The Architecture of Facework in Intercultural Virtual Work Team

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Abstract

The most crucial aspect of a collaborative process, face to face or online, is the face of participants, which is the focus of this research. The face is a direct indicator of the importance for individuals to maintain face (self-esteem) for themselves and their culture group. This research uses a qualitative interpretive approach of ethnomethodology. The subjects observed in this study are a virtual team of three universities: (one from Indonesia and two from the USA), which meets regularly via Skype videoconferencing. Conversation analysis is used to analyze how participants construct their conversation in collaborating to make decisions. The result of this study is the construction or mapping of the individual facework strategies from individualistic and collectivistic cultures. The attitude of individual mindfulness affects the facework strategy carried out in the collaboration process. The implication of this research is a model constructing face strategy mapping of individuals, which explains how individuals negotiate their face in virtual collaboration inter-culturally and are very relevant in the advancement of Face-Negotiation Theory.

Keywords:
Facework, negosiasi muka, strategi muka, kolaborasi virtual, mindfulness

Introduction

In today’s globalized world, technology and IT infrastructure have enabled people to collaborate through the Internet from any place in the world. The world becomes a global village, and people get more used to collaborating remotely. More than a decade ago, John Oetzel (in Littlejohn, 2008, 234) argued that in this globalized world, it is imperative to have the ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. Oetzel’s opinion reinforces researchers’ assumption that communication issues in virtual groups are not merely technical issues but are related to the human factors involved since the core values and the culture within an institution have a significant influence on how people behave. The behavior of people in social situations shows how social actors adapt accordingly to the circumstances and actions of
co-present others. (Goffman, 1959). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the behavior of virtual group members adapt to the circumstances of the environment when they interact.

Decision making and problem-solving in a group is an example of the collaborative interaction of the team members. In collaborative decision-making, there is an integrated sequence of activities that include exchanging information, interpreting it, creating and identifying alternative actions, choosing among alternatives, integrating different perspectives and opinions of group members, and finally making mutually agreed decisions and monitoring the consequences (Guzzo, 1995). The question is how the interaction process occurs when the collaborative decision-making is not face-to-face but mediated through computer technology where individuals, from various cultures, work together virtually through video conferencing, and therefore, is exciting to be further investigated.

Another critical issue in group communication that rarely explored is the facework that occurs in intercultural virtual groups, particularly how the facework behavior of individuals in saving self- and others face in collaboration. The most important aspect of a collaborative process, face-to-face or online, is the individual face of the participants. “Face” is a metaphor for a person’s self-image in public. Our identity is always questionable, which may lead to or be vulnerable to conflicts. Therefore, people do facework, i.e., messages of verbal or nonverbal communication that can avoid face-loss.

Many previous studies on face and facework problems in CMC have been carried out, but dominantly these studies looked more at results and were not focused on the process. The studies conducted by Oetzel et al. (2001), Hui and Bond (2009), and Kam, C. & Bond, M. (2008) show the different results of the effect of face loss between the US and Chinese participants in their research. According to Kam and Bond’s (2008) research, the face loss factor caused a 27% deterioration in the US and 35% in Chinese participants.

In other related studies regarding face and facework conducted by Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Masumoto, Yokochi, Pan, Takai, & Wilcox (2001); Oetzel & Ting-Toomey (2003); Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Chew-Sanchez, Harris, & Wilcox Stumpf (2003); Oetzel et al. (2007)], the researchers examined past conflicts of respondents with their parents, siblings, or friends, and conflict in organizational setting (Baranova, 2010; Peng & Tjosvold, 2011). Although not explicitly explained, their research refers to conflicts that occur in face-to-face interactions. As for the virtual scope, the research from Walsh, Gregory, Danau, and Gunawardena (2003) is an experiment about student reactions to the content of harassing messages from other participants in an online learning environment based on conflict scenarios.

The extant literature on online face works, particularly in virtual collaboration through Computer-mediated communication, is still scant. Some studies on online faceworks are focusing more on politeness and self-construal (Yung-ran Park, 2008; Petiti, 2010; Walsh, Gregory, Lake, et al., 2010). Canelon (2011) conducts more experimental studies on faceworks exploring faceworks in an online discussion, emphasizing the influence of the gender role in it, and Friedman et al. (2011) experimenting through eLab investigating the cross-cultural difference in reactions to facework during service failures.

