https://doi.org/10.37420/j.rbcs.2025.005

A Study of Applications of Face Negotiation in International Business Negotiation Conflicts -Taking Copyright Negotiations in the Film of Americans Dreams in China as an Example

Zhisong Li[1,*],Pengli Deng[2]

[1]School of English for International Business, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, & School of Foreign Languages and International Business, Guangdong Songshan Polytechnic ; 20240320002@mail.gdufs.edu.cn

[2]School of Foreign Languages and International Business, Guangdong Songshan Polytechnic, 404568401@qq.com

[*]Corresponding Author: 20240320002@mail.gdufs.edu.cn

Abstract

Face negotiation involves complex language strategies in business negotiation conflicts. Taking copyright negotiations in the film of Americans Dreams in China as an example, the study is to construct the conflict management strategies in the perspectives of concern for self, concern for others, and concern for each other, with the purpose of exploring the specific applications of conflict management strategies international business negotiation conflicts, and the findings go as follows: 1.In the selection of conflict management strategies, international business negotiators has boasted their own characteristics, and the use of individual strategies have great consistency and continuity; 2.Cultural differences influence the use of negotiation conflict management strategies, with collectivist cultures generally more concern for each other, more use of emotional expression, third party help, avoiding and dominating strategies, and individualistic cultures generally more concern for self, using more dominating strategies; 3.Cultural, personal, and environmental factors related to international business negotiators influence their specific negotiation conflict management strategies, and these factors shall be paid attention to. This study is to help to promote the effects of international business negotiations.

Keywords: Face-negotiation; International business negotiation; Copyright conflicts; Language strategies; Americans Dreams in China

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

1 INTRODUCTION

Face, encompassing both dignity and favor, reflects interpersonal relationships and implies the nuances of social interactions in human communications. With the deepening of China's reform and opening-up policy, international business negotiations have become increasingly frequent in our country. Due to cultural differences between the East and the West, people have varying understandings and applications of the concept and theory of face, leading to distinct manifestations in international business negotiation conflicts. Based on the study of face negotiation theory and international business negotiations, this paper takes the copyright negotiation scene from the movie "American Dreams in China" as an example to analyze the specific linguistic strategies and representations of key figures in Sino-American international business negotiation conflicts from self-focused, other-focused, and mutual-focused perspectives. It examines the conflict resolution strategies in face negotiation theory, including avoidance, compromise, forbearance, integration, and forcing, as well as strategies such as emotional language expression, third-party assistance, and passive-aggressive behavior. This analysis aims to explore the application of negotiation conflict language strategies among Sino-American international business negotiators, providing important references and exemplars for China's current and future international business negotiations.

2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

2.1 Face negotiation and its research

The concept of facework was first proposed by American sociologist Erving Goffman (1967), who believes that face is the concern for one's anticipated self-image, characterized by immediacy and spontaneity, and intricately linked to the dynamic nature of social interaction. The crux of face issues lies in the mutual effort of both parties in conversational exchanges to protect their own and each other's face. Subsequently, the British anthropologists Brown and Levinson (1978) introduce the Face-saving Theory, positing that face is a public self-image that every member of society strives to attain, serving as a means to understand how individuals from different cultures manage friendly relations and disagreements. They point out that face, as a marker of self-image, encompasses both a positive face (the desire for approval from others) and a negative face (the desire for one's thoughts and actions to be unimpeded), and that face, as a personal emotional investment, is often a focus of attention in interactions, where it can be lost, preserved, or enhanced.

Ting-Toomey (1988) proposes the Face-negotiation Theory, contending that face is the sense of a favorable social self-image that individuals require within their relational networks. Face is influenced by speech acts. She advocates that:1. All cultural communication is based on preserving and negotiating face; 2. Face becomes an issue when identity is questioned; 3. Cultural, individual, and situational variables influence the choice of face concern (e.g., self-oriented or other-oriented face-saving strategies); 4.Individualistic cultures tend to adopt self-oriented facework, while collectivistic cultures opt for other-oriented facework; 5. Cultures with small power distances favor egalitarian frameworks for facework, while those with large power distances prefer hierarchical frameworks; 6. Behavior is also influenced by cultural differences, individuals, relationships, and situational factors; 7. Intercultural communication competence represents the pinnacle of knowledge and thinking (Ting-Toomey 2005).

Fraser (1990) argues that every society has its own set of social norms, which prescribe explicit or implicit rules for behavior, events, and thought. Politeness, in turn, is the linguistic behavior expected in adherence to these social norms. Yang(2009) suggests that face negotiation in business negotiations involves interpersonal relationships, with negotiators employing different politeness strategies and linguistic representations to manage their communicative discourse. Richard Watts (1992) distinguishes between two levels of politeness: first-order politeness, which is the cooperative, other-considerate behavior found in any language and corresponds to the "lay or everyday concept of politeness," and second-order politeness, which is an "ide-

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

alized, universal, scientific concept of politeness" applicable across any sociocultural language, regardless of time and place (Sun 2008). Scollon and Scollon (1995) further refine the theory of face, highlighting its contradictory nature, encompassing two sub-concepts: "involvement" and "independence." That is, speakers must attend to others or grant attention to them, while also maintaining a certain degree of independence and respecting the independence needs of others.

