Managing Intercultural Conflicts Effectively
STELLA TING-TOOMEY

Instructor
ppa. Dr. Imke Lode,

Student
Bashar Al Takrouri

Summer 2006

Intercultural conflict

Conflict = com + fligere "to strike together".

Incompatibility of values, expression, processes or outcome between two or more parties from different cultures.

IC starts with miscommunication.

Culture variability perspective

Individualism – collectivism.

Relate variability perspective to the
conflict styles and cross cultural conflict
negotiation process.

Starting point ... individualistic-base vs.
group-base cultures.

Back to Hofstede study 1991 (countries +
type of cultures) UK vs. Guatemala.

Culture variability perspective

Markus and Kitayama 1991, argue that the self concept is influencing the communication with the others.

Cultural variability dimension of individualism-collectivism and independent-interdependent construal of self helps to understand the different approaches of conflicts negotiation in different cultures.

Culture variability perspective

According to Hall 1976:

LC [Low Context] most of information included in the message to make up what missing in context.
- individualistic culture

HC [High Context] minimal information transmitted in the message.
- collectivistic culture

Culture variability perspective

LC community

Conflict revolve around – individual pride, ego-base emotions, sense of autonomy and power.

Incompatible personalities, beliefs or goal orientation.

HC community

Conflict revolve around – group harmony, self-esteem, face related emotions and reciprocal sense of favor and obligations.

Incompatible facework or relation management.

Culture variability perspective

The concept face is tied to the need people have to a claimed sense of self-respect in any social interaction.

Time influences the tempo and pacings of the conflict negotiation session.

Culture variability perspective

According to Hall 1983:

Monochronic Time Schedule (M-Time).

Polychronic Time Schedule (P-Time).

"P-time is treated as less tangible than M-time. For polychronic people, time is seldom experienced as "wasted" and is apt to be considered a point rather than ribben or a road, but that point is often sacred." (Hall 1983, p.46)

Culture variability perspective

M-time culture

Time can be possessed, drained and wasted.

Conflict should be trained, controlled and managed effectively within certain frame or schedule.

P-time culture

time viewed as contextually based and relationally oriented.

Knowing really conflict parties. People synchronization is more important than any preset, objective timetable.

Culture variability perspective

"I" identity-base / LC / M-time negotiation schedule.

"We" identity-base / HC / P-time negotiation rhythm.

Conflict expectations

"Intercultural miscommunication or intercultural conflict often because of violation of normative expectation in a communication episode." (Ting-Toomey, p376-p4.)

Cultural conflict assumptions

LC procedures:

1. It is expressed struggle to air out major differences and problems.

2. It can be functional or dysfunctional.

3. Substantive and relation issues handled separately.

4. It should be dealt with openly and directly.

5. Win-win problem solving.

Cultural conflict assumptions

HC procedures:

*Face maintenance model.

1. Conflict to be seen as damaging to social face and relational harmony should be avoided.

2. Mostly dysfunctional conflict.

3. Conflict signs a lack of self discipline and censorship.

4. Face work negotiation process.

5. Substantive and relational issues are intertwined.

6. Discreetly and subtly.

7. Win-win face negotiation.

Conflict issues and process violation

LC negotiator attend to the objective and substantive issues.

HC negotiator attends to socioemotional issues.

"low-context negotiators can be described as primarily problem oriented ...high-context negotiators are seen to be predominantly relationship oriented" (Cohen 1991 p.51)

Conflict issues and process violation

In Western cultures, conflict parties seek help with an impartial third-party mediator e.g: family therapist.

In many Asian cultures they seek the help of an older person who is related to both parties.

Conflict issues and process violation

The power

In individualistic culture it means tangible resource of award and punishment.

In collectivism it is more intangible like face loss or face gain.

Cross cultural conflict interaction style

Individualists typically rely on direct request, verbal justification and clarification to define action or decision.

Collectivistic relies on tag questions, disclaimer. It can be viewed as "inscrutable".

Effective conflict management

Mindfulness concept by Langer.

Individuals need **to** learn to create new category, **be** open to new information and **be** aware that multiple perspectives typically exist in viewing basic event.

To have effective conflict management-Collective culture

1. Face maintenance assumptions.
2. Be Proactive with low-grade conflict.
3. Give face.
4. Be sensitive to the importance of quiet.
5. Discard the western-based model.
6. Cooling period.