The majority of the studies on faceworks are carried out in Western countries. Nevertheless, challenges, as well as applications, continue to appear, and critique has focused enormously upon the cultural perspective of the face construct (Jia, 2001; Mao, 1994; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). To the best of the researcher’s understanding, studies on this particular issue of faceworks in a collaborative virtual group, are still rarely conducted by the Indonesian researcher, not to mention the one having Indonesian informants. Therefore, involving and analyzing Indonesian informants in online collaboration with Western counterparts in this research will be exciting as well as challenging since the Indonesians are known to be reserved and more submissive, or in other words, give way to others.

The focus of this research is the individual facework in a real, non-experimental, virtual workgroup. The main issue that becomes a question in this research is: “How is the individual facework strategy, from individualistic (American) and collectivistic (Indonesia) cultures when collaborating in the decision-making process in a virtual workgroup, which communicating through Skype video conference.” Therefore, such a challenging issue makes this study essential.

Literature Review

The theoretical framework in this study begins with Erving Goffman’s (1967, 41) thought that all activities in an interaction are everyone’s efforts to be ready to face unexpected, intentional, or unintentional events. Goffman’s thinking refers to the idea of interpretive genres, theoretical thinking, that seeks to understand how people create and interpret the meaning of an action (Littlejohn, 2005: 8). The theory of an interpretive genre is an approach to understand and discover the meaning of an individual’s action, as reflected through the text of conversation in the interaction. It explains a process where understanding occurs and makes a clear difference between knowledge per se and scientific explanation.

Pluralists in the sociological world view argued that any difference is not a problem but a condition. It is normal and implicitly desired (Perdue 1986: 152). The pluralist paradigm emphasizes the individual heterogeneity in interpreting a reality; which in the context of this research is how
people (American or Indonesian) interprets their reality of communication and how they express their facework strategy in interaction, as a reflection of human free will, based on their rational thinking. Thus, this research offers new views and understanding of individual facework constructs by analyzing their symbolic interaction activities through new media.

This study commences with the focus on three primary concepts, which are the backbone of this research, namely: face and facework, group, and culture (especially between cultures). Therefore, the discussion in this literature review will focus on these three concepts, while decision-making activities in this study are seen as an activity (task) to see the process of communication in the group. The notion of Decision-making process is a process of collaboration, negotiation, which involves conflict among individuals in it.

Understanding Face and Facework

The concept of face is Chinese in origin. It was Arthur Smith, an American missionary in 1894, who, after 24 years of investigation in China, found that the concept of face is central to Chinese identity and characteristics (Mai Nguyen-Phuong-Mai, Cees Terlouw & Albert Pilot, 2014). Levinas, as quoted by Bruce Young (2013), says that “... the face is as the living presence of another person and, therefore, as something that is experienced socially and ethically”. So, the face is a human face (in French, visage), but not intended as a real face or an aesthetic object. This statement is consistent with the widely quoted Goffman (1955), who says that “a person’s face is not something that is or is attached to his body, but something that is in the flow of events in a meeting or interaction” (p.21).

According to Ting-Toomey (2005: 73), the concept of face refers to dignity, honor identity, which are visible or implied in the episode of a meeting. The concept of face is closely related to our emotional meaning and calculation of our self-esteem and social self-esteem. Therefore, the face is an essential identity in communication, because it can be threatened, respected, damaged, and negotiated, on an emotional level and cognitive consideration. In contrast, facework is about verbal and non-verbal behaviors that protect self, others, or mutual faces (Stella Ting-Toomey, 2009). Facework refers to how people together mutually express self-esteem, autonomy, and solidarity in conversation. Facework theory makes us understand the context of interactions and how group members choose speech patterns based on their perceptions of face needs, face threats.

The definition of face-work by Goffmann is an action taken by a person to support face (face-support), and that what he does is consistent with the face he wants (p.12). Goffmann stated further that one must have two strategies regarding face, namely: “a defensive orientation toward saving this own face and protective orientation toward saving the others’ face” (p.14). That is, in order to save the faces of others, one must choose the right steps not to lose one's face, and to save his face, the person must also consider other people who can lose face due to his actions.

