

**CONFLICT AND THE DIFFICULTY OF CULTURAL
ADAPTATION IN JAPANESE - THAI COLLABORATION**



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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study research consisted of i.e. 1.) to exploring the obstacles in workplace deriving from cultural difference. 2.) to identify influence cause of conflict between Japanese and Thai perception 3.) to understanding the cultural adaptation of Japanese working with Thai employees and vice versus. 4.) to finding out the cultural adapted by Japanese and Thai so as to resolve lack of communication. In term of research resources, I profoundly recovered and included varieties regarding the document, textbooks upon literature review.

For term of methodological mechanism, I have applied the qualitative research: in-depth interview for collecting data. In addition, research interview participants consisted of eight managers who have been working in Japanese company in Thailand and experienced cultural adaptations.

Comprehensively, it revealed that obstacles between Japanese and Thai staffs mainly driven by cultural distinctions and background. In response to workplace circumstances, the six strategies have been implemented in achieving resolution of lack of communication.

KEY WORDS: Conflict / Adaptation / Cultural difference

31 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to current business world, the industries are seeking competitive advantages in order to expanding its benefits and growth i.e. some planning to provide business expansion for overseas customers or specifying new customer segment. Nonetheless, with human capital constraints, most of companies rarely maintained its financial position with these instruments i.e. lower wage and materials rates, lower tax rate. Apparently, there have been the numbers of trade alliances or trade unions of many countries continually increasing. For instance, European Union and Associations of Southeast Nations were established so as to enhancing for more trading and cooperation. The main objective in response to business disruption and current appropriation particularly cultures in other countries, (as cited by Sopachitwattana, 1999 in Resanond, 2002, p.1 and 33-34). The national culture performs its functions as a central principle that organizes the perception of the company's working and procedures, as well as what sort of treatment they anticipate receiving. (Sopachitwattana, 1999; Resanond 2002, p.44-45). The effectiveness depends on all cooperation from personnel in the organization's global structure which resulting in development of the cross-cultural experiences that enhancing work practical with their local colleagues in addition to the international clients, customers, and suppliers.

The current global economic condition lies ahead, Thailand investment policy has been continued and developed for strengthening the country prosperity which gearing by its rapid growth and attractive location according to Unger cited that (1989, p.1) that Thailand has attracted direct foreign investment from neighboring East Asian countries partly due to the close location, which has led to economic growth, especially the recent acceleration of industrial expansion and the export of manufactured products.

Based on investment proportion, Japan is one of majority investors in Thailand covering 39% of totaling investment amount following by Singapore at 16% (BOI, 2018). (Takeuchi, 1991; cited in Utsahajit, 1997, p.28). Further, natural resources and weather condition have become the influence factors to Japan's economic expansion as the same in many counties investing in Thailand.

Apparently, both Thailand and Japan locate in Asia, but there are distinguishes in many ways i.e. culture, social values, and perspectives. Many of Japanese, who are working in Thailand, adapted and integrated in achieving their career goals by establishment of strategic working direction- practicing and working with Thais (Jamornmam,1987 cited in Utsahajit,1997, p.2). Japanese collars have put great effort implementing their own managerial characteristics, for instance, slight adjustments made for that practiced locally. (Dirks, 1994 cited in Utsahajit, 1997, p.2). As a result, the working dedication made by local staffs were ignored by the majority of Japanese companies, and thus, the Japanese playing all decisions by themselves.

Lastly, the rational regarding this topic study selection by taking into account many factors, as because I have been working with a newly-established Japanese company since 2 year ago. I realized that I have always facing with cultural difficulties due to unfamiliarity and background of my colleagues and mine. These resulted in low productivities and stress. I therefore sought for what might be a root cause of the problems in relation therein. In doing so, the cultural adaption stage was taken into consideration in associated with to identifying influence cause of conflict in relation thereto. Further, I have applied the in-depth interview so as to collect information and to explore what could reduce the conflicts and enhance perspectives for both Thai and Japanese particularly in workplace.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section consist of an overview and framework in relation to relevant literature including culture, conflict and cultural adaptation used to perform this research study. This study focused on effect of cultural adaptation between Japanese and Thai who working in the same organization in Thailand. In fact, there are many aspects of cultural similarity both Thai and Japanese, but it does not go along so well in term of co-working. This research study, therefore, the theory concerning cultural dimension, cross-cultural adaptation were synthesized to find out a root cause of conflict and provide resolution as well as guidelines therein.

2.1 How culture affect to human life

Taking a deeper look at definition of “Culture” has its meaning and varies in certain theories: it could be divided into tangible or intangible for which human adhered from a period of time till present. Culture present lifestyle and way of life. The origination of culture is not from nature or genetic, but rather for learning that it from the social environment., said by Hofstede (2005,4).

Tylor (1871; cited in Ilieva, 1997,11) explained that culture is a complicated phenomenon that combines art, beliefs, customs, knowledge, laws, ethics, and various other characteristics and behaviors developed by the members of a society. (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; cited in Cullen, 1983, 31). Further, culture is a mental condition created by the collection of the social values that inform the activities of the society as opposed to the set of activities themselves. Hofstede (2005,4) mentioned that on one hand, culture is different from human nature and on the other, it also differs from the personality of the individuals within the culture.

Human is a social animal, who need to interface with others in order to create relationship. As statement aforementioned about definition of cultural, cultures

refer to relevant behavior, believe, and habit with difference in each country. In addition to distinguishing people, it also represents a part of emotion expression.

