International Students' Accommodation and Politeness Strategies for Dealing with Communication Conflicts: A Case Study at a State University in Surabaya

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Abstrak/*Abstract*

Terdapat banyak mahasiswa internasional yang meninggalkan tanah air mereka dan tinggal di sebuah negara asing demi belajar. Studi kasus ini diharapkan dapat memberikan wawasan yang bermanfaat dalam strategi adaptasi sosial yang digunakan oleh para mahasiswa internasional. Teori yang digunakan adalah Teori Adaptasi Komunikasi dan Teori Politeness Strategies. Penelitian ini adalah sebuah studi kasus yang menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif-kualitatif. Penelitian dilakukan di UNAIR (Universitas Airlangga), Surabaya. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan observasi. Informan dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik purposive. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa menerapkan strategi kesantunan negatif, yang sejalan dengan strategi divergensi dalam teori akomodasi, ketika mereka mencoba untuk mempertahankan identitas mereka di tempat asing.

There must be quite a number of international students leaving their homelands and living in a foreign country to study. This case study is expected to provide useful insights into social adaptation strategies used by international students. The theory used in the framework is the Communication Adaptation Theory (CAT) and Politeness Strategies Theory. This research is a case study, in which a descriptive-qualitative approach was employed, it was conducted in UNAIR (University of Airlangga), Surabaya. The data were collected through interviews and observation. The informants were selected by using the purposive technique. The results revealed that most of the students applied the negative politeness strategy, which went in line with the divergence strategy in accommodation theory, as they tried to maintain their identity in a foreign place.

Kata kunci/*Keywords:*

Mahasiswa internasional, konflik komunikasi, akomodasi komunikasi, komunikasi antar budaya, strategi kesantunan

International students, communication conflict, communication accommodation, intercultural communication, politeness strategy

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Introduction

There is a range of motives behind the decision of leaving one's comfortable homeland. One might leave for a simple vacation, for making a new living, or for education. For educational reasons, aside from their actual need to study, students going overseas are considered prestigious in some countries. Based on the statistical data obtained by UNESCO in "Top 20 countries for international students" (2016), there were 740,482 international students in the USA, 427,686 international students in the UK, and a hundred thousand more students were spread across the globe. In Indonesia, several universities have recently become a destination for international students. In 2016, there were 6,967 study permits issued by the Directorate of Institutional Supervision of Higher Education (2017). Among those universities, UI, UGM, ITB, and UNAIR

appear to be some of the most popular destinations, based on the data of Top Universities Destination in Indonesia (2018).

Related to the previous information, there must be quite a number of international students leaving their homelands and living in a foreign country to study. Consequently, they will need to adapt and survive in the new environment. Adapting to a new place and its people (not to mention its customs) is a serious matter for them. Students might experience anxiety and culture shock as they are not in their own cultural zone. In helping the students to adapt to the new place, basic knowledge about the local life and culture is considered necessary, aside from learning a new language, especially if English is not used as the lingua franca. However, the preparation does not only go one way. The destination country for studying should also make an effort to ensure they successfully provide the best possible education experience for international students.

The locals might say or do things that the foreigners are not accustomed to. Indeed, the expression saying 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do' applies to such a situation. Foreigners should not expect to be fully and effortlessly 'accepted' by the locals without doing any adjustments to deal with the dissimilarity in language and customs. Accordingly, one's perception of what is appropriate or inappropriate is no longer identical, and thus, should not be treated the same way. This leads to different ways of viewing and applying communication strategies. It goes without saying that learning the local tongue is advantageous for the process of adaptation and seeking the local people acceptance, still and all, this is not the only wall needs to be infiltrated. Nonverbal communication also contributes to facilitating intercultural communication.

There have been a number of theories and studies concerning issues related to intercultural communication. students cannot avoid social interactions as they live through their daily activities, at least when communicating with their classmates or a teacher in a class. In this "foreigner-native" type of communication, problematic encounters are bound to happen, such as misunderstanding, stereotyping, intolerance, etc. These students might already have expected that there would be problems at some point in their adaptive life as foreigners. Thus, they will act and find strategies to cope with such communication problems. One of them is the CAT (Communication Accommodation Theory) proposed by Giles and Ogay (2007). It discussed the different ways people accommodated their communication, motives, and consequences for having it done. As Giles and Ogay deduced, a person's accommodative resources and flexibility might informally display their "communicative competences," and CAT can be associated with various individuals' uses of communicative actions, such as politeness, fashion choices, forms of address, etc.