Face-Negotiation Theory

This theory explains how individuals with individualistic and collectivist cultural backgrounds negotiate their faces in conflict situations, where facework issues such as face-honoring and face-saving are associated with individual interests in their social self-concept. Ting-Toomey (1988) builds this theory based on the idea that people from collectivistic cultures with high-context cultures are very different in terms of managing their faces and the way they manage conflict compared to people from individualistic cultures with low-context culture.

As the face refers to individual identity or image, its meaning is ambiguous and different from culture to culture. This ambiguous meaning of face is very vulnerable to conflict. Therefore, people do facework, namely verbal and nonverbal communication messages that can avoid loss of face or self-image. The way people do facework and style of managing conflict is different from one culture to another. Facework refers to how people express their self-esteem, autonomy, and solidarity in conversation. Facework theory makes us understand the context of interaction and how group members choose speech patterns based on their perception of face needs or face threats.

Ting-Toomey (1988) defines facework as a communication strategy used by individuals to express self-face and to support or oppose someone else’s face. So, self-face or identity occurs during the communication process in social interaction that is always changing and constructed by communicators. The strategy used to respect one’s face or the faces of others varies from culture to culture, from group to group, and from context to context. Therefore the word “work” is precisely referred to face because of its dynamic and ever-changing, that one must create and maintain the face as desired.

Stella Ting-Toomey (2005) refers to previous research on facework (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey & Cole, 1990; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998) mentions there are two themes in facework, namely: (1) Face orientation or concern refers to attention orientation, to oneself, others, or both. This facework theme refers to how face-negotiator pays attention to conflict messages. Whether or not the message is threatening the self-face, other-face, or both mutual face; (2) Face movements refer to the choices held by negotiators to maintain, defend, or to improve self-and other faces during the conflict episodes.

There are dual-concern of face movements according to Ting-Toomey. Based on the concep-
tual dimensions of self-face orientation (high vs. low) and other face orientation (high vs. low), Ting-Toomey proposed four possible orientations of facial movements. First, Mutual face protection, the tendency of great attention on one's face, and the face of others (high concern for self-face and high concern for other face movements). Second, Mutual face obliteration, the tendency of low attention both on the face of oneself and the faces of others (low concern for self-face and low concern for other face movements). Third, Self-defensive, the tendency to defend or maintain a high self-face and not care about the other person's face (a high concern for self-face and low concern for other face movements). Fourth, Other-face upgrading, the tendency to pay more attention to the other face than to their faces (low concern for self-face, and high concern for other face movements), as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Dual-Concern Face Movements: Four Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person A’s Concern for the other’s face</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (self-face protection)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (other-face upgrading)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual face protection</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-face defence</td>
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</table>

Source: Ting-Toomey (2005: 77)

Revisiting Definition and Dimension of Culture

According to Clifford Geertz, culture is a system of shared meaning, shared understanding, shared sense-making that has historically been transmitted as a system of conception that is inherited and expressed in the form of symbols through which people communicate and have knowledge of the behavior of life (Griffin et al., 2015). Geertz’s definition implies that the culture in which we live is very influential to our communication behavior, our beliefs, and our values that are learned and interpreted jointly by a group or community members. (Maitland & Bauer, 2001, 88). Hofstede (1991) argues that culture is a mediator between humans, which refers to individuals. Therefore, understanding cultural differences is essential to understand human behavior (Kruger & Roodt, 2003; Maitland & Bauer, 2001, 89).

Edward Hall (1976) categorizes cultural differences based on the way people communicate, as high-context and low-context communication. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) argue that the two characteristics of communication put forward by Hall are aspects of collectivism vs. individualism: high-context communication is referring to collectivist societies, and low-context communication is typical of an individualist culture. Individualism-collectivism dimensions are used to describe, explain, and predict differences in attitudes, values, behavior, cognition, communication, character, socialization, and self-concept (Green, Deschams & Paez, 2005).

High-context communication implies that there is little to be said or explained because most of the information already exists both in the physical environment or internalized in someone. Low-context communication is implying that all information must be made explicit and clear. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) argue that the two characteristics of the communication stated by Hall could be considered an aspect of collectivism vs. individualism. High-context communication is suitable for collectivist societies, whereas low-context communication is unique in an individualist culture. High-context cultures are those that communicate in ways that are implicit and rely heavily on context. In contrast, low-context cultures rely on explicit verbal communication (Hofstede, 2001, 212). In this study, the American informants are representations of individualistic culture while the Indonesians as collectivistic cultural representation. Those classifications are following the criteria proposed by Hofstede (2005, 83).

