A Study of Cross-Cultural Communication Problems in a Japanese Workplace in
Eastern Thailand

NARUEMOL PAMONMAST

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MASTER DEGREE OF ARTS
IN ENGLISH FOR COMMUNICATION
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
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2024

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นฤมล ภมรมาศ

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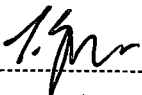BURAPHA UNIVERSITY
2024

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        Cross-cultural communication involves the exchange of information
between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, significantly
influenced by the collective ideas, beliefs, and values that shape each culture.
This study investigates the challenges of cross-cultural communication in a
working context, highlighting the significance of cultural differences in
effective workplace interactions. Each cultural group has a unique way of
understanding and interacting (Kim, 2017), and different cultures may interpret
the same message differently, emphasizing the need to recognize cultural
differences in communication (Riccardi, 2014). In our globalized world, these
interactions often lead to misunderstandings due to distinct interpretations of
messages. Recognizing and understanding these differences is essential for
effective communication.

        Using a mixed-methods research design, this study combines
quantitative data from questionnaires with qualitative insights from semi-
structured interviews. The findings reveal significant differences in
communication styles between Thai and Japanese employees, influenced by
cultural dimensions such as power distance, long-term vs. short-term
orientation, and uncertainty avoidance. Understanding these cultural nuances is
crucial for enhancing cross-cultural communication and collaboration in
international workplaces.

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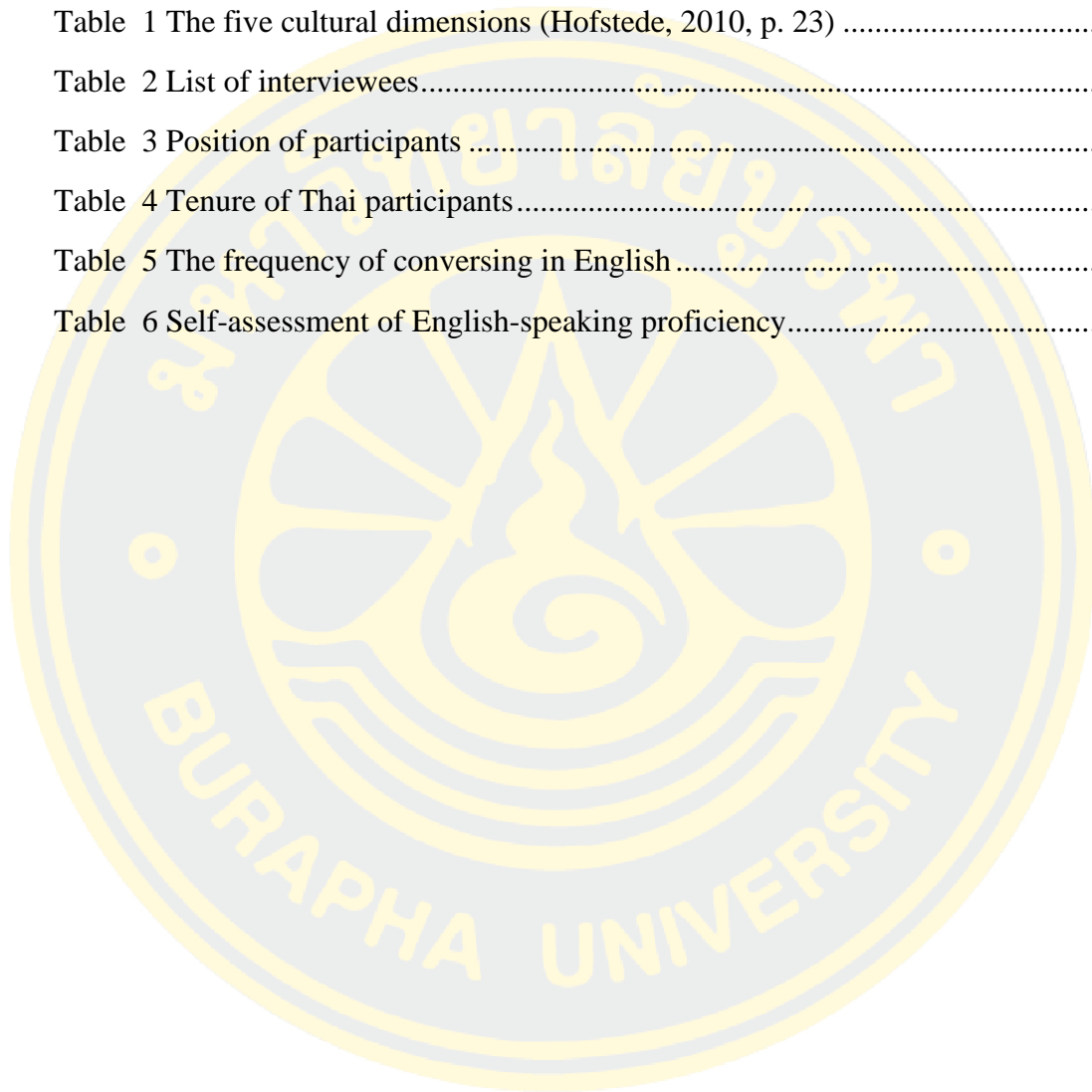
Naruemol Pamonmast

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays the groundwork for understanding the significance of cross-cultural communication problems, particularly in the context of using English as the medium for interaction. As globalization continues to bring people from diverse cultural backgrounds together, the effective communication across cultures has become increasingly important. English, as the primary language for international communication, plays a crucial role in facilitating these interactions. However, this also presents potential challenges when individuals from different cultures attempt to communicate, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts.

1.1. Significance of the Problems

Today's world becomes globalization. The interaction between people coming from different countries with different cultures is common these days. Moreover, English is widely used as a common language facilitating people to communicate and understand each other. Gnutzmann (2000), suggests that 80% of verbal interactions may use English as a common and second language that emphasizes the important role of English in cross-cultural communication.

These interactions with using English as a second language could lead to misinterpretation and understanding because of every culture has its own way to interpretation (Kim, 2017). Meierkord (2004) claims that each culture has unique way to interpret message and Riccardi (2014) has warned in TED talk that different cultures may interpret the same message in different way which could result in unintended meanings and misunderstanding. He suggests that people who have different cultural backgrounds could have problems if they do not recognize cultural difference existing across cultures. Therefore, it is very critical to recognize and understand cultural differences for better cross-cultural communication.

Cross-cultural communication between people coming from different cultures is interesting and challenging. Meierkord (2004) mentions that conversations could reflect the difference of culture, values, and norms in cross-cultural communication. Larkey (1996) claims that these differences could stimulate and lead to misunderstandings or conflicts because culture would shape different expectations and communication styles. Additionally, Hofstede (2011) points out that culture could shape dynamic communication and affect behaviors, actions, and interactions in multicultural workplaces. He suggests that cultural difference could be the key to address communication problems and ensure efficient communication, particularly when there are variations in values and beliefs across different cultures in working context.

Thailand – Japan economic relationship

Since Thailand and Japan have formally diplomatic relationship in 1887, it has been more than 130 years that they have enjoy their reactions through trade and businesses. The relationship between Japan and Thailand has been fostered and Thailand serves as an overseas hub for Japanese businesses and manufacturing. ("Japan-Thailand," 2017).

The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) has reported that Japan and Thailand are crucial partners in the economic field with direct investment from Japan to Thailand, which could account estimated up to 35% of total foreign investment in Thailand in 2018. Thailand has become a significant base of manufacturing and market in Southeast Asia for Japan. There are 5,856 Japanese companies registered and 82,574 Japanese employees with their family resident in Thailand which could promote the creation of jobs in Thailand ("JETRO," 2021).

In summary, this study focuses on cross-cultural communication problems in interactions between Thai and Japanese individuals in Japanese workplace located in Eastern Thailand. As English is used as a common language, it becomes crucial to explore the problems in communication and cultural differences. This study aims to

promote the understanding of cross-cultural communication problems and enhance the better communication in working context.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

- To investigate the communication problems when English-medium between Japanese and Thai employees in the context of speaking.

- To investigate the effects of cultural differences on English-medium cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Thai employees in the context of speaking.

1.3. Research Questions

- What are the problems when English-medium in cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Thai employees in the context of speaking?
- How do cultural differences influence in English-medium cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Thai employees in the context of speaking?

1.4. Contribution to the Knowledge

As Thailand is an essence production base and market in Southeast Asia that could create opportunity of working among Thais and foreigner employees from different cultural backgrounds. This study aims to explore the problems in cross-cultural communication and cultural differences influencing the communication between Thai and Japanese employees in a Japanese workplace. The output would help many employees who struggle from the hardship of cross-cultural communication problems with solutions to create a better understanding of cross-cultural communication and enhance the effectiveness of communication at working settings.

Japanese and Thai employees who working in Japanese workplace could benefit from understanding the problems and its impact. This understanding would facilitate them for more effective collaboration through better cross-cultural communication. Moreover, the insights of this study could be applied into other cross-cultural contexts. Many employees from differences in cultures could recognize cultural differences that may give a significant impact on communication at work. The effective communication across diverse settings could be recognized through the exploration of this study.

1.5. Scope

To ensure the quality of data collection, participants who join this study should meet following inclusion criteria:

Inclusion criteria:
- Participants use English as a medium at Japanese workplace.
- Participants have the experience of cross-cultural communication.
- Participants with various positions could join this study with challenges across different hierarchical levels.

1.6. Definition

Cross-cultural communication has been defined by many scholars, for instance, Ling et al., 2007 describe that it as the interaction between two or more different groups that have different cultural backgrounds. Bennett (1998) defines that cross-cultural communication as the capacity to interpret verbal and non-verbal communication with different cultures. While Jandt (2010) defines cross-cultural communication as comparing phenomena in diverse cultures, and it is the exchange of information between individuals who coming from different cultural backgrounds.

Language barrier refers to a difficulty when people from different cultural backgrounds trying to communicate with each other do not sharing a common language. This language

barrier could lead to misunderstanding and confusion between them. To address language barrier is crucial for effective communication in cross-cultural workplaces.

Cultural dimension refers to a specific aspect that could be measured and compared across different groups or societies. The concept is used in the study of intercultural communication, and cross-cultural communication to understand how cultural differences could influence behaviors, attitudes, and values (Hofstede, 1984).

Japanese workplace: a company or organization that has Japanese employees working with Thai staff located in Thailand. In the Japanese workplace, the collaboration and interactions between Japanese and Thai staff emphasizes the diversity in cultural practices and communication styles within the workplace.
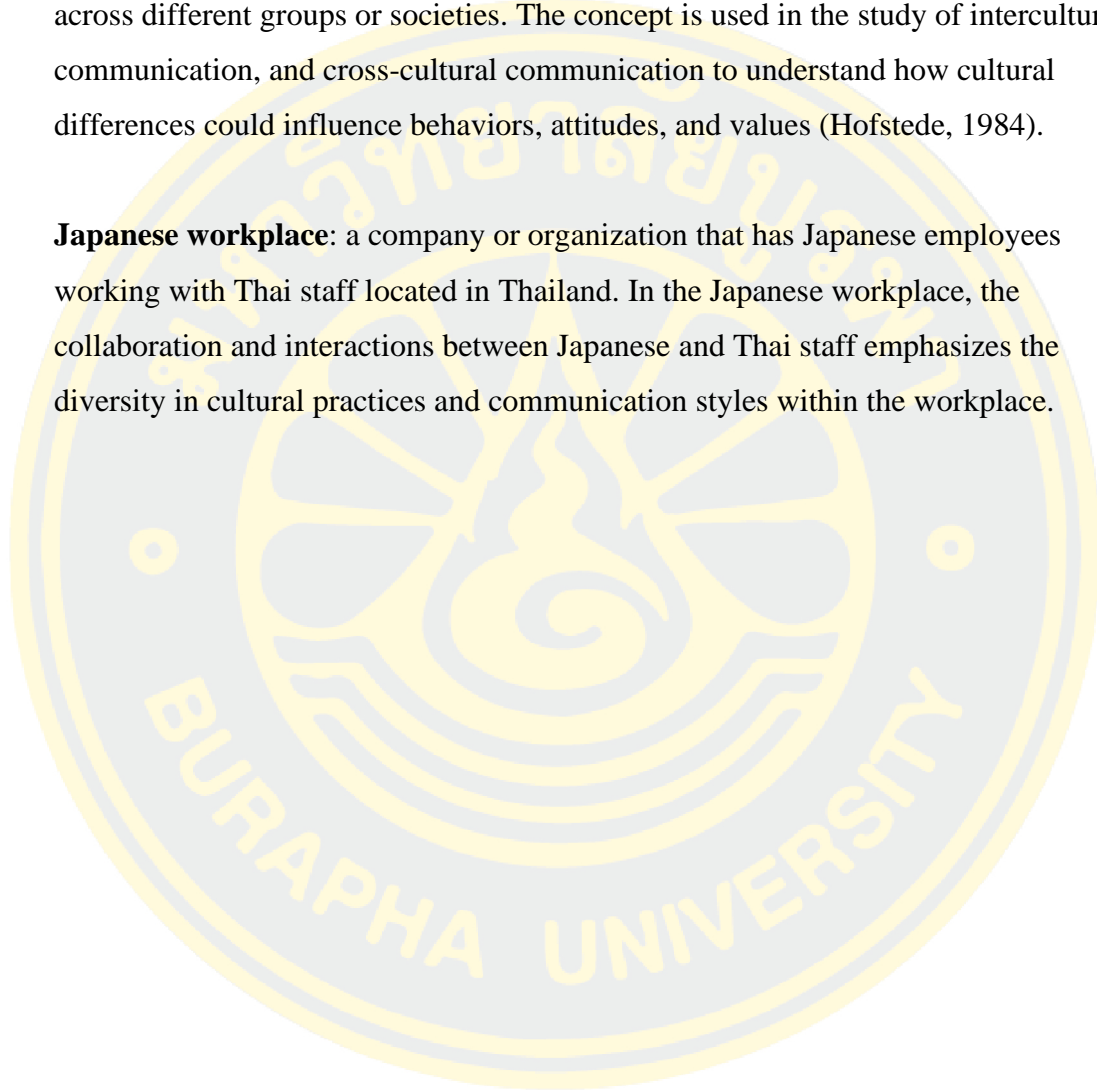
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces and discusses essential concepts necessary for understanding the challenges of cross-cultural communication in diverse workplaces. It begins with an exploration of cross-cultural communication, emphasizing how different cultural backgrounds influence interactions in multinational environments. Next, it highlights the significance of English as a medium of communication, underscoring its role as a lingua franca in international business. Then, cultural dimension frameworks are introduced, followed by a comparative analysis using Hofstede's framework to examine how cultural differences impact workplace communication and behavior, specifically between Thai and Japanese employees. Finally, it reviews previous studies related to cross-cultural communication, providing a foundation of existing research and identifying gaps that this study aims to address.

2.1. Cross-cultural communication

Gudykunst (2004) distinguishes between "cross-cultural communication" and "intercultural communication." Intercultural communication typically involves face-to-face interactions between individuals from different national cultures. In contrast, cross-cultural communication is a major area of research that focuses on comparative studies of face-to-face communication across different cultures.