2.2 Hofstede's cultural dimension

The theory of Hofstede's cultural dimensions constitutes a framework revolving around cross-cultural communication, which was devised by Geert Hofstede. The dimensions collectively portray the impact of the culture ingrained in society on the values of the members of that society; in 1970s, Hofstede had studied the value of people from fifty countries around the world. The research participants were from IBM's employees according to Hofstede's findings that it provided the respondents similarly to its national averages: exposing similarity of problems from around the world, but different in solution selection in each country. In addition to Hofstede's experiment, he cited that the value adhered by people comprising of 4 dimensions namely: i.e. power distance, individual-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. (Hofstede, 1991 cited in Rosson, 2003, p.4-5). These elements are covering three geographical clusters with 50 countries, and long-term orientation

2.3 Power distance in Japanese and Thai

Hofstede (2005, p.46) defined that the power distance is the extent to unequal distribution of power whether expected or accepted by the members of that institutions and organizations: who are less powerful in that society, Onishi (2006, p.29). The different perceptions that are "existential" rather than that are defined by situational or temporary roles of the power distance concept. Hofstede (2005, p.46) mentioned the value system of those members who are less powerful is the basis of describing the power distance. The behavior of the more powerful leaders of society is usually applied to explain the way that power is distributed instead of the behavior of those members who are led.

Onishi (2006, p.30) explained that in countries with high power distance, the superiors and the subordinates each considered the other to be existentially

unequal, and thus, it is perceived that the basis of the hierarchical system is the existential inequality. That means the subordinates potentially viewed themselves as being different from their supervisors, which explains the reason that they work as employees while their managers are at a higher level. In contrast, subordinates and superiors in low power-distance countries regarding one another as being existentially equal, and therefore, the establishment of the hierarchical system is done for convenience rather than to demonstrate the inequality of roles. In other words, the supervisors did not think as the workers as being superior to them by nature; instead, their higher position is only because of their respective positions in the company where they are both employed.

The nature of human treats other person unequally. Hofstede thus argued that inequality occurred in every culture, but people will react or handle in different way depending on their culture. As Table 1 of Swierczek and Onishi (2003) showed the power distance dimension of Japanese and Thai. It described that Thai people have higher of power distance than Japanese. Rosson (2003, p.10) argues relatively that authoritarian values and attitudes are the property of cultures with higher levels of power distance, as well as tradition-based authority and conformity of values. Onishi (2006, p.31) Japan considered relatively low power distance comparing to Thailand as the Japanese do not consider the differences in the hierarchy to be “existential” but as only applying to specific contexts, such as in workplace. Meanwhile, Thais have higher power distance, Onishi (2006, p.33); for example, it is said that hierarchy is the “cornerstone” of the system in Thailand.

Onishi (2006, p.33-34) states that an important role assigned by hierarchy in the Thai social system. These forced younger generations learning the behavior that is appropriate for dealing a significant part of socialization. Particularly, they received instruction on the recognition of the differences between the status high and low class, or “*thi sung thi tum*”, which literally means, “the disparity of Elite group in society and the low class”, as well as the appropriate behavior for each level. Not recognizing and conforming to the behavioral norms related to the concept of *thi sung thi tum* will result in a person being disapproved of and unaccepted in society.

2.4 Individualism and collectivism in Japanese and Thai

Individualism and collectivism reflect type of people which different in relationship perspective. Boonsathorn, W. (2003) mentioned that a broad value tendency exists which indicates how much an individual is expected to provide for one's own care (autonomous self) or to seek their own integration within different groups, especially their family (connected self) Boonsathorn (2003, p.21). The individualism focused on their own personal goals and success: the completion of individual tasks. Moreover, they prefer to independently complete tasks rather than working with a group, for example, western countries such as France, Germany, and the US. In contrast, the opposite of individualism is collectivism; this characteristic prefers do tasks with a group or feeling more comfortable when working in groups. Collectivists usually function as part of a team, and they usually mention their group and speak in terms of "we" more often than "I", as well as use "we" when have to write. Most Asian countries classified as collectivists namely: Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, and Taiwan.

As shown in Table 1 of Swierczek and Onishi (2003) regarding the individual and collectivism dimension of Japanese and Thai; it stated clearly that Japanese has more individualism than Thai, and Thai are collectivism. (Swierczek and Onishi, 2003) Japanese insisted that Thai work or solving problem as a group, but they prefer independently when has adequate knowledge. In term of job assignment, Thai always keen knowing who lead the project and how they organize the team, but Japanese provide the ideas and the direction of project.

2.5 Masculinity and Femininity

Family is first place for children to learn socialize. It means that family shaped children to perceive equally or unequally in genders. The difference concerning equality and inequality in genders relating to Hofstede cultural dimension. Masculinity and Femininity are the value between two genders. (Hofstede, 2005). The main difference between femininity and masculinity is that the masculine management style are aggressive and decisive. Masculinity will solve conflicts by choosing the strongest side win, tend to live for work, earning money is preferred than having more

time for work. Men are preferred more for professional jobs than women. In contrast, femininity characterized as consensus and intuition. They managed conflicts by way of negotiation. Feminine work to live in which a woman could work as professional positions.

