

ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION PATTERNS AND INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT IN OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS BETWEEN FOREIGN COACHES AND ATHLETES AT YASANIS WUSHU TRAINING CENTER, SURABAYA

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze intercultural communication patterns, forms of communication conflict, and strategies for overcoming language barriers between foreign coaches and athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through passive participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research participants consisted of one coach from China and four wushu athletes selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which involves the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that communication between the coach and the athletes was predominantly characterized by a high-context communication pattern, relying primarily on movement demonstrations, nonverbal expressions, and direct corrective feedback as the principal means of delivering instructions. Language barriers emerged as the primary challenge, giving rise to misunderstandings, uncertainty, and communication conflicts resulting from differences in language, culture, and communication styles. Nevertheless, these conflicts did not escalate into destructive conflicts, as both parties were able to adapt through repeated instructions, movement demonstrations, the use of nonverbal communication, assistance from interpreters in specific situations, and mutual efforts to learn each other's language. The sustained intensity of interaction also fostered mutual understanding, reduced anxiety and uncertainty, and enhanced communication effectiveness. The findings underscore that the ability to adapt to linguistic and cultural differences is a crucial factor in establishing effective communication while supporting the successful development of athletes within a multicultural high-performance sports environment.

Keywords: intercultural communication, language barriers, communication conflict, foreign coaches, wushu athletes.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of increasingly rapid globalization, interactions among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds have become an unavoidable phenomenon across various aspects of life, including high-performance sports (Sriwahyuniati, 2020). Globalization has expanded the mobility of human resources across national borders, enabling sports organizations to recruit foreign coaches to systematically enhance the quality of athlete development in accordance with international standards (Anggraini et al., 2022). Within the context of modern high-performance sports, the presence of foreign coaches is no longer regarded merely as a complement to the athlete development system but rather as a strategic approach to strengthening athletes' competitiveness at both the national and international levels.

This phenomenon is also evident in the development of wushu in Indonesia. As a martial art originating from China, wushu possesses highly specific technical characteristics that are deeply rooted in its cultural traditions (Linas et al., 2022). Consequently, the involvement of foreign coaches, particularly those from China, is often considered a strategic necessity for improving technical proficiency, training discipline, and athletes' competitive standards (Arya Dwi Prasetyo et al., 2025). One sports development institution that has consistently employed foreign coaches in its athlete development program is Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya.

Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya, is one of Indonesia's prominent wushu training centers with a strong reputation for producing high-achieving athletes across multiple levels of competition. The achievements attained by this training center extend beyond regional competitions to national and even international arenas. Athletes trained at Yasanis Wushu Training Center have secured first place at the West Java Provincial Sports Week (Porprov), representing success at the regional level. In addition, its athletes have demonstrated outstanding performances in the National Sports Week Pre-Qualification (Pra PON), which serves as the qualifying competition for Indonesia's highest national sporting event. Furthermore, the training center has achieved remarkable international recognition through its athletes' first-place victory at the 10th World Wushu Championship, a prestigious international competition that serves as an indicator of world-class athlete development.

These successive achievements indicate that the athlete development system at Yasanis Wushu Training Center is highly competitive and consistently capable of producing athletes with exceptional performance. Theoretically, world-class sporting achievements of this nature are generally supported by an effective, harmonious, and well-structured communication system between coaches, who provide technical instruction, and athletes, who implement training strategies in

practice. Effective communication facilitates the optimal transfer of technical knowledge, strengthens trust between coaches and athletes, and enhances coordination throughout intensive training processes, all of which are fundamental to successful high-performance athlete development.

Despite these remarkable achievements, the communication dynamics between foreign coaches and athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center present a number of complex challenges, particularly those related to language barriers and differences in intercultural communication styles. The presence of coaches from China, who possess limited proficiency in both Indonesian and English, creates significant obstacles to verbal communication during daily training sessions. Conversely, many athletes have only limited proficiency in Mandarin, making it difficult for them to fully comprehend the technical instructions delivered directly by their coaches.

These language barriers not only restrict the effective delivery of technical training instructions but also influence the quality of interpersonal interactions between coaches and athletes. Difficulties in accurately understanding instructions may lead to misunderstandings in the execution of training techniques that require a high degree of precision (Islami et al., 2025). In wushu, where movement precision is of paramount importance, even minor errors in interpreting instructions can directly affect athletes' performance quality (Rosa Arumsari et al., 2024).