From this perspective, 'politeness' is chiseled in one of the major interests. This term is not merely relevant to the way people act or use body gestures; it has something to do with the way people use language. As far as the intercultural communication concerns, politeness strategy in language use is one of the areas addressed by researchers investigating phenomena in intercultural communication. Politeness strategy in language use does not only concern word choices, but also the social and cultural background of the interlocutors. Correspondingly, how a foreign student selects a specific politeness strategy in a spoken interaction can show his 'game plan' when, for instance, he is potentially at risk of communication conflict.

Regarding this study, the authors were interested to investigate the foreign students' strategies to adapt to the new environment through practicing communication and politeness strategies. The students were studying at Universitas Airlangga (UNAIR), Surabaya. In conducting this study, the authors took some previous research related to communication accommodation and politeness strategies into consideration. A study conducted by Aziz (2018) addressesed the communication accommodation process in dealing with cultural differences experienced by Mexican students in Surakarta; the study discussed language and culture approach in answering the research questions. The findings presented that the communication accommodation process of the Mexican students in Surakarta mostly involved the convergence strategy, as there was communicative behavior between the foreign speakers (Mexican students) and local speakers. The strategy used in this adaptation process is through the language approach, which obviously is the Indonesian language. The wider the gap of the culture difference, the more uncertainty and ambiguity carried within intercultural communication.

Vasilopoulus (2016, in Aziz, 2018) stated that language adaptation is the crucial element in communication between foreign students and locals. As the language adaptation, such as local language, non-verbal language, and communication pattern conquered by a foreign student, the intercultural communication among foreign students and locals can be more 'manageable'. This leads to the understanding that the better intercultural communication achieved (through language), the more understanding of foreign students toward the local culture. Learning the local language is part of convergence in the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT); in this context, the foreigner is trying to adapt by understanding and learning the local culture, including the language. This is done for one specific goal: to be well-accepted by the locals. Aziz also added that in successfully coping with culture clash, the foreign students needed to have social competence, be open-minded toward different ways of thinking, and coped with cultural adaptation.

The first communication accommodation strategy of convergence performed by Mexican students was learning the Indonesian language and practicing it. The second convergence strategy was by understanding the local customs so they can act more like the locals. The informants attempted to learn the local culture and customs by asking the local people and reading books or browsing the internet. In general, there are three significant communication accommodation convergence strategies used by the Mexican students in coping with cultural differences in Surakarta: approaches through language, culture, and art; they were also mentally and morally supported by their closest people (family and friends).

In addition, studies related to politeness strategies in intercultural communication have been conducted by a good few researchers. In the intercultural context, the discourse occurs between or among individuals having diverse cultural backgrounds so that cultural clash might happen due to engraved customs of their inborn culture. One of the studies was conducted by Etae, et.al (2016). This qualitative case study investigated cultural politeness between Thai students and an expatriate lecturer within the context of Thai and Western speech acts. The 'Thai-Western' politeness study referred to the situation of Thai students engaged in English-speaking cultures. It was quite challenging for Thai students as the Thai cultural norms strongly led their way of thinking in academic discourse, using shared terms and a common knowledge base. Being exposed to two cultural dimensions affected the way they use English as they have contradicted linguistic notions of politeness. The participants were 146 Thai EFL undergraduate students and an American lecturer, who was teaching an English and American cultural background course. The results showed that the student participants were most likely to use Positive politeness, followed by Bald-On-Record politeness, Negative politeness, and Off-Record politeness strategy when posting online entries to the lecturer.

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) stated that when there was cross-language and/or cross-cultural interference in interaction, there would also be a chance of miscommunication and virtual offense resulting in a failure in an individual's social advancement. Pertaining to this study, the authors particularly focused on foreign students' strategies to deal with potential communication conflicts in their encounters with native Indonesian students and lecturers on campus. So, whether they want it or not, learning (or even mere understanding) the locally spoken language is essential to them as a part of social adaptation. The research subjects were international students of UNAIR (Airlangga University) who were not originally from western countries or popular Asian countries. The students were the awardees of KNB (*Kemitraan Negara Berkembang* - Developing Country Partnership) grants (also called

"Dharmasiswa" scholarship). Therefore, this case study is expected to provide useful insights into social adaptation strategies used by international students, particularly those who are not from 'popular' or 'superior' countries.