As in Table 1 of Swierczek and Onishi (2003), it explained that Japan has high masculinity while Thai are more to femininity. In workplace, masculine and feminine shaped organization culture in different way. Japanese working style are moving fast and well, having a competitive advantage, living to work. A career is necessary for men, but optional for women. Thai is more feminine; they are moving business lower, paying attention to customer detail, management as insight and general agreement, working to live and career is optional for both genders.

2.6 Uncertainty avoidance in Japanese and Thai

Uncertainty avoidance is dimension which measure degree of avoid uncertain situation or unpredictable situation. It could interpret as how people treat or deal with it. Rosson (2003) mentioned to Hofstede (2001) defined uncertainty avoidance as to the extent to degree members of certain culture are disturbed by situations that unknown or uncertain.

As shown in Table 1 of Swierczek and Onishi (2003), Japan is higher uncertainty avoidance than Thailand. (Swierczek and Onishi, 2003) Japanese usually made the specific rules to comfortable work. Moreover, in any cases for decision making, Japanese required sufficient study of relevant topics for the lowest risk. While Thai prefer flexibility and perceive Japanese very serious in decision making. Thai believe that the decision can be adjust in anytime.

2.7 Long term oriented in Japanese and Thai

Long term oriented is dimension which identifying people in two different value. First, long term oriented will focus on long term result and looking forward to the future in order to achieve the goal such as Japan and Asian countries. In contrast,

in western countries, they are short term oriented. They focus on short result and look for present more than predict to future. Hofstede (2005, p.210) argued that long-term orientation resulting in the encouragement of values concerned with rewards in the future, especially thrift and perseverance. On the other hand, short-term orientation involves the emphasis on the values focused on the past and the present, particularly fulfillment of social obligations, strong regard for traditions, and the preservation of status.

Table 2.1 Differences in the Japanese and Thai national cultures according to Hofstede

Cultural dimensions	Japanese	Thai	Difference
Power distance (higher = more hierarchy)	54	64	Thai + 10
Individualism (higher = more individualistic)	46	20	Japan + 26
Masculinity (higher = more masculine)	95	34	Japan + 61
Uncertainty avoidance (higher = more uncertainty avoidance)	92	64	Japan + 28
Long-term orientation (higher = a more long term orientation)	80	56	Japan + 24

Source: (Swierczek and Onishi, 2003, p.191)

Referring to Table 2.1 of Swierczek and Onishi (2003), Japanese has high long-term oriented more than Thai. (Swierczek and Onishi, 2003) In workplace, Japanese usually plan and set goal in long term, such as three years plan. While Thai usually make the plan for short term goal, also Thai do not accept long term plan for get high margin, but need loss at first. In term of management and promotion, Japanese work hard for long time to achieve, while Thai need to achieve it by do in short time or within a year.

2.8 Thai Management style

Empathy for others could be seen in Thai culture. As a result, avoidance of confrontation is preferred by Thais regardless of the cost (Niffenegger, Kulviwat & Engchanil, 2006). This implies that social harmony is desired by Thai management as

well as the business owners, and supervisors should have empathetic relationships with employees and subordinates (Niffenegger, Kulviwat & Engchanil, 2006). (Scarborough, 1998 cited in Niffenegger, Kulviwat & Engchanil, 2006). Subordinates have more respect and are often willing to respect the authority of the business owners and supervisors comparing with those in low power-oriented cultures that found in western nations. The majority of companies in Thailand are family businesses, which usually feel an obligation to operate as the 'father' of the employees and therefore, they are more cares for the staff that they employ at the company (Niffenegger, Kulviwat & Engchanil, 2006). For reason, that make Thai company usually doesn't have certain rules to manage employees in organization, but using traditional management style by treat employee like family.

2.9 Japanese Management style

Regarding Japanese culture, the employees are treated as a valuable asset of the company. Being a member of an organization or team is especially important (Haghirian, 2010). In the context of an organization, full-time personnel did not only enjoy job security but also receive full benefits such as bonuses, health insurance, and a pension plan; however, part-time staff receive none of these. When someone is employed by a Japanese company, they are expected to remain there for a long time, which often leads to a relationship lasting their entire lifetime. Moreover, they are very carefully screened before being offered a job (Haghirian, 2010). Teams and organizations in Japan are vertically structured, which means that the senior personnel exercise more influence, have higher salaries, and are regarded as having more expertise, although this may not be the actual case. (Haghirian, 2010).

Referring to Hofstede dimension, Japanese people are oriented for the long-term, and in Japanese society, there is a strong reciprocal relationship between persistence on the one hand and the relationships that organized and observed by status on the other (Onishi, 2006). There should be strong friendships among the staff. The highest priority is given to harmonious relationships, whereas open competition and conflict are widely avoided (Haghirian, 2010).

2.10 Source of Japanese and Thai conflict

The different aspects of sources of conflict that are caused by the management style of managers from Japan. These consisted of the national cultural characteristics according to Hofstede, the Japanese HRM system, and the unique Japanese business and social practices (Swierczek and Onishi, 2003, p.196).

Firstly, for Japanese values based on Hofstede dimension which are power distance, collectivism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and the long-term orientation. Secondly, Japanese applied their management style from company HRM policy. When they nearly to finish working aboard, they tend to follow customary management style and attention to parent company HRM policies in local branches. Swierczek and Onishi (2003) mentioned that these HRM approaches are commonly used by the specific corporate culture of Japan, which is quite different from the approach used by the Thais. Third, the leadership style of Japanese managers is based on Confucianism. In interpersonal relationships, the Confucian style still has a major influence in Japan (Swierczek and Onishi, 2003, p.196). Japanese has forced from society to show humbleness in collaboration. If they could not meet the expectation of their boss in interpersonal skill, they would difficult to get support from their boss.