In addition to language barriers, differences in cultural backgrounds also constitute an important factor influencing communication patterns between coaches and athletes. Coaches from China tend to adopt a communication style characterized by high power distance, in which the coach is positioned as the primary authority with full control over the training process. Within this communication pattern, coaches' instructions are regarded as authoritative and are expected to be followed with minimal negotiation or open discussion from athletes. In contrast, many athletes from Indonesian cultural backgrounds, particularly those from East Java and West Java, tend to exhibit a more contextual communication style that emphasizes a more egalitarian interpersonal approach. These differing communication orientations have the potential to create clashes in communication styles that may reduce the effectiveness of message delivery during training.

Theoretically, effective communication constitutes one of the primary determinants of successful athlete development. However, within the context of Yasanis Wushu Training Center, an intriguing paradox emerges. On the one hand, communication between coaches and athletes is characterized by language barriers, cultural differences, and relatively intense interpersonal communication conflicts. On the other hand, the training center has consistently produced athletes capable of achieving success at the world-class level.

Numerous studies have examined communication between coaches and athletes across various sports; however, most have focused primarily on interpersonal communication in general rather than specifically investigating intercultural communication involving language barriers. One relevant study conducted by (Oktafiranda et al., 2017) demonstrated that effective communication between coaches and athletes significantly contributes to improved athletic performance, with a reported communication effectiveness of 78.81%. The study emphasized the importance of openness, empathy, support, and equality in interpersonal communication. Nevertheless, it did not specifically address cultural differences or language barriers as primary variables affecting communication.

Similarly, another study by (Oktafiranda et al., 2020) confirmed that effective interpersonal communication positively influences the success of the training process, reporting a communication effectiveness level of 73.65%. This study primarily focused on two-way communication between coaches and athletes but did not examine how differences in cultural or linguistic backgrounds might affect communication quality.

A more contextually relevant study concerning language, conducted by (Ratu Fauzar Kusmawarti et al., 2024), found that the use of a mutually understood language—in this case, Indonesian—improved the effectiveness of instructional delivery, reduced misunderstandings, and strengthened coach-athlete relationships. These findings demonstrate the central role of language in successful communication within sports. However, the study focused on a shared dominant language and did not investigate situations in which coaches and athletes come from different linguistic backgrounds.

Another study by (Rosa Arumsari et al., 2024) reported that effective interpersonal communication enhances athletes' motivation, teamwork, and performance. Using a qualitative approach, the researchers found that harmonious coach-athlete relationships are strongly influenced by communication quality. Nevertheless, the study did not discuss communication barriers arising from cultural differences or foreign-language use. In addition, (Author, 2026) identified several effective communication styles, including open communication, emotional support, and the use of motivational language. The findings indicated that coaches' communication styles play a significant role in fostering athletes' self-confidence.

Research on communication patterns conducted by (Jodie Pratama et al., 2024) found that communication between coaches and athletes is inevitably affected by various forms of interference or barriers that may reduce the effectiveness of message delivery. These barriers may be psychological or situational in nature; however, the study did not specifically examine language barriers within an intercultural context. Furthermore, research by (Apriliyanti, 2025)

showed that effective communication requires mutual effort from both coaches and athletes to achieve shared understanding of training instructions and strategies. Although the study emphasized the importance of communication in achieving performance goals, it did not explore intercultural communication in depth.

Likewise, (Yuliana & Athalarik, 2025) found that clear and well-structured communication improves athletes' understanding of instructions, thereby contributing to enhanced mental resilience and athletic performance. However, this study focused primarily on instructional strategies and did not investigate language differences as a major communication barrier. Overall, these previous studies consistently highlight the importance of interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes in improving athletic performance, motivation, and collaborative relationships.

Although communication between coaches and athletes has been extensively studied, previous research has largely focused on interpersonal communication without positioning language barriers and cultural differences as the primary variables of investigation. Moreover, relatively few studies have examined communication conflict as an integral component of communication adaptation within the context of high-performance sports. In practice, however, communication conflict does not always function solely as an obstacle; it may also constitute an essential element in establishing rigorous training discipline within competitive athlete development systems.