There have not been many studies addressing the struggle and strategies of intercultural communication from not-so-popular countries, as they mostly show that the participants are from western countries or those from Asian developed or popular countries (Japan, China, Thailand, Korea, etc.), while the current study attempts to examine the strategies used by foreign students from Madagascar, Senegal, Pakistan, Palestine, and Afghanistan. Presumably, these students will be 'viewed' differently from those coming from America, England, Australia, or any western parts of the world. The strategies discussed include non-verbal (actions) and verbal (talks) responses to the conflicts. The foreign students did not speak English or Bahasa Indonesia quite fluently. Upon the research results, it is expected that this study can contribute to the enrichment of studies related to communication accommodation and politeness strategies (in language use) particularly of students from non-western and non-superior countries in dealing with communication conflicts they encounter in a foreign environment, in this case, Indonesian colleges.

Literature Review

The theories used in the framework were the CAT (Communication Accommodation Theory) and politeness strategies. These were used by the authors in analyzing the data for obtaining the results.

Communication Accommodation

Communication Accommodation is a theory focusing on the roles of verbal and nonverbal communication in conversation, based on the belief that people from different cultural communities will adapt their communication to accommodate others. Accommodation, in this case, is defined as the ability to adapt, modify, or manage someone's behavior in response to others. This theory focuses on interactions and understanding individuals from different groups by examining the language, non-verbal attitudes, and individual paralinguistic use. Through this concept, the understanding between people from various groups becomes an important part of achieving the purpose of communication (West & Turner, 2008: 217).

Giles and Ogay (2007) explained that CAT addressesed how individuals used communication, in part, to indicate their attitudes toward each other; it also served as a barometer of the social distance level between them. This constant movement toward and away from others, by changing one's communicative behavior, is called 'accommodation'. Furthermore, Giles and Ogay (2007) described the basic principles of CAT as follow:

a. Communication is influenced not only by features of the immediate situation and participants' initial orientations to it but also by the socio-historical context in which the interaction is embedded. For example, an isolated encounter between any particular police officer and citizen could be marred by alleged and past hostile relations between other members of these two groups in the neighborhood or on the media (as would be apparent probably for many citizens of color in the Rampant area of Los Angeles);

b. Communication is not only a matter of merely and only exchanging information about facts, ideas, and emotions (often called referential communications), but salient social category memberships are often negotiated during an interaction through the process of accommodation. For example, when being quizzed by Howard Giles British relatives on some (for them, curious) aspect of American entertainment and media, his shift from a British into a more American dialect is meant to be far more telling than the overt answer provided. Being conveyed here is the feeling that he is no longer a recent immigrant to the United States, but now a fully-fledged American citizen who has embraced many American ideals;

c. Interactants have expectations regarding optimal levels of accommodation. These expectations are based on stereotypes about outgroup members as well as on the prevailing social and situational norms. Calibrating the amount of non-, under-, and overaccommodating one receives can be an important ingredient in continuing or withdrawing from an interaction;

Interactants use specific communication strategies (in particular, convergence and divergence) to signal their attitudes towards each other and their respective social groups. In this way, social interaction is a subtle balance between needs for social inclusiveness on the one hand, and differentiation on the oth

According to Giles and Ogay (2007), from its original roots in speech style modification (regarding its correlation to language use), CAT has been developed into a generalized model of communicative interaction. It has been applied to study communication between different social groups, contexts, and through different media. Respectively, 'convergence' is one of the accommodative strategies that is used to achieve a speaker's communication goals; it has been comprehensively studied and considered as the historical core of the CAT. It has been defined as a strategy by which individuals adapt their communicative behaviors in a wide range of linguistic, paralinguistic, and nonverbal features, to resemble more of their conversational partner's behavior. On the contrary, the 'divergence' strategy emphasizes speech and nonverbal dissimilarity between or among individuals. That being said, someone will maintain his or her original style and pay no attention to the communication behavior of the other person.

An important motive for carrying out the convergence strategy is the desire to gain approval from one another; the more similar we are to our interlocutor, the more he or she will like or respect us, and the more social rewards we can expect. Converging to a common linguistic style also improves the effectiveness of communication. It has been associated with increased predictability of the other as well as mutual understanding and decreased uncertainty along with interpersonal anxiety. Notwithstanding, convergence is not only rewarding, but it may also come with consequences, such as the possible loss of personal or social identity. This is where the strategy of divergence intervenes: to emphasize distinctiveness from one's conversational partner, usually based on group membership. This will potentially emerge when the individuals involved in the communication interpret a situation more as "intergroup" (one's shared social identity) than "interindividual" (a personal identity) terms. An intergroup interaction is when individuals treat each other entirely in terms of their social category memberships; while an interindividual interaction is when interactants communicate with each other entirely based on their individual differences in temperament and personality and where their ethnicity, gender, age, etc. are not highly considered.