Studies of cross-cultural communication, which deals with culture's impact on human behavior, have several benefits. The studies can play a critical role in helping people better understand the contexts of cross-cultural communication, which are the interactions between people from different cultures that continue to increase globally (Brislin,1993). Cross-cultural studies can provide very helpful guidelines on how to deal with people who have different cultural backgrounds and ways of thinking.

2.2. English as the medium of cross-cultural communication

2.2.1. The spread of English

The spread of English, the most influential model representing how English is used around the world. Kachru (1986) has described his theory 'Three Concentric Circles Model' as below:

The first circle is the Inner Circle. English has been expanded across the nations during the era of colonization. The Inner Circle describes the traditional and historical backgrounds of the usage of English. English is used as a primary language such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

The second circle called the Outer Circle. English is spread by imperial expansion conducted by Great Britain in Asia and Africa. In these nations, English is not the mother tongue, but English has served as official use. India, Nigeria, Malaysia, Kenya, and the Philippines (colonized by the US) are the nations that included in this circle.

The last circle is Expanding Circle. In this circle, English is widely spread and used as a medium for globalized communication. This circle includes a largest portion of the world's population such as in China, Russia, Japan, and Thailand. As English is the most spoken language in the international communication, English serves as a significant tool for cross-cultural communication and interactions. Crystal (2008) indicates that there may be as many as 2 billion of non-native users of English which is most English speakers who are non-native English speakers.

This study is particularly related with the context of the Expanding Circle of Kachru's Three Concentric Circles Model, where English is extensively used for communication, business, education, and diplomacy. Specifically, it focuses on Japanese and Thai workplace settings with the complexities of cross-cultural communication in English. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1 Kachru's Three Concentric Circles Model (Kachru, 1986)

2.2.2. The reasons for the use of English as a medium of communication

The Spread of English

English is used widely around the world for many reasons, and it all starts with the British Empire (Jenkins et al., 2011). As England has begun exploring and establishing colonies in places such as North America, Africa, and Asia, English is spread rapidly. This lays the foundation for English becoming a common language, especially in regions once ruled by the British.

The influence of the United States after World War II also plays a significant role. USA's military and economic power has made English to be more important on the globalized stage. American businesses have expanded worldwide with export of popularity such as American music and Hollywood movies. These cultural exports have made English not just a language for business but also for entertainment for people all over the world.

With USA's technology, particularly with the invention of the Internet, English has become more important because the usage of language in computers, programming and the Internet is mostly English-based. This makes English essential in the world of science and academia where important research is mostly published in English.

English becomes more crucial for participating in international education, paralleling with trade and the global economy. Many countries, such as Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore using English as an official language or primary medium

of instruction. While governments in many nations have promoted the teaching of English at all levels of education such as Thailand and Japan where English has no official status, but it is prioritized as the first foreign language (Crystal, 2003).

In conclusion, English has been widespread starting with the British Empire's colonization that makes English to be a common language in many countries. The USA's post-war has influenced further this widespread along with advancements in technology such as the Internet and computers. Today, English has been used in schools, businesses, and workplaces worldwide. Fay et al. (2016) has indicated that English-mediated interactions are essential in our connections all around the world with people, products, and ideas flowing across nations.

2.2.3. Language barriers when English as a medium of communication

While English is a widely used as a common medium for cross-cultural communication, problems may arise because of differences in language speaking skill and cultural nuances. Here are some common problems associated with using English in cross-cultural communication.

Language can be a challenge when people from different cultures try to communicate with each other as claimed by Kramsch (2004). She has conducted research on language, culture, and communication, emphasizing that language plays a crucial role in how people see the world and how we show our cultural identities. Language can indeed act as a barrier, as discussed below:

Accents are a significant aspect of language barriers. Unfamiliar accents could be challenge to listeners when the accent is not clear to listener. Even the same language accents could vary widely which may lead to difficulty to understand. For instance, I could understand American accent, but it is very hard for me to understand Indian accent. Additionally, in Moyer (2013)'s research, she explores stigma that may have connection with accents, particularly among non-native English speakers, in her research. She investigates how individuals speaking English as a second language

could encounter stigma and negative judgments because people have different accent from native accents.

Hall (1973) claims that the connection between language and culture is very strong, and styles of communication differ among cultures. In Asia regions, people in many nations favor to communicate indirectly, and familiar to read unspoken hints and suggestion, while some nations in Europe may prefer straightforward expressions. Moreover, he suggests that what is considered as politeness or appropriateness could varies across nations and cultures. For instance, direct expression might be viewed as impoliteness, while in some cultures, directness is valued as honesty.

Different interpretation could occur when word choice and connotation vary in different cultures, as Krizan, Merrier, and Jones (2002) have mentioned about cross-cultural communication problems. Guirdham (2005) has indicated that individuals from different cultures could face misinterpretation even people communicating in the same language. For instance, an Irish friend of mine has given a sample of this occurs when he was a foreigner in the US. There was a misinterpret occurring in a casual greeting, "What's up?" from an American colleague with as genuine concern about his well-being, not "what a matter?" as his understanding. This misinterpretation leads to confusion and highlights the challenges of cultural nuances in communication between people from across cultures.

In conclusion, language could be a significant barrier to cross-cultural communication where individuals having different cultural backgrounds. Language barriers could occur misunderstanding, confusion, and finally even result in conflicts in cross-cultural communication (Jandt, 2018).

2.3. Cultural dimensions theory

Cultural dimension theory is a framework for understanding how people value and behave with their cultural backgrounds. Hofstede (2010) has defined five cultural

dimensions (see Table 1). His framework is used in analysis of cross-cultural context research to compare with these dimensions across different countries. The theory helps understanding cultural differences and the impact on communication.

Table 1 The five cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2010, p. 23)

Dimension	Explanation	Impact on Communication
Power Distance Index (PDI)	Measures the acceptance of unequal power distributed in a society.	**High PDI**: Acceptance in Hierarchical structures, subordinate may be less likely to question a boss, tendency of top-down communication. **Low PDI**: Equality emphasis, open dialogue, asking authority, more participative communication.
Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV)	Individualistic cultures: emphasis personal achievements, collectivist cultures: emphasis group and loyalty.	**Individualistic**: Direct, explicit communication, focus on personal goals and achievements. **Collectivist**: Indirect communication, emphasis group harmony and consensus.
Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS)	Masculine cultures emphasis competitiveness and success. Feminine cultures prioritize relationships and quality of life.	**Masculine**: Value competitive, assertive communication, focus on achievement and success **Feminine**: Cooperative, showing emphasis to nurture communication, well-being and relationships focusing
Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)	Measures tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity in each society.	**High UAI**: Preference for clear rules and structure, communication with risk avoidance focusing. **Low UAI**: Comfortable with ambiguity and change with flexibility
Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Normative Orientation (LTO)	Long-term oriented cultures: value perseverance and thrift Short-term oriented cultures: focusing on the	**Long-Term**: Future-oriented communication, emphasis planning and sustainability.

Dimension	Explanation	Impact on Communication
	present and immediate results.	**Short-Term**: Present-focused communication, emphasis on quick results with flexibility.

2.4. Cultural differences compared between Thailand-Japan

Cultural differences are among the main factors that can lead to the cross-cultural communication failure. Hofstede (2010) cultural dimensions theory is very important for analysis of cultural differences. His exploration on the cultural dimension is based on different values at work. Hofstede's framework is widely used because of providing important information about cultural differences compared with many countries.

Hofstede (1980) has conducted a survey in 50 countries during the IBM employees' values in working environments. He identifies five dimensions or 'problem areas' which represent important differences among cultures such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides a numerical index for each dimension, on a scale from 0 to 100, with a higher score indicating the higher degree to which a particular cultural trait is present in a society. Higher scores are considered in relation to the respective cultural context (Hofstede, 1980). The results displayed in Figure 2 which focusing on how Japan and Thailand differ in these cultural dimensions, as discussed below.

Chart titled "Cultural Differences compared between Japan-Thailand" showing horizontal bars for Japan and Thai across five dimensions:
- Power Distance: Japan ~54, Thai ~64
- Individualism: Japan ~20, Thai ~46
- Masculinity: Japan ~95, Thai ~34
- Uncertainty Avoidance: Japan ~92, Thai ~64
- Long-term Orientation: Japan ~88, Thai ~32
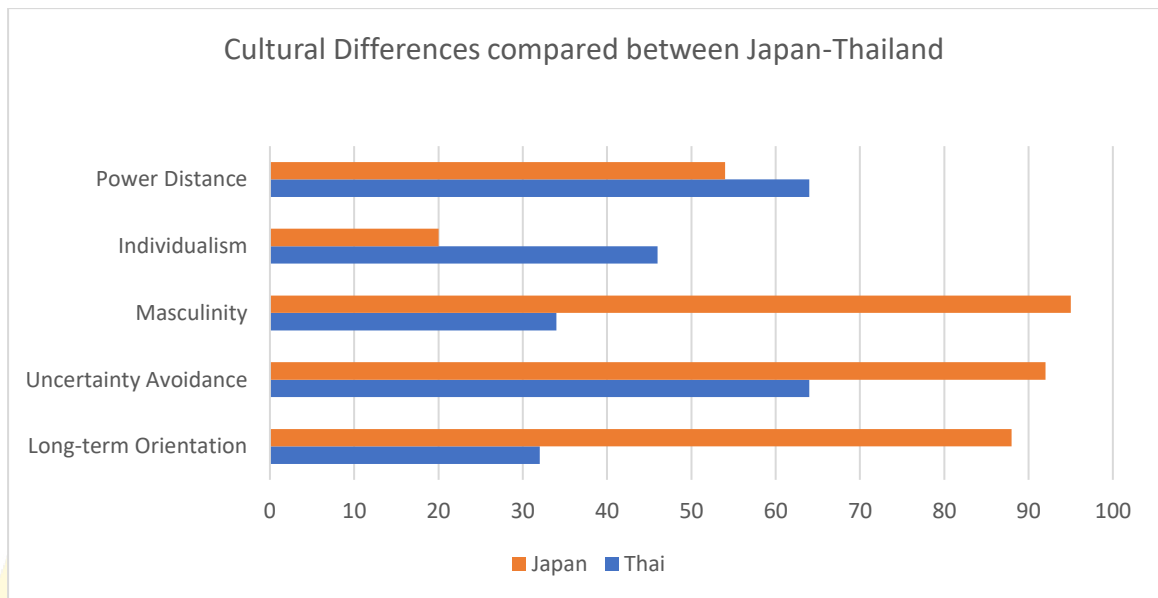
Figure 2 Cultural Differences compared between Japan-Thailand (Hofstede, 1980, pp. 51, 148, 176, 201, 239)

2.5. Previous studies

Effective communication is essential in our increasingly interconnected world where people from diverse cultural backgrounds frequently interact. However, communication across cultures can be challenging due to differences in language. This section explores studies that focused on various aspects of cross-cultural communication problems.

Suthaceva and Yuangsri's (2013) study on communication issues between non-Thai passengers and Thai cabin crew with 55 crew members of Thai Airways International participating in the study. The findings indicates that Thai cabin crew could not understand slang, idiomatic expressions, even foreign accents occasionally. Moreover, they could face cultural nuances which may lead to misunderstanding in working settings.

Aran Sahrai (2023) has explored how Thai teachers and students have feeling about different English accents. There are 6 Thai teachers and 123 Thai students from a public school participating in the study. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews are instruments for data collection. The findings show that American,

British, and Filipino accents are favored by Thai participants. Chinese and Indian accents are viewed negatively, particularly by teachers. Thai accents are seemed unacceptable by teachers, in contrast it is acceptable by students. The study highlights the importance of exposing students to diverse accents to foster positive attitudes and improve intelligibility. It suggests the need for teaching materials acknowledging Asian accents and emphasizes the role of teacher education in promoting effective teaching practices. The research emphasizes that English is a tool for communication with diverse accents in language education.

In the world with globalization, effective communication across cultures is essential. However, understanding how language influences diverse cultural contexts remains a challenge. Xu and Dinh's study (2013) aims to focus on this issue by exploring how individuals from various cultural backgrounds and English varieties comprehend and utilize specific words in English as a lingua franca (ELF) communication. Their aim is to explore whether there is a shared understanding of English words among participants from different cultures and how meaning is interpreted ELF discourse. Analysis of the data shows several key findings that not all English words hold the same meanings for speakers of different World Englishes, and the meaning of English words could be influenced by the context of ELF communication. Recognizing the variability of word meanings in English as a lingua franca (ELF) context is very important for English learners. This understanding holds significant implications for cross-cultural communication.

Srinarawat (2005)' study has explored the role of indirect speech as a politeness strategy in Thai communication. The study aims to understand the nuances of indirect speech in Thai both its forms and functions. 475 participants in the study giving insights of data from a questionnaire. From evidence shows in everyday interactions, participants express a tendency to employ indirect speech to underscore politeness rather than irony.

In today's globalized world, understanding how cultural differences influence communication behaviors is critical. Wannaruk (2008) has explored at Suranaree

University of Technology how cultural differences could impact the way people refuse things. The study focuses on Thai English learners compared to American English speakers and Thai native speakers. In the findings, participants both countries mostly use similar refusal strategies, Thai learners sometimes use their own language style when speaking English because of their unfamiliarity with appropriate refusals. Moreover, the study finds that there are some similarities in refusal expression between Thai and American participants giving potential miscommunication could arise. The need of learning pragmatic competence has been indicated with the emphasis on the possibility of pragmatic failures among lower intermediate learners who may transfer characteristics from their first language to their second language.

In workplace contexts, the recognizing the cultural dimensions that could shape communication patterns is crucial for cross-cultural communication. Madlock (2012) has examined the impact of Power Distance on communication among Mexican workers. The study has 181 participants with the findings that they have high Power Distance. This aligns with Hofstede's research indicating Mexico's ranking in high level of Power Distance. The study finds observations that high Power Distance could influence Mexican workers' preference to receive instructions from their bosses or supervisors. This is considered as normal in their Mexican context. Consequently, in Mexican workplaces, employee's communication style may be adjusted to align with the preferences of their supervisors.

Hongning and Liu (2012) have conducted a study on understanding cross-cultural communication and the impact of cultural differences is crucial in globalized workplaces. This study aims to find the major problems in cross-cultural communication and how cultural differences impact cross-cultural communication. The findings show that cultural differences may lead to inefficient cross-cultural communication between Swedish and Chinese employee in workplace located in China. There are 6 Swedish and 9 Chinese interviewed participants. All the interviewees are the researchers' colleagues or acquaintances who have experiences in Swedish and Chinese working environment. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (2001) has been used in data analysis of collected data with the 5 cultural dimensions.

The results show that Swedish and Chinese cultural differences have an influence on cross-cultural communication. Particularly, the power distance dimension is the most influential cultural difference that leads to misunderstanding and conflicts in cross-cultural communication among Swedish and Chinese employees.

