Conflict Resolution Process in International Joint Ventures: A Theatre Metaphor Approach

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Abstract

Due to the reason that conflicts are the fact of life, they present in any organizations and especially in hybrid organizations like international joint ventures (IJVs) where partners are from different backgrounds, cultures, and having different motives in IJVs. In addition, it is noticed in international business literatures that conflicts between partners are one of the main reasons lead to lower IJV performance and even termination of IJV relationship. Therefore, knowing how to manage conflicts between partners becomes crucial in IJV relationship. In this paper, we build up a process model for managing conflicts between partners in IJV relationship by employing theatre metaphor approach. In other words, we discuss in details how conflict between partners can be resolved by going through each step of the process. We conclude the paper by offering both theoretical and managerial implications. also theorists, and by pointing out opportunities for further research. This paper is believed to have significant contributions to IJV theory and conflict management knowledge.

Keywords: Conflict management, theatre metaphor approach, international joint ventures
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1. Introduction

Firms often engage in international joint ventures (IJVs) with local firms when they expand abroad (Dunning, 1995; Dinh, 1997; Li, 2003; Duan & Chuanmin, 2007; Meschi & Riccio, 2008). However, several studies show a high rate of IJV failure (Hennart, Kim & Zeng, 1998; Bamford, Ernst & Gubini, 2004; Yeheskel, Newburry & Zeira, 2004). There are several reasons for the failures. However, because firms often have different goals and ways of operating, it is no wonder that inter-partner conflicts often arise (Fey & Beamish, 1999). Thus, understanding conflict is crucial to organizations (Boonsathorn, 2007) since the conflict resolution strategy of a parent firm will affect IJV performance (Fey & Beamish, 1999; Lu, 2006; Yavas, Eroglu & Eroglu, 1994). Parkhe (1993) pointed out that conflicts in IJVs are one of the four key areas in IJV research besides partners’ motives, partner selection, performance measurement. Recently, Ma, Lee and Yu (2008) note that conflict management literature has still received little research attention. Ma et al. (2008) and Doucet et al. (2009) suggest that further study is needed. Furthermore, researchers maintain that there lacks of studies dealing with conflict management and resolution in IJV context (e.g. Lin and Germain, 1998; Nguyen and Larimo, 2011).

On the other hand Sullivan and Daniel (2008) suggest that we need to be innovation and novel in international business research. Palmer and Dunford (1996), Cornelissen (2004), Schreyögg and Höpfl (2004), Vera and Crossan (2004), Mantere, Sillince, and Hamalainen (2007) maintain that metaphor is an important approach for organizational research.
Shepherd-Barr (2006) emphasizes the role of theater metaphor on scientific research, especially in the study of conflicts of interest. In conflict resolution, many times, it requires new ways of imagining action and new language which is so rich in metaphors (Foster and Docherty, 2013). This study applies theatre metaphor approach (Coopey, 1998; Elam, 1980; Gardner, 1992; Graham-Hills and Grimes, 2001; Kerrshaw, 1992; Mangham and Overington, 1983, 1987; Rosen 1985; Shepherd-Barr, 2006) to manage conflicts between IJV partners. This managing process is challenges because IJVs have two parent firms and firms are from different countries with different cultures and often have different goals and ways of operating. Therefore it is important to apply metaphor approach to understand and gain insight the complex issues. This study is the first to apply metaphor approach in managing IJVs. Thus, it aims to contribute to both joint venture theory and conflict management theory. In the next section, we will first review conflict management research in international joint ventures. Then we elaborate theatre metaphor approach in detail. After that we build model for managing international joint venture conflicts using theater metaphor theory. Finally we discuss the implications of this model in both theoretical and pragmatic perspectives as well as point out future research opportunities.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Research of conflicts and conflict management in IJVs