Performing the convergence strategy at a social interaction will bring a positive evaluation from the conversational partner, and it will gain his/her compliance. Speakers who practice the convergence strategy are perceived more favorably than those doing divergence; they are perceived to communicate more efficiently and cooperatively. At the end of the day, being the interlocutor, the speaker wants to value our approval and acceptance, although convergence is not always desired by both the speaker and addressee as it might cause lack of trust and be viewed as 'controlling'; in this regard, a speaker is not necessarily needed to be fully native-speaker-like in an intercultural communication.

Face Negotiation and Politeness Strategies

Ting-Toomey (1998, cited in West & Turner, 2018: 460-462), who was influenced by research on politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), asserted that people would use a politeness strat-

egy based on the perception of a face threat. Ting-Toomey believed that although the face was a universal concept, there were various representations of it in various cultures. Face needs exist in all cultures, but all cultures do not manage the needs similarly. Ting-Toomey perceived that face could be interpreted in two primary ways: face concern and face need. Face concerns may relate to either one's face or the face of another. In other words, there is a self-concern and another-concern. Face concern answers the question, "Do I want attention drawn toward myself or another?" Face need refers to an inclusion–autonomy dichotomy. That is, "Do I want to be associated with others (inclusion) or do I want dissociation (autonomy)?" (West &Turner, 2008: 451).

The concept of face and FTA (Face Threatening Act) were put forward by Brown & Levinson. It discussed certain kinds of acts threatening face, namely those acts considered contrary to the "face want" of the addressee and/or the speaker (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). In this case, "act☐ can be both verbal and non-verbal communication. In their notion, one would rationally look for a way to avoid doing any FTA or use certain strategies to minimize the threat (in verbal communication), as schematized in Figure 1 (Brown & Levinson, 1987):
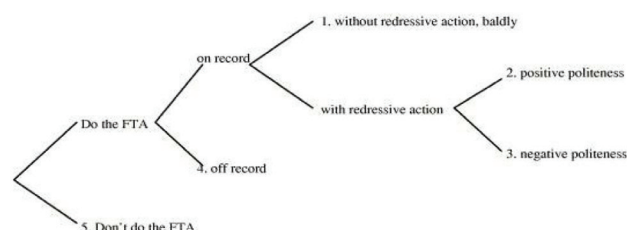

Figure 1. Strategies in Doing FTAs
Source: Brown & Levinson (1987)

According to the scheme (when one decides on doing FTA), being 'off record' means the speaker has more than one intention and is being ambiguous (such as, metaphor, irony, rhetorical questions, understatements, etc.). Thus, the speaker can avoid being responsible for doing FTA as the other party is left to interpret the intention on his own. The next FTA is when a speaker goes 'on record'; this means that the communicative intention is clear to both the speaker and hearer (non-ambiguous). There are two types of going on record: without or with redress. If one goes without redress, he would do the FTA directly, baldly, unambiguously, and would do it as concise as possible (such as commanding someone to do something). On the contrary, going with redress means one needs to 'give face' to the other participant, he would attempt to recognize the hearer's face and compensate for the potential face damage by doing either negative or positive politeness which depends on which face is being threatened

- negative/ positive face. Negative face is the wish not to be imposed on, or intruded. In other words, one would want his actions to be unimpeded by others or to be independent, which means nothing is being shared (to be 'formally' respected). A positive face, however, is the need when someone wants to be appreciated or to be approved by others. As opposed to the negative face, working with a positive face-want means one would try to include the other party and make him feel 'desirable' as a part of the members.

Related to this particular research, there are a number of previous studies showing the use of politeness strategies by foreign students in various types of communication contexts. Adel, et.al. (2016) investigated the politeness strategies used by Iranian EFL students in their interaction through writing posts in the class' blog. The interaction occurred between students and the instructor (teacher) as well as student to student interactions. The students posted their comments related to the class' conversations, their experiences and problems in learning the foreign language, and also about the things they had watched and read for 12 weeks. The purpose of his blogging activity was to promote communication and to show the politeness strategies they used. The research results were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). The analysis indicated that from 1520 politeness utterances in all of the blog posts (of 14 research participants who were Iranian EFL learners), the politeness strategies they used were mostly positive ones. Although they initially used negative politeness when communicating with the instructor, they began to use the posting-comments activity to get closer to the instructor as time went. This opened up the opportunity for the students to use positive politeness strategies to shape the good interpersonal relationship with the instructor and with the other students.