These three different perspectives would shape Japanese manager with management style. Even though, Japanese are in Japan or oversea, but these kinds of management style will sustain in organization. Swierczek and Onishi (2003) argued that the Japanese are conditioned to believe in a group of national beliefs that support their values and are related to certain human resource practices and business practices. These match very well for the Japanese managers, but not for the Thai subordinates.

2.11 Conflict management style between Japanese and Thai

Significant differences between the Thai staff and the Japanese managers are found in terms of the management styles of competing and compromising according to Onishi and Mondejar (2011, p.26). In the conflict management of the Japanese that supports competition for conflict, the feeling and debate for correctness will be expressed by the Japanese, while compromise in the management of conflict is needed by the Thai employees. Aggression is not usually expressed by Thai, who

attempt to use simple explanations even if some points need to be reduced. (Onishi and Mondejar, 2011) When conflict between Thai personnel and their colleagues, supervisors, or subordinates occurs, the discussion shall be required so as to avoid the conflict and any unpleasant arguments. When situations in which Thai must face conflict, they do not normally show their displeasure in any way or attempt to avoid this type of situation.

The second factor as the highest factor for conflict management is accommodation. There are two factors that Japanese managers concerning accommodation. A combination of accommodation and compromising is the first factor, and the second one is a combination of accommodation and avoidance. However, the factor of the Thai staff includes only the variable of compromise (Onishi & Mondejar, 2011, p.27). It is noteworthy that an accommodating style is not only used for both nationalities to manage conflict, but also whom they accommodate. (Onishi and Mondejar, 2011) The variables of both the Japanese supervisors and the Thai employees regarding this factor are not related to superiors but instead are related to subordinates and peers.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Primary Data Collection Method

According to literature review in chapter 2, it mentioned about information and theory in relation to cultural adaptation process and effect factors. “The qualitative research method collected open-ended and emerging data so as develop this study. This method allows for a study of an exploratory nature” (Creswell, 2003). The resulting data are rich, human, subtle and often very revealing (McDaniel & Gates, 2013). In this study, I have applied qualitative method; in depth interview to exploring the cross-cultural conflict and misunderstanding between Japanese and Thai employees in company A, and how they adapt to working with each other. In the interview process, I conducted interview session for Japanese and Thai who working in retail field with a minimum 1year experiences in Japanese company in Thailand. In addition, the experiences of Japanese and Thai will be advantage for me to understand widely view and more addition points.

3.2 Interview Method

The majority mechanism method of this study is the in-depth interview as the following:

3.2.1 Sample selection

The group of interview participants in this study consisted 8 persons working in Japanese company in Thailand in associated with different cultures experiences. The interview participants are at managerial level. The rational that I choosing Japanese retail company as because it is brand new company which established around 2 years in Thailand. Moreover, the interviewees who I selected,

they worked from company established until presently, it means that they were face lots of conflicts and cultural adaptation. Among 8 of selected interviewees, 4 of them are Japanese who responsible for merchandising in Thailand; Thailand and balancing profit and margin of company. The another 4 interview participants are Thai, who responsible for importing Japan goods such as grocery, confectionary, and agricultural products to selling in balancing products stock and disposal control and responsible for profit and margin of company. These 2 groups of interviewees have a minimum 1-year experiences in working with different cultures. All of Japanese lived in Thailand at least 2 years to 4 years. Thai interviewees has been experience and working with different culture.

Table 3.1 Interviewees list

Code	Position	Nationality	Gender	Intercultural experience
J1	Merchandise manager	Japan	Male	3 years
J2	Merchandise manager	Japan	Male	2 years
J3	Merchandise manager	Japan	Male	2 years
J4	Merchandise manager	Japan	Male	4 years
T1	Department manager	Thai	Male	2 years
T2	Department manager	Thai	Male	1.5 years
T3	Department manager	Thai	Female	3 years
T4	Department manager	Thai	Female	1.5 years

3.2.2 Develop open-ended question

In order to find out the truth from real life story, I implemented open-ended questions in order to give opportunities interviewees delivering their story and feeling from experiences. The list of open-ended questions as following;

Table 3.2 Questions list

Finding Factor	Interview question
Conflict	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me about your relationship with your Thai/Japanese coworkers. What works well? What does not work so well? Can you give some examples? 2. Can you think of a situation where you have misunderstood with Thai/Japanese people and become misunderstanding? 3. What is the thing that you think is cause of misunderstanding? 4. Do you think culture can be cause of misunderstanding? Why? or Why not? 5. In your opinion, how culture affect to misunderstanding? 6. How you solved those misunderstanding conflicts?
Cultural Adaptation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think language is a barrier for you in working with your Thai/Japanese colleagues? Can you give me an example? and how you deal with it? 2. Do you think Thai/Japanese culture has an influence on working together? if yes, how you deal with it? 3. Do you think working style is different between Thai/Japanese employees in your company? Can you give examples? and how you deal with it? 4. In your opinion, how important of adaptation? 5. How you adapt yourself to work with Thai (Japanese) people? What do you do differently now? Was it successful? Why? Or why not?