Existence of conflicts is a common characteristic of every organization (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). It is often regarded as a negative force, a harmful element (Boonsathorn, 2007) leading to discomfort, misunderstanding, and disruption of relationships or even collapse of organizations (Robbins, 2005). In contrast, Bolton (1986) has more positive view on conflict as he regards conflict as opportunity. Fisher (1990) suggests that conflicts can arise when partners perceive the differences in their needs, interests, views, values, or goals.
Moore (1996) divides conflicts into five different categories as follows: Data conflicts arise when information is lacking, differently interpreted or withheld. Interest conflicts occur when there are actual or perceived scarce resources such as physical assets (money or other tangible things), procedural issues (how decisions should be made) or psychological issues (who is in the wrong emotionally). Value conflicts erupt when people have different ways of life, deeply rooted goals or varying criteria on how to evaluate behaviors. Relationship conflicts prosper in environments of strong emotions, stereotypes, poor communication and historic negative patterns. Structural conflicts result from structural inequities in control, ownership, power, authority or geographic separation.

Fey and Beamish (1999) noticed that most researchers have focused their studies on how partners can avoid conflicts. However, they argue that conflict must be dealt with because it is inherent in the relationship. Thus, it is important to understand different kinds of conflict resolution approach in a partnership, so that firms will be able to resolve conflicts with their partners.

Fundamentally, conflict management styles are based on concern for self-interest or the interests of another. Based on two dimensions of assertiveness (satisfying one’s own concerns) and cooperativeness (satisfying the concerns of another), Thomas (1976) constructs five conflict handling strategies: competing, collaboration, compromising, accommodating, and avoiding. According to Rahim and Bonoma (1979), conflict management strategies include dominating, obliging, avoiding, compromising, and integrating. Lin and Germain (1998) and Lu (2006) categorize conflict resolution strategies into four main strategies: problem solving, compromising, forcing, and a legalistic strategy.