To have effective conflict management-individualistic culture

1. Problem solving assumption.
2. Openly express opinions or point of view.
3. Engage in assertive, leveling style of conflict behavior.
4. Use "I" statements in the decision making process.
5. Provide verbal feedback and engage in active listening skills.
6. Use direct verbal massage.
7. Commit to working out the conflict situation.
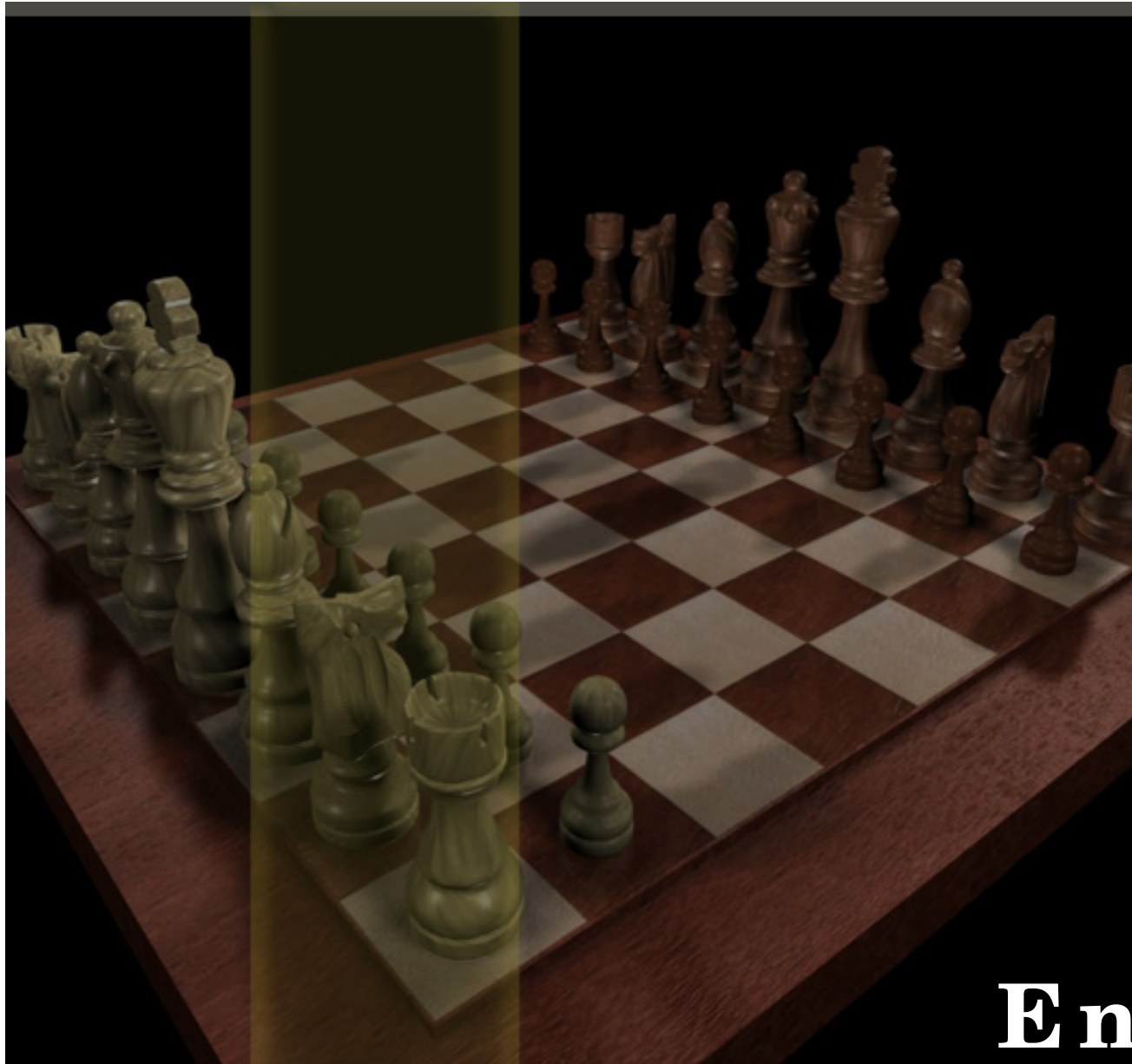
End

Recourses

1. Stella Ting-Toomey, "Managing intercultural conflict effectively", Stella Ting-Toomey, communicating interculturally: becoming competent - chapter 7, .373-385.