To acknowledge and address the problems from cultural differences in the workplace is important to promote communication and collaboration among employees from diverse backgrounds. There are many Thai researchers have undertaken numerous studies to examine the obstacles associated with cross-cultural communication and interactions, especially between Thai and Japanese individuals working in Japanese workplaces located in Thailand. Urairoj (2021)'s study with focusing on cultural differences between Japanese and Thai employees aims to solve problems arising among employees by Qualitative research. The interview is used to gather information from 6 Japanese employees and 3 Thai participants. The result finds that English as a medium could cause misinterpretation in cross-cultural workplaces.

Moreover, cultural differences could contribute to conflicts in cross-cultural communication. Pohkaew (2017) confirms that cultural differences could impact and lead to conflicts in cross-cultural communication. Primary data is collected qualitatively using open-ended interview questions towards participants. Seven interviewees are selected from Thai employees who work in a Japanese company for more than one year. The different level of dedication to work, which is analyzed as 'masculinity' in Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, could lead to a conflict between Thai and Japanese employees. A high level of dedication with a detail-oriented style of the Japanese could result in difficulties and conflicts about the flexibility of the work environment in Japanese companies. The preference of Thai employees for flexibility is often perceived by Japanese managers as imprudent and recumbent. Fun-pleasure orientation of Thai employees is perceived as a lack of dedication and effort.

Petison (2010) has explores the challenges in the collaboration between Thai suppliers and Japanese buyers in marketing endeavors included 25 Japanese interviewees from

major automotive companies such as Toyota and Honda. These interviews aim to investigate the impact of Thai cultural influences on their working interactions. The study reveals the significant of cultural differences to achieve effective collaboration with employing Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The findings show that Thais has feminine traits, while Japanese has masculine characteristics. This distinction highlights diverse perspectives on aspects such as quality standards and problem-solving approaches.

2.6. Summary

To sum up, previous studies have shown the existence of communication problems and cultural differences having an influence on cross-cultural communication. Knowing about problems occurring in cross-cultural communication is a piece of significant information to communicate with people who have different cultural backgrounds because the information plays a large factor in motivating employees to work with effectiveness.

Hofstede's cultural dimension theory is a theoretical analysis of cultural differences with five dimensions to explain cultural issues occurred in cross-cultural communication. When consideration the issues of cross-cultural communication between Thai and Japanese employee in Thai context workplace, there is a few information that is strategic analysis of cultural differences defined by Hofstede's cultural dimension. It should be explored that cultural differences could contribute to problems and how cultural differences give influences in cross-cultural communication between Thai and Japanese workplaces.

My study is a need for Thai and Japanese employees when English is used in cross-cultural context. This study has explored issues concerning English-medium, and how cultural differences could impact cross-cultural communication for a better well preparation. Messages could be conveyed and interpreted differently in cross-cultural communication, and finally would lead to communication failure. With a hypothesis

of cultural awareness, it is worth to study participants in other levels such as misunderstanding, and misinterpretation could be prevented by proactive communication strategy in cross-cultural workplaces.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter offers a description of the research methodology. Firstly, it presents an overview of the research design. Secondly, it discusses how participants are chosen. Thirdly, it describes the data collection process. Finally, it presents the methods of data analysis.

3.1. Research design

Mixed-methods research design is an approach to combine the elements of qualitative and quantitative research methods within a single study. This methodology provides the advantage of both approaches for more comprehensive understanding of a research problem than would be possible with either approach alone (Creswell, 2013).

This study is conducted under a mixed-methods research design because it is undertaken in a particular context and employs multiple data collections to answer the research questions. In the quantitative part, data are collected by a questionnaire and analyzed by descriptive statistics. This is followed by the qualitative part, in which data are gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed by thematic coding analysis to interpret the findings. The results from the questionnaire are related to insights provided by the semi-structured interviews.

3.2. Participants

Convenience sampling method is used in this study. It allows the researcher to quickly and easily access acquaintances or co-workers who are readily available to join this study. The participants are recruited from a Japanese company in Amata City, Rayong. Thirty Japanese staff members and twenty-two Thai staff members who use English as a medium to communicate in their daily work are invited to join this study

through convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research (Yin, 2016). It allows researchers to quickly and easily access participants who are ready to participate in the study. Even convenience sampling may have potential bias, Saldana (2014) emphasizes that conducting data analysis with transparency and consistency could help minimizing bias in research.

3.3. Instruments

In this research, two instruments are employed. The initial instrument utilized is a questionnaire featuring a Likert scale, a widely recognized technique for gauging respondents' attitudes or opinions on communication problems. Participants are provided with the Likert scale to express their levels of agreement concerning issues in cross-cultural communication, allowing for nuanced responses. The primary objective of this questionnaire is to gather information to inform subsequent interviews.

In developing items for the questionnaire, the Burapha University Advisor is consulted. Other items and ideas emerge from the literature. To check the comprehensibility of the items in the questionnaire, an early version is pre-tested by co-workers who are Thais and Japanese and are not participants in this study. Comments from all of these are incorporated into the final version (see Appendices).

The questionnaire is structured into three distinct parts. Part I comprises demographic questions, and Part II delves into cross-cultural communication problems, addressing research question No.1: "What are the problems when English is used as a medium in cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Thai employees?". Part III focuses on cultural differences, seeking insights to address research question No.2: "How cultural differences influence cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Thai employees in the context of speaking?"

The second tool utilized in this study is a semi-structured interview. The researchers follow a predetermined set of questions and topics while also having the flexibility to explore additional areas related to research questions. This approach aims to elicit detailed responses from participants. By fostering a conversation, the semi-structured interview allows participants to express their thoughts, opinions, and experiences freely. This method's flexibility allows the researcher to explore deeper into specific areas and unexpected insights that may arise during the interview process (Yin, 2016). The interview questions (see Appendix) used in this study are adapted from Hongning and Liu (2012).

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with 7 Japanese and 8 Thai participants, utilizing online platforms, with each interview lasting approximately an hour for every participant (See Table 2).

Table 2 List of interviewees

Participant	Position	The cross-cultural working experience
Japanese A	Manager	More than 10 years
Japanese B	Manager	1-5 years
Japanese C	Manager	1-5 years
Japanese D	Manager	1-5 years
Japanese E	Manager	More than 10 years
Japanese F	Manager	More than 10 years
Japanese G	Manager	1-5 years
Thai A	Manager	More than 10 years
Thai B	Supervisor	More than 10 years
Thai C	Supervisor	More than 10 years
Thai D	Manager	More than 10 years
Thai E	Manager	More than 10 years
Thai F	Manager	More than 10 years
Thai G	Manager	More than 10 years
Thai H	Staff	1-5 years

3.4. Data collection

The process of data collection is conducted via online Microsoft Forms and online interviews according to the following steps:

- The researcher requests the president's collaboration to conduct this study within the company.
- After obtaining the president's permission, participants receive an online official letter with the participant information sheet from BUU and the consent form.
- The online consent form includes an "I agree" statement, which participants click to indicate their consent. This action signifies their understanding of the consent form and their willingness to participate.
- Participants would answer the questionnaire.
- Book schedule for participants who express willingness to be interviewed.
- Conducting interview with online recording.

3.5. Data analysis

To analyze quantitative, data percentage calculation has been used. Percentages for each group are calculated and then compared the percentages between the two groups. A higher percentage in one group would reflect a greater proportion of a specific category within that group. Wheeler (2000) has suggested that the use of percentages in quantitative data analysis would offer a straightforward approach. This method is easy approach to understand differences in specific categories between groups. The study employs percentages in data analysis because it offers a standard measurement making it easy to compare proportions between the two group and helps audiences to understand easily.

To analyze qualitative data, thematic analysis has been used. Thematic analysis is utilized to analyze the qualitative data in this study. It aims to identify and interpret

themes within the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method includes the systematic organization and interpretation of patterns of meaning within the data.

The first step is familiarizing with the data by reviewing all the interview data. The second is taking notes and focusing the key points to acquire a profound understanding of the content. The third step is coding. Saldana (2021) has emphasized the recognizing repetitive patterns in human affairs is very important process to analyze qualitative data. Then Codes are organized into potential themes through a review. The final step has included synthesizing the data by analyzing and interpreting the identified themes that related with cross-cultural communication. The researcher has linked the connections between themes and draws conclusions in alignment with the research questions. This thematic analysis would unveil patterns and recurring ideas within the qualitative data and provide a deeper understanding into cross-cultural communication challenges and the impact of cultural differences. The systematic approach could ensure the exploration of patterns with the depth and context to the research findings.

To ensure their validity and reliability, there are two steps to verify both qualitative and quantitative data which are expert review and peer review discussed as below.

Expert review

The collected qualitative and quantitative data are reviewed by an expert in cross-cultural communication. The expert, Dr. Sutraphorn Tantiniranat, with extensive knowledge and experience in the field, examines the data for accuracy, consistency, and relevance. The expert's evaluation ensures that the data accurately reflect the cross-cultural dynamics and communication patterns between Thai and Japanese employees.

Peer Review

Following the expert review, the data and preliminary findings are presented at the 4th National and the 14th International Conference on Arts and Culture 2024. This peer review process adds another layer of validation, leveraging the collective expertise of

conference attendees, including researchers, scholars, and practitioners in the field of cross-cultural communication. The peer review has been conducted by attendees in the conference providing feedback on its methodology, data analysis, and interpretation of results which offering insights and suggestions for improvement. Finally, the consensus from the peer review process that led by Associate Professor Dr. Intira Charuchinda, serves to validate the study's findings, ensuring that the data analysis and the interpretations are credible.
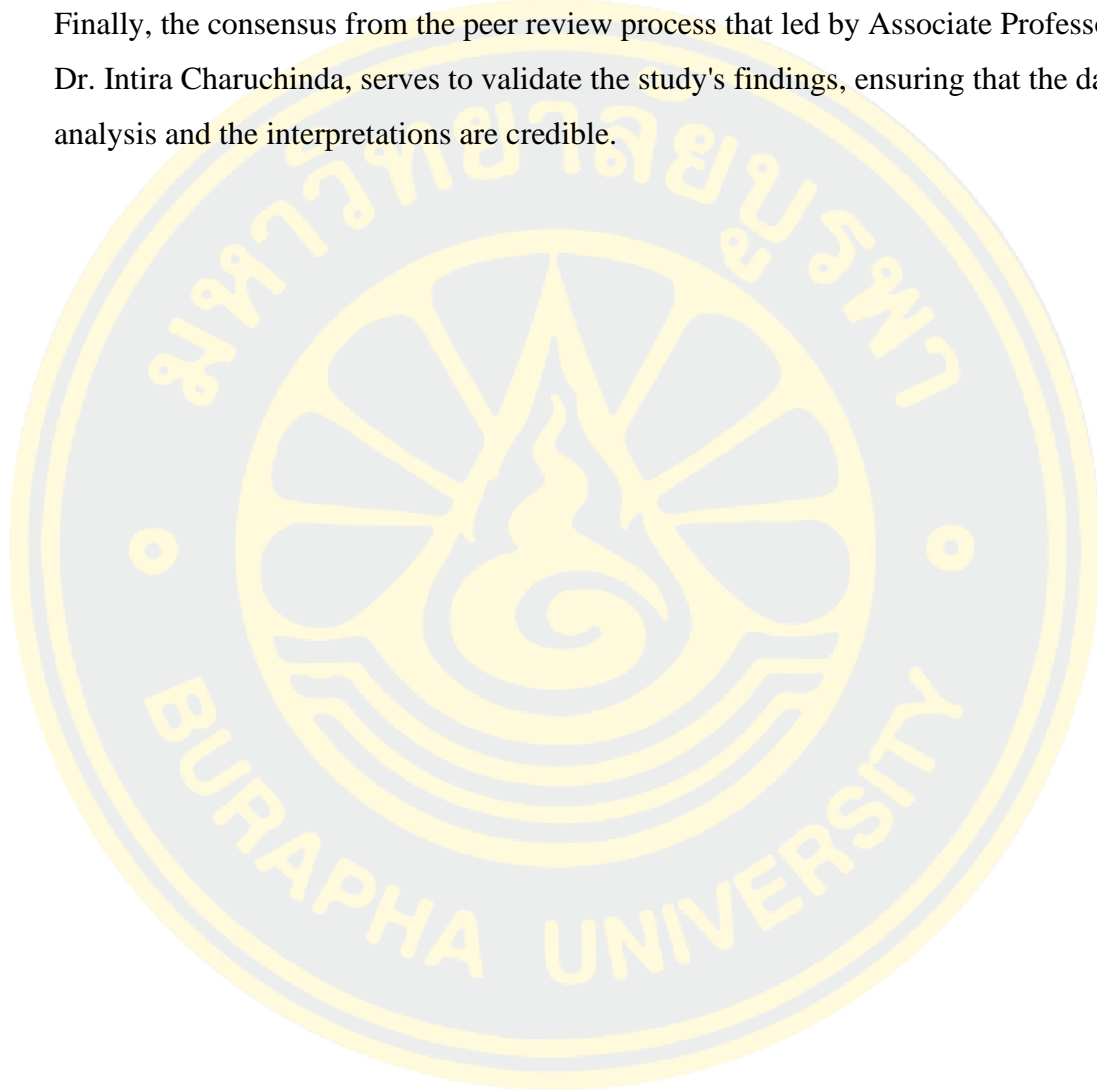
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter is structured to provide findings related to the research questions "What are the problems concerning English-medium cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Thai employees?" and "How do cultural differences influence English-medium cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Thai employees in speaking context?" These findings are based on the analysis of quantitative data from the questionnaires and qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews.

4.1. The demographic data from the participants

59% of Thai and 83% of Japanese participants has managerial positions, while only approximately 18% of Thai and 7% of Japanese participants are staff. (See Table 3).

Table 3 Position of participants

Position	Thai		Japanese	
-Staff	4	18.2%	2	6.7%
-Supervisor	5	22.7%	3	10.0%
-Manager and above	13	59.1%	25	83.3%
Total	22	100.0%	30	100.0%

68% of Thai participants have experience of working in cross-cultural context over a decade, while only 23% of Japanese participants have a similar level of experience. (See Table 4).

Table 4 Tenure of Thai participants

Tenure	Thai		Japanese	
-0 year	0	0%	2	6.7%
-1-5 years	2	9.1%	15	25.0%
-6-10 years	5	22.7%	6	20.0%
-10 years and above	15	68.2%	7	23.3%
Total	22	100.0%	30	200.0%

Among the participants, 73% of Thai respondents and 53% of Japanese respondents report using English daily, whereas less than 20% from both groups indicate using English in their conversations only once a week. (See Table 5).

Table 5 The frequency of conversing in English

The frequency of conversing in English	Thai		Japanese	
-Once a month	2	9.1%	9	30.0%
-Once a week	4	18.2%	5	16.6%
-Everyday	16	72.7%	16	53.4%
Total	22	100.0%	30	100.0%

Approximately 36% of Thai participants have evaluated as beginners, while 67% of Japanese participants have valued themselves as the beginners which falling into the lower proficiency category. (See Table 6).