Research Methodology

This study was conducted for three months, namely from April up to June 2013. The researcher employed an interpretative approach to describe in detail how the individual facework strategies in the group when collaborating to make decisions. In this case, conceptually, collaboration is understood as mutually beneficial cooperation by coordinating, sharing, and jointly interpreting communication messages to achieve agreed goals. By looking at collaboration from a constructionist point of view, in this study, ethnomethodology approaches, especially conversation analysis (conversation analysis, CA) is used to explore communication behavior, particularly individual facework strategies that emerged in the collaboration process. Ethnomethodology is the study of “common-sense practice in their natural setting” (Garfinkel, 1967).

Garfinkel introduced ethnomethodology as a research method long before the invention of the internet. However, its primary approach to discourse in social structures (in this case, the specific and continuous behavioral patterns) can be applied to interactions via the internet. This reason refers to the argument of Agger (2004, 157-159) that Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology helps us understand that daily activities such as reading, writing, posting, chatting, and regulating, are not just building communities, but even building new social institutions. Furthermore, Agger (p.160-161) also argues that the internet makes individuals create their virtual selves, in which individuals must process information and electronic stimulation, which when referring to Garfinkel’s opinion, they must be involved in practical reasoning to understand and interpret what they see on a computer screen, and often even modify it.
Descriptive analysis is used to describe how individuals, as working group members, managing their image or facework in the collaborative decision-making process in a virtual group. The subject of this study is a virtual group of three universities (one from Indonesia and two from the USA), which collaboratively host an international conference. The participants in that collaborative virtual group consisting of three persons from Indonesia (two males and one female) and two from the USA (one female and one male). The collaborative work team meets regularly every week through Skype video-conferencing. Recorded data is transcribed in detail using the transcript convention from Forrester (2002).

Data analysis in this study focuses on the stages of decision-making and task-related behavior of participants (group members) during the conversation episode to track face strategy patterns that appear in conversation episodes. It is then analyzed using conversation analysis (CA) to examine the construction of meaning in real-time, during conversations between group members. The fundamental reasons for this selection are:

(a) In CA, a conversation refers to as a means for human action or the primary means for communicators to carry out actions that are goal-oriented in the profession and organization (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, 40). (b) In CA’s view, practical actions that form the core of social life are carefully compiled and organized. (c) According to Heritage & Atkinson, as quoted by Peräkylä (2008), conversation and interaction are examined as a place where an individual’s intersubjective intention is created, understood, and maintained.

To identify and observe in detail the discursive practices (turn-taking and sequence) in conversation, the researcher follows four conventional concepts in CA, recommended by ten Have (1991). Turn-taking organization (construction of turn, pause, overlap or overlaps); the sequencing of conversation (how speech in a conversation is arranged in sequence); the role of repair strategies and procedures (how people deal with interaction problems in conversation).

While the data on face-related communication behaviors are observed and analyzed based on their occurrence in the decision-making procedures according to John Dewey (1910): a) define and analyze the problem; b) develop criteria and list alternatives; c) evaluate solutions and choose the best solution. The collected data of the communication behavior of the informants are observed and categorized based on the seven themes from Robert Bales’ task-related behavior (Johnson & Johnson, 2009), i.e., give or ask for suggestions; gives or ask for opinion; gives or ask for orientation; shows solidarity; shows release tension; agree/disagree; shows antagonism. Data of the facework orientation strategy is analyzed based on the face-tactics category of Goffman (1967) and the individual face-needs of Ting-Toomey (2005). To detect trends and in mapping, the dynamics of orientation and facework tactics, especially the individual face strategy, analysis of facework interaction strategies from Ting-Toomey is used, namely: face-saving strategy, preventive, and restorative. Individual face strategy is classified and categorized based on Dewey’s decision-making phases, and task-related behavior from Bales. In analyzing the tendency of facework strategies of each informant, this study uses the face orientation and face movement as proposed by Oetzel & Ting-Toomey (2003) as reference.