The novelty of the present study lies in its specific focus on intercultural communication patterns within the relationship between foreign coaches and wushu athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya, with language barriers positioned as the central research variable. Furthermore, this study offers a new perspective by examining communication conflict not merely as a problem but also as a dynamic component of communication adaptation throughout the high-performance sports training process. Based on the foregoing discussion, the authors are interested in conducting a study entitled "Analysis of Communication Patterns and Intercultural Conflict in Overcoming Language Barriers Between Foreign Coaches and Athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya."

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of intercultural communication between wushu athletes and a foreign coach at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya, particularly in overcoming language barriers. This approach enabled the researchers to explore the participants' experiences, meanings, and naturally occurring

interaction processes from the perspectives of the informants (J. Moleong, 2017). The study focused on identifying communication patterns, language barriers, and the communication strategies employed throughout the training process. The concepts examined included intercultural communication patterns through the dimensions of power distance, uncertainty management, and high-context and low-context cultures (Hofstede, 2001; Gudykunst, 1998; Hall, 1989). In addition, the study investigated intercultural conflict, face negotiation, and language barriers arising from differences in language, culture, and communication styles between the coach from China and the Indonesian athletes (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Kovalchuk, 2021; Widiyanarti et al., 2024; Meilani et al., 2024).

The study was conducted at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya, from April to June 2026, as the site serves as the primary setting for direct interaction between the foreign coach and local athletes. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique and consisted of one coach from China and four active wushu athletes who had direct communication experience with the coach during training sessions. The selection of informants was based on their direct involvement in the phenomenon under investigation, enabling them to provide rich and in-depth information regarding communication patterns, intercultural conflict, language barriers, and the communication adaptation strategies employed throughout the training process (Sugiyono, 2022).

Data were collected through passive participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation to obtain comprehensive and complementary data (Sugiyono, 2022). Subsequently, the data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification conducted continuously from the data collection stage through the completion of the study. These analytical procedures were employed to generate valid findings concerning intercultural communication patterns and strategies for overcoming language barriers between wushu athletes and the foreign coach (Sugiyono & Lestari, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Intercultural Communication Patterns

Intercultural communication refers to the process of exchanging messages between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds and plays a crucial role in high-performance sports development involving participants from various countries (Meilani et al., 2024; Abinaskholani & Nurrachmad, 2024). According to Edward T. Hall, intercultural communication patterns are classified into high-context and low-context cultures, each emphasizing message delivery either implicitly through contextual cues or explicitly through verbal communication (Hall,

1989). The findings indicate that interactions between the coach from China and the Indonesian athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya, reflect the characteristics of a high-context culture, characterized by the predominance of nonverbal communication through movement demonstrations, facial expressions, and vocal intonation in delivering training instructions. These findings are consistent with the cultural characteristics of both China and Indonesia, which emphasize situational context and interpersonal relationships in fostering effective communication (Liliweri, 2011).

Findings on Intercultural Communication Patterns

The interview and observational findings indicate that communication between the coach and the athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya, occurs intensively throughout the training process, particularly in providing instructions, correcting techniques, conducting evaluations, and establishing training targets (Yuliana & Athalarik, 2025). The coach adopts a direct, task-oriented communication pattern in which athletes generally receive instructions and immediately put them into practice. In addition to verbal instructions, the coach relies primarily on movement demonstrations as the principal communication medium because they are considered more effective in helping athletes understand proper techniques. Observations also revealed that the coach consistently monitored every detail of the athletes' movements, providing immediate feedback through verbal instructions, demonstrations, and physical correction of body positions. Consequently, the communication process was dynamic, repetitive, and consistently oriented toward improving athletes' performance and achieving training objectives.