**Table 1. Key studies focusing on conflict resolution strategy from 1994-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Focus of study</th>
<th>Method of study</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yavas et al. (1994)</td>
<td>Examining severity of various conflicts in Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Empirical study, Survey 60 executives in Saudi Arabia ANOVA</td>
<td>Dynamic approach (close monitoring, frequent updating of goals and continuous cultivation of relationship) should be used to resolve conflicts in Saudi-US JVs rather than static approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ding (1996)</td>
<td>Examining Chinese management style in conflict resolution</td>
<td>Empirical study, Interviews 6 US Chinese JVs Comparative case analysis</td>
<td>Chinese managers tend to adopt contingent, long term, contextual, and holistic approaches to resolve conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin &amp; Germain (1998)</td>
<td>Establishing the link between IJV context and a partner’s conflict resolution strategy</td>
<td>Empirical study, Survey 94 IJV managers, of whom 35 are Americans, 59 are Chinese LISREL</td>
<td>Cultural similarity stimulates a problem solving approach; the more power they have, the more partners use a forcing strategy and the less relevant a compromising strategy becomes. The longer an IJV relationship exists, the more likely partners are to use more problem solving and less legalistic strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris et al. (1998)</td>
<td>Examining culture and conflict management style</td>
<td>Empirical study Survey with MBA students 132 US, 100 Chinese, 160 Indians, 62 Philippines ANOVA</td>
<td>Chinese managers rely more on an avoiding style because of their relatively high value on conformity and tradition. US managers rely more on a competing style because of their relatively high value on individual achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fey &amp; Beamish (1999)</td>
<td>Formulating a strategy for managing conflict in Russian IJVs</td>
<td>Empirical study, Interviews 40 Russian JVs Case analysis</td>
<td>Align partner’s objectives, ensure adequate communication, develop standard procedures for resolving conflict, consider gains for all parties, developing high tolerance and understanding for different cultures, discussing ways to avoid future conflict, ensuring all parties are committed to the IJV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peng et al. (2000)</td>
<td>Examining conflict management style in Sino-US, Sino-French enterprises in China</td>
<td>Empirical study, Survey 374 Sino-American and Sino-French IJVs, and 150 from state-owned enterprises ANOVA</td>
<td>Chinese business tends to emphasize uncertainty avoidance more than western equivalents but both Chinese and Westerners tend to adopt compromising style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin &amp; Wang (2002)</td>
<td>Examining association between the preference for conflict resolution strategy and relationship trust and commitment and relative power</td>
<td>Empirical study, Survey 106 Asians &amp; 99 Chinese Factor Analysis and Structural equation modeling</td>
<td>Trust encourages partners to use a problem solving strategy. The more power partners have, the more likely they will use a legalistic strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barden et al. (2005)</td>
<td>Developing organizational justice based on closer relating of parent control to parent conflict</td>
<td>Empirical study, Survey 75 Vietnamese IJV's Hierarchical and moderated regression</td>
<td>Level of conflicts in IJVs depends on the consistencies between control structure and parent’s contribution of proprietary resources, and between control structure and a partner’s ability to effectively monitor operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang et al (2005)</td>
<td>Comparing cross-cultural differences in the preference of conflict handling style</td>
<td>Empirical study, Survey 463 IJV managers: 217 Chinese managers, 124 Asian expatriates, and 122 Western expatriates</td>
<td>Western managers tend to use forcing and problem solving more than Asian managers do. Asian managers tend to prefer compromising styles more than their western partners. Western managers tend to use legalistic approach more than Chinese partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lu (2006)</td>
<td>Examining the impact of conflict resolution strategies in IJV performance</td>
<td>Empirical study, Survey</td>
<td>Compromising and legalistic strategies are positively related to IJV satisfaction in Sino-Japanese IJVs but not in Sino-Taiwanese IJVs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onishi &amp; Bliss (2006)</td>
<td>Exploring how managers from Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Vietnam differ in conflict management</td>
<td>Empirical study, Survey</td>
<td>Managers from Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Vietnam differ in their preferences for conflict resolution strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomsahorn (2007)</td>
<td>Analyzing the preferences for conflict management styles of Thais and Americans in multinationals in Thailand</td>
<td>Empirical study, Survey</td>
<td>Thais preferred avoiding and obligating strategies. There is a negative relationship between length of stay abroad for Thais and preference for a dominating conflict management style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim et al. (2007)</td>
<td>Examining how Chinese, Japanese, Koreans resolve interpersonal conflict with their supervisors and the influence of cultural factors on conflict management style</td>
<td>Empirical study, Survey</td>
<td>Koreans more frequently used a compromising strategy than the Chinese and Japanese did. The Japanese used less dominant strategy but were more obligated to their supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White et al. (2007)</td>
<td>Using transaction cost to explain how firms should formulate contractual governance to get better efficiency, lower costs, and minimize conflict with partners</td>
<td>Conceptual study</td>