Another research, however, showed that negative politeness strategies were the most used by the participants. This research was conducted by Hermanova (2018). It was aimed to investigate the politeness strategies used when foreign students were performing requests via emails. The student participants were of British and Irish, German, and French nationalities. From the 200 emails sent to the faculty, the participants performed negative politeness strategies the most. Since making a request is a face-threatening activity, it requires the participants to apply certain politeness strategies. The researcher employed Brown and Levinson's theory on Politeness Strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987), and found out that 85% of the requests were predominantly redressed with a negative politeness strategy regardless of some emails were showing the use of positive politeness. This indicated that the participants were trying to minimize the imposition

of performing the requests. This research also concluded that the participants' nationality also took part in determining their choice of strategy, while gender influenced the directness level of requests.

Communication between cultures and linguistic groups in the intercultural context can be considered the most "natural" applied context for CAT, as the theory was first developed by studying interactions where linguistic markers (different languages, dialects, accents) defined membership to cultural groups. CAT's utility in explaining intercultural relations extends to macrolevel issues, such as, bilingualism, language maintenance and shift, and creolization (e.g., Burt, 1994; Lawson-Sako & Sachdev, 1996; Niedzielski & Giles, 1996 citer in Giles & Ogay, 2007). A satellite model of CAT, the intergroup model of second language acquisition examines the sociopsychological variables influencing the attitude of subordinate group members towards learning the dominant group's tongue (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

Methods

This research is a case study with a descriptive qualitative approach. As stated by Zainal (2007), a case study allows the researcher to analyze the data in a specific context. In most cases, a case study explores a small geographical area or employs a very limited number of individuals as subjects. This method is utilized to investigate contemporary real-life phenomena by a detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships.

The research was conducted at UNAIR (University of Airlangga), which is the biggest public university in Surabaya, East Java. The purposive technique was employed to determine the informants, in which specific criteria or considerations were used. The informant's criteria were as follow. First, international students who were no longer learning in language class; the students had to be in the regular class according to their subject and had direct interaction with Indonesian students and lecturers. Second, the international students had to come from outside Southeast Asia, thus the complexity of different culture and geographical location would generate more diverse data.

Moreover, the informants' origin and general information were as follow:

1. Senegal: a second-semester student of the Master of Literature and Cultural Studies Programme, Faculty of Humanities, Airlangga University. She had been in Indonesia before for Dharmasiswa Scholarship Program.

2. Madagascar students of Bachelor and Master Program.

a. First Semester for the Bachelor's Degree, Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Airlangga University. She had been in Indonesia before for Dharmasiswa Scholarship Program

b. Master's Degree: a second-semester student of International Relations that have been here before for Dharmasiswa Scholarship Program

c. Master's Degree: a third-semester student of Media and Communication, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Airlangga University

3. Pakistan: a first-semester student of the Master of Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, Airlangga University.

Table 1. Politeness and Adaptation Strategies of International Students for Dealing with Communication Conflicts

Student Nationality	Politeness Strategy		Adaptation Strategy	
	Negative Politeness	Positive Politeness	Divergence	Convergence
Afghanistan		v		v
Madagascar (Male Student)		v		v
Madagascar (Female Student 1)	v		v	
Madagascar (Female Student 2)	v		v	
Pakistan	v		v	
Palestine	v		v	
Senegal		v		v

4. Afghanistan: a second-semester student of the Master of International Relations Programme, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Airlangga University.

5. Palestine: a second-semester student of the Doctoral degree of Social Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Airlangga University.

Correspondingly, the data were collected directly from interviews conducted with the informants. Additionally, direct observation was also conducted to study their behavior and activities. The researcher conducted the observation in classes, when doing activities outside with the informants, during the interview, and from the informants 'social media activities. The triangulation technique (of source and theory) was used for the validity and reliability test of the data analysis in this research. It helps to assist the assessment process of the data found from various ways and times. Thus, the process and the result of this research are valid. The data classification was carried out according to the specific theme and was interpreted using the theoretical framework in the data analysis process. In the data classification process, the background of the informants had to be considered. The analysis process was conducted by transcribing interview according to the categorized criteria and selecting the data obtained to select the suitable information for the research purpose. The next processes were displaying and analyzing the chosen data with the help of related, relevant theories. Lastly, the authors present the findings of the research.