Language Barriers

Language barriers constitute one of the primary challenges in intercultural communication, arising from differences in language, meaning, linguistic structure, communication styles, and pronunciation, all of which may lead to misunderstandings (Kovalchuk, 2021). This study found that semantic, connotative, syntactic, and phonetic barriers emerged during interactions between the coach from China and the Indonesian athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya, primarily because the coach communicated in Mandarin while the athletes used Indonesian. These differences affected the delivery of training instructions, performance evaluations, and technical corrections, requiring the coach to frequently repeat explanations or demonstrate movements to ensure that the athletes understood the instructions. This situation is reflected in the coach's statement: "When I first arrived in Indonesia, I could only speak Mandarin. I often

had difficulty explaining techniques because the athletes could not understand the language I was using." Similarly, the athletes acknowledged experiencing difficulties in understanding the coach's instructions. Informant 2 stated: "Back then, laoshi only spoke Mandarin. Most of the time I didn't understand what he was explaining, so I just watched the movements he demonstrated." Informant 3 explained: "Sometimes I thought the movement was supposed to be done one way, but that wasn't what laoshi meant. I only understood after he demonstrated the movement." These communication barriers also emerged when the coach introduced new techniques or provided training evaluations. Informant 4 remarked: "New movements were usually harder to understand because laoshi explained a lot, but I couldn't understand the language since he used Mandarin." Likewise, Informant 5 stated: "Sometimes when laoshi gave feedback after training, I only understood part of what he said." Nevertheless, continuous interaction facilitated the adaptation process for both parties. The coach gradually acquired Indonesian vocabulary, while the athletes became increasingly familiar with Mandarin terminology. This was reinforced by the coach's statement: "Sometimes I've already explained something, but the athletes still don't understand. I know the problem is that we speak different languages." The athletes also acknowledged that demonstrations made the instructions much easier to understand: "Usually I wait until laoshi demonstrates the movement so I won't misunderstand or perform it incorrectly." "If it's only explained verbally, it's quite difficult to understand, but once it's demonstrated, it's much easier." Over time, communication became more effective, as reflected in Informant 5's statement: "Now I'm much more accustomed to the way laoshi speaks, and laoshi also understands some Indonesian words and has become fairly fluent, even though he sometimes still mixes up the word order."

Discussion of Language Barriers

The interview and observational findings indicate that language barriers constitute the primary obstacle to communication between the foreign coach and the athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya, as they affect the delivery of instructions, message comprehension, and training implementation. Based on Kovalchuk's classification, the barriers identified include semantic, connotative, syntactic, and phonetic barriers, which are reflected in differences in the meanings of technical terminology, interpretations of intonation, linguistic structures, and the pronunciation of Mandarin, all of which made it difficult for the athletes to understand the coach's instructions. These findings are also consistent with Edward T. Hall's concept of high-context culture, in which movement demonstrations function as a more effective communication strategy than verbal explanations for

overcoming language barriers (Hall, 1989; Utoro & Prasetya, 2024). Nevertheless, the adaptation process undertaken by both the coach and the athletes through sustained interaction gradually improved communication effectiveness. These findings also reinforce previous research demonstrating the crucial role of language in coach-athlete communication while contributing a novel insight through the identification of four forms of language barriers within the context of intercultural communication between a foreign coach and local athletes (Ratu Fauzar Kusmawarti et al., 2024).

Intercultural Conflict in the Communication Process Between the Coach and the Athletes

Intercultural conflict refers to tensions or disagreements arising from differences in values, norms, communication patterns, and cultural backgrounds among individuals or groups engaged in interaction (Meilani et al., 2024). Such conflicts may occur because of differing ways of interpreting messages, communication styles, and emotional expression during social interactions. Within the context of intercultural communication, conflict is not always negative or destructive; when managed effectively, it can become an integral part of the processes of intercultural adaptation and learning (Efendi et al., 2024).

According to the literature, intercultural conflict may manifest in various forms, ranging from minor misunderstandings to more serious disputes that threaten interpersonal relationships (Putra Adnyana et al., 2025). The sources of intercultural conflict include language differences and communication barriers, differences in communication styles, differences in values and social norms, differences in perceptions and stereotypes, as well as differences in emotional expression (Efendi et al., 2024).

The factors most frequently associated with intercultural communication conflict include differences between high-context and low-context cultures, differences in power distance, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, differences in nonverbal communication, and differing orientations toward tasks and relationships (task-oriented versus relationship-oriented) (Mumtaz et al., 2024). The findings of this study indicate that several of these factors were evident in the interactions between the coach from China and the Indonesian athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya.

Findings on Intercultural Conflict in the Communication Process Between the Coach and the Athletes

The interview findings indicate that differences in cultural backgrounds between the coach from China and the Indonesian athletes initially gave rise to

misunderstandings and communication tensions during the adaptation process due to differences in message delivery, emotional expression, and the interpretation of instructions (Mumtaz et al., 2024). This condition is reflected in Informant 2's statement, "There was a misunderstanding because I interpreted the instruction differently from what laoshi actually meant," and Informant 4's explanation, "Sometimes I didn't understand why laoshi was upset, but it turned out that my movement wasn't what he wanted." Several athletes also perceived the coach's communication style as more assertive than that of Indonesian coaches. As expressed by Informant 3, "In my opinion, the way laoshi gives instructions is firmer and harsher than Indonesian coaches. At first, I was surprised because it felt much stricter," while Informant 5 remarked, "Indonesian coaches usually explain things more gently. Laoshi is much more direct, and when he speaks, his voice is quite loud, so at first I thought he was angry." The coach explained this communication style by stating, "When there is a mistake, I usually speak more loudly so that the athletes become more focused and understand what needs to be corrected." However, some athletes initially interpreted this vocal intensity as anger. Informant 2 admitted, "At first I was afraid whenever laoshi spoke loudly because I thought he was angry," adding, "When that happened, I usually chose to stay quiet and listen instead of answering because I was afraid I might get scolded." Similarly, Informant 3 stated, "In the past, whenever laoshi spoke loudly, I felt like I was being scolded," and explained that, "Usually I just focused on correcting my movements instead of responding to the coach." Informant 4 shared a similar experience, noting, "At first I was scared because I thought laoshi was angry with me, but after training with him for a while, I realized that this was simply the way he gives instructions or corrections," and further explained, "I usually don't argue. I listen first to what laoshi tells me to do, and then I immediately try to correct my mistakes." Several athletes also recalled that during the coach's early period in Indonesia, his corrective approach was considerably stricter. Informant 2 stated, "Back then, laoshi was indeed much stricter. If someone made a mistake, he would sometimes immediately kick or hit them." The coach acknowledged this, explaining, "At that time, I was stricter because the athletes often did not understand what I meant," while adding, "I also had to learn to adapt because the characteristics of athletes in Indonesia are different from those in my country. I also started learning Indonesian so the athletes could better understand what I was trying to tell them." As interaction between the coach and the athletes became more frequent, communication tensions gradually diminished as both parties developed a better mutual understanding. Informant 5 explained, "In the past, whenever laoshi spoke, I often felt like I was being scolded or that I had done something wrong because he always spoke loudly. Now I understand what he means and realize that's simply the

way he speaks," adding, "Usually after laoshi explains it again or demonstrates the movement, I understand, and then he doesn't need to speak loudly anymore." This was further supported by Informant 4, who stated, "Usually, once he explains it again or demonstrates the movement, the problem is resolved.."

Anxiety and Uncertainty Management as a Strategy for Resolving Intercultural Conflict

Anxiety and uncertainty management in intercultural communication refers to an individual's ability to regulate anxiety and uncertainty when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds (Gudykunst, 1998). William B. Gudykunst's Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory posits that successful intercultural communication largely depends on an individual's ability to maintain anxiety and uncertainty at optimal levels (Neuliep, 2017). Excessively high levels of anxiety and uncertainty may hinder communication because individuals become less confident in expressing and interpreting messages. Conversely, excessively low levels of anxiety and uncertainty may also result in misunderstandings, as individuals become less attentive to the cultural differences that shape the communication process.

The resolution of intercultural conflict can also be understood through Face Negotiation Theory, proposed by Stella Ting-Toomey. This theory explains that individuals from different cultural backgrounds employ different communication strategies when responding to interpersonal conflict. It is grounded in the concept of face, which refers to the self-image, social dignity, and personal identity that individuals seek to maintain during social interactions (Eko & Putranto, 2021). Accordingly, the communication strategies individuals adopt in managing conflict are strongly influenced by their cultural value orientations.

The findings of this study indicate that anxiety and uncertainty management, as well as the resolution of intercultural conflict between the coach from China and the Indonesian athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya, were achieved through a variety of strategies that reflect the principles of both theories. Through continuous interaction, both the coach and the athletes gradually managed their anxiety and uncertainty while simultaneously employing face negotiation strategies that were consistent with the collectivistic cultural orientation shared by both parties.

Research Findings

The interview findings indicate that misunderstandings during the training process generally occurred when athletes did not fully understand the coach's instructions or had not yet become accustomed to his communication style. During

the initial stages of interaction with the coach from China, these situations often generated feelings of fear, tension, and discomfort among the athletes.