3.2.3 Probing Technique:

One-on-one interviews that probing and eliciting the detailed answers to questions, implemented nondirective techniques to covering hidden motivations (McDaniel & Gates, 2013). In addition, one-on-one interview provided interviewee focusing on their idea, feeling and paying attention to answer questions. The direction

of a deep interview is guided by the responses of the interviewee (McDaniel & Gates, 2013). For this reason, during interview process, I have applied probing technique to follow up interviewee answers, focusing on their feeling during interview.

3.2.4 Conducting the interview

The effective way to interview people are concerning conversation and proper interaction with interviewee. According to this study, all of interviewees are living in Thailand. I have collected data by way of face-to-face conversation, and interview at coffee shop or venue nearby the interview workplace. The interview venue is very important as because it affected directly to feeling of interviewee. Distance from workplace will create relaxing atmosphere, they will brave to tell the truth in detail. In each interview session will take approximately 30 - 45 minutes including introduction and probing to find more information. After done data collection from interview, I conducted study interpretation and data analysis. Then, compare the result with literature review and supported theory. Lastly, write the result and conclusion.

3.3 Research Framework

The aim of data collected from in-depth interview and literature review are to identify, different culture which influenced conflict in organization and how they adapt cultural to reduce conflict between Japanese and Thai. The result discussed between interviewed data and literature. The conclusion combined primary and secondary data by organizing based on categories. The relationship of finding cause of conflict and cultural adaptation related to cultural differentiation as shown in research framework in figure 3.1

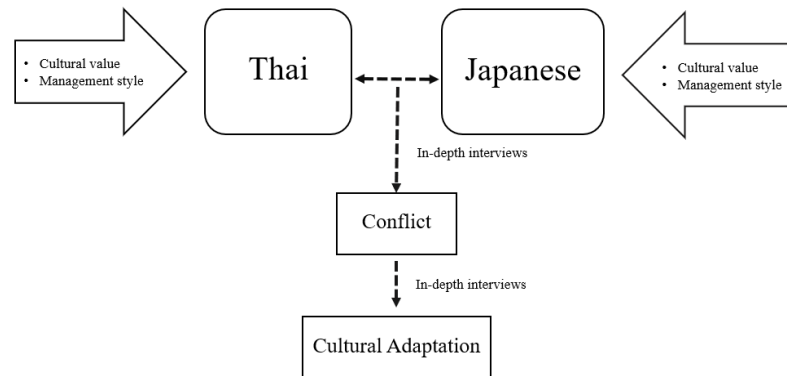


Figure 3.1 Research framework



CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

After completion of qualitative research, the summary of data finding from interviewees analyzed based on both Thai and Japanese respondents.

4.1 Conflicts between Thais and Japanese

This topic aims to understand what caused misunderstandings between Japanese and Thais and may lead to cross-cultural conflicts.

4.1.1 Relationship with co-worker

At the first interview question, I started the conversation by asking the relationship with co-worker between Japanese and Thai. Both Japanese and Thai responded in positive way about their relationship with their boss and subordinates. 3 out of 4 Japanese interview participants mentioned Thai were genuinely friendly and kindness. As Mr. J2 said that “I think I have a good relationship with co-worker. Thai are really kind. The Thai always work as a friend more than boss and subordinate. They have made me feel like friend not co-worker. It was totally different from Japanese which we separated co-worker from friends”. In addition, Mr. J1 mentioned that “Yes, I think we have a good relationship between co-worker. But did you know, normally Japanese people has their own private zone which they not allow others to step much closer. Mr. J4 said “I think we work along well because we separated our responsible clearly”. To summarize, all Japanese has good relationship with Thai co-worker. In addition, 3 out of 4 Japanese mentioned to Thai character which friendly, kindness and always smile.

According to Thai interview participants, 3 out of 4 them mentioned to their Japanese co-workers as positive way. But mentioned about their relationship with Japanese co-workers in different perception. Ms. T3 said “I have good relationship

with my boss, I think my boss quite open to accept my ideas. Before I worked here, I thought that Japanese might be much strictly with everything. But, when I have worked with him, he made me relax and having freedom to make decision.” While, Mr. T2 said “I think I have good relationship, but sometimes Japanese are complicated for me. He has strong opinion which I don’t understand. He believed that the ways Japanese think are correct. For me, I think in order to work together, we have to listen each other. And, Ms. T4 said “Maybe!. Sometime it seemed good, but sometime not. I thought that, Japanese really un-openness for me”. For all Thais, they have different perception about their relationship with co-worker due to Japanese characteristics they met.

Pursuant to Japanese and Thai interviewees, Japanese are focusing on work rather than relationship between co-workers as they mentioned about working responsible and separated co-workers from friend. While Thais are focusing on relationship with co-worker and feeling rather than work.

4.1.2 Miscommunication

In this topic, Japanese mentioned about miscommunication point which affect to conflict between Japanese and Thai. Japanese mentioned that, in the beginning, they usually faced with misunderstanding situation, but later it became better and more understandable each other. Mr. J4, who has 4 years of intercultural experiences in Singapore and Thailand, said “I was faced misunderstand situation, when I tried to assign them to did some tasks, but they did in different way from I said. At that time, I got angry because I had to do it completely and it wasted the time”. In addition, Mr. J1 said “Thais usually did in different ways from I said, maybe they didn’t understand what I really mean”.

For the Japanese, miscommunication is a problem which can be the cause of conflict, as because it made them angry and frustrated.