Research on face-related cross-cultural communication between China and the West has become increasingly rich. Regarding communicative conflict language strategies, the Face Negotiation Theory integrates the dimensions of self-concern and other-concern, categorizing conflict handling strategies based on their relative importance. These strategies include: domination (prioritizing one's own position and goals over others), avoidance (escaping the conflict topic, parties, or situation), accommodation (prioritizing the other party's interests over self-interests), compromise (reaching a middle ground through mutual concessions), and integration (developing solutions that highly consider both parties' concerns) (Rahim 1983, 1992). Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) add three additional approaches for handling cross-cultural communicative conflicts: affect expression (clearly expressing personal emotions to manage and control conflicts), third-party help (seeking additional assistance to manage and resolve conflicts), and passive aggression (addressing conflicts indirectly and assuming responsibility in an oblique manner). Chang and Huang (2022) analyze the connotations and development of the Face Negotiation Theory from sociological, linguistic, and cultural cognitive perspectives.

Research on face in Western and Chinese cultures has yielded insightful findings. Scollon and Scollon (1995) explore how Westerners' and Asians' concepts of face influence interpersonal politeness strategies, reflecting different thinking and cognitive modes. Lei and Yao (2008) point out that Western culture emphasizes individual face-saving, while Chinese culture prioritizes interpersonal harmony in social interactions. The differences in face between China and the West are rooted in their distinct cultural cores: humility, respect, trustworthiness, diligence, and wisdom for China, versus freedom, equality, and competition for the West. Zhao (2012) examines the mechanism of face from a social psychological perspective and explored its impact on organizational management. Chen (2011) conducts empirical research on conflict handling strategies such as avoidance, compromise, forgiveness, integration, and autocracy in cross-cultural contexts, attempting to establish realization forms of face negotiation behavior in cross-cultural conflict contexts. Chen proposes cultural and social dimensions of face, as well as cross-cultural conflict management strategies, to enhance face negotiation and cross-cultural conflict handling abilities. Zhou and Daniel (2016) summarize debates on the division of positive and negative face, the inadequacies of culture-specific face research, and the necessity of face research tailored to Chinese cultural characteristics. Yang (2019) explores the cross-cultural pragmatic trends of thank-you expressions and the "intention" in politeness cognition from a politeness perspective. Chang and Huang (2022), based on culture and interaction, analyze the connotations of the Face Negotiation Theory through multiple dimensions like face work, value orientations in face maintenance, self-construal in face negotiation, and face conflict management strategies. They particularly highlight the scarcity of applied research on the Face Negotiation Theory in China. Therefore, understanding the current research status of face theory and conducting a detailed analysis of specific strategies for handling cross-cultural conflicts in the Face Negotiation Theory can facilitate the exploration of application strategies for face negotiation in international business negotiation conflicts, while enriching the research on the Face Negotiation Theory in China.

2.2 Face and international business negotiation

Conflict refers to the actual or imagined opposition arising from the differing needs, values, and interests of two individuals. International business negotiation is a behavioral process where parties involved in commercial activities from different countries or regions engage in consultation on various elements of a transaction through information exchange to reach an agreement. As negotiators from different countries

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

participate, they face cross-cultural communication conflicts in ideology, culture, consciousness, and interests to resolve conflicts of interest and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, manifesting as exchanges and conflicts between Eastern and Western civilizations (Peng 2022).

Face plays a crucial role in international business negotiations. Yang (2004) points out that Chinese negotiators encounter cultural adaptation issues such as face, Chinese language sentiment, and cultural threats in international business negotiations, and offers suggestions for a "salad-style" cultural adaptation. Yang (2009), from the perspective of Foucault's "theory of discourse power," discusses the issues of "discourse right" and "discourse power" in Sino-US trade negotiations and proposes establishing a shared discourse power negotiation realm, understanding the hidden mechanisms linking discourse and power, and insight into the complex relationships between discourse and subjects. Combining Hofstede's (1991) cultural dimension theory, Li (2012) focuses on analyzing cultural differences in international business negotiations across five dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, and long-term vs. short-term orientation. Wang and Zhang (2013) propose broadening the approach to business negotiations from linguistic perspectives such as discourse analysis, pragmatics, and speech acts. Wan (2014) analyzes face negotiation in cross-cultural communication through the event of the Macartney Mission to China and points out that although both Eastern and Western cultures pursue face, the East focuses on the positive aspect while the West emphasizes the negative aspect. Based on face-negotiation theory, Yang (2022) analyzes the problems and strategies in Sino-French cross-border e-commerce communication with Chinese customer service representatives flexibly using face-saving strategies of prevention and self-recovery to maintain the face of all parties. Zhu (2015) explores face-negotiation behavior in discourse communication, analyzing the concept, dimensions of face, negotiation strategies and their significance, showing that factors such as cultural background influence face-negotiation strategies. Xiao and Qin (2019) take the public announcement of the relationship between Lu Han and Guan Xiaotong as the research object, exploring the sub-cultural types in fan communities, the conflicts between cultures and the cross-cultural negotiation process, and showing that cross-cultural conflicts in fan communities are closely related to the concept of face, and integration and third-party control are effective solutions.