<td>Perceived transaction costs influence firms’ choice of contractual governance mechanisms and conflict resolution strategy in foreign ventures. Cultural distance, relative power, and interest alignment will play important roles in conflict resolution strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doucet et al. (2009)</td>
<td>Comparing conflict management behavior of Americans and Chinese</td>
<td>Empirical study, structure interview</td>
<td>For Chinese, embarrassing the colleague, teaching moral lesson are important elements. For Americans, hostility and vengefulness are important elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speakmann &amp; Ryals (2010)</td>
<td>Examining conflict theory for management of multiple simultaneous conflict episodes</td>
<td>Conceptual study</td>
<td>In dealing with multiple, simultaneous conflicts, managers need to consider the possible implication of chosen strategy along with the changing environment of their operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan (2010)</td>
<td>Examining how American and Chinese employees of multinational organizations deal with conflict between them</td>
<td>Empirical study</td>
<td>Both American and Chinese employees used various strategies to deal with conflict. American participants were more likely to confront a conflict than Chinese participants. Different motivations may lead to the exercise of a common conflict strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisseling &amp; Sobral (2011)</td>
<td>To examine and compare the effects of emotional and task conflict on team performance and member satisfaction in two distinct</td>
<td>Empirical studies Survey</td>
<td>Cultural differences between these two countries not only influence the way intragroup conflict is experienced, but also its impact on members’ satisfaction and group Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traavik (2011)</td>
<td>To investigate the similarities and differences between dyads and four-party groups in an integrative negotiation.</td>
<td>Data are collected from subjects experiment. A total of 182 participants completed a negotiation role play and questionnaire.</td>
<td>For dyads the procedure used (considering more than one issue at a time) led to higher economic outcomes, and both procedure and problem solving were important for subjective outcomes. For four-party negotiations, problem solving was significantly related to higher outcomes. Problem solving was significantly more important for the groups than for dyads on economic outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kern et al. (2012)</td>
<td>To investigate the limitation on the presumption that intercultural negotiation are doomed to generate low joint gains.</td>
<td>Data collected from 45 bi-cultural Korean and 47 Americans. Inter-cultural dyads generate higher joint gain than Korean or US intra cultural dyads. Intercultural negotiators, one of whom is bi-cultural, who use language, especially the pronoun “you” to close social distance achieve higher joint gains than intra-cultural negotiators who do not.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguyen &amp; Yang (2012)</td>
<td>To conceptualize Chinese conflict management behaviors as contingent on the hierarchical relations of conflict parties in an organizational context and investigate individual characteristics as moderators in this contingency framework.</td>
<td>Data collected from 704 employees across China. Multiple logistic analysis was used to analyze data.</td>
<td>Chinese role-playing a supervisor in a conflict with their subordinate tended to use direct, assertive, strategies to resolve the conflict but the results depended on age, education, region, and work experience. As a subordinate in their conflict with their supervisor, Chinese chose indirect, harmony, preserving strategies. In a conflict with a peer, respondents used a broader spectrum of conflict management strategies, depending on their individual characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirk et al. (2013)</td>
<td>To test the impact of a self-regulatory strategy of goal pursuit on interactive bargaining task.</td>
<td>Data collected from 132 German. Regression analysis used to analyze the data.</td>
<td>The strategy of mental contrasting with implementation intentions led dyads to lead the largest joint agreement, compared to dyads that only use mental contrasting or if then plans. Participants who mentally contrast formed more cooperative implementation intentions than participants who mentally did not mentally contrast, mediating the effect of joint gain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross et al. (2013)</td>
<td>To employ Weber’s analysis of conflict system, specifically the distinction between formal and substantive rationality to demonstrate that predominant method of analyzing of conflict management focuses too heavily on the managerial interests in administrative efficiency and productivity rather than on the needs of individuals and organizations.</td>
<td>Conceptual paper</td>
<td>Conflict management based on Weber’s theories of formal and substantive rationality will benefit organizations and society by promoting a more positive perception of corporate behavior.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Academy of Management Review*, we have identified the key studies on conflict management strategies and have presented them in Table 1. The results in Table illustrate that most previous studies either focus on analyzing the conflict management styles of parties in one country (e.g. Ding, 1996; Fey & Beamish, 1999; Kirk et al., 2013; Nguyen & Yang, 2012) or on comparing those employed in two countries (e.g. Doucet et al., 2009; Boonsathorn, 2007; Kern et al., 2012; Yavas et al., 1994; ) or in a number of countries (e.g. Kim et al., 2007; Lu, 2006; Onishi & Bliss, 2006; Peng, He & Zhu, 2000). Some also
compare the conflict management strategies of western versus Asian firms (Wang et al., 2005; Peng et al., 2000). And, some researchers used one cultural dimension to analyze the preference for conflict management strategy (e.g. Komarraju, Dollinger & Lovell, 2008).