Informant 2:

"At first, I was afraid whenever laoshi spoke loudly because I thought he was angry."

When confronted with such situations, Informant 2 admitted that he preferred to listen to the coach's instructions rather than respond directly.

Informant 2:

"When that happened, I usually chose to stay quiet and listen instead of answering because I was afraid I might get scolded."

A similar experience was reported by Informant 3, who stated that he often felt tense when receiving instructions from the coach during the early stages of training.

Informant 3:

"In the past, whenever laoshi spoke loudly, I felt like I was being scolded."

Informant 3 further explained that he preferred to focus on correcting the movements that were considered incorrect rather than responding to the coach.

Informant 3:

"I usually just focused on correcting my movements instead of responding to the coach."

Informant 4 also admitted that he initially felt uncomfortable when receiving corrections from the coach because he had not yet understood the coach's character and communication style during training.

Informant 4:

"At first, I was scared because I thought laoshi was angry with me, but after training with him for a while, I realized that this was simply the way he gives instructions or corrections."

When communication tensions arose, Informant 4 explained that he tended to follow the coach's instructions and immediately tried to correct his mistakes.

Informant 4:

"I usually don't argue. I listen first to what laoshi tells me to do, and then I immediately try to correct my mistakes."

These accounts indicate that the athletes generally responded to communication-related tension by listening carefully to the coach's instructions and attempting to correct their mistakes rather than prolonging disagreements during training.

The coach also made continuous adjustments to his communication throughout the training process. Repeating explanations, demonstrating movements, and modifying his instructional approach were strategies used to help

the athletes better understand the intended messages. Informant 1 explained that adapting to the characteristics of Indonesian athletes required time.

Informant 1:

"I also had to learn to adapt because the characteristics of athletes in Indonesia are different from those in my country. I also started learning Indonesian so the athletes could better understand what I was trying to tell them."

Informant 5 explained that communication has now become much easier than when the coach first arrived in Indonesia.

Informant 5:

"Now I'm much more accustomed to the way laoshi speaks, and laoshi also understands some Indonesian words and has become fairly fluent, even though he sometimes still mixes up the word order."

According to Informant 5, communication tensions that arose during training were usually resolved after the coach repeated his explanation or demonstrated the intended movement.

Informant 5:

"Usually after laoshi explains it again or demonstrates the movement, I understand, and then he doesn't need to speak loudly anymore."

This statement was reinforced by Informant 4, who explained that communication tensions generally ended after the coach provided another explanation or demonstrated the movement again.

Informant 4:

"Usually, once he explains it again or demonstrates the movement, the problem is resolved."

The interview findings also indicate that movement demonstrations served as the primary strategy for managing uncertainty and reducing misunderstandings during training. The coach more frequently demonstrated movements directly whenever the athletes were unable to understand verbal instructions. Informant 1 explained that he preferred to demonstrate the movements whenever the athletes experienced difficulty understanding his instructions.

Informant 1:

"If the athletes don't understand, I usually demonstrate the movement directly."

Informant 2 explained that he relied primarily on the coach's demonstrations whenever he had difficulty understanding the language used during training.

Informant 2:

"Back then, laoshi only spoke Mandarin. I often didn't understand what he was explaining, so I paid more attention to the movements he demonstrated."

Informant 3 likewise stated that it was much easier to understand instructions through movement demonstrations than through verbal explanations delivered in Mandarin or in the coach's limited Indonesian.

Informant 3:

"If it's only explained verbally, it's quite difficult to understand, but once it's demonstrated, it's much easier."

Informant 4 further explained that assistance from an interpreter often helped him understand the coach's explanations.

Informant 4:

"When the explanation is lengthy, someone usually helps translate it so I can understand it better."

The ability of both the coach and the athletes to adapt to each other's language use throughout the training process also contributed to reducing communication barriers. Continuous interaction enabled the athletes to gradually become familiar with the Mandarin terms frequently used by the coach when giving instructions. Likewise, the coach progressively learned Indonesian vocabulary commonly used during training, making the communication process considerably easier and more effective than before.