4.1.3 Miscommunication

In this topic, Japanese mentioned about miscommunication point which affect to conflict between Japanese and Thai. Japanese mentioned that, in the beginning, they usually faced with misunderstanding situation, but later it became

4.1.4 Language barrier

During the interview session, both Japanese and Thai responded quite similarly. All of them thought that, the cause of misunderstanding is language rather than other factors. Mr. J2 said “I wasn’t English native speaker, I used the wrong words to communicate to them. Then, it became misunderstanding. But, Mr. J1 said “I think communication, as because we speak in different language which directly affect to lack of communication.”

For all Thai interviewees, they thought that language is main cause of misunderstanding, but I also found interesting part from Thai; Mr. T2 said “It was really difficult for me to communicate with Japanese, I could not speak Japanese even English. When he assigned me tasks, I have to use translator in every times”. While Ms. T3 said “Even, I speak in English, but I don’t really know that how much my Japanese boss could get the information”.

For the respondents of both Thai and Japanese, they perceived in the same way about language barrier which can be one of conflict factors.

4.1.5 In-group communication

According to the conflict factor, it is interesting that Thai interviewees mentioned Japanese in-group communication which could be cause of conflict in Thai perception.

As Mr. T2 said “Japanese lacked of communication. Japanese have their own plans which they usually communicate among Japanese rather than Thai”. And Mr. T1 said “in any cases occurred, Japanese have always discuss among Japanese. They did not let Thai involved or made decision together with them”.

In this case, it can summarize that, even Japanese and Thai are working in the same company, Japanese considered Thais not in the same group.

4.1.6 Culture versus personality

Japanese and Thai have different cultural. In this question, I intended to observe both nation perception. When they had to work together, do they think of different culture can be cause of misunderstand. Based on Japanese perception, they didn’t think that different culture can be causing of misunderstanding even, we have

base different cultural. Mr. J3 said “I don’t think so, it isn’t about culture. For me work is work not about culture and personality. Further, Mr. J4 said that “I’m not sure, but I don’t think so. I think, we have misunderstood because of language and miscommunication more than culture effect.

Two Thai interviewees thought that culture can be cause of misunderstanding. Mr. T2 said “We have different background and different working style; it shaped us in different perspective. Mr. T1 said “It could be as because when I worked with Eastern supervisors, it was totally different from Japanese. The way he worked, and the way he assigned the job were totally different. In contrast, another 2 Thai thought as the same as Japanese which language is cause of misunderstanding. As Ms. T3 said “I don’t think it can be cause of misunderstanding. In my opinion, I think it depends on personality, if he or she can adapt and adjust themselves to work with others, they can work everywhere around the world. Because I have been worked with Japanese before, and I could work potentially together with as working with my boss. As Ms. T3 aforementioned, it means that she recognized people need to adapt themselves to the other culture and to the other person for productivity.

The interviews elaborated that Japanese interviewees thought language and miscommunication rather than other factors. Whilst, Thai are likely to thinking of culture and adaptation due to Mr. T1, Mr. T2 mentioned above about culture causing of conflict. And Ms. T4 mentioned more about when Thai has conflict, they usually keep in mind and do not tell so as to make dissatisfaction between each other. In contrary to Japanese style are more to have meeting to find out what is the problem and how to protect in future. Also, Japanese thought that Thai are not productive and slack work.

In summary, Japanese thought of miscommunication can be cause of conflict. Miscommunication caused by cultural difference. The culture shaped people in different personality which lead people to think and act in different, whilst Thai believed that cultural different is cause of conflict.

4.1.7 Strict with rules versus Mai pen rai

According to working characteristics with different nations, Japanese and Thai have their own unique working style. When both working together, the different

working style would affect to them. As Mr. J1 said “Japanese do work hard and result oriented; you cannot go home until the assigned task done. It was very different from Thai people. I experienced with the using company policy to make them following, for example, I assigned one of my subordinates to checking stock, and he asked me to postpone immediately. Mr. J2 said “Thai people usually go home on time even their work not finish, and I don’t like it at least they should inform me when it would finish”. In addition, Mr. J2 said “When Thai people faced with difficult situation, they usually said Mai Pen Rai with unnormal situation.

The interviews demonstrated that, Japanese are more strictly with rules rather than Thai. Japanese usually respect and follow company rules. While Thai interviewees in Japanese mentioned, they usually tried to avoid which makes Japanese angry and frustrated.

4.2 Strategic Adaptation

In this section aimed to understand people after faced with conflict between Thai and Japanese respondents. People will adapt themselves to work with each other in different ways. Nonetheless, I required to collect data in order to find how people do cultural adaptation between Thai and Japanese respondents.

4.2.1 Reasoning Strategies

As I aforementioned about different cultural between Japanese and Thai in order to see how both groups solve misunderstood situation. From interview session, Japanese and Thai used reasoning strategy to solve and deal with misunderstand situation. As Mr. J2 said “I let Thai people do what they want, but they need to have the reason support behind. For Thai people, Mr. T2 said “If we think in different way, I will talk to him directly to make everyone understand the same direction. But, if something I disagree, I will tell my reasons supporting communication that I’m disagree. Then, we discuss condition better”.

Moreover, Mr. T2 mentioned more about working with different working style in order to less miscommunication between co-worker. Mr. T2 said “He has strong believe which I could not change his mind even, I had reasons to support. Also,

he doesn't trust in Thai people. I solved the different working style by talking to him directly, and inform him which effect that occurs if you persist in doing so".