In illustrating the trend of facework orientation strategies carried out by informants from America and Indonesia in this study, the researcher observes each strategy used by both informants based on the frequency of their appearance at each stage of decision making. Results of which are presented in two charts representing the Indonesian and American informants.

The validation criteria of conversation analysis, as outlined by Peräkylä (2004), as follows: Apparent validity (validity of what is seen). Validation through “next turn.” (validity as seen from turn or response in conversation). This research applies goodness criteria in qualitative studies, which refers to aspects of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005); trustworthiness, and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005); or summarized as authenticity and reflectivity; and aspects of ethics in the analysis of speech studies proposed by Forrester (1999).

Results

The finding shows that the matrix of facework strategies used by each participant during the conversation in the three stages of Dewey decision-making process in Bales task related behavior are very dynamic, as shown in Table 2.

In the first stage of Define and Analyze the problem, there are two facework strategies used by Indonesian informants i.e., mutual face protection, which appears in giving information and giving an opinion, and the self-face defensive strategy appears in giving orientation. While the facework strategy used by the American informants in the task of giving information is mutual face protection, other face upgrading, accommodating. In the task of giving an opinion, the American used the strategy of self-face defensive, whereas the strategy of mutual face protection appears during the task of giving evaluation and giving orientation. In disagreeing or passive rejection and ask for orientation, the American informants use the strategy of self-face defensive, dominating, passive aggressive.

During the second stage of decision making, develop criteria, and list alternatives, the facework strategies used by the Indonesian informants are mutual-face protection, integrating; self-face defensive; dominating. In the task of giving suggestions or direction, implying autonomy for others,
Table 2: Dynamics of Facework Strategy of Indonesian and American in the Decision-Making Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages in Decision Making (Dewey’s procedures)</th>
<th>Task Related Behavior (Robert Bales)</th>
<th>Faceworks Strategy (Ting-Toomey)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define and analyze problem</td>
<td>Give information</td>
<td>Mutual face protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual face protection, other face upgrading, accommodating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give opinion</td>
<td>Mutual face protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give evaluation</td>
<td>Mutual face protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give orientation</td>
<td>Self-face defensive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree (passive rejection)</td>
<td>Mutual-face protection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask for orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop criteria and list alternatives</td>
<td>Give suggestion (direction, implying autonomy to or for others)</td>
<td>Mutual face protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual-face protection, integrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give orientation</td>
<td>Self-face defensive</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give or ask opinion</td>
<td>Mutual-face protection, integrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluate solutions and choose the best solution</td>
<td>Show tension release (satisfaction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual-face protection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other face upgrading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agreeing (concur)</td>
<td>Other-face upgrading, mutual-face protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give opinion</td>
<td>Mutual-face protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual-face obliteration, integrating, suspended judgment appeal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Show solidarity (raises other’s status)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask for clarification</td>
<td>Mutual-face protection, integrating</td>
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</table>

Source: author

The strategy used by the Indonesian informant is mutual face protection. During the task of giving orientation, the Indonesian used self-face defensive and dominating strategies. Mutual face protection, integrating strategy reveals on the task of giving and asking an opinion. The strategies used by the American informants at this second stage, particularly in giving a suggestion, which implies direction and autonomy for others, are mutual-face protection; integrating. These strategies also evidence in the task of giving or asking an opinion. Interestingly, when the Indonesian counterpart is giving orientation, no indication of face strategy used by the American. It is because they are just paying attention to their counterpart’s orientation on the issue to solve.

In the third stage of decision making, in the process of evaluating solutions and choosing the best solution, in showing tension release or satisfaction, the facework strategy of the Indonesian informants are mutual face protection. While on the same task, Americans are using other face upgrading strategies. On the task of agreeing or concurring, the Indonesians are using the strategy of other-face upgrading, while the Americans are using mutual-face protection only. In the task of giving an opinion, the Indonesians are using mutual-face protection and integrating, whereas the Americans are using mutual-face obliteration, integrating; suspended judgment appeal. In the task of showing solidarity (raises other’s status), the Indonesian shows no facework strategy, while the Americans use mutual-face protection, integrating strategies. However, in asking for clarification, the Indonesians use other face upgrading, justification strategies, while no evidence of facework strategy of the Americans at this stage.

