



**ENGLISH BARRIERS AND FACTORS AFFECTING
COMMUNICATION AMONG THAI SOFTWARE
CONSULTANTS WORKING IN A MULTINATIONAL IT
COMPANY**

BY

Ms. KOTCHAKORN PUAPUNTUMA

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN CAREER ENGLISH FOR
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2019
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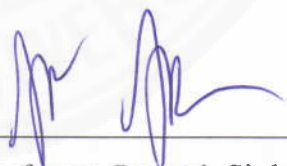
ENTITLED

ENGLISH BARRIERS AND FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION
AMONG THAI SOFTWARE CONSULTANTS WORKING IN A
MULTINATIONAL IT COMPANY

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the English barriers among Thai IT software consultants and explore the factors affecting communication regarding different cultures in a multinational IT company. A total 95 Thai software consultants working in a multinational IT company completed a questionnaire that was created based on a pilot study, asking three volunteers who had a qualification according to the target population, an interpersonal skills test for intercultural sensitivity created by Chen & Starosta (2000) for measuring intercultural sensitivity in term of intercultural communication competence in five dimensions: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment and interaction intensiveness. A total of 61 respondents volunteered to take an English proficiency test, CEFR level B2- Business Vantage adopted from the CEFR free online test, on the Cambridge English assessment webpage. The period of data collection was between March 23rd to April 30th, 2019 and data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) in order to calculate frequencies, means, and standard deviations (SD). In terms of the English proficiency test, , all exam papers were marked and scored according to the standard of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) created by European Council (1989-1996) and the European

Union Council Resolution (2001), to measure English ability on a six-point scales combined: Below A1, A 1, A 2, B1, B2, and C1.

The finding revealed that most respondents had a fair level of English proficiency in the four skills. They could understand basic English messages and content from books, internet, and basic English conversations on topics relevant to their background knowledge and their field in SAP software architecture. In aspect of interpersonal skills of intercultural sensitivity, most of them had good intercultural communication competent in every aspect of the five dimensions, notably a strong positive attitude, open-mindedness, self-esteem, good relationships as well as recognition of cultural difference and procedures for effective cross-cultural communication with culturally distinct counterparts.

Keywords: English barriers, Thai software consultants, multinational IT company, Intercultural communication competence, Interpersonal skills, English proficiency test, factors affecting communication, AEC, SEA, SAP.

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Ms. Kotchakorn Puapuntuma

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

In business world today, the information technology industry plays a major role in all kinds of businesses. Many organizations, SMEs and startups have adopted the new innovations of technologies and digital transformation platform to support the high demand for production capacity in various businesses in the world market. Many software partners have created joint ventures in IT services and solutions companies and extended their services worldwide; therefore, the role of IT consultants is a significant resource for designing and implementing smart technology infrastructure and software programs complying with the requirements of usage for customers in all business sectors. However, the obstacles of job opportunities for advancement on the IT career path are not only proficient technical knowledge, but also effective English communication in a multinational working environment.

As Chonnipa Kaewthong (2014) mentions in her research Thailand has been considered as the third country in which many specialists IT consultants works in multinational IT services and solutions companies and most of them have a high working exchange in the AEC community, following Singapore and Malaysia. Unfortunately, many Thai IT consultants still have insufficient English proficiency and other soft skills which are needed for future advancement on their career path.

Cultures and languages have an influence on communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds, which can impact people's beliefs, personality, cultural values, social values, and livelihoods. Therefore, the trend of internationalization in the borderless communication era, the needs of effective working performance and successful communication in intercultural environment is apparent in many international information technology organizations; however, many research findings have shown that effective intercultural communication remains insufficient in the business world (Fritz & Mollenberge, 1999; Fritz, Mollenberge, & Werner, 1999).

This study aims to investigate English language barriers among Thai software consultants working in multinational IT company in Thailand. It also aims to explore employees' interpersonal skills in intercultural communication and cultural awareness affecting communication in the workplace, which are key issues in intercultural communication causing uncomfortable feelings and impeding effective communication in multicultural environments.