In addition, previous studies also focus on providing strategies to avoid conflict (e.g. White III, Joplin & Salama, 2007; Barden, Steensma & Lyles, 2005) or the effect of cultural similarity, age of relationship, and the general relative power of partners (e.g. Lin & Beamish, 1999) on the preference for certain conflict resolution strategies. In short, the past studies on conflict resolution in IJVs are mostly tactics and lack of studies on the process of conflict resolution. There is even more limited on conflict resolution studies in IJV context. This study is therefore to fill this gap.

2.2. Metaphor approach

A metaphor gives directions of interrelationships that are normally nonexistent. A creative metaphor builds a bridge between two different conceptual domains, which encourage new visions, innovation and new product development (Cacciaguidi-Fahy and Cunningham, 2007). Metaphor can be used to simplify the complex description of organizations, to convey information and ideas, ways of thinking using languages (Cacciaguidi-Fahy and Cunningham, 2007), to highlight the evolution of strategic alliance (Hunt and Menon, 1995) to understand organizational situations and problems (Palmer and Dunford, 1996).

According to Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn (2002), metaphor can help firms to build multicultural teams with common vision. Furthermore, Smith and Eisenberg (1987) view that metaphors are important in organization as they help members to understand or have cues from one context to another. In addition, conflict resolution is about change parties’
behaviors. Thus, metaphor approach is important in the field because metaphors are used to introduce changes (Palmer and Dunford, 1996). Through communication, metaphor enables the connection of different cultures and bonds all stakeholders in joint venture regardless of their national or organizational cultures (Cacciaguidi-Fahy and Cunningham, 2007).

**Theatre metaphor and conflict resolution**

Theatre metaphor approach has been widely applied in organizational research (Kendall, Kendall, and Lee, 2005) since the use of theater as a metaphor to explain and structure a neurological explanation of consciousness of decision makers (Melody, 2007), and to depict conflict of interest (Shepherd-Barr, 2006). Furthermore, the theatre metaphor approach looks at a pre-play period of communication between actors. This period is important as actors have not decided which strategies to use to resolve conflicts. Therefore, this is a chance for actors to position themselves and influence each other to have a common solution. According to Smith and Eisenberg (1987) theater is highly structured, rules governed presentations in which individuals play clearly defined roles designed to bring about an intended effect.

Another key point of using theatre metaphor approach in resolving conflicts is that the standpoint of actors can change via emotion and rationalizations. Actors in the scene will try to use emotion and rational debate to influence their own and others’ beliefs and values. This is an advanced technique since actors cannot simply choose rational moves in isolated environment with them and with other’s emotions. Thus theatre metaphor approach suggests that actors’ choices of moves are not only basing on instrumental rationality but also on their beliefs about the opportunities they perceive, and on characteristic of the players and the environment they are in. The outcome of attempting to resolve conflict according to theatre metaphor approach is the result of the interactions related to the evolvement of emotions, reasoning, exploring, debating, exchange of threats, and promises.
The nature of theatre is to help the people to understand issues through metaphoric communication and providing a communal experience. Using theatre metaphor in conflict resolution in IJVs is a process of stimulating and sustaining participation of partners using the world of the theatre to achieve real solutions to practical problems that occur in partnering relationship affecting IJV operation. Employing theatre may help to transform the people from being the object to the subject of development. Applying the theatre metaphor in resolving conflict helps IJV partners to hold effective discussions, constructive dialogue, understanding and trust toward partners and therefore work out strategies for dealing with problems that affect them.

The logic of theatre works by creating a fictional narrative of special ongoing relationship and conflicts which are subject to change by the playwrights and participants. In addition, theatre work also explores all the aspects of situation, real life understanding, and relationship. Furthermore, theatre also emphases on conflicts of personality, attitudes, emotions, interests, and morals. The use of theatre metaphor approach is useful in conflict management in IJVs as it may help to diagnose the nature of conflict as it re-enacts in a fictional scene of the dynamics of human interaction and motivation which cause conflicts. Furthermore, playing roles in theatre; partners have opportunities to understand the other partners’ viewpoints as they play the antagonists or play third parties. Therefore, partners will view the conflicted problems more objectively, leading more easily to resolve them.

3. **Theatre metaphor in conflict resolution in IJVs**

In conflict resolution process under theater metaphor approach, partners agree on the context and the purpose the conflict resolution process. During the process IJV partners will attend
warm-ups for building trust toward each other. Furthermore, they are trained to understand partner’s skills and function so that they are willing to accept differences which come from partners’ cultural background and their management styles. In addition, they should be able to express their true feelings about the conflicts so that when the conflicts are solved, they are gone and there are no hidden agenda.

