergraduates were less likely to resort to arbitration in resolving the conflicts. The findings are consistent with Adrian-Taylor et al. study (2007), whereby they discovered that among the five procedures, international undergraduates were less likely to use arbitration.

Finally, the results on the use of the "ombudsman" straregy for resolving conflicts was different for the groups. It was found that Chinese undergraduates returned the highest median (Mdn = 4.00) and shared the same variation (IQR =1.00, range = 4.00) with Indonesian undergraduates. Indonesian undergraduates had the second highest median (Mdn = 3.50) while Malaysian instructors had the lowest median (Mdn = 3.00) with the highest variation (IQR = 2.00, range = 4.00). There were three outliers – two from the Indonesian undergraduates' group and one from the Chinese undergraduates' group who preferred not to use the ombudsman procedure. However, the Chinese undergraduates are the ones most likely to use the ombudsman procedure, compared to Malaysian instructors who are least likely to adopt the procedure to resolve conflicts.

Discussion

From the findings on facework strategies, there was no difference in terms of integrative strategies (REM, PRO, PRI, APO) except for RES. Chinese undergraduates showed a higher tendency to use RES strategy (Mdn = 3.83) than Indonesian undergraduates (Mdn = 3.67). The findings also showed that Chinese undergraduates may be more willing to use dominating strategies (VER, DEF, AGG) compared to Indonesian undergraduates. Lastly, Chinese undergraduates' choice of facework strategies leaned towards the avoiding style (TPH, PRE GIV).

These findings can be interpreted through Ting-Toomey's (2005a) cultural-level proposition 5 (collectivistic culture members are inclined to avoidance strategies than individualistic culture members) and proposition 10 (collectivistic culture members lean towards the aviodance strategies compared to individualistic culture members) of the face negotiation theory. According to Hofstede (2011), both China and Indonesia are

high context cultures that relies on context and explicit communication. Indonesia is placed slightly higher than China in terms of collectivism. The findings showed that Chinese undergraduates had a higher level of uncertainty avoidance than Indonesian undergraduates. This can be seen from the Chinese undergraduates' tendency towards the avoiding style.

As for intercultural conflict management procedures, the study showed that the Indonesian undergraduates rated negotiation the highest out of the five intercultural conflict procedures. This was followed by third-party facilitation and mediation. However, the Chinese undergraduates rated mediation as the highest, followed by third-party facilitation and negotiation. Both ombudsman service and arbitration were rated the lowest by both groups. For the Malaysian instructors, mediation was rated significantly higher than any other procedures while negotiation service was rated lower than third-party facilitation, arbitration, and ombudsman.

Although the three groups of respondents came from Asian countries that are basically collectivistic in nature, they exhibited different conflict management procedural preferences. This may be because the level of collectivism for the countries vary. While both Indonesia and China possess an index value below 50 for collectivism, Indonesia has an index value of 14 while China has an index value of 20.   According to Dissanayake et al. (2015), even though China, Indonesia, and Malaysia are located in the Asian region, these countries differ from one another due to their different national cultural identities. These countries are heavily influenced by the Eastern philosophy and religions such as Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam. Indonesia and Malaysia practises Islam as their main religion, while China practices Buddhism. In addition, the countries feature different kinds of cultural heritage. These variations may have contributed to the differences in conflict management procedural preferences.

The findings of the current study can be categorised into practical and theoretical implications. One practical implication of the study, resulting from the combination of face negotiation theory (Oetzel et al., 2008) and the intercultural conflict management procedures (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007), is first-hand data for instructor development regarding face-saving application in intercultural student-instructor conflict for Chinese and Indonesian undergraduates. The findings are significant as they provide a basis for instructors to be better equipped in understanding the actions taken and reactions shown by both Chinese and Indonesian undergraduates. By knowing how an international undergraduate may react before a conflict even started, the instructor can decide on appropriate facework strategies and procedure to prevent or manage the conflict situation effectively before it gets out of hand. To give a specific example, should a conflict arise among Chinese undergraduates, Malaysian instructors can immediately resort to the mediation approach to resolve the conflict since the instructor is now equipped with the knowledge that most Chinese undergraduates favour mediation as a means to resolve conflicts.

Another significance is that the findings enable instructors to make use of the pedagogy that encompasses the knowledge, skills, activities and attitudes that best fit

the students' cultural background, including being culturally responsive to them, and to shape as well as mould the students in every aspect mentally, socially, emotionally, politically and spiritually (Ladson-Billings, 2009). This is exemplified in the case of Malaysian instructors allowing international undergraduates to have the option of choosing tasks that the undergraduates themselves can relate to. It not only allows for better acceptance of the Malaysian instructors by the international undergraduates but also reduces the social distance in the undergraduate-instructor relationship and develops a sense of closeness and trust.

Regarding the theoretical implication, the findings can be interpreted using Ting-Toomey's (2005a) face negotiation theory. The findings of this study is similar to the empirical research evidence in the "The Matrix of Face" (Ting-Toomey 2005a) where the collectivists (e.g., Chinese and Mexican respondents) tended to use more indirect, other-face concern conflict styles (i.e., avoiding and seeking third-party help). Ting-Toomey (2005a) has 12 cultural-level propositions, but in this study, only propositions 5 and 10 were related to the findings where the collectivistic culture members were inclined to avoidance strategies than individualistic culture members, suggesting that Malaysian instructors would need to expand their understanding of how people from different cultures use different facework strategies in intercultural conflicts. Unlike the previous studies on face negotiation theory (Oetzel et al., 2000; Oetzel et al., 2008; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000), the study considers conflict episodes and the constructs of facework of intercultural relationships in the classroom.

Conclusion

In the study, the researcher found that both Chinese and Indonesian undergraduate groups showed similar tendencies to use integrating strategies. However, the Indonesian undergraduates were less willing than Chinese undergraduates to use dominating strategies. Lastly, Chinese undergraduates' choice of facework strategies leaned towards the avoiding style. The findings also showed that the most favourable procedure was mediation and third-party facilitation and the least favourable was ombudsman service. It is likely that these preferences were not only due to cultural gaps, but also because of age and social distance. One limitation of this study is that the researcher only focused on the cultural and situational-level propositions. The individual-level was excluded because it was not within the scope of the study. Future studies could use mixed method to collect data to allow for a more comprehensive and holistic view. The findings raise questions whether intercultural conflict management concepts and facework concepts are consistent across individualistic and collectivistic cultures because of globalisation as undergraduates are more exposed to seamless information exchange now than decades ago. They have become more informed and aware of cultural biases, thus, there is also an urgent need for educators to be more conscious of cultural differences.

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