Table 6 Self-assessment of English-speaking proficiency

Self-assessment of English-speaking proficiency	Thai		Japanese	
-Novice	8	36.3%	20	66.7%
-Intermediate	10	45.4%	8	26.7%
-Advanced	4	18.3%	2	6.6%
Total	22	100.0%	30	100.0%

4.2. Problems when English is used as a medium of communication

This section presents the themes obtained from the analysis of the data from both questionnaires and interviews that related with problems occurring when Japanese and Thai employees collaborate and use English in the workplace.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Meaning of word varying across cultures

Over 90% of participants from Thais and Japanese notice that the interpretation of words could differ in cross-cultural communication. (See Figure 3)

Varied Meaning of words in different cultures

	Japanese	Thai
Strongly agree	43.3	27.3
Agree	46.7	63.7
Uncertain	6.6	4.5
Disagree	3.3	4.5
Strongly disagree	0	0
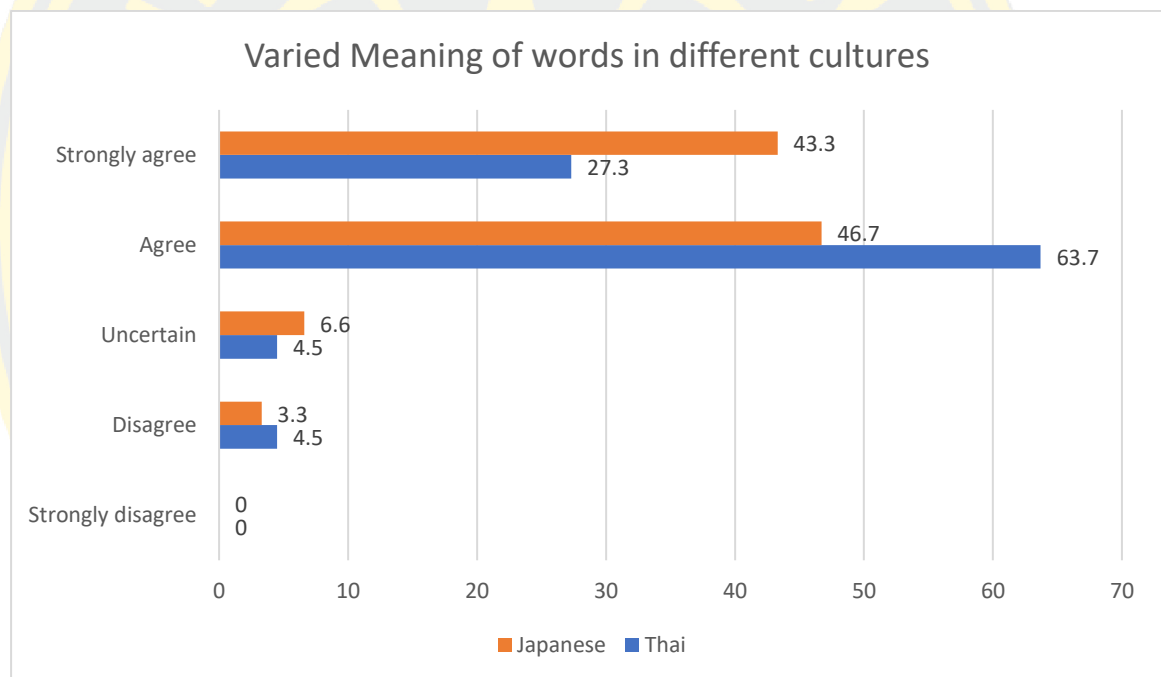
Figure 3 Varied Meaning of words in different cultures

Japanese and Thai participants express in the interviews that they may encounter greater difficulties in conveying and communicating effectively within cross-cultural workplaces as in the excerpts below:

Excerpt 1
 "Word could be interpreted differently, such as '**Checking**' for Japanese could sound like '**investigation**' for Thai employees. The word of 'checking' **might imply** a

thorough examination or investigation in Japanese culture. I feel like word might have **<u>a different meaning</u>**. It could create a different perception across nations." (**Thai E**)

This excerpt suggests that 'checking' could be interpreted differently between Japanese and Thai cultures. For Japanese participant, it could imply a detailed examination, while for Thais, it could be interpreted a quick look and completion.

Excerpt 2

"The term of '**<u>due</u>**' could hold different meanings. It may carry a concept of a '**<u>deadline</u>**' for Japanese. The perception of word can **<u>vary</u>** between Thai and Japanese employees. The **<u>different expectations</u>** may occur a gap in cross-cultural communication between Thai and Japanese employees related to timing." (**Japanese A**)

This except indicates the gap of meaning in term of 'due'. Japanese may value closely with the idea of 'deadline'. For Thais, the interpretation in the word of 'due' may be different. This difference could lead to varied expectations regarding the time and urgency.

Excerpt 3

"Japanese use the word of '**<u>Review</u>**' so many times. While Thai people would refrain from using this word because it **<u>sounds of 'self-punishment'</u>**." The different view on word "review" may create a **<u>different emotional feeling</u>** or **<u>interpretation</u>**." (**Thai G**)

The term of "review" could carry cultural meanings differently between Thai and Japanese. For Japanese, the word of "review" may imply a constructive meaning that aiming for improvement. For Thais, it might have a sense of self-punishment or harsh self-criticism. This difference indicates varying meanings can affect emotional responses and interpretations that could lead to misunderstandings.

Excerpt 4

"When Japanese boss asks '**why**' to Thai employees, even I know that the intention of asking to for **fact-checking**, Thai employees would perceive this as **being blamed for a mistake**." (**Thai D**)

This excerpt shows that the question of "why" could make Thai employees feel the sense of being blame for a mistake. For Japanese colleagues, asking "why" is a method to check fact to improve or solve problems but for Thai employees, it has a potential of the interpretation as being blamed for a mistake.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Unfamiliar and indirect expressions

More than 50% of Thai and Japanese participants acknowledge that unfamiliar expressions could influence by cultural differences. It would be difficult to understand when using English as a medium as showed in Figure 4.
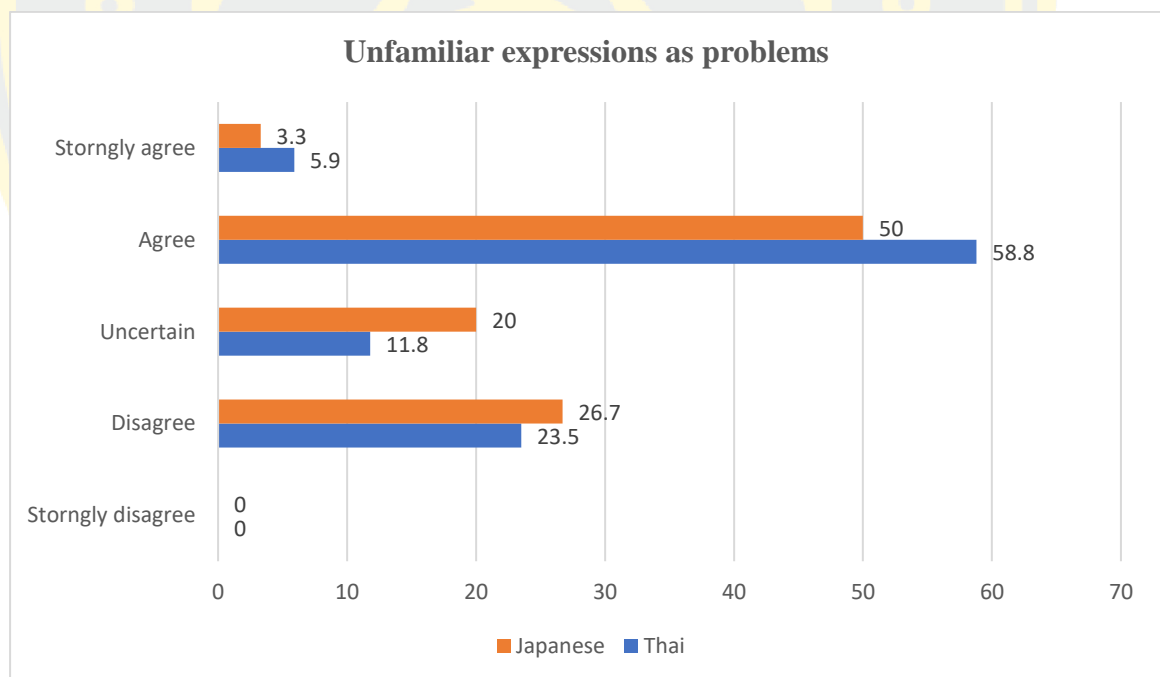
Figure 4 Unfamiliar expressions as problems

27.3% of Thai participants agree that their communication is direct, while 56% of Japanese participants express disagreement and strongly disagree indicating that their communication is indirect communication. (See figure 5)
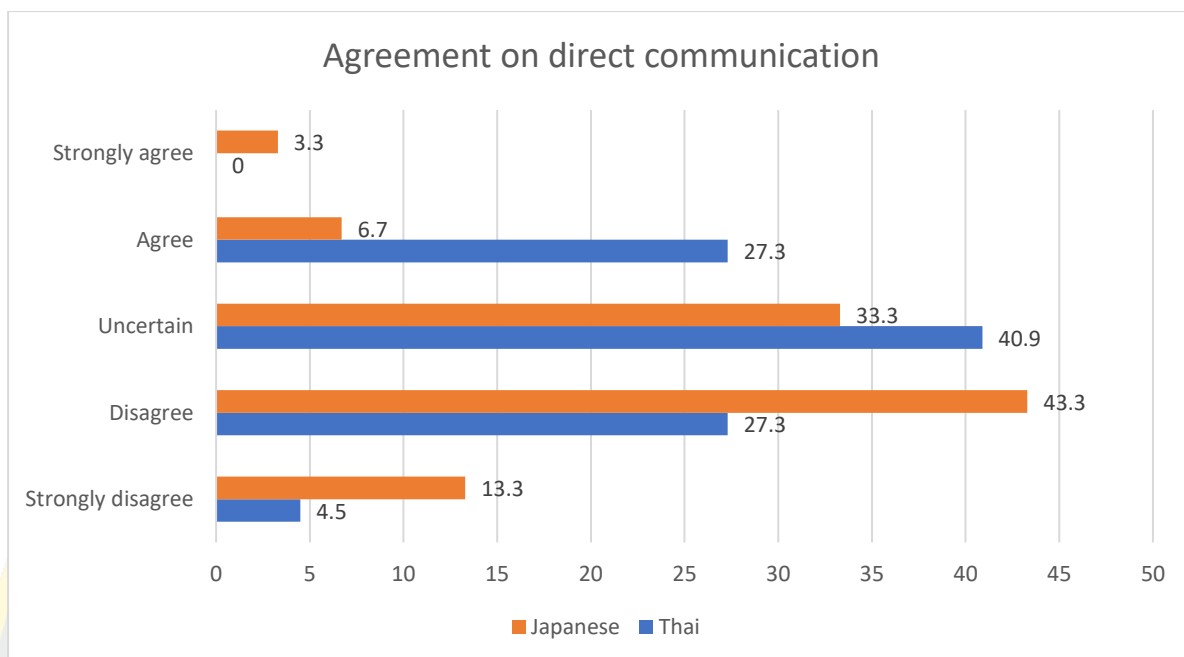
Figure 5 Indirect communication

Both Thai and Japanese participants prefer indirect communication, especially when providing disagreement or negative feedback. In Thai culture, direct confrontation or negative expression are avoided. Instead of saying 'No', Thais may select indirect language to convey their disagreement that aiming to avoid causing confrontation.

Excerpt 5

"Japanese people use indirect expressions to convey **politeness**. They express such as **'I am sorry**,' **'Excuse me**,' 'I am **not sure** if **you have the time or not**,' or '**If you don't mind**. Sometimes I am not sure about it would be politeness expression, instruction or even **disagreement.**" (**Thai H**)

This excerpt suggests that Japanese employees may use indirect language as a means of expression politeness to maintain harmony. 'I am sorry' or 'If you don't mind...' are used to soften instructions or disagreements that making the communication seem less confrontational. This indirect approach could sometimes hide the true intentional message and those unfamiliar expression may lead to potential misunderstandings.

Excerpt 6

"My boss used to say 'It is not bad but...' or 'It is already good enough but... I am unclear with the expression. Sometimes it could be **disagreement** or **negative feedback.** I think that it will be better if the boss says **more straightforward** when giving instructions." (**Thai D**)

The use of indirect expressions may be hard to understand. Phrases such as "It is not bad but..." or "It is already good enough but..." may confuse Thai employees whether it is actual feedback or instruction.

Excerpt 7

"Thais always put priority on harmony, so **saying 'no' directly** might be perceived as **aggressive**. When I ask, 'Can you make it by the due date?', a Thai employee might respond 'I will try' instead of saying '**no**', even having the answer 'no' in his mind. Thais always **avoid saying 'no' directly**." (**Thai E**)

This excerpt shows that Thai culture may put prioritize on harmony and maintain relationship. Saying 'no' could be perceived as aggressive. This indirect communication style could help to maintain workplace harmony but sometimes it   may lead to misunderstandings if the implication of 'no' is not understood.

Excerpt 8

"When a Thai employee responds to a question about work progress with **'No problem**,' Japanese boss should be reminded that it could imply **'No problem for now'**" (**Japanese A**)

The phrase of "No problem" could have many meanings in Thai culture. For Thai employees, saying "No problem" might show the polite implying instead of directly stating 'no.' the Japanese could mean that there is no problem for now, but may be the problem soon.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Accent

Accents could play an important function in English, such as speech sounds, intonations, and stress patterns, which could create a challenge in cross-cultural communication. 63% of participants from both Thai and Japanese backgrounds notice that accents could impact mutual understanding (see Figure 6).
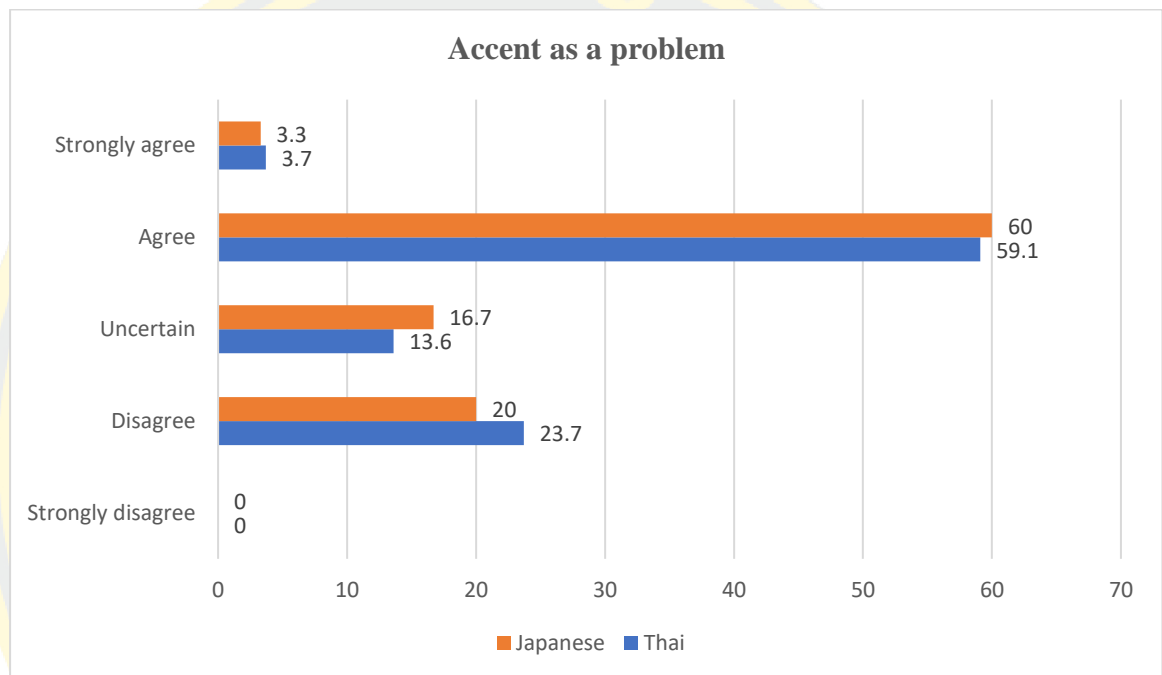
Figure 6 Accent

From interviews, participants provide reflections on their views, experiences, and thoughts regarding this issue. Even recognizing accents as a natural aspect of linguistic diversity, it becomes indeed obstruct for effective communication and comprehension, as highlighted in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 9

"When I worked Japanese company. I was not familiar with **the Japanese accent in English**. Their **pronunciation** of some English words is **difficult to understand**, such as budget, theme, vendor, and confirm." (**Thai A**)

This expression suggests that accents could impact cross-cultural communication, especially when English is spoken with strong Japanese accent. The Japanese-English

pronunciation is difficult for Thai employees to understand. This suggests the accent needs to be clear to ensure effective communication in a multilingual workplace.