In summary, there is a lack of quantitative research combining face theory with conflict in international business negotiations. Further quantitative and qualitative analyses are needed. This paper will explore application strategies for face negotiation in conflicts during international business negotiations by specific negotiation cases.

3 Research Design

3.1 Research subjects

This study takes as its example the script of the copyright negotiation between three representatives from the Chinese company New Dream and two American negotiators in the film "American Dreams in China" (also known as "China Partners"). Focusing on face negotiation and linguistic strategies, it specifically investigates the following two questions:

(1)What are the characteristics of the face negotiation conflict language strategies employed by Chinese and American international business negotiators in handling negotiation conflicts?

(2)What cultural and individual traits do Chinese and American international business negotiators exhibit when selecting language strategies for negotiation conflicts?

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

3.2Research methods

Based on the sequential appearance of the four copyright negotiation scenes in the film "American Dreams in China", the negotiation corpus is organized by meticulously watching the negotiation content, transcribing it carefully, and having two experienced colleagues review the transcripts to ensure the accurate representation of the English language used during the negotiations. The conflict handling strategies are then categorized from three perspectives: self-focused, other-focused, and mutually-focused. Subsequently, detailed analysis and statistical examination are conducted on avoidance, compromise, forbearance, integration, and domination strategies, as well as emotional expression, third-party assistance, and passive-aggressive strategies, to explore their application in each section and the overall copyright negotiation. This analysis aims to identify the language strategy characteristics of Chinese and American international business negotiators, both collectively and individually, in handling negotiation conflicts.

4 Analysis of Language Strategies in Copyright Negotiations

The film "American Dreams in China", whose prototype is the real-life New Oriental Education Group, is set against the backdrop of the 1980s to the early 21st century, depicting the inspiring story of three Chinese young people who met and became friends during their university days, shared business dreams, worked together to establish an English training school, and ultimately achieved a listing on the New York Stock Exchange. In the process of handling conflicts during the Sino-US copyright negotiations, the issue of face concern for both Chinese and American parties is highlighted, revealing the influence of various factors such as individualism and collectivism, power distance, and the individual and contextual aspects of negotiation on conflict resolution. Based on the perspectives of self-focus, other-focus, and mutual-focus, the eight strategies for conflict language in international business negotiations are categorized as follows in Table 1.

Table 1 Strategies for Conflict Language in International Business Negotiations

Focus Perspective	Specific Strategies	Strategy Characteristics
Self-focus	Control, Emotional Expression	Emphasizes concern for self-image, control and management of conflicts
Other-focus	Appeasement, Passive Aggression	Emphasizes concern for the other's image, coordination and management of conflicts
Mutual-focus	Avoidance, Integration, Compromise, Third-party Assistance	Emphasizes concern for both parties' images, multi-channel resolution of conflicts

In the copyright negotiations depicted in "American Dreams in China", there are four main parts with five negotiators from both China and the US involved. Based on the main negotiation content and its characteristics, these parts are divided into: negotiation focus, first half of the negotiation, negotiation break, and second half of the negotiation. In terms of negotiators, the Chinese side, represented by New Dream, has three representatives, namely 1. Meng (Meng Xiaojun), with an overseas returnee background; 2. Cheng (Cheng Dongqing), characterized as a "local" entrepreneur; and 3. Wang (Wang Yang), with a "rebellious" demeanor. The American side, represented by EES, has two main negotiators: 1. Lady, a lady serving as the company's legal advisor; and 2. Bernot, the chairman of EES. They employ face negotiation conflict language strategies that focus on self, others, and mutual concerns during the negotiation conflicts. Following the order of appearance, the negotiation content and strategy applications are reflected in the four stages of the negotiation process.

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

4.1 Language strategies for discrepancies in Sino-U.S. copyright negotiations

In the initial phase of the Sino-U.S. copyright negotiations, the focal point was the legitimacy of using examination materials. There are notable differences in the language strategies employed by both China and the United States during the negotiation's onset.

Lady: Mr. Cheng, Mr. Cheng, Mr. Cheng, do you acknowledge that your company has used unauthorized test materials from my client, Education Exam Services of Bernot New York State, so that Chinese students could have unfair advantages during exams.

Meng: I formally declare to you that what you just said has hurt the integration of all Chinese students.

Cheng: I want to remind you that to make legal use of the materials, we pay annually for the EES.

Bernot: Mr Cheng, back to be mediocre of your record. The school you founded has enabled to send thousands of students abroad in the US. To them, you're a hero; to me, a thief.