In the future, this study might provide beneficial guideline for software consultants and other IT workers to acknowledge the needs for English communication and encourage them to improve their English proficiency in the workplace. Moreover, the human resource department and the people in charge could take these issues into consideration and find the right ways to help the IT staff overcome those barriers.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

English barriers have occurred among Thai software consultants working in information technology companies for decades. Many Thai IT consultants are specialist in their fields, equal to IT experts from leading information technology country hubs such as Singapore, India, Malaysia, and the Philippines. On the other hand, in business communication when meeting-up with executive business partners, most Thai IT consultants resource have a positive reaction toward the partners from different cultural backgrounds. Even if they have sufficient “technical skills”, in terms of “soft skills” including English communication is a significant skill that need to be enhanced.

In a multinational IT company with high standards of global business service, governance policies and service level agreements, most IT employees may experience pressure in intercultural communication and need to adapt themselves according to global governance policies and working style with their native and non-native supervisors as well as the customers in various market sectors. Therefore, the turnover rate in the IT industry is high in every quarter. Even if companies provide the attractive benefits and extra bonuses, most of them work here for the short term, so HR department has to spend a lot of time and money finding new consultants and in providing technical training for them.

Therefore, a leading recruitment agency has divided the factors contributing to IT employees' turnover rates in many organizations into four categories; good salary, corporate culture or organizational culture, lack of advancement opportunities, and lack of training in the workplace. Although there are more than 10,000 job vacancies for IT and software positions in the marketplace, the number of new graduations is unable to support the demand for all kinds of businesses. Many employers today attract new employees by offering a high salary, good benefits, or extra pocket money; however, in the hiring of long-term employees, encouraging employees through effective training skill development and developing good relationships between employees of different cultural backgrounds are the most critical benefits that all employers should acknowledge and offer to their employees.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.3.1 What are English barriers among Thai software consultants working in a Multinational IT Company?

1.3.2 What are the factors affecting communication regarding different cultures in a Multinational IT Company ?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 To investigate English barriers among Thai software consultants working in a Multinational IT Company.

1.4.2 To explore the factors affecting communication regarding different cultures in a Multinational IT Company.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definition of terms for this study are presented as follows;

1.5.1 Software consultant refers to employees with expertise in software design, software development, software engineering, and software applications. Their responsibility is to create software program according to users' requirements. This study focuses on software consultants with expertise in SAP (systems applications and products) software.

1.5.2 SAP (Systems Applications and Products) Software refers to a software package that many leading organizations and new entrepreneurships utilize to manage and control their business structures such as resource planning, financial management, customer relationship management, supply chain management, human resource management, and etc.

1.5.3 Multinational Information Technology Company refers to the global information technology companies expanding their subsidiaries to other countries and run business operations which offer information technology solutions services, infrastructures, software, applications, SAP/ERP software package implementation, and other computing systems.

1.5.4 English barriers refer to the obstacles that software consultants confront when they communicate in English language to foreign supervisors, colleagues as well as clients in their workplace in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

1.5.5 Factors affecting communication refer to factors which influence communicators' beliefs, cultural values, social values, and livelihoods. Those factors can describe individual personality and faith, which illustrate the communication styles of people from different cultures.

1.5.6 Individualistic cultures refer to cultures that values individuality, self-reliance, assertiveness, and independence

1.5.7 Collectivistic cultures refer to cultures that values empathy, group orientation, self-sacrifice, and interdependence.

1.5.8 Low context cultures refer to cultures that prefer information and communication are to be clearly spelled out, direct, and explicit.

1.5.9 High context cultures refer to cultures that prefer information and communication to be brief, indirect, and implicit.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate English language barriers of Thai software consultants and software functional staff and to explore the respondents' interpersonal skills for intercultural communication based on sensitivity scale measuring the factors affecting communication in the workplace. To achieve the objective of this study, Thai software consultants who were specialists in SAP (System Application and Products) and other software applications consultants working in a multinational information technology company were the target population of this study. In order to collect all data within timeline of the Language Institute, Thammasat University, convenient sampling was utilized for collecting the data from the sample group who were the volunteers for this study.