Results

After analyzing the interview responses, it was found that the students encountered various difficulties during their study. Those difficulties do not only affect their learning activity in class but also their interaction with their classmates and lecturers. Various difficulties faced by international students during their study include Language and Subject, Stereotyping and Interactional Problems. According to the analysis conducted on the data obtained, Table 1 displays the results of the study as follow:

The researchers found that all of the informants mostly chose not to do FTAs, while dealing with the difficulties during their study, whenever possible. They thought it was better to remain silent and avoid any conflicts since they lived in a foreign environment. Nevertheless, should they had to communicate, they applied negative politeness strategies (in doing FTA) when dealing with their lecturers. Negative politeness strategy is commonly associated with "formal respect" politeness. According to the politeness strategies theory, the outputs are all forms useful for social

"distancing" and therefore the strategy is likely to be used for putting a social brake in an interaction. A clear example of this strategy is the use of honorific, such as Pak/Bu/Professor before the lecturer's name. Even though they do not have this kind of addressing form in their own culture, they adapted to the local culture (Indonesian - especially Javanese) to attend to the social distance and eventually used the terms. The honorific that is mentioned as a part of the negative politeness strategy is a part of convergence as referred to in the accommodation theory. By using the honorific for the lecturers, the international students are willing to adapt to the Indonesian culture in addressing someone older or a lecturer.

However, from the data, the researcher also noticed that the international students tended to avoid doing any FTAs if possible, even if they really needed to do it (such as, asking questions or requesting for further explanation). In their culture, intruding a lecturer's on-going speech delivery in class is considered very impolite. Students remain silent in the class even though they are confused or having difficulty understanding the subject. To keep the class going unbothered, their avoidance method is by nodding to the lecturer. Therefore, even if the lecturer actually let his students ask questions in the middle of delivering the lesson if they had difficulty understanding it, the international students chose not to do it and waited until the end of the class or even met the lecturer personally outside the class schedule (should they really needed to).

The next analysis discusses the politeness strategies used by the international students in interacting with classmates and other student acquaintances (including the interviewer herself). From the data, it was known that the international students went on different strategies when communicating with other students (bald on record, negative politeness, and positive politeness). Some of them went bald on record because it was the way they did in their country as it was better to be direct, so they had no reason to "minimize the threat". Going bald on record usually aims at maximum efficiency in communication. For instance, in a potentially conflictive and sensitive conversation topic like "dark skin tone☐ or "racism" brought by a local classmate, one of the international students directly attacked the hearer's positive face need by disapproving and reprimanding. The dialogue is shown as follows (context: the international student was from Madagascar and she had dark skin tone, while the local student thought dark-skinned people - like the Papuans - were bad, so the local student was implying that the Madagascar student was bad):

Local student: *"do you know, orang Indonesia baik semua tapi yang paling jahat orang Papua"* (Indonesian people are all good, but the worst ones are Papuans)

International student: *"orang Papua orang Indonesia juga kan, saya punya banyak teman Papua tapi mereka tidak jahat, kamu lebih jahat"* (Papuans are also Indonesians, right? I have a lot of Papuan friends but they are not bad, you're worse than them).

From the response, it was clear that the international student went directly "bald on record" without redressing her classmate's positive face. In her defense, being direct is a part of her culture. So, there is no need to sugarcoat when it comes to one's belief. When she saw or heard something she dislikes, she would tell others about it directly.

Furthermore, most of the informants (four of seven) chose to apply negative politeness strategies in their interaction with fellow students. This is because of the social distance between them and the local students. Thus, they tried to respect the local's negative face need. It also shows the divergence of communication to adapt to differences used by international students. An example is taken from the interview response by a Palestinian student to show the use of this strategy. When the interviewer asked for his opinion about the existence of "Dolly" - the biggest prostitution business in Southeast Asia - in Surabaya (the city in which UNAIR is located), he said, "It's hard to see the biggest Muslim country has things like this. I'm sorry, I'm sorry". From his response, he used two types of negative politeness strategies: the impersonalization of the speaker and hearer (by using dative agents for the verb - "it is hard to see") and the apology (by saying "I'm sorry"). This implied in spite of disapproving the fact that Indonesia, as one of the biggest Muslim countries in the world, had a well-known prostitution business, he minimized the threat to the hearer's (who was both a Muslim and an Indonesian) negative face. As a Palestinian, keeping faith for what is already believed as something permitted and forbidden is a must. It cannot be tolerated or even changed just because of leaving to study overseas. What the Palestinian student said previously is a model of communication divergence applied during his study in Indonesia.