During the negotiations, Lady, the legal advisor for EES Corporation from the US, employs a control strategy by accusing the Chinese side of using unauthorized exam materials, thereby giving Chinese students an unfair advantage in the exams. Meng, on the Chinese side, adopts an avoidance strategy, pointing out that the American accusations has tarnished the reputation of all Chinese test-takers. Cheng uses a passive-aggressive strategy, suggesting that the Chinese side pay an annual fee to EES. Bernot, also from the US side, continues with the control strategy by questioning Cheng's credentials on the spot, highlighting his humble beginnings yet his ability to send tens of thousands of students to study in the US, and implying that he has committed theft. In this segment, the American side is on the offensive, focusing more on their own image and employing control strategies aimed at overpowering the opposing side with sheer force. The Chinese side, on the other hand, is on the defensive, concerned not only with self-preservation but also with the welfare of others, raising issues of verbal harm inflicted by the other party and highlighting their own efforts.

4.2 Language strategies in the controversy over EES' issuance of warnings

Regarding the controversy surrounding EES' issuance of warnings, Lady, the legal advisor for the American EES company, continues to employ a control strategy. This is evident during the second phase of the negotiations.

Lady: Mr. Cheng, my client, Education Exam Services, has issued a warning to all US universities of the possibility that New Dream students have cheated on the TOEFL and GREs, the universities have been advised to investigate any New Dream's students with exceptionally high scores.

Meng: You can't issue such a notice.

Lady: And it has already been issued.

Meng: What are your accusations based on? It's already to prove them guilty, a violation of the fundamental principle of American law.

Bernot: Mr Meng, if that's how you feel, why would you travel all the way here for this meeting?

Meng: I know what we've done wrong, but you don't know what you have done, and you don't even care.

Bernot: I admire your critical thinking. It just proves you've received good education in the US. I came across some interesting files about Chinese culture, the imperial exams have first established the tradition of cheating begun in China with many documents and techniques on how to cheat. This is also a record. It's just an interesting anecdote I want to share.

Lady: Where're you going?

Wang: To take a leek. You want to go with me?

Cheng: I'm going with him.

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Lady points out that EES has issued warnings to universities across the United States, alerting them to potential cheating by New Dream students in the TOEFL and GRE exams. Bernot, the representative from the American company, employs strategies of avoidance and third-party assistance, sidestepping Meng's inquiries about the basis for the accusations and citing historical data on cheating in China to suggest that cheating has been a phenomenon in Chinese history. Meng adopts strategies of control, passive aggression, third-party assistance, and compromise. She argues that the Americans should not issue such warnings, questions the basis for their accusations, points out that their actions violate fundamental principles of American law, and acknowledges her side's mistakes while suggesting that the Americans are unaware of their own errors and dismiss them. Wang and Cheng, on the other hand, utilize strategies of avoidance and accommodation, working together to seize opportunities to ease the tense atmosphere and pressure of the negotiation conflict. In terms of this part of the negotiation, the Americans primarily employ a comprehensive face-negotiating conflict resolution strategy that focuses on self-image, others, and mutual concern. The Chinese, however, primarily focus on mutual concern, while also incorporating strategies that focus on self and others.

4.3 Language strategies in the contest over unfair advantages

In the section dealing with the contest over unfair advantages, Meng, the representative from the Chinese company New Dream, successively employs strategies of accommodation, passive aggression, control, and avoidance. In response to the Americans' claim that Chinese test-takers have obtained unfair advantages in the exams, Meng questions how the Americans define "unfair advantages," proposes the option of legal action, and emphasizes the clarity of her self-expression. These strategies are specifically manifested in the third stage of the negotiation.

Meng: Mr. Bernot, you claimed that our tutorial materials gave Chinese students unfair advantage doing exams. Can you define what do you mean by unfair advantage?

Bernot: You should know what that means better than I do. But we'll go to that later. Right now I want you to admit the unauthorized use of that material.

Lady: We filed the motion with the courts, ordering you cease your infringement, and destroy all unauthorized copies of EES materials. We're seeking 15 million in damages, this figure does not include punitive.

Wang: That's ridiculous.

Meng: The damages you are seeking far exceed our total profits. You leave us no choice but go to court.

Lady: Please repeat what you just said

Meng: You heard me, loud and clear, in English.

Cheng: I suggest we take a break.

Lady: Fine.

At this stage of the negotiation, both Wang and Cheng employ emotional expression and avoidance strategies. Wang points out the unreasonableness of the American demand for a compensation of USD 15 million, while Cheng proposes a recess to ease the tension in the negotiation. The American representative, Bernot, adopts avoidance and control strategies, sidestepping the definition of unfair advantage and demanding that the Chinese side admit to the unauthorized use of their exam materials. The American legal advisor, Lady, employs control and accommodation strategies by proposing that they have initiated legal proceedings to require the Chinese side to cease infringement, destroy the materials, and pay a compensation of USD 15 million excluding penalties, and asks the Chinese side to reiterate the legal proceeding options. Subsequently, she agrees to Cheng's suggestion of a recess. Overall, at this stage, the Chinese side employs a balanced approach to conflict resolution strategies that focus on self, others, and both parties, while the American side primarily focuses on self, with a comprehensive application of strategies that also consider others and

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

both parties. Up to this point, the emotional and financial demands of both the Chinese and American negotiating parties have been clearly expressed.