Discussion

It is evident in the findings that in the conversation during the decision-making debate, the mapping of the facework orientation strategy carried out by conversation participants from individualistic culture (American) and collectivistic culture (Indonesia) are found. To illustrate the trend of facework orientation strategies carried out by informants from America and Indonesia in this study, the researcher observes each strategy used by both informants based on the frequency of their appearance at each stage of decision making, as shown respectively in Chart 1 and Chart 2 below.

Chart 1. Frequency of the Use of Facework Orientation Strategy by American Informants at the decision making stages

As shown in Chart 1 above, the tendency of facework strategy of American informants (i-
individualistic culture) at the three stages in the decision-making process, as follows. First, the facework orientation strategy of Mutual-face Protection of the American individuals. Direction or orientation of the advance strategy “mutual face protection” appears dominantly at each stage of decision making. It indicates that individuals from individualistic cultures express their opinions, hopes or express their feelings while still referring to high attention both on their faces and on the faces of others (high concern for both self and other faces). This finding shows that people with individualistic cultural backgrounds do not always prioritize the “I” ego in collaborative decision making.

Second, Self-face Defensive American Individuals. This strategy indicates high attention to self-face but little or no consideration for others’ faces (high concern for self-face and low concern for other faces). There is an important finding that this self-defensive strategy does not appear in the third stage of decision making, i.e., Evaluate and Choose the best solution for problem-solving. This indicates that in evaluating existing solutions and selecting the best for problem-solving, individuals from America (individualistic) communicate their opinions or approval of these solutions without thinking of their interests or want to win themselves. This finding shows that individuals with individualistic cultural backgrounds can prioritize others and the group’s collective goals when they are at the final stage of decision making.

Third, Self-face Defensive as well as Mutual Face Protection of American individuals. Interesting findings regarding the face orientation strategies undertaken by American individuals emerged only in the first stage of the decision-making process. The dichotomy occurs when on the one hand he dominantly expresses his argument and considers his opinion to be the most correct (high concern for self-face and low concern for other faces). However, on the other hand at the same time, he convinces the other person that what he put forward is for shared group interests (high concern for both self and other faces). This finding shows that American individuals (individualistic culture) emphasize individual truths personally but also at the same time think of shared interests with others in the group.

Fourth, Other face upgrading of American individuals. This advance orientation of other face-upgrading by American individuals appears in the first and third stages of the decision-making process. In the first stage when the individual gives information to the other person by referring to what is the concern of others (fellow group members) the possibility of negative consequences for the group. In this case, this American informant gave a face to others by considering the arguments put forward by others. Interestingly, other face upgrading strategies by American individuals also appear in the third stage of decision making. This strategy emerged when the individual spontaneously (low context communication) expresses support and praise and shows his satisfaction with the solution to the problem offered by the interlocutor. At this point the researcher argues that this finding indicates that the American having individualistic cultural background appreciate other face or other’s self-image.

Fifth, Mutual Face Obliteration an American individual. Mutual face obliteration strategies carried out by American individuals appear only in the third stage of decision making when evaluating the solution to the problem. It happens when individuals and other group members “must” be submissive to others who have higher authority. In this submissive situation, individual American face concern is low. This finding shows that individuals from both individualistic and collectivistic cultures can also suppress or not prioritize their image and collectively submit to higher powers.

In the following discussion, the researcher will explain the facework orientation strategy of Indonesian informants based on the frequency of occurrence at the stages of the decision-making process, as shown in Chart 2.

The tendency of facework strategy of Indonesian informants (collectivistic culture) at the three stages in the decision-making process, is elaborated as follows. First, Mutual-face Protection of the Indonesian informant. This face strategy is a face orientation strategy that give highly concern to self- and other face. This occurred in every stage of decision-making process by the Indonesian. This is evident that individual from collectivistic culture, who usually prioritizing group rather than own ego can also show otherwise by prioritizing protection and loosening of self- and other face communally.