Excerpt 10

"When I talk with Japanese employees, many times that I am **not sure** about **the accent**, I would let my Japanese colleagues write it out to confirm what they said." **(Thai B)**

The excerpt shows that there is a solution when people face the difficulty with the accents. This approach could help clarify communication and avoidance of misunderstandings due to pronunciation. It highlights the importance of using communication strategy to bridge gaps caused by accent differences.

4.3. Cultural differences influence on cross-cultural communication

This study has employed Hofstede's cultural dimensions as a framework to gauge the distinctions between Japanese and Thai employees. The five key cultural dimensions are used as measuring tools to understand and compare cultural nuances in the workplace. This section presents the findings from the questionnaire followed by that from the interviews.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Power distance

According to Hofstede explanation about Power distance, it is a concept used to discuss how individuals in a group or society handle differences in power. It explores the extent to which people are comfortable with or anticipate an unequal distribution of power and how people would handle the power distance. Based on the findings, there is a disparity in the level of consensus on this issue, with Thais displaying a higher degree of agreement included strong agreement as about 77% of Thais indicated that they wait for the boss's orders on what to do, accepting them completely. In contrast, the Japanese indicate 60% disagreement rate, including strong

disagreement, indicating that subordinates do not need to wait for orders. This finding is supported by the data in Figure 7 and the excerpts provided below.
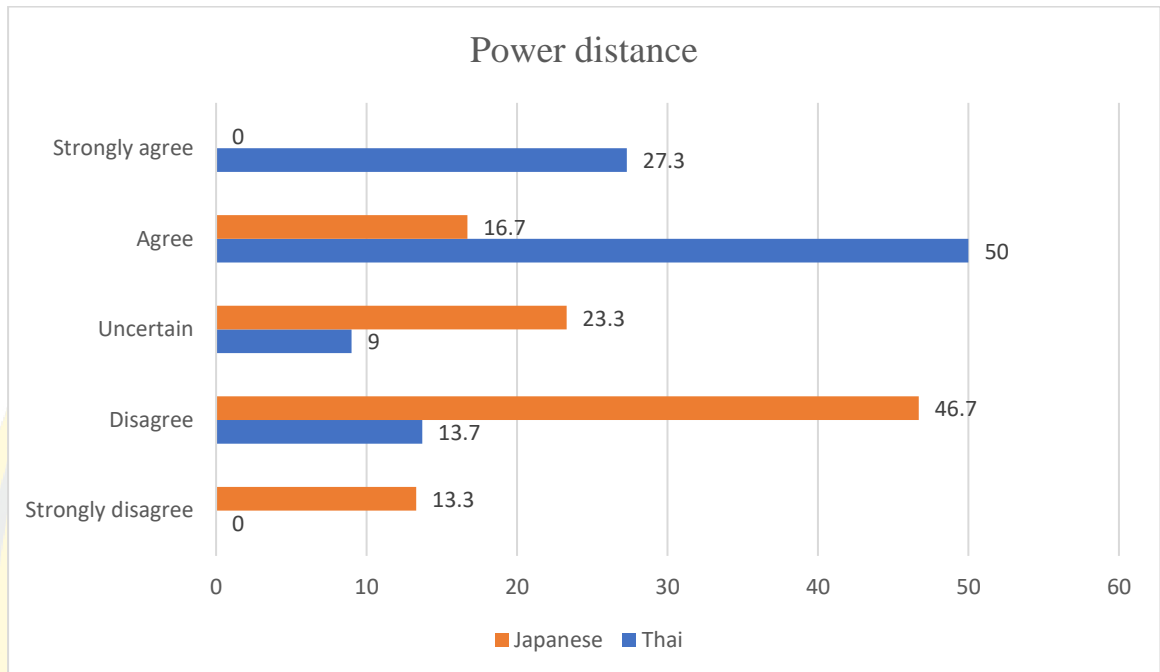
Figure 7 Power distance

Excerpt 11

"In Thai culture, it seems usual for the boss to **give clear instructions**, and everyone follows without needing to agree. This could make Japanese people feel like Thais don't have their own thoughts or a sense of belonging. Thais do not like to discuss things; they **prefer being told what to do**. On the other hand, Japanese like to have discussions, and everyone could share their ideas. In this way, we can find a solution with respect and follow." (**Japanese E**)

This expression shows that differences in power distance may impact on communication between Thai and Japanese employees. In Thai culture, high power distance may result in a top-down approach where subordinates should follow instructions. In contrast, Japanese lower power distance could encourage open discussions and collective decision-making to ensure all ideas are considered and respected.

Excerpt 12

"In Thai culture, people would **<u>wait for instructions</u>** before doing anything. They show the respect to their bosses and Thai people don't like doing things without being told. This shows that there's a **<u>big gap</u>** in authority between bosses and employees in Thai culture. Some people are afraid of doing something wrong, so they **<u>prefer to wait</u>** for their bosses to tell them what to do. But once they get instructions, Thai people would act quickly. (**Thai E**)

This excerpt shows that the high power distance in Thai culture could have influence on communication at work. Thai employees may have tendency to wait for instructions from their bosses because there is a gap in authority and hierarchical structures. This deference to authority ensures that tasks are executed efficiently once directives are given, reflecting a cultural emphasis on respect and diligence.

Excerpt 13

"In Thai culture, the boss is a leader. **<u>Boss gives orders</u>**, and it's the job of the employees to follow without asking too many questions. Even if the boss tells them to do something that doesn't make much sense, Thai employees usually do it **<u>without questioning</u>** the boss." (**Thai D**)

This expression shows that Thai culture may exhibit a high power distance. Boss is rarely to be questioned by subordinates. Employees may be expected to follow instructions without asking. This could highlight the significant gap in power between leaders and subordinates.

Excerpt 14

"When a Thai employee follows instruction **<u>without asking questions</u>**, some Japanese bosses might perceive a lack of shared ideas or even a lack of engagement." (**Japanese E**)

This excerpt suggests that high power distance in Thai culture may impact Thai employee say less and comply as being told. This act could be interpreted by Japanese

that Thai employee have no idea, and even worse Thais may be viewed as having no engagement with organizations.

Excerpt 15

"**Thai** people often **keep quiet** in the meeting. Many Thai people are afraid of being strange from the group or expressing opinion against other people. Thais also do not want to harm feeling by saying disagreement." (**Thai E**)

This excerpt indicates that Thai employee emphasize harmony and confrontation avoidance that may lead individuals to refrain from expressing somethings that may affects other's feeling. Saying nothing may foster good relationships. The preference for avoiding confrontation could influence communication in the stage of meetings.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation

82% of Thai participants think that it is a norm to be flexible and solve problems quickly in their culture. This norm aligning with what Hofstede remarks about short-term orientation, where people want quick results and do not plan too much for the future. In contrast, only 20% of Japanese participants feel that being flexible and solving problems quickly is important. (See Figure 8)
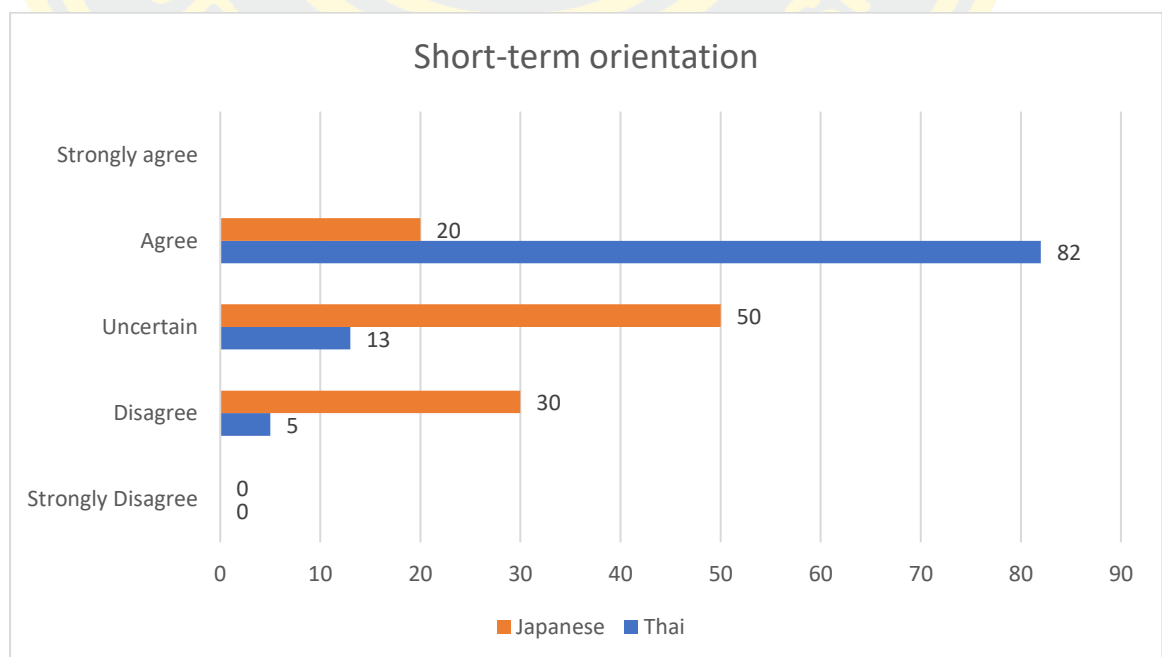
Figure 8 Short-term orientation

Excerpt 16

"Japanese **meeting** aims to **consensus** and respect the **decisions**. Before then, Japanese would have extensive dialogue with diverse stakeholders to gather varied perspectives before making any decisions." (**Japanese E**)

This excerpt shows that the Japanese cultural tendency that they would discuss until they could reach the conclusion from the discussion. Therefore, the meeting tends to be extensive dialogue openly to build consensus.

Excerpt 17

 "Japanese and Thai people have different expectations when it comes to **problem-solving**. Japanese believe that solving a problem should not only fix the current situation but also prevent the problem from happening again. On the other hand, **Thais** often focus on making **immediate improvements** or correcting the situation to return to normal. But for **Japanese**, just making corrections isn't enough; it's seen as a step toward **preventing the problem** from happening again." (**Japanese G**)

This excerpt indicates that there are cultural differences in problem-solving approaches between Japanese and Thai participants which associated with long-term and short-term orientations. For Japanese employees, preventing the problem with no reoccurrence could have a sensitivity of long-term orientation, while Thai culture may have a tendency focusing on quick corrections that reflecting short-term orientation.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Uncertainty avoidance

According to Hofstede, uncertainty avoidance is about how comfortable a society or group is with not knowing what will happen. This cultural dimension reveals the extent to which a culture prefers having clear information and guidelines to reduce uncertainty and worry.

Approximately 67% of Japanese participants expressed agreement, with many strongly agreeing, that they should seek clarification when faced with a lack of understanding about conveyed information. In contrast, a smaller proportion,

specifically 50% of Thai participants, shared this perspective, both in agreement and strong agreement (See Figure 9)
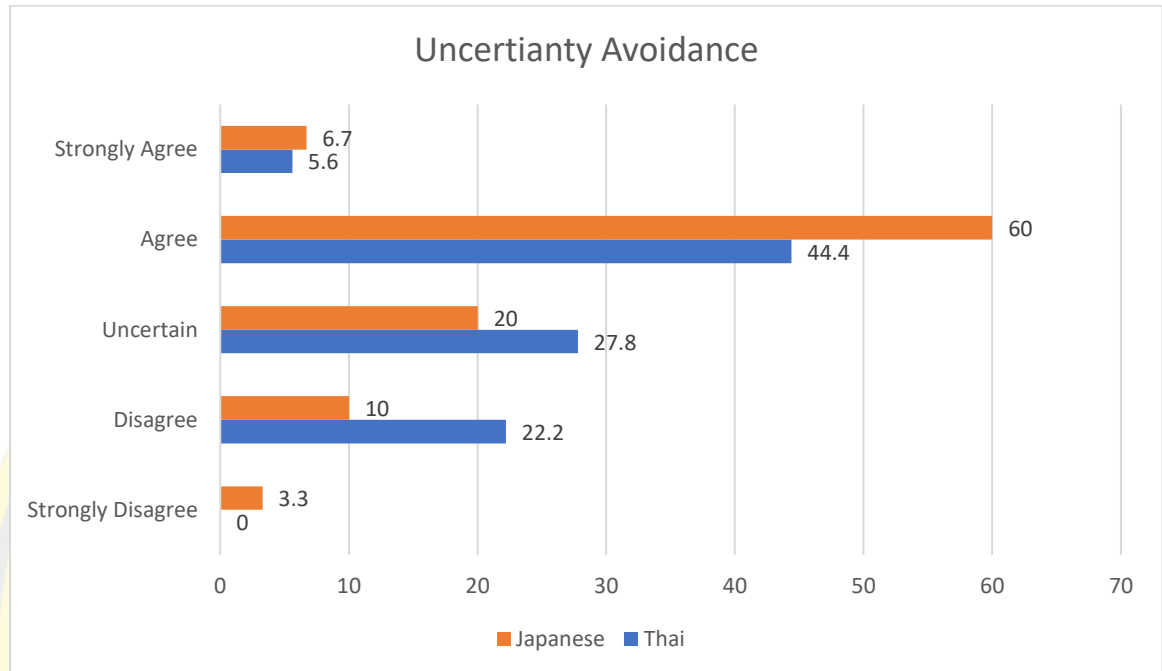
Figure 9 Uncertainty avoidance

The impact of uncertainty avoidance on communication can be observed as findings from the qualitative data as below:

Excerpt 18

"Thai employees often respond to Japanese bosses with **ambiguity**, using phrases like '**perhaps**' and **'I think'** without verifying the facts. Thais tend to provide quick answers with the intention of serving the boss as promptly as possible. However, **Japanese bosses prefer specific details**, including who, what, when, where, and how, aiming to prevent the recurrence of issues." (**Japanese G**)

This excerpt shows that the differences in communication styles between Thai and Japanese employees could be linked to varying levels of uncertainty avoidance. Thai employees' use of ambiguous language such as "perhaps" and "I think" could reflect a lower uncertainty avoidance, where there is more comfort with ambiguity and a focus on immediate responses to please superiors. In contrast, Japanese bosses, with higher uncertainty avoidance, prefer specific detailed information to ensure clarity and

prevent future problems. This emphasis on detailed communication highlights the Japanese tend to minimize uncertainty and avoid misunderstandings in the workplace.