4.4 Language strategies for resolving copyright conflicts through emotion and reason

As the most prominent part of the copyright negotiation in the movie "American Dreams in China", this section adopts an approach that combines emotion and reason to resolve conflicts, embodying Chinese etiquette culture and demonstrating different handling techniques for face concerns and negotiation conflicts between China and the United States. The specific negotiation discourse strategies are reflected in the fourth stage.

Wang: Mr. Bernot, it's your gift, from me.

Bernot: It's got from Chinatown?

Wang: Chinese moon cakes. Next week is the moon festival. And if the fight breaks out later, I have something to throw.

Bernot: Hahahaha...

Wang: Oh hoo, you got the joke, for you.

Cheng: Mr. Bernot, we officially offer a formal apology, we acknowledge the commodity copyright infringement and prepare to settle.

Wang: But not fifteen million.

Cheng: Please, take any clause you want, any clause that is related to our copies.

Lady: Clause eleven.

Cheng: The WIPO Copyrights and Performances and Phonograms Treaties of Implementation Act of nineteen ninety-eight, amended section 101 by adding the definition of Geneva Phonograms Convention. Pick another one please.

Lady: Thirty five.

Cheng: The WIPO Copyrights and Performances and Phonograms Treaties of Implementation Act of nineteen ninety-eight, requires that some paragraph D, the definition of eligible country take effect a part entry into force of the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaties with respect to the United States which occurred on May 20th 2002.

Cheng: This because I memorized the entire text on the plane coming here. It is a skill that I mastered when I was eighteen, that year, I memorized the whole XinHua English dictionary. For your information, I was only considered mediocre among my peers, Chinese students are extremely adept at taking exams, you can't imagine what they are willing to go through to succeed, you don't understand Chinese culture.

Meng: Mr. Bernot, regardless of the final ruling, this meeting marks the start of our formal partnership. We hope the EES can enforce its copyrights in the Chinese market. We don't like being called thieves. We've come here today, hoping to educate you about one thing. China has changed. Unfortunately, you are still stuck in the past.

Bernot: Mr. Meng, I remind of you, Yao Ming is in the NBA.

Meng: That's because NBA was trying to tap into the Chinese market, China is already the world largest market for English language education. Today, Chinese students don't aspire to stay in America, they want to go home. Yet you're still stuck on whether they cheat on exams.

Cheng: Mr. Bernot, before we came to the States, we debated whether to list the New Dream on the stock exchange. Now, I've come to a decision, New Dream's IPO will be officially announced, today.

Bernot: What makes you think I care?

Cheng: But you will care, I will be waiting for the right opportunity for the company to go public, now, I've got it. That's right; it's you who give us this opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Bernot. You are the one who has

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

gained us the attention of potential investors form Wall Street. They will see us as a company with integrity and courage. The more we pay in compensation, the greater valuation we will get in the future. In addition, there will be at least one more benefit from listing New Dream. Someday, when we are no longer teachers, but the representatives of the world's largest educational service cooperation, you may finally show us the respect we deserve. We won't have to rely on lawsuit to communicate with each other. More importantly, I'm also doing this for personal reasons. I have a friend, who is more brilliant that I will ever be, and more deserving of success. But when he came to America, I realized the best man of my generation destroyed here. Mr. Bernot, the playing field has never been even. This is my way of reclaiming my friend's dignity. According to a Chinese proverb，I'm like a TUBIE --a soft shell of turtle, someone afraid to go out and take risks. Now, I'm standing here, terrified even as we speak. But as my friend once said, some things are so important that enforce us to overcome our fears.

In the fourth stage, Wang, the representative of China New Dream Company, primarily adopts conflict resolution strategies of third-party assistance and control. Taking advantage of the upcoming Mid-Autumn Festival, he presents mooncakes to Bernot, the American representative, as a gesture of goodwill from the Chinese side, while also proposing that the compensation cannot be USD 15 million. Cheng employs a range of strategies in the negotiation, including compromise, third-party assistance, emotional expression, passive aggression, and integration. He first apologizes to the American side for the infringement and expresses willingness to compensate, then allows the American side to select the copyright clauses, and recites the entire content of the selected clauses verbatim to demonstrate the hard work and wisdom of the Chinese people. Cheng tells the American side that Chinese test takers put in more effort than they can imagine for the exam, announces that New Dream Company will be listed in New York on that day, and thanks Bernot for the opportunity, stating that the higher the American side's claim for compensation, the higher the company's market value will be. He proposes that the company's listing in New York will promote mutual respect and equality between China and the United States. Cheng also mentions that unfair competition has always existed, citing his friend's struggle in the United States as an example, and says that the company's listing is a way to regain his friend's dignity. He describes himself as a "local bumpkin" who fears risk but is driven to overcome it by important matters.

Meng employs strategies of integration, control, third-party assistance, passive aggression, and emotional expression. He believes that, regardless of the verdict, this round of negotiations marks the beginning of a partnership between China and the United States. He expresses the hope for authorization in the Chinese mainland market and tells the American side that China is changing while they are not. Using the NBA as an example, he illustrates the attractiveness of the Chinese market and points out that China is now the largest English education market in the world, with Chinese test takers preferring to return home rather than stay in the United States, while the American side only focuses on whether they cheat.