Second, Self-face Defensive Individuals in Indonesia. The strategy of “defensive self-face” orientation shown by Indonesian participant occurred in the first and second stages of the decision-making process, but nonexistent in the stage of evaluating and choosing the best solution. The orientation of the defensive self emphasizes high concern for one’s face and low concern for other’s face. These findings indicate that In-
Indonesian individuals having a collectivistic cultural background, who usually prioritize group, can also dominate, prioritize and maintain their face image when giving opinions or expressing their arguments over a given situation or condition. Another important finding is this self-face defensive orientation does not appear in the final stages of decision making. This finding shows that at the stage of selecting the best solution for problem-solving, Indonesian individuals prioritize the group’s face rather their self-interest.

Third, Self-face Defensive as well as Mutual-face Protection of the Indonesian informant. These dichotomous face strategies occurred when the Indonesian tries to convince other members of the group that her opinion or proposed argument for the solution is the best argument (high concern for self-face and low concern for other face). This result shows that the informant is not only having a significant concern for self-face but also try to get the approval or agreement from others; thus, she needs also to consider other’s face mutually.

Finally, other face upgrading of Indonesian informant. The strategy that prioritizes the face or self-image of others appears only in the third stage, namely the stage of evaluating and choosing the best solution in making decisions. This finding shows that individuals from Indonesia (collectivistic culture) in the final stages of decision making tend to be more submissive and obeying what the other person wants, which also indicates as an excuse to reduce personal risk for a proposed solution.

Conclusion

Findings from the facework orientation strategies understudies, it can be concluded that each participant in this study responds to conflicts constructively (win-win) regardless of their cultural background. Mai, Terlouw & Pilot (2014) argue that face is social control of mechanism with the primary aim to reach harmony in society; thus, when the balance of face is maintained, whole interaction overflow with mutual respect. When the dynamics of face are unbalanced, social harmony is disrupted. Thus, the mores of the face are neither to be wholly confirmed or confronted but rather to be balanced. It is a sophisticated way of both confirming and confronting face in order to reach a desirable result.

Looking at the findings regarding the dynamics of facework orientation strategy of both Indonesian and American informant, it is also evident that Indonesian informants, in this case, Eastern culture, which usually emphasizes group harmony, tolerance, and kinship, there is also a blended of the two cultures (collectivistic yet individualistic culture). For example, concepts of “self-face defensive” and “dominating” are concepts that imply the superiority of oneself over others. Those concepts are different from concepts known in Eastern culture, which emphasizing kinship and togetherness. The concept of “self-face defensive,” emphasizes to the interlocutor that there is an individual egoism implying an unwillingness to annul the statement or argument conveyed in the conversation. This phenomenon illustrates that individuals from collectivist cultures also have a strategy to maintain their face, to demonstrate a “self” who does not want to be submissive or being a victim and even a feeling that he is better than the other person in the conversation. In this line of combination in face strategies, it is of utmost importance to emphasize that a threat to one’s face should be applied appropriately, i.e., with the right balance of face confirmation so that one would not feel too much pressure and back off.

The findings show that there are “mutual face protection” and “other face upgrading” of participants during the decision-making process, which the researcher indicates as a merging culture of individualistic and collectivistic cultures. The blended cultures in a conversation show that the behavior of individuals with different cultures in a conversation will result in cultural relativism. Cultural relativism, as said by the French anthropologist Levi Strauss as quoted by Hofstede & Hofstede (2005: 6) that “culture does not have definite criteria for assessing other cultural activities as a culture that either low or noble. Every culture can be valued based on its members’ activities since every member of that culture is an actor as well as an observer.” When linked to Strauss’ statement, the result of this research shows that in each functional stage of decision making, none of the participants consider their culture as superior over the other’s. They even show their empathy towards other cultures by treating them as the same or equal.

At this point, the researcher argues that individualistic and collectivistic culture are not dichotomous but mutually complementary, and a new approach to facework studies which sees face as an essential social more rather than a cultural barrier. In light of this argument, some theoretical implications are resulting from this study are as follows:

First, blended facework strategy of individualistic and collectivistic culture. The findings in this study prove that people with individualistic and collectivistic cultures carry out their faceworks intentionally or unintentionally based on the law of collaboration, where each party negotiates problem-solving in a mutually beneficial manner. The findings of this study also show that there are patterns of facework strategies that integrate individualistic and collectivistic facework styles. Both American and Indonesian individuals can protect or maintain their faces (self-face defense), but at the same time, uphold mutual respect and prioritize solidarity in their groups. The implications of the findings of this study are on the importance of re-categorizing the concepts of individualism and collectivism in the theory of intercultural communication, especially in face negotiation theory.

Second, Findings of face Strategy patterns in
identifying and building a group culture. One of the interesting things about facework is the link between face strategy and culture. Wilson (1992, 200) argues that culture is influential on the “face” and facework of individuals in negotiations. The question is whether face and facework influence culture? Alternately, can the face form or build culture? Scollon & Scollon (2004) argue that culture is an ideology formed based on history, beliefs, values, and perspectives. An individual’s ideology reflects its culture, which determines the face strategies chosen in the interaction. However, the findings in this study indicate that what was stated by Scollon & Scollon is not entirely true.

Moreover, the characteristics of individualistic and collectivistic cultures, as described by Hofstede & Hofstede (2005), do not appear as “black-and-white” per se. However, there is a “grey area” or cultural convergence where individuals from individualistic cultures do not always show their individualistic nature. Likewise, the opposite happens to individuals with collectivistic cultural backgrounds who do not always bring up their collectivist character. This phenomenon happens because of the mindful attitude of individuals in honoring cultural membership and the personal identity of group members. This finding also indicates the existence of a culture of politeness formed in a group whose members consist of Academics. The ability to maintain politeness, kindness, and harmony of groups is considered as essential both by individuals from America (individualistic) and by individuals from Indonesia (collectivistic).

Finally, the research findings also show that mindfulness is very influential in facework strategies that are carried out in the collaborative process. It is evident that group members from individualistic cultures are more sensitive and understand and give extra attention to those from the collectivist culture who are process-oriented and who prioritize harmonious relationships among group members. Likewise, vice versa, group members from collectivist cultures seem to understand better those from individualistic cultures, which are more results oriented.

**Recommendations**

The results of this study indicate that identifying face strategy in a collaborative decision-making conversation in a virtual environment is a challenging research endeavor. This study succeeded in eliciting advance strategy patterns that emerged from the themes of particular conflicts in the collaboration process. While decision-making conversation takes place, disputed issues emerge, mutually agreed solutions must be sought, and the emerging individual facework strategies give an understanding of how participants in collaborative conversations in virtual groups make decisions to solve problems and make decisions.

The researcher proposes some recommendations for further studies on the following issues that would enrich the study of faceworks. Firstly, conducting similar research with a focus on personal impression management in collaboration in virtual groups. Facework is closely related to image management because the face is a reflection of individual self-concept. The face negotiation theory is very closely related to Goffman’s impression management theory. Face-negotiation theory is relevant when someone negotiates his face in an attempt not to lose his face when displaying his image in front of others. When an individual feels that his self-image, in this case, is threatened, he needs to manage his image by negotiating with others. At this point, the theory of impression management is relevant. The questions are: How does one communicate verbally or non-verbally, in a virtual setting, to present themselves (self-presentation) or manage their impressions? How does one protect their identity when they lose face? All of those questions require further research to answer the curiosity.

Secondly, conducting similar research focusing on measuring individual satisfaction of group members in the decision-making collaboration communication process. The focus of this study is only limited to the input and process of collaborative decision-making communication. The decision quality, group members’ satisfaction, as an output of the collaborative process, are not considered. This research also does not take into account the quality and effectiveness of the results of joint decisions as outputs of the collaborative process. One aspect that was not carried out in this study was the debriefing session on the decision-making process. The researcher recommends further study on debriefing sessions in similar studies as an effort to understand and explore more deeply the communication process in the opinion of the participants (group members) and what learning they get from each conversation session. Thus it is expected that the results of the debriefing session can be an added value to evaluate the effectiveness of decision-making collaboration conversation sessions.

Lastly, conducting Turn-taking and Sequence analysis at each stage of decision making. When analyzing narrative transcripts of each conversation session in this study, the researcher’s focus is only on the whole sequence in each debated issue without paying attention, particularly on how the communication process changes at each stage of decision making. The researcher believes that mapping the sequential pattern in the decision-making stage will be interesting to do, and the results will be able to add to the communication process observation unit, so that more data can be tested statistically, for example by factor analysis or concordance analysis. This endeavor is an effort to overcome the limitations of the number of participants in this study.