In addition, Japanese and Thai respondent mentioned about culture that influenced interviewees to new culture. In addition, how both Japanese and Thai respondents perceived about working with foreign co-workers. Mr. J2 said "Sometime I think of different ways from Thai people because I don't know their culture, but I tried to listen them before making decision. While Thai interviewees agreed that Japanese culture influenced them; Mr. T2 said "I have Japanese boss, and everything that Japanese assigned me blending Japanese culture and many Japanese environment forced me to follow their culture".

As information from interviewed earlier, the way Japanese and Thai using to manage misunderstand situation and different working style are reasoning strategy in order to make their co-worker understand reason and opinion. Moreover, Japanese and Thai respondents used reasoning strategy in order to support their adaptation to new culture. However, reasoning strategy can be one strategy which help to solve misunderstand and adaptation.

4.2.2 Following the Japanese boss

According to the second strategy, it applied and used by Thai respondent who unsuccessful with reasoning strategy. In addition, this strategy used for manage conflict with Japanese co-workers. As Ms. T4 said that "Now, I do nothing, I have been talked to Japanese boss directly, but it didn't work. Now I gave up and let he did he wanted".

In addition, Ms. T4 mentioned more about handling with different working style. Ms. T4 said "he tried to monitor me everything, never let me work on my decision and I solve it by let him did what he want. If the working result mistaken, he would ask me to solve it. Then he would learn".

From information above, Ms. T4 usually got everything done by following his boss direction. She used "Following Japanese boss strategy" in order to solve misunderstanding and handling with different working style by less conflict with her Japanese co-worker. However, this strategy would be part of personality which Ms. T4

facing with her Japanese co-worker. Then, it gave her came up with new strategy using with her boss to less conflict.

4.2.3 Using translator

In this question, it aimed to confirm that language can be barrier for both Thai and Japanese respondents when working together. This question, all the interviewees answered in the same way; they believed that language is the big part for both Thai and Japanese respondents for not work along well. Mr. J1 said “Of cause, we speak different language. Even, sometime I used English to communicate, but they won’t understand what I tried to communicate. While Ms. T3 said “It can be barrier when he doesn’t understand what I tried to say. The way people use to handle with language barrier, they use language translator in order to communicate to right meaning.

The information from interviewees indicated that the way Thai and Japanese respondents managed the language barrier using translator in order to help to communicate the right message to co-worker. Despite, this is one of adaptation point from Japanese and Thai respondents which they use in order to adapt themselves to work with foreign co-workers.

4.2.4 Change mindset and adapt to new culture

As I mentioned about different working style between Japanese and Thai in order to see how they think of the important of adaptation. For Japanese, Mr. J2 said “it is important because I did not know everything in Thailand. I therefore had to ask many things from Thai people to live here. For working, I think not much important, but sometime I learn from staff about Thai behavior different from Japanese.

For all of Thai people, they mentioned in the same way. Ms. T3 said “I think it important, even I have been working with foreigner before, but I think I still need to adapt a lot”. In addition, Mr. T2 said “It very important for me because I have never had foreigner boss. Also, Japanese are very strictly with rules. It is a big adaptation for me.

For both Japanese and Thai respondents, they are using change mindset and adapting to new culture strategy working with foreigner. Apparently, the Japanese

still adapted to work with different culture in order to work potentially with Thai people. Whilst Thai people, were more paying attention to adaptation by learning and adjusting themselves to work with difference culture.

4.2.5 Being yourself

According to, strategy which Japanese used for working with Thai co-workers. Some of Japanese tend to follow Japanese way rather than adapt to new culture. As Mr. J1 said “I think I don’t need to adapt because our company has policies to make everyone go the same way and Thai people quite easy to work with because when I ordered them, they would follow it. And Mr. J4 said “I think it isn’t important for me, but it important for Thai people because they working in Japanese company, they have to adapt to work with Japanese, but if I working in Thai company, it my duty to adapt to work with Thai culture”.

As Japanese interviewees responded above, Japanese use being yourself strategy to work with Thai co-workers by being themselves and strict on the rules which they thought that, it would help to generate work well rather than adapt themselves to work with different nation.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

After completion of data analysis from the in-depth interview collection, this research could provide and identify conflict factors between Japanese and Thai who working in same company. In addition, it also proved that in their perception, different culture could be cause of conflict or not. Further, I could identify how they manage conflict to work with each other. After that, I studied more in adaptation for both Japanese and Thai which help to identify Japanese and Thai has been adapted themselves to work with each other. This is summarized in figure 5.1 as the following below:

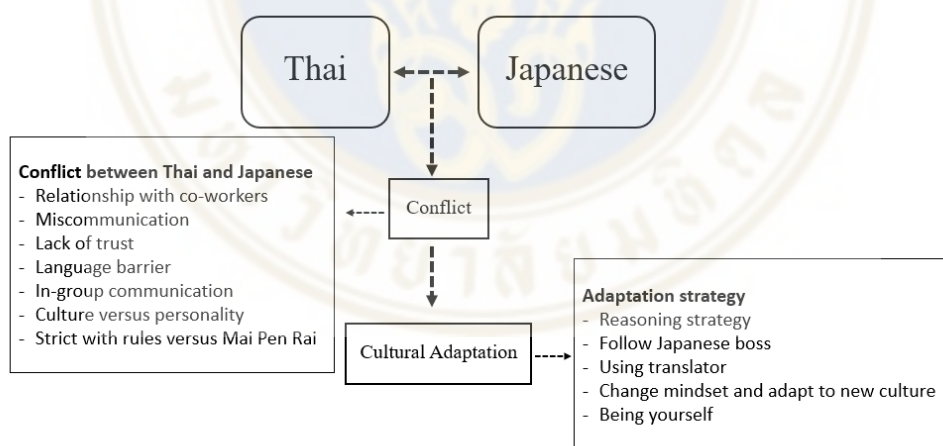


Figure 5.1 Conflict between Thai and Japanese and Adaptation strategy

The figure 5.1 shown the conflict between Thai and Japanese which caused by 7 topics of conflict. Firstly, relationship with co-worker, Thai and Japanese are focusing in different perception, Japanese are focus on work, while Thai people are focus on feeling and relationship between co-worker. This information is similar to

Niffenegger, Kulviwat & Engchanil (2006) which mentioned about social harmony is desired by Thai management as well as the business owners, and supervisors should have empathetic relationships with employees and subordinates. Secondly, miscommunication is the cause of conflict in Japanese perception. When Japanese and Thai communicate to each other, they did not get the message correctly due to different culture. Thirdly, lack of trust, Japanese people strongly believe in Japanese practice rather than local people which made Thai people frustrated. Fourthly, language barrier is cause of conflict of Thai and Japanese respondents due to different native language. Fifthly, in-group communication, Japanese usually make in-group communication rather than communicate to everyone, that making Thai people disappointed and getting low motivation. Next, culture versus personal, culture shaped people in different personality which lead people to think and act in different way. Therefore, it relatively caused Thai and Japanese difference in perception. Lastly, strictly with rules versus Mai Pen Rai, Japanese believed and respected in rules while Thai usually said Mai Pen Rai in response to trouble.

According to cultural adaptation, after Japanese and Thai respondents faced with conflict period, both Japanese and Thai will move to adaptation period which they overcome the conflict between each other and make work along well. The strategies consisted of 5 which Japanese and Thai respondents using for adaptation. Firstly, reasoning strategy, the way Japanese and Thai using to managed misunderstand situation and different working style are reasoning strategy in order to make their co-worker understand reason and opinion between each other. This information is similar to Onishi and Mondejar (2011) who mentioned about conflict management style between Thai and Japanese. The author mentioned that Thai needs compromising in conflict management, Thai people tried to use simple word to explained their action even, need to reduce some points. Secondly, some Thai respondent used "Follow Japanese boss strategy" by following Japanese assignment without any debated in order to solve misunderstanding and handle with different working style. Also, less conflict between Japanese co-worker. Thirdly, Thai and Japanese respondents managed the language barrier by using translator in order to help to communicate the right message to co-worker. Fourthly, Japanese and Thai respondents are using change mindset and adapt to new culture strategy in order to

adapt to work with foreigner. Despite, the Japanese still adapt to work with different culture in order to work along well and understand in Thai people. While Thai people, tend to pay attention to adaptation by learn and adjust themselves to work with difference culture. Lastly, some Japanese are used being yourself strategy to work with Thai co-worker by strict on the rules and being themselves. They believe that it would generate work well rather than adapt themselves to work with different nation.

However, in term of cultural adaptation, even Japanese mentioned about striation with the rules and follow Japanese practice, but they have been adapted themselves to work with Thai co-workers anyway. In addition, I found that both Japanese and Thai adapted to work with each other due to Japanese tend to openness with Thai people and tend to accept Thai opinion. In Japanese company, from the interviewed it is evident that Japanese has higher power than Thai which obviously that, Japanese has adapted some point to work with Thai, but Thai people has to adapted to responded Japanese goals.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Understand the cultural

Before expanding broadly, they should learn the cultural difference in Thailand before, to order to know as base of information. In addition, they have to learn more about different working style that directly affect to organization, and working results for a long time. After know the difference, they should prepare and learn how to adjust their own culture to work with different culture to make two different culture can work along well. Not only Japanese company has to prepared and adjust, but also Thai has to learn the different between each other, and learn how to adjust themselves to go along with company goals.

5.2.2 Respect Japanese as leader

After both nations had learnt the different of cultural as I mentioned above, then Thai people should respect Japanese as leader of organization and follow them as company goal even, Japanese and Thai ideas are difference. In addition, Thai people

should let Japanese leading in order to set company process and procedure in Japanese way.

5.2.3 Making report

When Japanese assign job to Thai people, Thais should to do progress report to Japanese and related person in every period in order to make sure that in every step of work does not have any serious problem. Also, if have any mistake occurs, they can handle as well as possible.

5.2.4 Ask for permission

One way to solve conflict between Japanese and Thai, Thai people should ask Japanese to get permission before action. As I mentioned earlier, Japanese and Thai usually think in different way which would make conflict easily. For reasons, Thai people should ask Japanese and consult Japanese by telling the process and plan that Thai going to do, in order to get advice and suggestion from Japanese by less mistake and less conflict between nations.

5.2.5 Active listening and discuss the difference

When working with Japanese, Thai should listen to Japanese carefully. When Thai have the different opinion, Thai should ask at that time after Japanese finish telling. As Onishi and Mondejar (2011) mentioned that Thai people usually reduce conflict by using compromise. For reasons, Thai people should discuss the different opinion between Japanese and Thai in order to make everyone understand and follow in the same direction.

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