The last strategy used by international students is a positive politeness strategy. This strategy is chosen whenever a speaker wants to minimize the threat to the hearer's positive face and thus it is the opposite of negative politeness; positive politeness realization is used for minimizing social distance. The example of applying this strategy is when one of the international students (she was from Senegal) used a "familiar□ name to call her classmates and acquaintances (e.g. she called the interviewer by her nickname) to be "closer□ to them. Since she had been learning Bahasa Indonesia, she also used the language to answer the interview questions as well as communicating in the campus area. She even used

the locally common informal terms like *"oke lah"* (okay), *"ndak suka"* (do not like, but the "not" is in Javanese), *kok bisa yah*!! (How could he! - when she commented to a male classmate), and *"haduuuh haduuh..* (an interjection similar to "uurgh...). This example are a realization of "using in-group identity markers/language" strategy.

Another example of the students' strategy of adaptation is when a male student from Madagascar copied Indonesian students' habits to come late. In his country, coming late to school or university is prohibited. The first time he started class in Indonesia, he tried not to come late. After seeing most of the Indonesian students (even the lecturer) coming late to the class, he decided to copy this habit. He did this because he did not want to waste his time. If it is normal to come late, he would do the same as it is a part of his adaptation. Meanwhile, an Afghanistan student used his adaptive strategy by doing some of the Indonesian styles of socializing to build a friendship. He said that his Indonesian friends loved to text a lot, asking *"Agamanya apa"* (what's your religion), *"sudah punya pacar belum"* (have you got a girlfriend), and he loved to hang out at the coffee shop or as the local calls it *"warung kopi"*. Things that he could do for adaption were something that he had to cope with the cultural differences. By adapting to his Indonesian friends' habits, he believed that it would be easier to build a friendship during his study. In his view, having a lot of friends would be an advantage for him should he need any help to finish his thesis.

Aside from choosing not to do any FTAs at all, there were two ways of politeness strategy applied by international students to avoid a potential conflict. First was the negative politeness strategy. People from a different culture are trying to adapt to the differences, some others would try to keep the distance by using the formal form of address (if the country has it) while others would try to remain silent and leave things as they are. The students in this research chose to be silent as a strategy to avoid a potential conflict during their study at the university. The silence meant they were trying to stay away from the disagreement that might happen. The silence-strategy was shown by the body gesture, such as nodding their heads when their local friends or their lecturer talked and by not verbally telling their difficulty in the class to the lecturer. The silence act in this situation also meant that they did not want to be a part of the group and chose to be alone or to only befriend international students.

The second was the positive politeness strategy. For those willing to be open to differences, they could accept and adapt to Indonesians' habits without much difficulty. The strategy can also relate to the convergence strategy, in which the students were trying and willing to adapt to the different culture and be more open-minded toward the cultural differences. According to the communication accommodation theory, convergence is a strategy that is used to adapt to someone's behavior. It is a selective process people do by relying on their perceptions of

the other person's speech or behavior, which they will use as a guide in behaving and responding to the other person. From this research, the students applied this strategy by accepting and tolerating those often coming late to class, willing to build a friendship with the local students even with the difference in habits, using locally common informal terms while talking with friends, and so on. Those behaviors implied that the international students were willing to blend with the locals and even be a part of the group, even if they were at first not familiar with some of the local habits. Those students felt that using such a strategy would also give them advantages during their study, on top of the benefit of being able to improve their social life.

Discussion

Studying and living abroad provides people with the chance to improve their social and cultural knowledge by experiencing the local culture and lifestyle in general. By blending and interacting with the locals, foreigners can learn about the way the locals live and interact with each other. Besides having to meet and make friends with people from a different country with a different culture, international students also have to learn the local language, particularly if the teaching is not delivered in English. That could pose a problem for them, especially because it relates directly to their learning experience (Sari & Widita, 2017). In addition, the chance to improve social and cultural knowledge in the new environment means that students have to adjust themselves in every stage of their activity. Students need to find a way how to adjust and accommodate their communication during interaction with the local people or their friends in university. Mesidor & Sly (2016) in their study on factors contributing to the international students' adjustment identified the various adjustments faced by the international students into cultural adjustment, social adaptation, academic adjustment, and psychological adjustment.

Ikuko (2007) stated that studies in multicultural classroom settings have shown students from minority ethnic groups being silent in the classroom, in comparison with their majority peers. Silence or silencing of the minority students in the classroom can be seen as a sign of discrimination and control and also the tension which exists in negotiating power relationships between the teacher and students. This situation even took place amongst Anglo-Saxon and African students. The silence situation used by international students in this research shows that silence is a control of emotion and a way to avoid conflict.