Table 2: Actors in conflict resolution in IJVs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors in theatre</th>
<th>Actors in IJVs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Playwright:</strong></td>
<td>Experts or specialists who are directly responsible for solving conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person who create the fiction, invents the situations and characters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Director:</strong></td>
<td>Foreign parent firms and local parent firms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person who manage context of event and the fiction context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actors:</strong></td>
<td>Managers/employees from both foreign and local partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who play out the characters in fiction context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience (also critic):</strong></td>
<td>Representatives of different departments that are involved in the conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who watch, observe, respond, and reflect on the dramatic action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The theatre process includes scriptwriting, initial reading, workshopping, rehearsals, and the actual performance (Kendall, Kendall, & Lee, 2005). In *scriptwriting stage*, through observation, discussion with involved parties to identify sources cause conflicts, how serious
the problem is, and how IJV have been affected by conflicts and how urgently need to solve conflicts by following IJV performance. As different type of conflicts have different natures and therefore they require different type of players and their responsibility. A typology of conflict is useful when the issues in a conflict are centralized in one of the five categories discussed above.

When different conflicts occur, different responses to conflicts are required. For example, if a conflict is primarily a data conflict, sharing information and being sure that each party is interpreting the facts the same way is useful. However, if the conflict primarily is about values, sharing factual data alone will not solve the problem. In this stage firms may have initial plan for conflict resolution with its stand and strategies.

In initial reading stage, partners make a plan for different steps of conflict resolution. In this stage they evaluate advantages and disadvantages when to select specific strategy to solve conflicts. In initial stage, firms analyze their strategies and anticipate reaction of their partners. For conflict to be resolved, it is important to know in terms of cultural aspects: not only know what but know why and how the other partner behaves in such a way. The conflict resolution process is the continuous development process. Partners need to recognize the forces or sources causing conflicts. The point in this stage is to know why conflict occurs in IJV relationship between partners.

In workshopping stage, the plan of partners for conflict resolution does not fix but it opens to change. Under guiding by parent firms, conflict management teams or conflict negotiators are allowed to act and try out different alternatives. Through workshopping stage, the players are able to learn how to respond properly when the other have different moves. In rehearsal stage, negotiation teams are practicing their negotiation steps, tactics and strategies to get partners to agree with their proposed solutions. In addition, in this stage, different solutions and alternatives are
rehearsed in case if the first priority alternative strategy fails to solve the conflicts, partners will go on the second best one and so on. Before entering to negotiation table, partners have to agree on the fundamental of theater that they will be willing to suspend of their disbelief about the stereotype toward each other or their belief that there is only one solution for the problem.

**Table 3:** Process of stages in conflict resolution applying theater metaphor approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process stage in Theatre activities</th>
<th>Process stage in Conflict Management in IJVs</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scriptwriting</strong></td>
<td>- Problem identifications and evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td>- To find out sources, types, and levels, and roles of conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Strategies formation</td>
<td></td>
<td>- To find out different approach and strategies to solve conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Reading</strong></td>
<td>Initial walkthrough steps of conflict resolution plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating advantages and disadvantages for different conflict resolution approach and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Casting actors and actress</strong></td>
<td>Conflict negotiation team formation</td>
<td></td>
<td>To select team that will performance successfully conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workshopping</strong></td>
<td>Brainstorm strategies to resolve conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict resolution team will test different approach and strategies to solve the conflicts to find out the different best options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rehearsals</strong></td>
<td>Practicing of conflict transformation</td>
<td></td>
<td>The team practice to negotiate with partners to agree with their solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The performance (The show)</strong></td>
<td>Actual conflict resolution negotiation between partners</td>
<td></td>
<td>The conflict resolution team and the representative of other partners meet to negotiate for conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post Performance, (Critique, publicity)</strong></td>
<td>Evaluating and trust rebuilding</td>
<td></td>
<td>To follow up conflict resolution stage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the *performing stage*, conflict resolution team meets with their counter partners to negotiate for conflict resolution. Partners then need to influence the other so that they do recognize the
strengths of cooperative behavior and thus encourage partners to create positive responses. It is important in resolving conflicts that partners try to avoid direct negative comments. To resolve conflicts in IJVs, partners need also to understand the other and also to make others to understand their own points. These can be done only through open discussion. Through open discussion about conflict areas, it is possible to change the ways the other partners perceive, and therefore they act toward common goal as to maintain IJV performance and therefore solve the common problems between partners.

