

# Comparisons of the Different Views of Face Negotiation Theory

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## ABSTRACT

People from different countries are influenced by economic globalization. This situation leads to a large number of negotiation difficulties due to different cultural backgrounds and various views of the “face” problem. Face Negotiation Theory (FNT) is an original theory to explain how people manage the face problem in some cases. In this work, we are going to examine whether FNT fits to the current circumstances via comparing six different papers related to the main idea “Face Negotiation”. We found that these papers illustrate the application of the FNT in international negotiation conflicts (mainly come from China and the United States) from 24 perspectives and prove that the theory is rational and logical. Hence, we made the conclusion that the FNT launched into an authoritative disquisition about solving “face negotiation” problems.

**Keywords:** Face Negotiation Theory, Face Negotiation, Conflict, Intercultural Culture, Face Concerns

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Our team wants to learn about managing face in Chinese and U.S. workplace communication, especially in the negotiation. Face Negotiation Theory (FNT) is an original theory that can explain a situation that people will manage their faces during processes of negotiation. In order to identify the authenticity of Face Negotiation theory, we have chosen six articles to compare so as to demonstrate FNT’s authenticity. Some of materials are used to test aspects of Face Negotiation Theory, while others tend to apply this theory to support other research. Our RQ is to determine whether Face Negotiation Theory is correct, and then point out reasons.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Due to seven articles, this paper will utilize mixed method. “Americans and Ecuadorians are participants in this study.” [1] “Researchers asked their participants’ emotions after face to face negotiations” [2] “768 participants in China, Germany, Japan, and the United States cultures are asked to explain details interpersonal conflict through questionnaires.” [3] These three

sentences come from three different articles, but they make use of a same method--participants observation. The next one chooses “surveys” as their methodology to do further research. “This research tests the links between dimensions of managing face and conflict styles in 4 countries (Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan, China and the United States).” [4] Moreover, experiments are included. “Employers and employees completed a self-report questionnaire about their reactions to particular conflicts with someone else of different status.” [5] The last methodology is second data analysis, which is used in “a Sino-American Investigation of the Mediating Effects of Anger, Compassion, and Guilt in Interpersonal Conflict”. [6]

## 3. LIT-REVIEW

Face Negotiation Theory (FNT) comes from Stella Ting-Toomey in 1985. This theory mainly talks about face and face-work communication. She mentions that face will play different roles when people communicate with diverse people in particular situations. People from different groups will have their own understandings of the way they managing face. Face will have diverse meanings as well. When their faces are attacked, they will take actions to save their faces. “The results of this

study show that Ecuadorians and American students have no differences in their face concerns, especially in self-face, other-face, mutual-face” [1] The Conflict Style Dimensions (CSD) is a model used as a way to measure and analyze intercultural conflict situations. [5] What’s more, “A Sino-Dutch study points out that Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) tools can be used as a new way to do research.” [2] In this study, they find “Indeed, no matter how researchers believe that the motor of human behaviour and attitude is rationality, they ought to know that emotions will influence more in humans’ feelings, decisions and behaviours”. [2] The purpose of this Sino-Dutch pilot study is to evaluate the meanings of culture on emotions in the situations of negotiations. Also, “This study’s goal was to examine an assumption of FNT that conflict management styles can be predicted by face concerns”. [5] Researchers connected emotions to the theoretical assumptions of FNT and explored the important roles in different types of feelings in understanding the complicated pathways of people’s relationships with self-construal, face concerns, and conflict styles in Chinese and American cultures. They also think that independent self- construal, self-face concern, and the competing styles associated positively with anger. Compassion was associated positively with interdependent self-construal, other-face concern, and the integrating, compromising, and obliging styles as well.[6] Another article examined Ting-Toomey’s [7] theory on conflict face-negotiations. More specifically, this survey attempted to figure out the combinations between dimensions of managing face and conflict styles in some countries and districts (Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States). They then stated that (a) two dimensions of managing face, self-face concerns and other-face concerns, was affected by variability of cultures of individualism or collectivism, (b) compared with conflict styles to face dimensions, face maintenance dimensions worked much better for conflict styles. Furthermore, (c) self-face maintenance had a strong combination with dominating conflict style, and other-face maintenance had a strong combination with avoiding, integrating, and compromising styles of conflict management. It tests the Face Negotiation Theory and provided a questionnaire in 4 countries to collect people’s views about interpersonal conflicts and introduced that (a) independent self-construal has a positive relation with self-face, and interdependent self-construal has a positive relation with other-face. Also, (b) self-face has a positive relation with dominating conflict styles and other-face related positively with avoiding and integrating styles. [3]

#### **4. FINDINGS**

In the literature review, a cross-culture study concludes that Ecuadorian’s preferences differ from

those of American toward two conflicts situations. This study also summarizes that “In general, American students would rather dominate face-work and conflict styles that are expressed in emotional ways, conversely, Ecuadorian students like getting rid of face-work and the styles of conflict that depend on give-in/oblige. Concerning ties of society, politic, and economy in two different cultures, perhaps commercial and interpersonal cooperation among Americans and Ecuadorians students may be easily bolstered via doing the recognition of these critical communication varieties.” [1] “The Associated Analysis of Variance anticipated that first, the Dutch is less angry than self-Chinese participants did. Second, the Chinese participants illustrated being much more Anxious than the Dutch did. Third, the Chinese participants declared being much more Apprehensive than the Dutch did. Fourth, the Chinese participants demonstrated being extensively more Uncertain than the Dutch did.” [1] Thus, we can illustrate that Chinese people will feel more negative and depressed feelings than the Dutch when both of them are in conflict situations. More specially, they will suffer from excessive pressure in conflict situations. The hypothesis that conflict management styles can be predicted by concerning faces is being supported by John Oetzel, Mary Meares, etc. After comparing these three articles, we find that all of them use Face Negotiation Theory to test or apply in these authors’ articles. These three articles think FNT is correct and provide their own opinions about 24 aspects of Face Negotiation Theory. John Oetzel and Stella Ting-Toomey stated that conflict styles and mediated effects are directly affected by cultural individualism-collectivism through self-construal and face concerns as well, and showed that self-construal with independence was related positively with self-face concern and interdependent self-construal was related positively with other-face concern. It introduces that self-face concerns were related positively with dominating conflict styles, and other-face concerns was related positively with avoiding and integrating conflict styles. Then, face concerns led to all kinds of the total variance which was illustrated in dominating styles. Stella Ting-Toomey (including Ge Gao, Paula Trubisk, Zhizhong Yan, Hak Soo Kim, Sung-Ling Lin & Tsukasa Nishid) is consistent with the former points about the direct influences individualism or collectivism made.

However, it emphasized that face maintenance dimensions predicted better conflict styles than the other way around. It added that variates controlled by self-face maintenance have a strong connection with variates controlled by dominating conflict style. In turn, variates controlled by other-face maintenance have a strong connection with variates controlled by the avoiding, integrating, and compromising styles. Unlike the others, Qin Zhang, Stella Ting-Toomey & John G. Oetzel put forward that emotion also affects the face

problem. It demonstrates that independent self-construal had a positive relationship with anger, and interdependent self-construal had a positive relationship with compassion and guilt. Moreover, self-face concerns had a positive relation with anger, and other-face concerns had a positive relation with compassion. Anger was found to be positively associated with the competing style, and compassion had a close connection with integrating, compromising. Furthermore, guilt had a positive relationship with the avoidance styles in China and the obliging styles in the United States.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

“Face-negotiation theory says individualism and collectivism’s cultural variability dimensions have effects on concerns of faces, face-work, and conflict styles. On the other hand, each of them has not been measured. Second, owing to some research already existed, the current study utilized self-report measures.” The third one is recalled the applications of conflicts. Thus, the findings mentioned are representatively relative to the credibility of the recalled conflict.”

Moreover, we find that the limitations of the Sino-Dutch study are lacking of intercultural simulations and the emotion’s concept. In addition to the above limitations, FNT can be applied to the explanations of conflict styles. The limitations of the article related to conflict styles are their finite organizations. “The next one is the conceptualization and measurement of variables, especially in the styles of self-construal and conflicts” [5] Stella and other researchers concluded that there are limitations among those experiments and results. “Complete theory can be extended with necessarily becoming consistent.” [7] “We employed derived etic scales. An indication that participants in our sample interpreted the scales differently is found in low reliabilities in independence (Germany and Japan) and interdependence (China).” From above analyzes, these six articles we cite in our paper have their limitations.

As well as these articles, the purpose of our paper is to compare their points and opinions. So our paper’s flaws are limited resources and lack sufficient evidence. In order to do further research, our team is supposed to find more articles and believable evidence to support our paper’s main points.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Still, our main focus is comparisons of different points in six articles, which are relevant to managing face in Chinese and U.S. workplace communication. Through analyzes, six articles have their unique aspects to test or apply Face Negotiation Theory. After analyzing these articles, we can answer RQ. Face Negotiation Theory (FNT) is correct because these six

articles prove the authenticity of this theory from six different aspects. Although they only talk about parts of FNT which includes 24 aspects, we can eventually conclude that FNT is correct for us to employ when we need to explain some important behaviours in conflict situations.

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