Excerpt 19

"**Japanese people** do pay attention to **small details**. They want to know about everything concerning an event. I will ask lots of questions such as '**who, what, when, where, and how**.' Thai people working with Japanese might be **stressful** because of questioning by Japanese boss. Endless of questioning might make Thai subordinates feeling of **losing their confidences**" (**Thai D**)

This excerpt could be analyzed that differences in uncertainty avoidance between Japanese and Thai employees could lead misunderstandings, stress and losing trust in the cross-cultural workplaces. Japanese tend to pay close attention in every detail and ask many questions to minimize ambiguity or ensure clarity. This event could be misinterpreted by Thai employees perceiving as lacking ability to explain and lead to lose their confidences.

Excerpt 20

"When **Thai** people say, **'Let it be'** or **'Let it go**,' it sounds like Thai people don't mind about what is happening, and it seems that they are **okay with unexpected situations**." (**Japanese F**)

This excerpt shows that Thai employee may accept of unexpected situations. Phrases such as "Let it be" or "Let it go" could indicate a comfort with ambiguity and a more relaxed approach to unexpected events. In contrast, cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, such as Japan would prefer to control and plan for every detail to avoid surprises. This difference highlights how Thai individuals' relaxed attitude towards uncertainty can be perceived as indifference by Japanese colleagues, who may find it challenging to navigate this cultural approach to handling unexpected situations.

Excerpt 21

"For Japanese people when they say '**<u>check</u>**,' it's like saying 'investigate.' Thai employees usually respond with 'it is **<u>OK</u>**' when the boss asks them to check its situation. But Japanese bosses often follow up with another question, asking 'How is it OK?' **<u>Japanese</u>** people want to know the **<u>specific details</u>** about what happened, when it happened, and how it happened. Sometimes, Thai employees think the question is about finding out 'who did it,' but for Japanese, it's more about understanding the facts and the root cause. They want to create rules and measures to control the **<u>stability of conditions</u>** at work." (**Japanese A**)

This expression suggests that Japanese culture may have a high level of uncertainty avoidance. Japanese would emphasize to seek for details thorough investigation. When Japanese boss saying 'check', it could mean 'investigate' to ensure clarity and prevent future problems. When Thai employee responding 'OK', it could be followed by Japanese boss with many questions. This difference in uncertainty avoidance dimension could be viewed as Japanese managers focusing on understanding the root cause and establishing control measures, while Thai employees may misinterpret these questions as fault-finding.

Excerpt 22

"The word of '**<u>preparation</u>**' has different expectations between Thai and Japanese cultures. Thais would say 'prepare' for **<u>normal</u>** case. But, for Japanese, preparation should include '**<u>abnormal</u>**' case. Japanese will have a plan for unexpecting case. When working with Japanese, you need plans for both normal and **<u>unexpected situations</u>**. (**Thai D**)

The concept of 'preparation' varies across cultures. Thai employees prepare thoroughly for normal situations. Japanese would prepare for abnormal case for occurrence of unexpected event. This difference could show the different level of preparation to control uncertainty.

Excerpt 23

"I fell that **<u>Japanese</u>** people seem to be more on the alert for **<u>crises</u>** compared to Thais. It's like they've got this **<u>super precise approach</u>** to every little thing, and I gotta say, it can be a bit much sometimes. There have been situations where they'd keep drilling me with questions for hours, especially if I give them answers with any kind of **<u>ambiguity</u>**." (**Thai F**)

This excerpt shows that Japanese culture have a high level of uncertainty avoidance when compared to Thais. Japanese individuals would avoid potential issues by questioning in detail to eliminate ambiguity. In contrast, Thai culture tends to be more relaxed for risk or crisis when compared with Japanese culture. This difference can cause stress and frustration between Thai and Japanese employees when they work on addressing problems in different level of uncertainty avoidance.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Individualism vs Collectivism

Collectivism emphasizes the importance of the group and working together for everyone's benefit, rather than focusing solely on individual goals. It involves being part of a team where mutual support is valued. According to Hofstede's theory, people in collectivist cultures tend to avoid conflict and may hesitate to express differing opinions, fearing it might disrupt group harmony. The questionnaire findings suggest that approximately 86% of Thai individuals and 70% of Japanese individuals lean towards collectivism, as indicated by participants who strongly agreed or agreed. (See Figure 10)

Individualism vs Collectivism

Response	Japanese	Thai
Strongly agree	16.7	18.2
Agree	53.3	68.2
Uncertain	20	4.5
Disagree	6.7	9.1
Strongly disagree	3.3	0
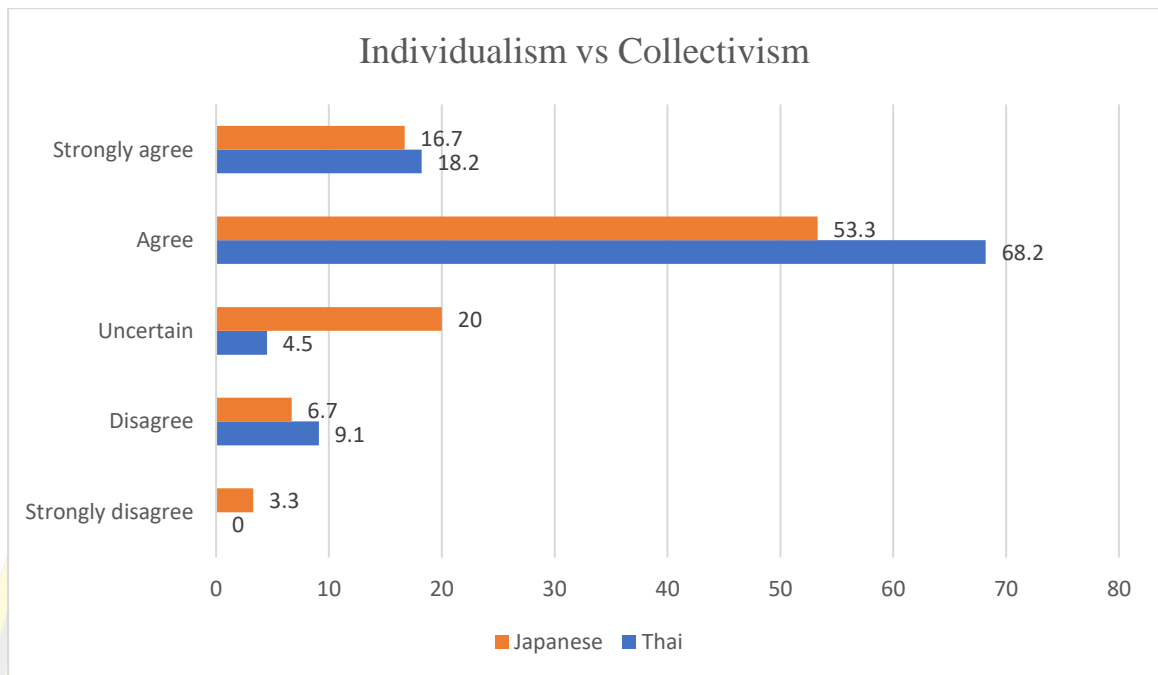
Figure 10 Individual vs Collectivism

However, the Japanese workplace can also involve explicit communication, especially in professional settings, where clarity and precision are highly valued as highlighted in the excerpts below:

Excerpt 24

"In **Thai** culture, people often choose to remain **silen**t because they **fear** that certain words could have a negative **impac**t on someone and **harm** their **relationship**. This cultural inclination is reflected in a Thai proverb that suggests the value of holding one's tongue: "Saying something might cost a lot, but keeping silent could bring great benefits." The wisdom conveyed here emphasizes the importance of avoiding potential harm and maintaining **positive relationships** by choosing to remain silent." (**Thai E**)

This expression shows that Thai culture may emphasize on harmony and positive relationships. Remaining silent might be a strategy to avoid negative reactions. As the Thai proverb shows the cultural belief that silence can be more beneficial than speaking out. Thai do not like confrontation.

Excerpt 25

"**<u>Expressing disagreement</u>** can be challenging, but when it concerns the overall benefit of the group, it **<u>becomes necessary</u>** to speak up, even if it might have an impact on an individual or the group itself." (**Japanese A**)

Japanese people may tend to avoid express disagreement to maintain group harmony. But when it comes to benefit of the group, Japanese may voice concerns, even if it might cause discomfort or confrontation. This reflects the Japanese value on prioritizing collectivism.

4.3.5 Theme 5: Masculinity vs Femininity

Masculinity vs Femininity dimension identified by Hofstede's research (2010) values traits such as assertiveness, ambition, and goal achievement. Femininity values prioritizing cooperation and relationship-building. 40% of Thai participants express disagreement (36.7%), including strong disagreement (3.3%) answer their prioritizing tasks over building relationships. While 22.7% agree with this sentiment. Conversely, Japanese participants display a similar trend with Thai participants with 42.6% (33.6% + 9%) disagreeing, including strong disagreement, and 16% agreeing with the emphasizing tasks over building relationships. This data suggests the prevalent importance placed on relationship-building within both Thai and Japanese cultural contexts. (See Figure 11)
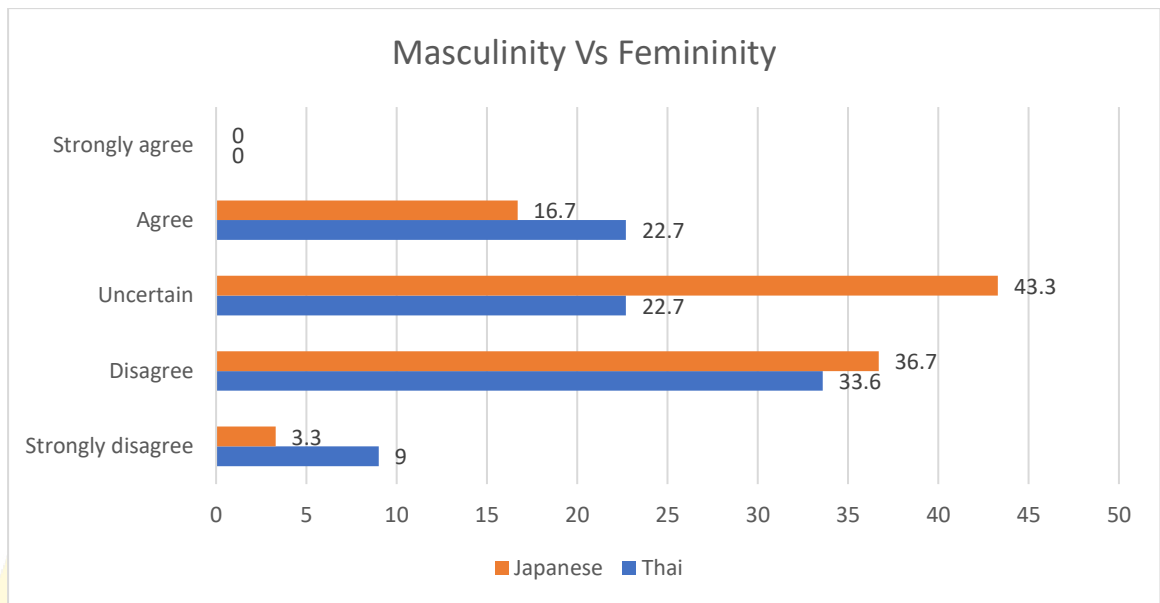
Figure 11 Masculinity Vs Femininity

Thai and Japanese participants share their perspectives on Masculinity vs Femininity in workplace as in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 26

"I've noticed that Thai people have strong tendency to **support** during meetings. Thai employees often **share smiles** as a way of **expressing care**, even when discussion on challenging and difficult topics. Thais try to create an atmosphere of **empathy** in the meetings, fostering a sense of **friendship**, something that may not be as prominent in Japanese meetings." (**Japanese B**)

This excerpt suggests that Thai culture may emphasizes support and empathy in the meetings and formal settings. It reflects feminine cultural traits. The act of sharing smiles and expressing care in difficult discussions could create an environment of care and friendship. In contrast, expressions of empathy may be less common in meeting where only Japanese participated.

Excerpt 27

"For me, I find that Japanese employees are dedicated and **committed to their work**. They put effort and focus on their jobs. Additionally, Japanese colleagues would prioritize politeness, **kindness**, and fostering **positive relationships**." (**Thai E**)

This expression suggests that Japanese employees would value on dedication and commitment to their work which reflecting work ethics. Moreover, Japanese colleagues may emphasize politeness, kindness, and fostering positive relationships with blending elements of both masculinity and femininity to promote harmonious interactions.

Excerpt 28

"I've noticed that Japanese employees try hard to be on time, especially when it comes to **completing tasks not to overdue.** In Japanese culture, the word of 'due' is synonymous with '**deadline**.' If you just explain why you're late, it could sound like an excuse to the Japanese. However, if you try to include a recovery plan in your explanation, it shows that you're focused on **achieving your goals**. In a Japanese workplace, 'due' should be treated as 'deadline' that couldn't be postponed."
(**Japanese G**)

In Japanese culture, people may value on punctuality and strict to deadlines that this context reflects Masculinity traits. Especially Japanese employees would try to be in completing tasks on time. Japanese employees view the word 'due' as synonymous with 'deadline'. Simply explaining a delay may be perceived as excuses why the individual could not be on time. But the individual providing a recovery plan could demonstrate a commitment to finish task. This cultural trait would highlight the importance of treating deadlines in Japanese workplaces. In contrast, Thai may be more flexible approaches in the point of view of 'punctuality' for Japanese.