The chance for partners to change comes from an active metaphorical dialogue about conflict, transformation and resolution. Moreover, for conflicts to be solved, partners some time may need to improvise the solutions as the situation development. They may also need to take off their shoes and step into the other partners’ shoes to understand the other better. This changing role helps partners to enter to change their mentality and nature of the negotiation toward the common solution.

In post performing, parent firms are interested in the feedback and reviews from critics and audiences such as board of IJVs, representatives of each related departments or even customers of the IJVs. After conflicts have been resolved, it is important to monitor the short term and long term effects of the conflict resolution (Nguyen, 2011). In addition, as in theatre, it is important to have follow-up period to observe, to collect the feedback of the partners to know if they are really satisfied with the solutions that are implemented. Furthermore, the effect of the solutions to IJV performance should also be observed. Depending on the conflicts types and level of conflicts, the length of this post-performance will last. Mechanisms for follow-up are evaluating partner actions, behaviors, and performance against what have been agreed upon during the resolution process (Nguyen, 2011). In addition, social exchange and personal relationships may help to regain trust and neutral negative energies of the ventures and help to reaffirm commitment of partners into
IJVs. Personal connections and relationships are not only crucial for conflicts resolution but also for post conflict follow-up.

4. Conclusions

Metaphor approach has been proven as an important approach in management research (e.g. Mantere et al., 2007) as it enables us to make sense of the complex and unfamiliar problem (Foster & Docherty, 2013). We adopted theatre metaphor approach to analyze conflict resolution between partners in IJVs. The theatre metaphor provides partners opportunity to solve the conflicts by stepping out their current reality with current thought, constraints, and viewpoints to allow them to try different solutions as well as to understand other partner’s viewpoint, logic and motives. This will allow partners with creative thinking and coming up with problem solving solution.

Applying theatre metaphor approach can help partners to realize different cultural awareness, and to have collective thought. In addition, theater metaphor can help partners to objectify the various stands in understanding sources of conflicts between partners. Conflict resolution leads to a higher level understanding of each other. By discovering the value of different opinions, progress in conflict resolution becomes possible. Theatre metaphor approach helps partners to step into others’ shoes and thus they can see the issues from the other partner’s viewpoints. Thus, it helps to avoid deadlock in conflicts resolution since it allows the viewpoints to be changed.

Since previous studies on conflicts resolution in IJVs are very tactics (see table 1), and assuming that conflict resolution is one time transaction, this study offers the process model that specify which actors, actions, and activities are needed in each step of conflicts resolution. As the present study is the first to apply theater metaphor approach to the process of conflicts resolutions in IJVs, it enriches IJV literature. Furthermore, the study benefits for
managers of IJVs in such a way that managers know how to manage to resolve conflicts with their partners through step by step of the process model proposed earlier.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This paper offers the process model of conflict resolution using theater metaphor approach. In general the model could be applied for any conflict resolution in IJVs. However, the conflict should be concerned to strategically important for partners really take time and go through all stages of the process to ensure the success of problem solving. In addition, employing the theatre metaphor in conflict resolution does not work if partners do not hold on to the agreements and decisions reached in the process. Furthermore, this is only a theoretical discussion; future studies can use empirical data to test our proposed model. As the model proposed in this paper is a process model, longitudinal studies will have better chance to capture the issues and therefore they are of interests for further research.

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