Bernot, the representative of EES Company in the United States, employs strategies of accommodation, emotional expression, third-party assistance, and integration. He asks if the mooncakes are from Chinatown, laughs at Wang's joke, points out that Yao Ming is already in the NBA, and asks what his concerns are regarding the company's listing on the NYSE. Lady, the legal advisor for EES Company, employs an accommodation strategy by selecting two clauses related to the copyright as requested by Cheng and listening carefully to check his recitation.

Overall, in this part of the negotiation process, both the Chinese and American negotiators prominently employ language strategies that focus on each other, mainly reflected in third-party assistance and integration strategies. They also comprehensively utilize strategies that focus on self and others. The Chinese side relatively employs more self-focused strategies, especially emotional expression, while the American side employs more other-focused strategies, particularly accommodation. This indicates that in the process of resolving conflicts in international business negotiations, both parties need to first focus on each other, while also paying attention to self and others, and flexibly employ language strategies to achieve mutual benefit and win-win outcomes.

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

5 Language Strategies for Copyright Conflict Negotiation and Their Effects

Based on the comprehensive analysis above, the frequency of conflict language strategies employed by Chinese and American negotiators in four negotiation sections of international business negotiations is counted. Subsequently, according to the negotiators' appearance information and their different perspectives of self-focus, other-focus, and mutual-focus, combined with their specific conflict handling strategies, their language strategies are summarized and comprehensively analyzed. The language strategies used by Chinese negotiators in international business negotiation conflicts can be summarized in the following table (Table 2).

Table 2 Summary of Chinese Negotiators' Conflict Language Strategies

Negotiator Appearance Information			Self-Focus		Other-Focus			Mutual-Focus		
Negr Sd	Section	Negrs	Ctrl	EE	Accom	PA	Avd	Intg	Comp	TPA
Chinese	2	Wang					1			
Chinese	3	Wang		1						
Chinese	4	Wang	1	1	1					1
Chinese	1	Meng					1			
Chinese	2	Meng	2			1				1
Chinese	3	Meng	1		1	1	1			
Chinese	4	Meng	1	1		1		1		1
Chinese	1	Cheng				1				
Chinese	2	Cheng			1		1			
Chinese	3	Cheng					1			
Chinese	4	Cheng		4				1	1	3
	Subtotal		5	7	3	4	5	2	1	6

Note 1: Negr Sd stands for Negotiator Side, Negrs stands for Negotiators, Ctrl stands for Control, EE stands for Emotional Expression, Accom stands for Accommodation, PA stands for Passive Aggression, Avd stands for Avoidance, Intg stands for Integration, Comp stands for Compromise, and TPA stands for Third - Party Assistance.

The table above indicates that, although Chinese negotiators employ different language strategies in various sections of copyright negotiations, they generally tend to use more language strategies that focus on mutual-focus and self-focus, while relatively fewer strategies that focus on other-focus. Specifically, Chinese negotiators relatively frequently apply strategies such as emotional expression, third-party assistance, avoidance, and control. Additionally, the negotiation conflict language strategies employed by the same negotiator in different negotiation sections demonstrate both certain variations and relative continuity. The overall strategies used by Chinese negotiators are quite diverse, with continuity manifested in Meng's consistent use of control and passive aggression strategies in the latter three sections. There are significant differences in the conflict language strategies employed by different negotiators: Wang prominently uses self-focused emotional expression strategies, Meng frequently employs self-focused control strategies, other-focused passive aggression strategies, and mutual-focused third-party assistance strategies, while Cheng pays great attention to using self-focused emotional expression strategies, mutual-focused third-party assistance, and avoidance strategies.

During the Sino-US copyright negotiation process, the conflict language strategies employed by American negotiators are summarized in the following table (Table 3).

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Table 3 Summary of American Negotiators' Conflict Language Strategies

Negotiator Appearance Information			Self-Focus		Other-Focus		Mutual-Focus			
Negr Sd	Section	Negrs	Ctrl	EE	Accom	PA	Avd	Intg	Comp	TPA
American	1	Lady	1							
American	2	Lady	1							
American	3	Lady	4		1					
American	4	Lady			2					
American	1	Bernot	1							
American	2	Bernot					1			1
American	3	Bernot	1				1			
American	4	Bernot		1	1			1		1
	Subtotal		8	1	4	0	2	1	0	2

Note 2: Please refer to Note 1 for the meanings of the above abbreviations.

Table 3 indicates that during the process of handling conflict discourse in Sino-US copyright negotiations, American negotiators predominantly employ self-focus language strategies, frequently utilize mutual-focus strategies, and also adopt other-focus strategies. Specifically, the most frequently used strategy by the Americans is the self-focused control strategy, followed by the other-focused accommodation strategy. Regarding individual negotiators, there is a certain degree of variation in the strategies employed by American negotiators, and they also exhibit relatively consistent negotiation conflict language strategies. For example, Lady has consistently used the control strategy six times in the first three sections. In terms of the strategies used by different individuals, there are also notable differences among American negotiators. Lady, the legal advisor, has most frequently employed the control strategy and also used the accommodation strategy, while Bernot, the representative from the American company, has comprehensively utilized specific conflict language strategies such as control, avoidance, and third-party assistance.

The overall differences in the strategies used during the Sino-US copyright negotiation process can be summarized in the following simplified table:

Table 4 Simplified Table of American Conflict Language Strategies in "American Dreams in China" Copyright Negotiations

Negotiator Appearance Information		Self-Focus		Other-Focus		Mutual-Focus			
Negr Sd	Negrs	Ctrl	EE	Accom	PA	Avd	Intg	Comp	TPA
Chinese	Wang	1	2	1		1			1
Chinese	Meng	4	1	1	3	2	1		2
Chinese	Cheng		4	1	1	2	1	1	3
Subtotal		5	7	3	4	5	2	1	6
American	Lady	6		3					
American	Bernot	2	1	1		2	1		2
Subtotal		8	1	4	0	2	1	0	2
Total		13	8	7	4	7	3	1	8

Note 3: Please refer to Note 1 for the meanings of the above abbreviations.

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

As shown in the table above, throughout the entire copyright negotiation process, both Chinese and American negotiators employ a variety of conflict language strategies. Relatively speaking, the negotiation strategies employed by the Chinese side are more diverse. Specifically, Chinese negotiators most frequently use mutual-focus conflict resolution strategies, with 14 instances, followed by self-focus conflict language strategies, with 12 instances. The use of other-focus strategies is relatively less frequent, with 7 instances. On the other hand, American negotiators most frequently employ self-focus conflict resolution strategies, with 9 instances, while mutual-focus and other-focus strategies are used less frequently, with 5 and 4 instances respectively. In terms of the use of negotiation conflict language strategies, Chinese negotiators utilize all eight types of negotiation conflict resolution strategies, whereas American negotiators only use six of them. From a self-focus perspective, American negotiators employ more control strategies, with 8 instances, compared to 5 instances by the Chinese. Chinese negotiators use more emotional expression strategies, with 7 instances, compared to 1 instance by the Americans. From an other-focus perspective, American negotiators employ more accommodation strategies, with 4 instances, compared to 3 instances by the Chinese. Chinese negotiators use more passive-aggressive strategies, with 4 instances, while the Americans use none. From a mutual-focus perspective, Chinese negotiators employ more third-party assistance, avoidance, and accommodation strategies, with 6, 5, and 2 instances respectively, compared to 2, 2, and 1 instances by the Americans. The Chinese also use compromise strategies, which are not used by the Americans.

This indicates that Chinese negotiators, who come from a collectivist and high-power distance culture, pay more attention to the image and interests of the collective, as well as their own personal image and interests, while relatively less attention is paid to others. In terms of the specific negotiation conflict language strategies used, they generally employ a relatively rich and diverse set of strategies. In contrast, American negotiators, who come from an individualist and low-power distance culture, pay more attention to their own image and interests, and less attention to the image and interests of others and the collective. Additionally, American negotiators generally employ fewer negotiation conflict resolution strategies overall. Furthermore, the table also shows that while the conflict language strategies chosen by different negotiators generally reflect certain cultural characteristics, there is considerable individual variation in the specific strategies used.

6 Conclusion

By analyzing the research connotations and related studies of Face Negotiation Theory, this paper summarizes the research status of face and international business negotiations. Based on the conflict language strategies of Face Negotiation Theory, it refines specific conflict language strategies that focus on self, others, and mutual concerns. Through the analysis and organization of international business negotiation cases, with the copyright negotiation of “American Dreams in China” as a representative, this paper explores the specific conflict resolution strategies employed by Chinese and American negotiators in international business negotiations, analyzes the characteristics of language strategies used by international business negotiators, and points out that collectivist cultures generally pay more attention to mutual and self-concerns, and frequently employ emotional expression, third-party assistance, avoidance, and control strategies, while individualist cultures tend to focus on self-concern and prominently use control strategies.

In future research on the application of Face Negotiation Theory, researchers can conduct comprehensive studies on international business negotiations with a larger scope and more data. As China continues to expand its opening to the outside world, it will participate in more and more international business negotiations. In terms of face negotiation, international business negotiators need to pay attention to the application characteristics of face negotiation in international business negotiations, choose appropriate language strategies, and ensure that all parties in the negotiation are treated equally, get along harmoniously, and achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. Furthermore, this study also provides an empirical analysis basis for business negotiation teaching and the implementation of language strategies.

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Funding

[1]2021 Guangdong Provincial Continuing Education Quality Improvement Project "Research and Practice of Foreign Language Business Vocational Training Projects Based on Industry-Education Integration and Multi-Party Collaboration" (Project No,:JXJYGC2021BY0094)

[2]College-level projects of Guangdong Songshan Polytechnic: "The Model Team for Ideological and Political Education in Business English Professional Courses" (Project No.: 2023-KCSZTD-03)

[3]"The Industry-Education Integration Practice Center for Business Foreign Languages" (Project No.: 2023SJZX04)

[4]"Research on the Deep-integration Mechanism between Party-building Work and Scientific Research Work in Universities in the New Era: A Case Study of the Teachers' Party Branch in the School of Foreign Languages and Business" (Project No.: 2024-DJSZ-05)

[5]"Research on the Construction Path of the Tourism and Trade Service Professional Group Empowered by Digital Intelligence" (Project No. 2024JYJG21).

References

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1978). Universals of Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena. In E. N. Goody (Ed.), Questions and Politeness Strategies in Social Interaction (pp. 56-310). Cambridge University Press

Chang, J., & Huang, L. Y. (2022, June). Culture and Communication: A Study on the Connotation and Development of Face-Negotiation Theory. Journal of Nanning Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 4, 98–106.

Chen, Y. H. (2011, October). A Quantitative Study of Face-Negotiation Behavior in the Context of Cross - cultural Conflict. Foreign Languages and Their Teaching, 5, 35–38.

Fraser, B. (1990, April). Perspectives on Politeness. Journal of Pragmatics, 14, 219–236. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(90)90081-N

Goffman, E. (1967). Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior. New York: Doubleday.

Hofstede, G. (1991). Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind. London: McGraw-Hill.

Lei, Y. L., & Yao, M. (2008, January). A Probe into the Differences between Chinese and Western Face Theories. Journal of Changchun University of Science and Technology (Social Sciences Edition), 1, 85–88.

Li, Z. S. (2012, June). Cultural Differences in International Business Negotiations. Journal of Henan University of Engineering (Social Science Edition), 2, 25–27.

Peng, J. W. (2022, November). Cultural Conflicts and Countermeasures in International Business Negotiations. Foreign Investment in China, 22, 22–24.

Rahim, M. A. (1983, June). A Measure of Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict. Academy of Management Journal, 26, 368–376.

Rahim, M. A. (1992). Managing Conflict in Organizations (2nd ed.). Connecticut: Praeger.

Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (1995). Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sun, Y. (2008). An Introduction to Pragmatics and Cognition. Beijing: Peking University Press.

Ting-Toomey, S. (1988). Intercultural Conflict Styles: A Face Negotiation Theory. In Y. Y. Kim & W. B. Gudykunst (Eds.), Theories in Intercultural Communication. California: Sage.

Ting-Toomey, S. (2005). The Matrix of Face: An Updated Face-Negotiation Theory. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), Theorizing About Intercultural Communication. California: Sage.

Ting-Toomey, S., Yee-Jung, K. K., Shapiro, R. B., et al. (2000, November). Ethnic/Cultural Identity Salience and Conflict styles in Four US Ethnic Groups. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 24, 47–81.

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Wan, J. (2014, July). Face Negotiation in Sino-Western Cross-cultural Communication: A Case Study of the Macartney Mission to China. Journal of Xinjiang University (Philosophy, Humanities & Social Sciences Edition), 42(4), 128–132.

Wang, L. F., & Zhang, F. R. (2013, July). Theoretical Foundations and Research Status of Interactive Discourse in International Business Negotiations. Shandong Foreign Language Teaching Journal, 6, 5–10.

Watts, R. (1992, February). Linguistic politeness and politic verbal behaviour: reconsidering claims for universality. In R. Watts, S. Ide, & K. Ehlich (Eds.), Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory and Practice (pp. 43–69). Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin.

Watts, R. (2003, September). Politeness. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615184

Xiao, J., & Qin, B. Y. (2019, March). Face Negotiation in Fan Communities: A Cross-cultural Communication Perspective. Modern Communication, 41(3), 43–49.

Yang, W. H. (2004, July). An Analysis of Chinese Businessmen's Cultural Adaptation Phenomena in Business Negotiations after China's Accession to the WTO. International Economics and Trade Research, 4, 56–59.

Yang, W. H. (2009, September). A Look at Sino-US Trade Negotiations from Foucault's "Discourse-Power Theory". Journal of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, 5, 22–26.

Yang, W. H. (2009, May). A Study of Interpersonal Language Strategies in Business Negotiations. Beijing: Science Press.

Yang, W. H. (2019, May). A Probe into the Cross-cultural Pragmatic Situation of Thank-you Expressions and the Analysis of the Meaning of "Thanks" in Polite Cognition. Foreign Language Teaching, 5, 29–33.

Yang, Y. (2022, June). A Study on the Application of Face-Negotiation Theory in Sino-French Cross-border E-commerce Communication. PR Magazine, 173–175.

Zhao, Z. J. (2012, October). A Review of Face Theory Research. Journal of Chongqing University (Social Science Edition), 5, 128–137.

Zhou, L., & Daniel, K. (2016, June). Inheritance and Evolution of Face Research. Foreign Languages Research, 3, 26–30.

Zhu, X. J. (2015, January). A Study on Face - Negotiation Behavior in Discourse Communication and Its Significance. Journal of Chongqing Three Gorges University, 31(1), 119–123.

© By the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group (MPG), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)