Excerpt 29

"When Thai employees deal with challenges at work, they may openly discuss hardship and suffering topics which revealing **<u>vulnerability</u>** as a way of expressing **<u>kindness</u>** and **<u>caring</u>** for each other. In addition, Thai people often use positive and uplifting words to demonstrate their caring for one another. On the other hand, in Japanese culture, rather than expressing **<u>weaknesses</u>**, they may encourage each other using phrases like **<u>'Go for it'</u>** and '**<u>Benchmark</u>**.' This expression can reflect an emphasis on **<u>achievement</u>** and a **<u>competitive attitude</u>** in the workplace." (**Japanese B**)

This excerpt shows that Thai and Japanese cultures have different approaches to dealing with work problems. This could reflect the different cultural values. Thai employees may exhibit femininity traits with care. Thais may openly discuss regarding hardship and suffering that could reveal vulnerability. It could be a way to express kindness and care to foster a supportive environment. In contrast, Japanese employees may tend to avoid expressing weaknesses. Instead, their saying or encouraging each other with phrases such as "Go for it" and "Benchmark," could reflect an emphasis on achievement and competitiveness, which are masculinity traits.

Excerpt 30

"When Japanese work in an organization, we must have **<u>goals</u>** to pursue. But here's the thing: we can't do everything on our own. **<u>Building and maintaining relationships</u>** with other employees in the organization is very **<u>important.</u>** I mean that It's like a **<u>balancing</u>** act between reaching our targets and fostering good relationships. So, that's why I choose '**<u>uncertainty</u>**'." (**Japanese F**)

This expression could illustrate that organizational success needs a balancing of goal achievement and relationship building. This could reflect that a mix of Masculinity and Femininity traits exist in working environment. The speaker recognizes the necessity of setting and pursuing goals with emphasizing of fostering the good relationships between employees at the workplace. This balancing act may underscore the significance of both individual achievement and collective harmony. This

dynamic situation would highlight the complexity of Thai and Japanese workplace where they face the different cultural expectations in workplace interactions.

In conclusion, this chapter has systematic exploration of the challenges when English is used as a medium in cross-cultural communication. The influence of cultural differences between Thai and Japanese employees at work has been explored by the analysis grounded in both quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires, and qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews. This integrated approach has provided a comprehensive understanding of how cultural differences that could be shaped communication act and behaviors which indicates the complexities that may affect interactions in a cross-cultural workplace setting.
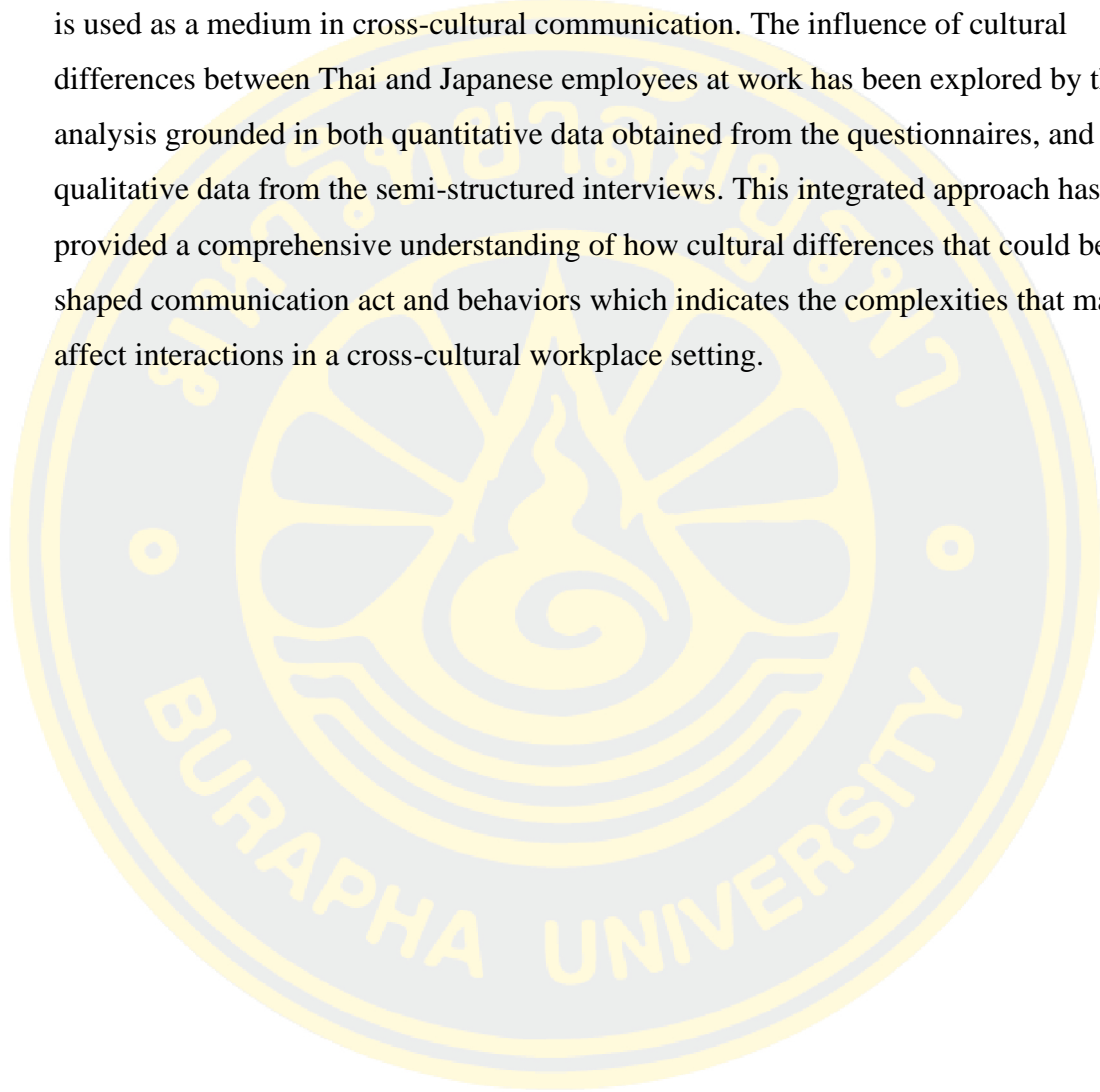
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents discussions regarding the challenges that occur in cultural differences and how they impact communication between Japanese and Thais at work. Through detailed analysis and discussion, this chapter aims to provide insights to respond the two research questions of this study. In addition, this chapter provides implications and recommendations to future research for even more enhancement and understanding of cross-cultural communication.

5.1. Discussions

5.1.1 Problems when English is used as a medium of communication

5.1.1.1 Theme 1: Meaning of word varying in different cultures

The findings from the questionnaire, showing that more over 90% of participants from Thailand and Japan recognize the variations in interpreting word in cross-cultural communication. With alignment of insights of interviews, such as excerpt regarding how the term of 'due' is understood differently between Japanese and Thai participants, especially related with deadlines, there is a gap in interpretation between the two cultures.

For Japanese participants, the word of 'deadline' could carry a sense of weight with punctuality, precision, and duty. When something is described as 'due,' it conveys an expectation of completing or delivering it by a specific time or date, aligning closely with deadlines prevalent in Japanese culture.

In contrast, Thai participants have tendency to prioritize flexibility and harmony with a more relaxed approach to managing time. In Thai cultural context, the interpretation of "due" may not demand the same level of urgency or strict adherence as in Japanese culture. Instead, Thai cultural context may prefer adaptability and harmony over strictly deadlines.

In conclusion, when individuals from Japanese and Thai backgrounds having interaction, there are differences in expectations which could reflect each cultural norm. Varying in word meanings across different cultures could play a crucial role in shaping communicating reaction. The different interpretation might reflect each cultural setting so that it could carry different connotations and lead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding between both Japanese and Thai employees. As Edward T. Hall (1976) has emphasizes the critical importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness to facilitate cross-cultural communication. He has suggested that these differences in interpretation is the intricate nature of cross-cultural communication and there is a necessity to recognize the cultural nuances. This notion is supported by a study conducted by Xu & Dinh (2013), which has explored into how individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and English varieties comprehend and utilize specific words in English as a lingua franca (ELF) communication.

5.1.1.2 Theme 2: Indirect communication challenging cross-cultural interaction

From the questionnaire results, it appears a significant challenge in cross-cultural communication that there are the impacts of indirect communication. Over half of both Thai and Japanese participants notice that indirect expressions sometimes could be the difficulty to understand.

This preference for indirect communication is supported by the insights from interviews. Thai participants express their cultural value on harmony. Their explanation on direct refusals could be perceived as aggressive. For instance, when they face a direct question such as "Can you make it by the due date?", Thai employee might respond with "I will try" to avoid causing confrontation. Similarly, Japanese participants provided examples of indirect negative feedback that Japanese may respond with a phrase as "Your idea is good but consider other options."

These excerpts indicate the crucial role of cultural values that it could impact each communication style. Both Thai and Japanese cultures put priority on harmony and politeness which could lead to a preference for indirect expressions. Particularly, in situations of disagreement or negative feedback, indirect expression may be a strategy

to avoid confrontation not to harm harmony. As Hall's (1973) has suggests that direct confrontation and expressions of negativity could be avoided to maintain social harmony. The exploration of indirect communication highlights the cultural variations regarding politeness and appropriateness. These differences may extend to each communication style. He mentions that what may be considered acceptable in one culture might be appearing ambiguous or evasive in another. Consequently, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds may encounter challenges with indirect communication methods that could result in misunderstandings.

5.1.1.3 Theme 3: Accent

Accents with various speech sounds, intonations, and stress patterns in English could be a challenge when English is used as a medium in cross-cultural communication. Findings from the questionnaire have revealed that approximately 63% of Thai and Japanese participants recognize the impact of accents on their comprehension. Unfamiliar accents may be challenges to understand certain words or phrases when the sound differ from what the listener is accustomed to. For example, from interview data of Thai participant, "At the first time when I worked with Japanese, I was not familiar with the Japanese accent in English. Their pronunciation of some English words was different from what I used to. This unfamiliar pronunciation could be budget, theme, vendor, and confirm. May be, these sounds have no equivalence in Japanese's pronunciation."

However, Thai participant who has worked with Japanese colleagues for more than five years indicates that time will allow them to become more familiar with Japanese accent patterns and Thai could gradually understand. A Japanese participant who has been assigned to work in Thailand for five years expressed that he still faces the difficulty in comprehending the Thai-English accent, highlighting that familiarity with accents may take time to develop.

Interestingly, while Moyer (2013) suggests that non-native English speakers could encounter stigma or negative judgments because of different accents. From the interview results, Thai and Japanese participants express no feeling of stigma by their

accents. Instead, they have recognized accent differences with awareness of the importance of managing to understand each other at work. This finding is supported by Sahrai's study (2023) on Understanding Attitudes Towards Accents, individuals also experience mixed feelings about their own accents. Even their accents sound differently form native speakers, they would try to communicate clearly and effectively. The study emphasizes the primary concern of mutual understanding during communication. Rather than achieving a "standard" accent, both Thai and Japanese employees may underscore the importance of clarity for effective communication.

5.1.2 Influences of cultural differences on cross-cultural communication

5.1.2.1 Theme 1: Cross-cultural perception on power distance

Both Thai and Japanese participants may perceive the same phenomenon differently. Based on interview findings, a Japanese employer actively seek for input from Thai employees. He encourages Thai employees to have open communication. However, Thai employees refrain from contributing ideas that makes the Japanese employer may interpret this act as a lack of engagement rather than recognizing it as a cultural difference in communication styles.

Based on quantitative data from questionnaire, the perception of power distance shows a significant contrast between Thai and Japanese in work environments. Approximately 77% of Thai participants answer that they agree with the practice of awaiting their boss's instructions before acting. This act could reflect a characteristic aspect of Thai culture. As one Thai participant express, "In Thai culture, many people wait for instructions from the boss. This expression aligns with Hofstede's concept of high power distance cultural contexts, such as Thai culture have a tendency of top-down communication style. Leaders would provide clear instructions, and others follow the instruction. In high power distance context, open dialogue or collaboration in decision-making is not the norm (Hofstede, 1984).

In contrast, 66% of Japanese participants show disagreement with the concept of subordinates waiting for orders. It highlights a more diverse perspective within

Japanese workplaces. Japanese approaches to power distance could be more actively encouraging to share of ideas with creating an environment of questioning and suggesting of improvements. Participants with a low power distance orientation could prefer to involve others in decision-making processes. Even employees in positions of lesser authority with a low power distance orientation would be more likely to believe that they should have a voice in the company's decision-making processes (Brockner et al., 2001).

While both Thai and Japanese cultures may value efficiency and respect in the workplace, the manifestation of power distance shows significantly in the differences between Thais and Japanese employees. Thai participants would demonstrate respect by waiting for instructions and promptly executing tasks with alignment of reflecting a hierarchical structure. This observation is supported by a study conducted by Paul E. Madlock (2012), which has explored the impact of power distance on communication among Mexican workers. The findings revealed that Mexican employees show a high power distance with the influencing on Mexican communication that they would prefer to receive instructions from their supervisors.

5.1.2.2 Theme 2: Comparative analysis of Long-term vs Short-term cultural orientations

The analysis of long-term and short-term orientation analyzed by Hofstede (2010) provides deep insights into the varying priorities between Thai and Japanese participants. In Thai culture, there is an emphasis on flexibility and quick problem-solving which aligning to short-term orientation. This approach highlights the importance of adaptability, quick results, and practical actions within a hierarchical decision-making framework. In Thai context, people would wait for boss's decisions s they would follow the instructions precisely. This inclination to tackle problems immediately without much of planning could be the evident. The fact that 82% of Thai participants show preferences for rapid adaptability and quick problem resolution underscores a cultural tendency towards prioritizing immediate effectiveness and responsiveness to current situations.

Conversely, the emphasis of Japanese culture on long-term objectives, precise planning, and in-depth discussion prior to making decisions has shown its long-term orientation. Interviews with Japanese participants have revealed that a cultural inclination towards patience, perseverance, and emphasis for future. The Japanese societal may value on strategizing with future consequences in mind, emphasizing thoroughness with consensus-building and systematic problem-solving. These actions could be the mirror of stability and sustainability.

Swierczek and Onishi (2003) suggest that Japanese managers could face difficulty in achieving consensus with Thai subordinates due to different cultural preferences. While Japanese have tendency towards long-term orientation, it contrasts with the Thai preference for flexibility with short-term orientation that resulting in complexities within problem-solving approaches between Japanese and Thai employees.

5.1.2.3 Theme 3: Uncertainty Avoidance
Based on the findings in this study, it reveals a contrast between Japanese and Thai participants regarding the importance of seeking clarification when they face with unclear communication. Approximately 67% of Japanese participants expressing with strong agreement would emphasize the significance of seeking clarification in communication compared with 50% of Thai participants sharing this perspective.

This discrepancy could imply that Japanese participants may exhibit a greater sensitivity toward uncertainty more than Thai participants. This observation is supported by Petison's (2010) study, which suggests that Thais are more adaptable and comfortable with uncertainty than Japanese. This characteristic aligns in the Thai concept of "Mai Pen Rai," meaning "Take it easy, don't worry." As a result, Thais have tendency to handle changes or uncertain situations with greater ease than Japanese participants.