Discussion

A. Anxiety Management

Within the framework of the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory, anxiety is defined as an emotional response arising from feelings of discomfort, doubt, or apprehension when individuals encounter communication situations perceived as unfamiliar or different from their previous communication experiences (Gudykunst, 1998). In the present study, anxiety emerged during the initial interactions between the coach and the athletes. The athletes frequently reported feeling afraid of making mistakes because they were unable to fully understand the coach's instructions, while the coach also experienced anxiety when the athletes failed to grasp the intended meaning of his messages.

The athletes' anxiety is reflected in several interview excerpts. Informant 2 admitted, "At first, I was afraid whenever laoshi spoke loudly because I thought he was angry." Similarly, Informant 3 stated, "In the past, whenever laoshi spoke loudly, I felt like I was being scolded." Informant 4 likewise acknowledged that he initially felt uncomfortable when receiving corrections from the coach because he had not yet understood the coach's personality and communication style, stating, "At first, I was scared because I thought laoshi was angry with me." Anxiety was also experienced by the coach. Informant 1 explained, "Sometimes I've already explained something, but the athletes still don't understand. I know the problem is

that we speak different languages." These findings indicate that language barriers affected not only the technical aspects of communication but also the psychological conditions of both parties involved in the interaction.

However, as the frequency of interaction increased, the level of anxiety gradually declined. Informant 4 explained that repeated training sessions enabled him to realize that the coach's firm tone of voice was simply part of his coaching style rather than an expression of anger, stating, "But after training with laoshi for a while, I realized that this was simply the way he gives instructions or corrections." Likewise, Informant 5 remarked, "Now I'm much more accustomed to the way laoshi speaks." These findings are consistent with Gudykunst's (1998) argument that repeated communication experiences enable individuals to develop mutual trust, thereby facilitating more effective communication than during the initial stages of adaptation. The more frequently interactions occur, the greater the opportunity for individuals to understand each other's characteristics, habits, and communication styles, ultimately reducing anxiety.

B. Uncertainty Management

Within the AUM Theory, uncertainty is defined as a condition in which individuals lack sufficient information regarding the communication characteristics, cultural values, social norms, or behavioral patterns of people from different cultural backgrounds (Gudykunst, 1998). This condition makes it difficult for individuals to predict the communication behavior of their interlocutors, thereby increasing the likelihood of message misinterpretation.

In this study, uncertainty emerged when the athletes were unable to understand the coach's instructions because of language differences. As a result, they experienced difficulty anticipating what the coach expected of them and sought alternative ways to comprehend the intended instructions. This uncertainty was reflected in the athletes' hesitation when receiving instructions that they did not fully understand. Informant 2 explained, "I usually wait until laoshi demonstrates the movement so I won't misunderstand the instruction or perform the movement incorrectly." Likewise, Informant 3 stated, "If it's only explained verbally, it's quite difficult to understand, but once it's demonstrated, it's much easier." Informant 4 further explained that understanding the coach's instructions became even more difficult when lengthy explanations were provided for new techniques, stating, "New movements are usually harder to understand because laoshi explains a lot, but I can't understand the language since he uses Mandarin."

The coach also experienced uncertainty. His limited proficiency in Indonesian made it difficult for him to determine whether the athletes had correctly understood the instructions being delivered. As Informant 1 explained, "Sometimes

I've already explained something, but the athletes still don't understand. I know the problem is that we speak different languages."

To manage this uncertainty, both the coach and the athletes gradually developed various communication strategies. Movement demonstrations emerged as the most dominant strategy, with the coach directly demonstrating the required techniques whenever the athletes experienced difficulty understanding verbal instructions. This finding is consistent with Utoro and Prasetya, who argue that movement demonstrations enable individuals to understand instructions visually without relying entirely on verbal language. Repeated explanations also became an important communication adjustment, allowing the coach to ensure that the athletes fully understood the intended message. The coach consistently repeated his instructions until the athletes demonstrated an adequate understanding of the required techniques. In certain situations, assistance from an interpreter also helped reduce misunderstandings caused by language limitations. Furthermore, reciprocal language adaptation contributed to improved mutual understanding, as the coach gradually learned Indonesian vocabulary while the athletes became increasingly familiar with frequently used Mandarin terminology.