Concerning the current study, the results demonstrated that the international students applied the negative politeness strategy more than the positive ones. This is related to divergence strategy in accommodation theory, in which the students do not feel comfortable adapting their habits with the locals due to the difference of value and belief. They consider this as something that cannot be easily changed no matter where they live. Divergence, in this particular context, can also be understood as a social identity that has to be maintained especially when someone lives abroad or lives in a different area. It should not be misconstrued as an effort to disagree or not to respond another communicator and it is not the same as inattentiveness. When people use this strategy, they simply choose to dissociate themselves from the communicator and the conversation (West & Turner, 2018: 487). Furthermore, Ting Toomey's explanation about face negotiation theory that cultural dimensions influenced the selection of conflict styles, such as, patterned responses, or typical ways of handling conflict across a variety of communication encounters also supported the argument. In face negotiation, when it comes to avoiding, it means staying away from disagreement (West & Turner, 2008: 458).

The discussion of politeness strategies shows that different cultures may have different styles of communicating (Urley & Amason, 2001: 450), which may cause problems in intercultural communication. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of intercultural communication is the goal and it is important to know how to do so. Besides understanding the language spoken or using English as a global language, being culturally sensitive is also crucial for effective communication to happen. Being culturally sensitive means being aware of the cultural difference and willing to accommodate the difference to achieve the objective of communication. Murray (2003, cited in Ruddock & Turner, 2007: 362) argued that to be culturally sensitive, there needs to be openness, respect, and understanding of the cultural difference itself. The different strategies used by the international students as explained above showed that they have made an effort to understand the local (Indonesian culture) and tried to adapt to it to blend well with the locals as well as to avoid conflict with the people around them. However, it should be noted that cultural difference is not the only challenge. The need to adjust to a different academic environment and psychological challenge also contribute to their adaptation process. The challenge in experiencing new education system combined with a new language may affect their adjustment and psychological factor is something that is usually overlooked by many, even though there are cases of psychological distress experienced by students, which affect not only their study but also their social life.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Eze (2015) highlighted the importance of understanding and accommodating the international students in facing the difficulties from culture shock as well as psychological problems. While students have implemented the politeness and adaptation strategy in their effort to adjust and live in their new environment, it is still necessary to acknowledge the other challenges they may face. If those students cannot deal with those challenges well, it is likely

that their overall studying abroad experience will be negatively affected and they will not be able to get the most out of that experience.

Conclusion

Based on the research results, the International students performed various strategies in communication during their study to deal with the potential conflicts. This research also shows that each student has their own decision in performing the strategy based on their personal background or their culture. According to Table 1, the strategies used by the international students to cope with the potential conflict are Negative and Positive Politeness Strategy; while to deal with the differences to adapt, the international students uses Divergence and Convergence Communication Strategy. As we can see in the table, 4 out of 7 students who use negative politeness also apply the divergence strategy during their study. It means that those students are trying to keep their identity and their own cultural value because they feel like it is something that has to be preserved, even if they do not live in their own country. As a consequence, they have to cope with the cultural difference during the study in Indonesia by doing some negative politeness acts. The rest of the international students used positive politeness strategy and also convergence strategy during their study. It means that those students are willing to adjust themselves to the new environment and blend in with the local students. Students using this strategy prove that positive and open-minded personalities will give them an easier time during their studies. Moreover, it will help them to befriend the locals and have an overall better social life.

The researchers propose some recommendations based on the finding. First, for the educational institutions to better accommodate the international students' needs to give them better studying and living experience as well as maintaining their and the country's reputation, those students should be provided with not only the knowledge of the Indonesian Language but also the social and cultural life, because they will interact directly with the local cultures daily. That will prepare them better in adjusting and understanding the cultural difference.

Secondly, the institution can propose some sessions for international students to help them adjust to their new life and environment. This would be especially helpful for the students who are having a hard time adjusting. In that session, the international students can be provided with briefing or understanding or counseling, so they can be more open-minded toward cultural differences and adapt better. It is important that the students know that regardless of the differences of culture, values, daily habits, or the learning and studying style, it will be better if they can be more open-minded and consider the differences as a part of their self-learning to broaden their perspective about the different countries and the way of life. Moreover, the institution can also assign an academic advisor or mentor who has an intercultural experience or knowledge to help them deal with the challenges. Only with the effort created by not only the students themselves but also the institution, that the desired learning and living experience will be achieved and those students can have an easier time living and studying abroad.

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