This observation of insights from a Thai participant during an interview would emphasize that Japanese individuals focus on small details of every aspect about the

concern. As a Thai participant mentioned, "Japanese individuals are known for their attention to every details. Every aspect of any concerning event, Japanese always have many questions about 'who, what, when, where, and how ' in the meeting. When Thai people collaborate with Japanese colleagues, this thorough approach can lead to extended periods of time spending on those discussions which may result in stressful environmental workplaces.

Moreover, this approach with prolonged discussions and the extensive questioning by Japanese colleagues may unintentionally occur a lack of trust in Thai and Japanese employees. This observation is supported by Petison's (2010) study. Japanese claims that there is a lack of information from Thai employees. In Japanese culture, it is normal to provide information precisely following with updated data that allows Japanese to understand the situation including risk or future problems.

5.1.2.4 Theme 4: Collectivism impact indirect communication
Based on the findings in this study, it has been revealed a significant prevalence of collectivism among both Thai and Japanese participants. With approximately 86% of Thai and 70% of Japanese responding, the results suggest the prioritizing in group harmony and cooperation.

Both Japanese and Thai communication styles, particularly regarding the reluctance to express opinion, disagreement, and rejection could be viewed in both cultural interactions. Japanese would avoid direct refusals with a sign of politeness and respect to maintain harmony in the group. Similarly, Thai participants would avoid direct confrontation with refraining from expressions of disagreement or rejection because Thai people tend to prioritize harmonious relationships.

This emphasis on avoiding conflict and maintaining positive relationships may exist deeply in both cultures. The findings align with the research conducted by Gudykunst et al. (1996). They have explored the influence of cultural factor on individual and communication styles across different cultures. The research suggests that collectivist cultures tend to have a preference of indirect communication styles. Thai and

Japanese cultures have been characterized by Hofstede's cultural dimension as high collectivist cultures.

5.1.2.5 Theme 5: My research findings versus previous studies on Masculinity

The findings have revealed that 40% of Thai participants have expressed disagreement to prioritize tasks more than build relationships. In parallel, Japanese participants have demonstrated a same trend with 42.6% expressing disagreement to emphasize task completion over building relationships. This result highlights the cultural traits on relationship-building within both Thai and Japanese working contexts. Surprisingly, 43.3% with a majority of Japanese participants have expressed uncertainty regarding to prioritize—relationship building or task completion. This uncertainty is consistent with Japanese interview data that Japanese may have a desire to take a balance between tasks completion and relationship-building.

In contrast, Hofstede's research (2010) has associated that Japanese culture with traits such as assertiveness, ambition, and task-orientation. This presents a divergence from the findings, highlighting the complexity and nuances of cultural influences on work behavior. As Hall (1976) suggested, cultural ways of thinking are not fixed; they evolve through interactions. Continuous engagement between individuals from different cultural backgrounds drives this evolution, leading to the adaptation and integration of diverse cultural elements.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 Problems in English-medium cross-cultural communication

This study has explored the problems when English is used as a medium in cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Thai employees working in a Japanese workplace located in Thailand. English is served as the primary language for interaction in cross-cultural workplaces. There are many participants, especially more than half of Japanese rating their English speaking skill as a beginner level. The low level of speaking English could impact their communication. Additionally, the

presence of unfamiliar accents in English could create difficulty in cross-cultural communication.

Word interpretation would be challenges for Thai and Japanese cultures because each culture has its own set of interpretations relying on cultural norms for interpreting. The recognition of word meaning variability across cultures underscores the complex nature of cross-cultural communication.

The results emphasize that fostering cultural awareness and implementing effective communication strategies are important. These efforts are crucial for promoting mutual understanding and collaboration in diverse workplace settings.

5.2.2. Differences across cultures influence on cross-cultural communication.
5.2.2.1. The impact of cultural differences toward Thai style of communication
Based on findings through this study, the cultural differences could affect Thai communication style. Especially, recognition of high power distance in Thai culture is very important. This cultural aspect could shape social and organizational dynamics, as high power distance could result in the acceptance and expectation of unequal power and authority distributed within organizations. In Thai culture, hierarchy and respect for authority are highly valued that leading to top-down communication and a reluctance among subordinates to question authority openly. Consequently, the free exchange of ideas from Thai employees may be hindered.

Moreover, Thai culture emphasis on collectivism that could have influence on communication dynamically. Thai employees may prioritize maintaining good relationships within the group and provide indirect expression and polite communication styles to avoid confrontation and conflict. Based on this situation disagreement may be difficult for Thai employees to express their different opinions openly. But Thai employees have encouragement on emotional expressions which fostering an environment where Thai employees feel comfortable to share their feelings within the group. This openness to expressing emotions further shapes Thai

communication style that adding another layer to the complexity of cross-cultural interactions.

5.2.2.2. The impact of cultural differences toward Japanese style communication

Based on the analysis, there are two concepts of 'Long-term orientation' and 'Uncertainty Avoidance' that significantly shaping Japanese communication styles. Japanese put emphasis on the notions of improvement and sustainability. They prefer long-term meetings with detailed discussions and questioning to achieve consensus. Employees in Japanese workplace are encouraged to activate participating by sharing suggestions and voicing their opinions.

The use of indirect and implicit language may be viewed, particularly in expressing disagreement or criticism is very common in Japanese communication style. This approach aims to avoid direct confrontation to maintain harmony within the group or organizations. However, when it comes to address work-related problems, clarity and precise details are crucial and they have a strong trait to investigate to ensure effective problem-solving and uncertainty management.

5.3 Implications

5.3.1 Adaptation of Japanese employees in Thai contexts

For Japanese employees working in Thai contexts, the understanding the impact of cultural differences is crucial for effective communication at Japanese workplaces located in Thailand. Thai culture is scored as high in power distance, hierarchical structures are presented. Therefore, Japanese may face challenges that Japanese is not familiar. Recognizing and adapting to these cultural aspects would help them to navigate the power distance within Thai contexts more effectively. Japanese may need to adjust to the preference of top-down communication and reluctance among subordinates to question for mutual understanding. Additionally, Thai culture emphasize on the collectivism, where group cohesion and strong relationship would play a significant aspect in Thai contexts. Moreover, confrontation and criticism

should be avoided by Japanese employees with recognizing the Thai cultural preference.

5.3.2 Adaptation of Thai employees in Japanese workplaces

Thai employees who working in Japanese contexts should understanding the impact of cultural differences on Japanese communication styles to enhance cross-cultural communication and collaboration in the Japanese workplaces.

The emphasis on 'Long-term orientation' and 'Uncertainty Avoidance' in Japanese work culture would be reflected in cross-cultural communication. Thai employees can benefit from adopting a similar approach to communication with familiarity of long-term thinking and discussions to reach consensus to ensure the improvement for sustainability.

Additionally, participating in discussion is a must in Japanese workplaces. It is very important for Thai employees to engage actively in discussions, sharing suggestions, and voicing their opinions in the meetings. Moreover, Thai employees may need to adapt their communication style when they work with Japanese on work-related issues. Thai need to communicate focusing on clarity and precise details.

5.4 Recommendations for further studies

This study has explored the challenges arising in cross-cultural communication. Here is an invitation to other researchers to explore similar issues in different settings. By considering the complexity of different backgrounds such as other company, industry, region, and nationality to deepen the understanding of the impact of cultural differences in cross-cultural workplaces.

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APPENDICES

Questionnaire for Cross-cultural communication problems and the influences of cultural differences on cross-cultural communication

This questionnaire is a part of data collection for a study that aims to explore cross-cultural communication problems and the impacts of cultural differences on cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Thai employees in Japanese workplace located in Thailand.

It consists of three parts: Part I: Demographic questions, Part II: Cross-cultural communication problems at work, and Part III: The impacts of cultural differences on cross-cultural communication. Please select the answer that fits you most.

Part I: Demographic questions

1) What is your nationality?
1. Japanese
2. Thai
3. Other nationality (Please specify) ….
2) What is your current job position/role?
1. Staff
2. Supervisor
3. Manager
4. Other (Please specify) ….
3) How long have you been working in a cross-cultural workplace?
l. Less than 1 year
2. 1-5 years
3. 6-10 years
4. More than 10 years

| 4) How often do you use English at work? |
| 1. Rarely (once a month) |
| 2. Sometimes (once a week) |
| 3. Often (every day) |
| 5) How would you rate your speaking level in English? |
| 1. Beginner: You can use simple expressions and talk about yourself in a basic way. |
| 2. Intermediate: You can keep going with pausing for finding expression or grammar. |
| 3. Advanced: You can express yourself and discuss in a meeting in English. |

Part II: The cross-cultural communication problems when English is use as a medium at work.

Please rate your agreement with the following statements with scaling 1-5 (1= Strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

Items	Criteria				
	1	2	3	4	5
1) I don't understand unfamiliar accents of my colleagues.					
2) I don't understand unfamiliar expressions of my colleagues.					
3) I don't understand facial expressions of my colleagues.					
4) I think that my communication style is direct and straightforward.					
5) I believe that understanding the meaning of words can vary across different cultures.					

6) I have experienced cross-cultural communication difficulties.					

Part III: The impacts of cultural differences on cross-cultural communication

Please rate your agreement with scaling 1-5 (1= Strongly disagree, 2 = Slightly disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Slightly agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

Items	Criteria				
	1	2	3	4	5
7) Subordinates expecting to be told what to do is normal in my culture.					
8) In my culture, people tend to avoid expressing opinions that would lead to conflicts to maintain group harmony.					
9) In my culture, getting the work done is more important than building relationships.					
10) Asking for further explanation when the order is unclear, or you do not understand is normal in my culture.					
11) In my culture, flexibility and rapid problem-solving are more important than discussion on the problem and detailed planning.					

Do you have interest and give consent to join interview regarding cross-cultural communication problems and cultural differences online for about 1 hour?

☐   I consent. (Please give an e-mail address for sending invitation)

E-mail:

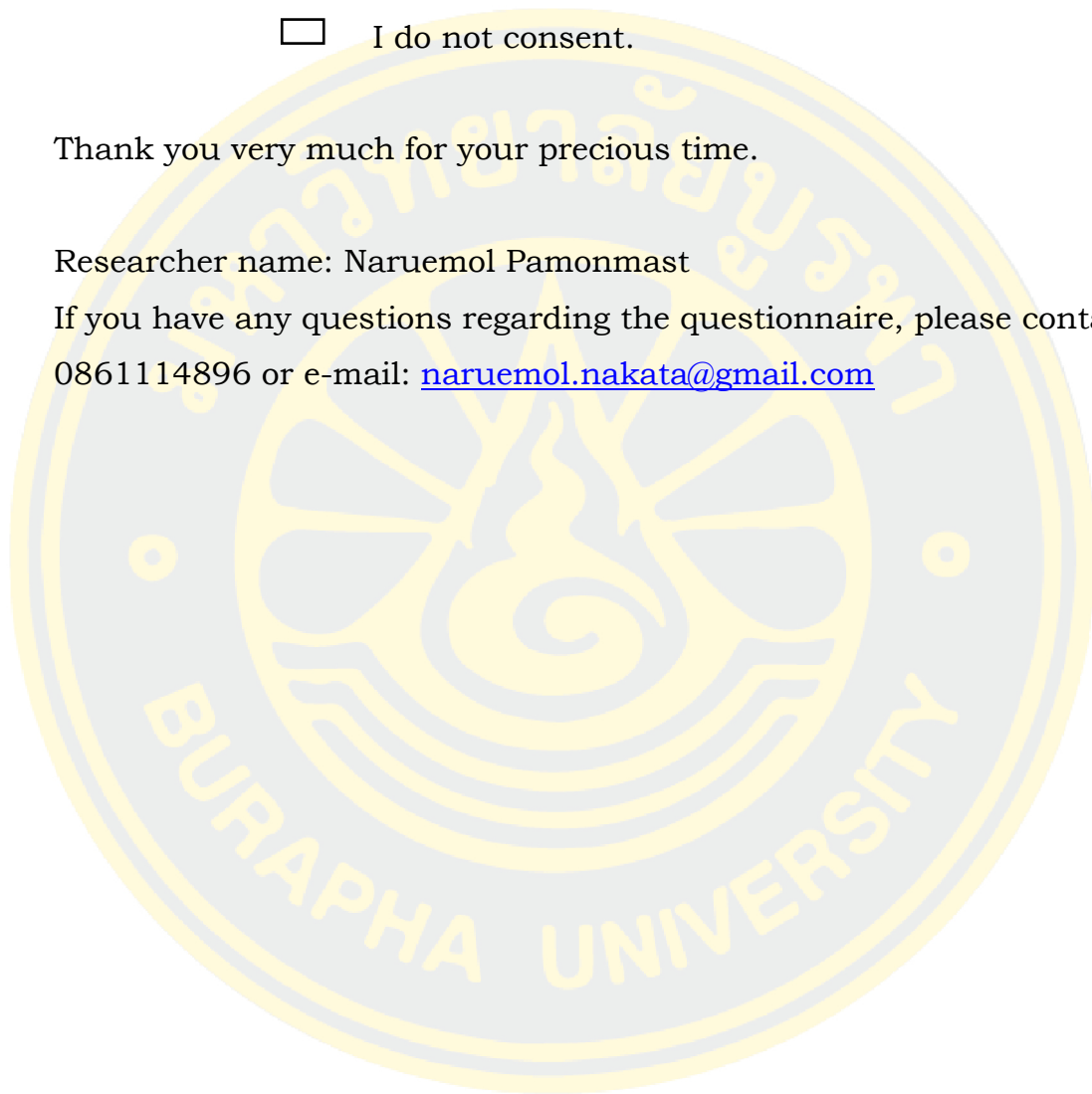...

☐   I do not consent.

Thank you very much for your precious time.

Researcher name: Naruemol Pamonmast

If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, please contact 0861114896 or e-mail: naruemol.nakata@gmail.com

The Cross-cultural problems when English is use as a medium to explore the effect of cultural differences on cross-cultural communication interview questions.

Part I: The cross-cultural communication problems

In your opinion, what are the major communication obstacles or problems when interacting with your Japanese/ Thai colleagues in English? Please explain and give an example.
Are there any differences in communication style between Japanese and Thai employees? Please explain and give an example.
What word can be understood differently by Japanese and Thai cultures? Please explain and give an example.
Have you ever experienced difficulties in cross-cultural workplace? If you have, please share your experience.

Part II: The effects of cultural differences on cross-cultural communication

1) Please describe any cultural differences between Japanese and Thai employees that you have encountered at work.
2) In your culture, do employees tend to adhere to the instructions given by their supervisors without questioning them? How it affects your communication between you and your colleagues? Please explain. (Power distance)
3) How do you view the different levels of prioritizing to maintain group harmony? Please explain. (Individualism versus collectivism)
4) How do you view the different levels of focusing on success at work between Japanese and Thai? How it affects your communication between you and your colleagues? Please explain. (Masculinity versus femininity)

5) How do you view the different levels of toleration of uncertainty or ambiguity between Japanese and Thai employees? How it affects your communication between you and your colleagues? Please explain. (Uncertainty avoidance)

6) How do you view the different levels of focusing on immediate outcomes or long-term goals in the future between Japanese and Thai? How it affects your communication between you and your colleagues? Please explain. (Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation)