



Attitudes of University Students - Future Teachers about Prevailing School Conflicts and Behavior Strategies in Them

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Abstract

The paper proposed here is in the scientific field of pedagogical conflictology. There are various studies by researchers, school psychologists, school counselors and teachers on conflicts in school organizations. All of them are written with the desire to enter into the problematics, to help, to give practical advice, to see which conflicts prevail or what the consequences are. Conflictological culture in organizations and in schools is more than necessary. It constantly reminds about itself, not only in real conflict resolution, but also in the theory concerning conflicts. Conflictological competence is part of this culture and this is the main reason for choosing this topic. The study with the relevant instruments was conducted with two groups of respondents and followed by comparison. The first group consists of students with a four-year course for a Bachelor's degree in Education with foreign language learning for the whole period of instruction.

The second group consists of students with a four-year course for a Bachelor's degree in Education without studying a foreign language. Basis for distinguishing the two groups of respondents is the assumption that university students – future teachers studying a foreign language have better developed communication skills because of their linguistic preparation. It is also known that communication skills are an essential element of conflictological competence.

1. Introduction

The culture of school as an organization is: (1) the prevailing and established specific **style** of carrying out its activities; (2) **the attitudes** towards them; (3) **a complex of methods and rules** for dealing with problems from the exterior and interior school environment, which have justified their existence in the past and are still topical now [1]. The **established set of attitudes** on the other hand is a feeling (emotion) or mindset that affect the behaviour of a person.

Is there a conflictological paradigm and how to comprehend it? A number of sociologists define it and subscribe to it. According to this paradigm, the conflict is the thing which opposes equilibrium and accentuates on instability at various levels of contradictions. Conflict is assumed as the most important positive factor affecting social changes and the force behind social development. At present, conflict is a subject of research by conflictology - a science claiming its autonomous scientific domain. Students - future teachers with the very start of that profession become a part of the faculty in a certain school or kindergarten. The pedagogical personnel is immanently included in the organizational context of the school and its conflictological structure is inherently connected with the culture of the school as an organization. With the development of conflictology the concept of *conflictological competence* is formed. It is to be understood as the ability of the active person, whether a leader, a manager or a teacher, which is manifested in the real conflict through activities (functions) directed at minimization and management (resolution) of its destructive form. Conflictological competence represents a level of development of knowledge and skills for identification of conflicts and likely strategies (methods and techniques) for their management. Conflict management is the practice for their identification and exerting influence on them in a reasonable, fair and effective manner. It includes the application of strategies aiming at limiting the negative effects and reaching of a reconciliation. "Conflict management is a philosophy and a set of skills that assist individuals and groups in better understanding and dealing with conflict as it arises in all aspects of our life".[3]

2. Sample and research instruments

For the realization of the purposes of the scientific report 120 students majoring in Preschool and Primary School Pedagogics and 120 students majoring in Preschool and Primary School Pedagogics with a foreign language (English) participated in the study. The first group of students learned English only one semester during their education. The second group learned English throughout the four years of their study. All students were in the Bachelor programme at the Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski

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- fourth (last) year of study with the corresponding number of practicum hours of student teaching according to the curriculum. For the purpose of the study a test for conflict-handling style was used, authored by Thomas and Kilmann (Thomas-Kilmann Instrument). [2] The study was carried out from January 2015 to July 2015.

3. Hypothesis of the study

The hypothesis of the study was that the students who did not learn a foreign language intensively would produce results with statistically considerable differences compared to those who learned a foreign language intensively. This hypothesis is based on the presumption that the students learning English purposefully (explicitly) form and develop their communicative competence as specific and it is a very important and deliberate part of their preparation. Communicative competence is a very important element of the conflictological competence and it is functionally integrated with it. The training of the former group (those not learning a foreign language) did not put a special emphasis on the communicative competence and it was developed implicitly.

4. Analysis of the results of the study

The number of the students not learning a foreign language for the whole period of their study was 120. Each of them had their leading conflict-handling mode calculated, as well as the subsequent strategies.

Table. 1. gives us the distribution of the leading conflict-handling mode in terms of frequency and percentage. It shows that the arrangement of the leading conflict-handling mode by frequency for the students not learning a foreign language is as follows:

- compromise (45%);
- avoiding (20.8%);
- competition (13.3%);
- collaboration (5.8%);
- accommodation (5%);
- usage of two or more modes of handling conflict;

The distribution by absolute frequency is also illustrated in Fig. 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the leading conflict-handling mode in terms of frequency and percentage.

Leading conflict-handling mode	Absolute frequency	Percent
Compromise	54	45,0%
Avoiding	25	20,8%
Competition	16	13,3%
Collaboration	7	5,8%
Accommodation	6	5,0%
Compromise/Avoiding	5	4,2%
Avoidance/Competition	1	0,8%
Compromise/Competition	1	0,8%
Accommodation/Avoiding	1	0,8%
Accommodation/Compromise	1	0,8%
Collaboration/Avoiding	1	0,8%
Collaboration / Compromise	1	0,8%
Collaboration / Compromise / Avoiding	1	0,8%
Total	120	100%

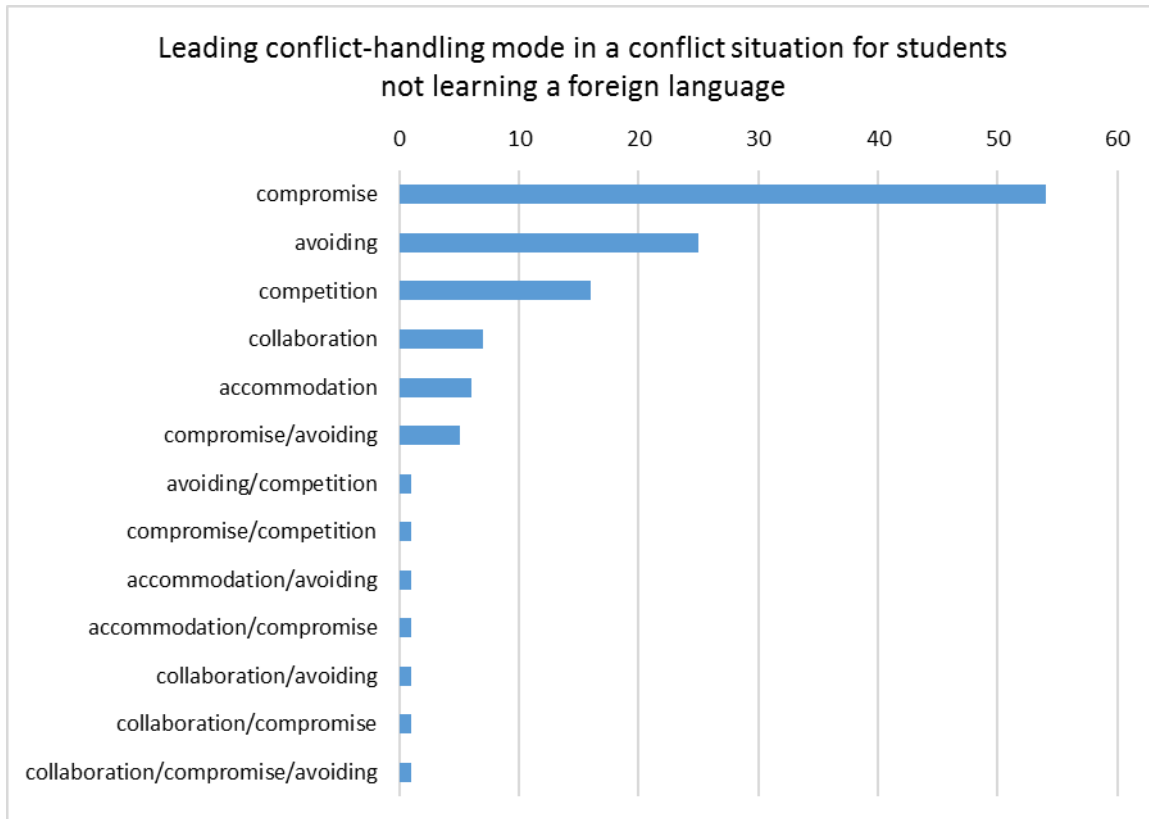


Figure 1. Distribution of the leading conflict-handling mode for students not learning a foreign language by absolute frequency.

The number of the students learning a foreign language was 120. Each of them had their leading conflict-handling mode calculated, as well as the subsequent ones.

Table 2. gives us the distribution of the leading conflict-handling mode in terms of frequency and percentage. It shows that the arrangement of the leading modes by frequency for the students learning a foreign language is as follows:

- compromise (35%);
- avoiding (21.7%);
- competition (11.7%);
- collaboration (8.3%);
- accommodation (7.5%);
- usage of two or more modes of handling conflict;

The distribution by absolute frequency is illustrated in Fig. 2.

Table 2. Distribution of the leading conflict-handling mode in terms of frequency and percentage for students learning a foreign language.

Leading conflict-handling mode	Absolute frequency	Percent
Compromise	42	35,0%
Avoiding	26	21,7%
Competition	14	11,7%
Collaboration	10	8,3%
Accommodation	9	7,5%
Compromise/Avoiding	3	2,5%
Accommodation/Compromise	3	2,5%
Accommodation/Compromise/Avoiding	3	2,5%



Collaboration/Compromise	3	2,5%
Avoiding/Competition	2	1,7%
Collaboration/Avoiding	2	1,7%
Accommodation/Avoiding	1	0,8%
Cooperation/Accommodation	1	0,8%
Collaboration/Accommodation/Compromise/Avoiding	1	0,8%

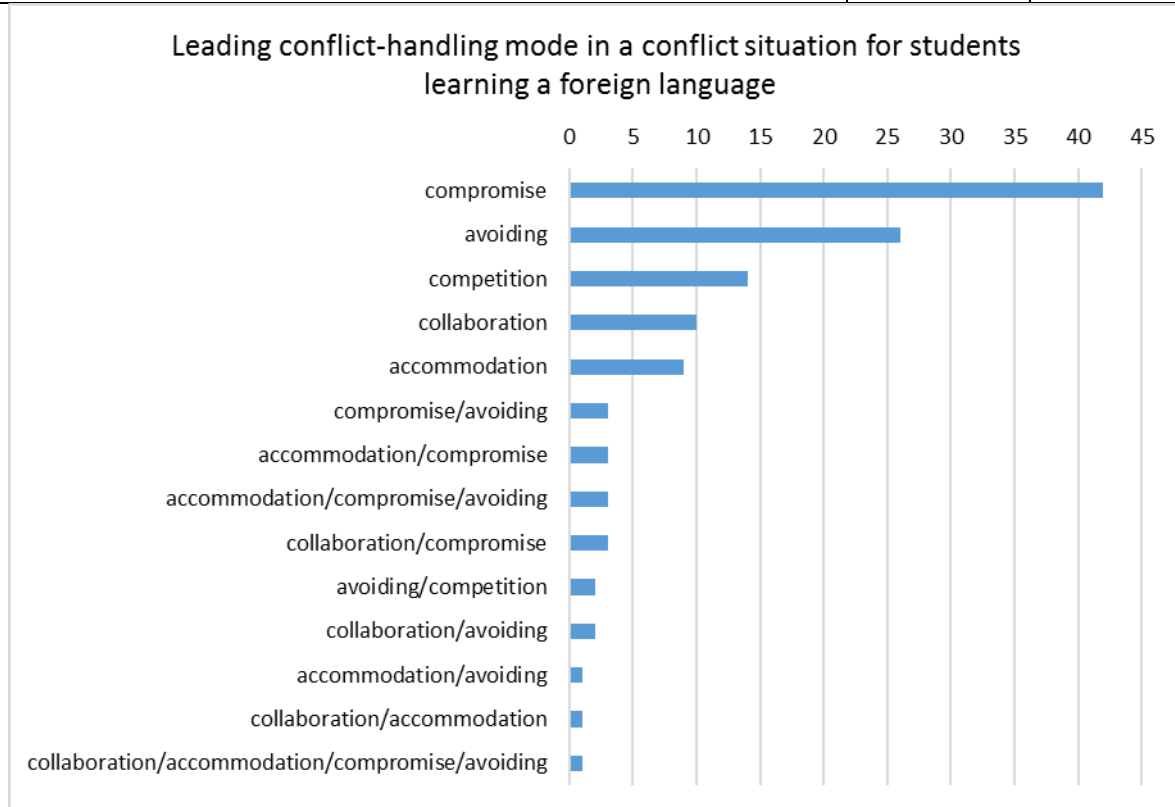


Figure 2. Distribution of the leading conflict-handling mode for students learning a foreign language by absolute frequency.

5. Comparison of the results of the study

Table 3. gives us a comparison of the leading conflict-handling mode for students learning a foreign language and for those not learning it, in terms of frequency. It makes it clear that the results of the Thomas-Kilmann test for both groups of students are very close to each other.

Table 3. Distribution of the leading conflict-handling behaviour in terms of frequency for students learning a foreign language and for those not learning it.

Leading conflict-handling mode	Absolute frequency	
	students, not learning a foreign language	students, learning a foreign language
Compromise	54	42
Avoiding	25	26
Competition	16	14
Collaboration	7	10
Accommodation	6	9
Compromise/Avoiding	5	3
Accommodation/Compromise	1	1

Accommodation/Compromise	1	3
Accommodation/Compromise/Avoiding	0	3
Avoiding/Competition	1	2
Compromise/Competition	1	0
Collaboration/Avoiding	1	2
Collaboration/Compromise	1	3
Collaboration/Compromise/Avoiding	1	0
Collaboration/Accommodation	0	1
Collaboration/Accommodation/Compromise/Avoiding	0	1
Total	120	120

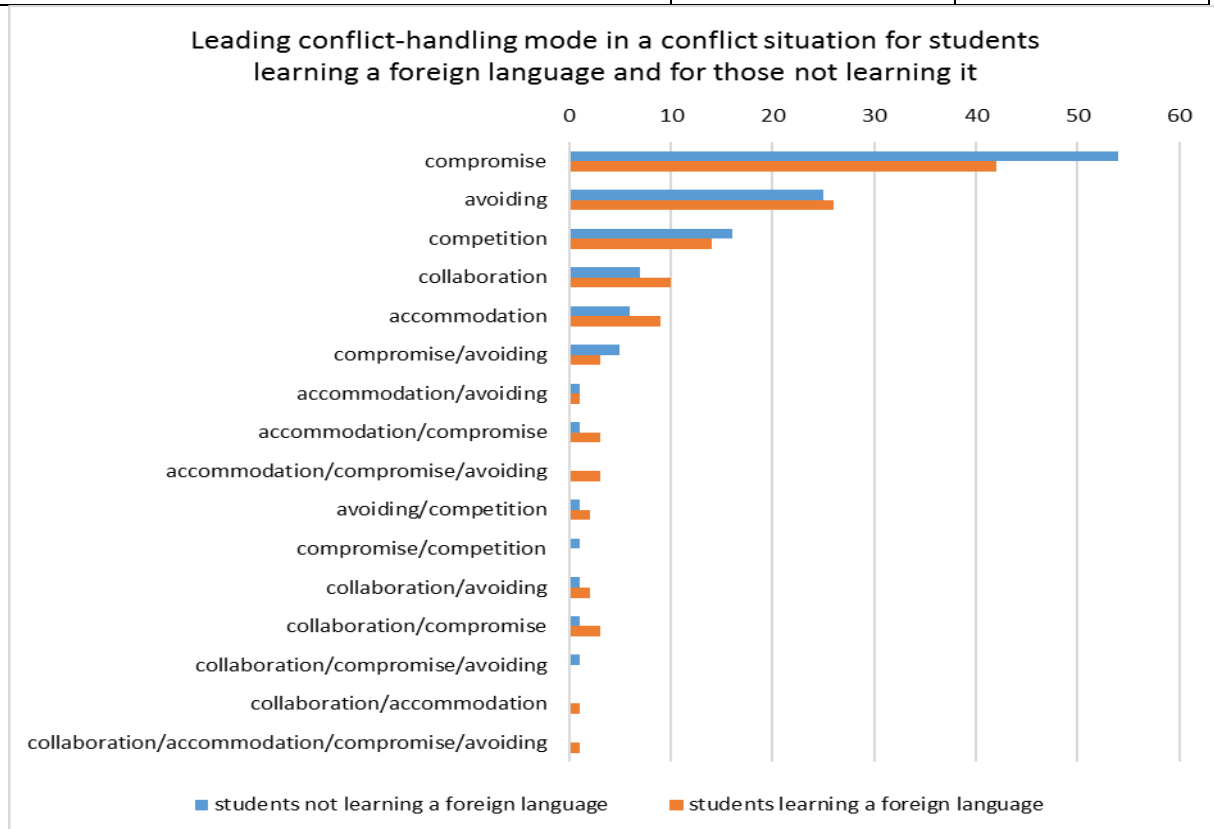


Figure. 3. Comparative diagram of the leading conflict-handling behaviour by absolute frequency for students learning a foreign language and for those not learning it.

A verification of the hypothesis for the presence of statistically significant differences in the results of the conflict-handling mode test of Thomas-Kilmann for both groups of students – learning and not learning a foreign language.

It is assumed that there will be a statistically considerable difference between the conflict-handling modes for students learning and for those not learning a foreign language. In other words, the conflict-handling modes depend on whether they do or do not learn a foreign language. We have chosen a level of significance of 0.05 or 5%. Table. 3. however, shows us that the test results as a whole for both groups are close to one another. According to the results of the table, there are grounds to consider that in fact there will be no statistical differences between them. To verify the hypothesis for propinquity of the results of the conflict-handling modes for students learning and for those not learning a foreign language, the X square criterion was used. The calculated statistics (13) is lower than the critical value of the criterion (24.9 at 15 levels of freedom). This means that we can reject the hypothesis of the statistically significant difference between the results for both groups. It turns out that there is no such. Therefore, the hypothesis is disproved.



6. Conclusion

It is obvious that the leading attitudes and strategies for the resolution of conflicts by both groups of students - future teachers from the sample do not exhibit any statistically significant difference. This means that the communicative competence of students, integrated functionally in the conflictological competence, does not develop purposefully, but fortuitously and implicitly. This conclusion is valid specifically for students learning a foreign language. Foreign language teachers will have to direct more attention to the communicative approach in their teaching. Though not applied, it is often declared in many instances. At the same time, the accent for the formation and development of attitudes and conflict-handling styles in conflict situations of the students - future teachers is to be directed towards the most effective ones: cooperation and compromise and at times accommodating too. They can be manifested in a combination as well.

References

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- [3] Tschannen-Moran, M., Collaboration and the need for trust. Journal of Educational Administration, 39, 2001.