These strategies exemplify the uncertainty management process described in the AUM Theory, whereby individuals reduce uncertainty through communication strategies that facilitate clearer message comprehension. According to Gudykunst (1998), the ability to develop effective communication strategies is one of the key determinants of successful intercultural communication. Likewise, Neuliep (2017) argues that effective intercultural communication can be achieved when individuals maintain anxiety and uncertainty at optimal levels. The findings of this study demonstrate that this process developed gradually through continuous interaction throughout the training process.

C. Conflict Resolution Through Face Negotiation

In addition to anxiety and uncertainty management, the resolution of intercultural conflict identified in this study can also be explained through Face Negotiation Theory. This theory proposes that individuals from different cultural backgrounds employ different communication strategies when responding to interpersonal conflict (Eko & Putranto, 2021). Within collectivistic cultures, individuals tend to prioritize group interests over personal interests; consequently, the communication strategies adopted in conflict situations commonly involve avoiding, accommodating, or compromising in order to preserve harmonious social relationships (Al Azis & Irwansyah, 2021).

The Indonesian athletes, who come from a collectivistic cultural background, predominantly adopted an avoiding strategy by remaining silent and listening to the coach whenever communication tensions arose. This tendency is reflected in

Informant 2's statement, "When that happened, I usually chose to stay quiet and listen instead of answering because I was afraid I might get scolded," as well as Informant 3's explanation, "Usually I just focused on correcting my movements instead of responding to the coach." In addition, the athletes demonstrated an accommodating strategy by immediately correcting their mistakes without arguing or asking many questions, thereby showing respect for the coach's authority. As expressed by Informant 4, "I usually don't argue. I listen first to what laoshi tells me to do, and then I immediately try to correct my mistakes."

The coach likewise demonstrated adaptive behavior by adjusting his communication style to the characteristics of Indonesian athletes. As Informant 1 explained, "I also had to learn to adapt because the characteristics of athletes in Indonesia are different from those in my country. I also started learning Indonesian so the athletes could better understand what I was trying to tell them." As part of this adaptation process, the coach gradually reduced the use of physical corrective actions that could cause discomfort and increasingly relied on movement demonstrations as the primary instructional strategy.

Constructive conflict management through repeated explanations, movement demonstrations, and a more adaptive communication approach became the primary means of resolving communication tensions. This is reflected in Informant 5's statement, "Usually after laoshi explains it again or demonstrates the movement, I understand, and then he doesn't need to speak loudly anymore," which is further supported by Informant 4's observation, "Usually, once he explains it again or demonstrates the movement, the problem is resolved." These findings are consistent with the principles of Face Negotiation Theory, which suggest that successful intercultural communication in conflict situations depends largely on an individual's ability to adapt communication strategies to the cultural characteristics of the other party (Fabriar et al., 2025). An understanding of different cultural value orientations enables individuals to develop more flexible and adaptive communication strategies, thereby preventing communication conflicts from escalating into interpersonal conflicts that could undermine collaborative relationships. Furthermore, conflict management that takes cultural values and social face into account strengthens interpersonal trust, enhances communication quality, and fosters harmonious and productive collaborative relationships (Efendi et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that intercultural communication between the coach from China and the athletes at Yasanis Wushu Training Center, Surabaya, is characterized by a dynamic and predominantly instructional communication

pattern, with the coach assuming the dominant role in providing instructions, correcting techniques, demonstrating movements, and evaluating training performance. Language barriers emerged as the primary communication challenge, as differences in language use prevented instructions, technical explanations, and training evaluations from being consistently understood, thereby giving rise to uncertainty, misunderstandings, and communication tensions. Intercultural conflict primarily resulted from differences in interpreting the coach's vocal intonation, direct reprimands, and corrective feedback, which were initially perceived by the athletes as expressions of anger. Nevertheless, these conflicts did not escalate into destructive interpersonal conflicts because both parties continuously adapted to one another throughout the communication process. The strategies employed to overcome communication barriers included movement demonstrations, repeated instructions, nonverbal communication, interpreter assistance in specific situations, and reciprocal language learning. Among these, movement demonstrations emerged as the most effective and frequently employed strategy because they were easier for the athletes to understand than verbal explanations delivered in Mandarin. Moreover, sustained interaction enabled both the coach and the athletes to develop a deeper understanding of each other's characteristics and communication practices, thereby reducing language barriers, fostering mutual understanding, and enhancing communication effectiveness throughout the training process.

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