In conclusion, the data was collected from 95 respondents within the time period of 29th March to 30th April 2019. To address the research questions, three research instruments were used to obtain the data from sample: a questionnaire asking for respondents' demographic and general information, an interpersonal skills test using intercultural sensitivity scale adopted from previous research topic and an English proficiency test, CEFR - Level B2 Business Vantage adopted from the CEFR free test online, from the Cambridge English assessment webpage.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate English barriers and factors affecting communication among Thai software consultants in a multinational IT company. The

findings should provide the beneficial guideline for executives and upper management on increasing the potentiality of their employees, and human resources to design training courses for employees in English communication. IT consultants may be able to acknowledge their needs in English communication and be encouraged to improve their English proficiency to minimize barriers in their workplace.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The target population of this study were Thai software consultants with expertise in the SAP (Systems Applications and Products) software package and others IT digital platforms working in a multinational IT company as well as freelancers with at least one-year experience in software consulting in a multinational company. The research instruments for collecting the data from respondents a questionnaire with close-ended and open-ended questions, an interpersonal skills test for intercultural sensitivity adopted from previous research and an English Proficiency test, CEFR-Level B2 Business Vantage adopted from the Cambridge English assessment webpage - were distributed in both a hard-copy and online by the way of convenient sampling. Finally, all data were collected from 95 respondents with 61 respondents of those respondents volunteering to take the English proficiency test within the timeline of the Language Institute of Thammasat University.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of English language barriers and factors affecting communication among Thai software consultants working in a multinational IT company is divided into five chapters;

Chapter 1 Introduction which contains the background of study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, definition of terms, scope of study, significance of Study, limitations of study, and organization of the study.

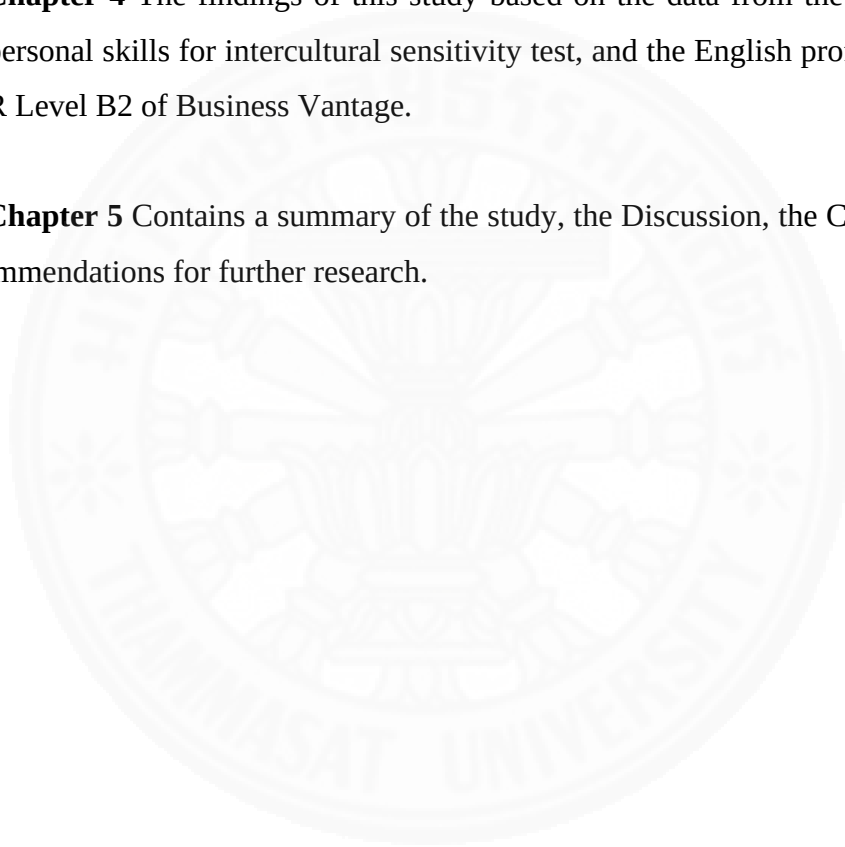
Chapter 2 Review of literature consisting of the significant theories related to this study such as an introduction of software consultants, English barriers in the four skills

(listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and factors affecting communication as well as relevant research.

Chapter 3 Description of Research Methodology used in this study along with subjects/participants, the research methodology and instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter 4 The findings of this study based on the data from the questionnaire, interpersonal skills for intercultural sensitivity test, and the English proficiency test of CEFR Level B2 of Business Vantage.

Chapter 5 Contains a summary of the study, the Discussion, the Conclusion, and Recommendations for further research.



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The relevant of literatures reviewed as follows;

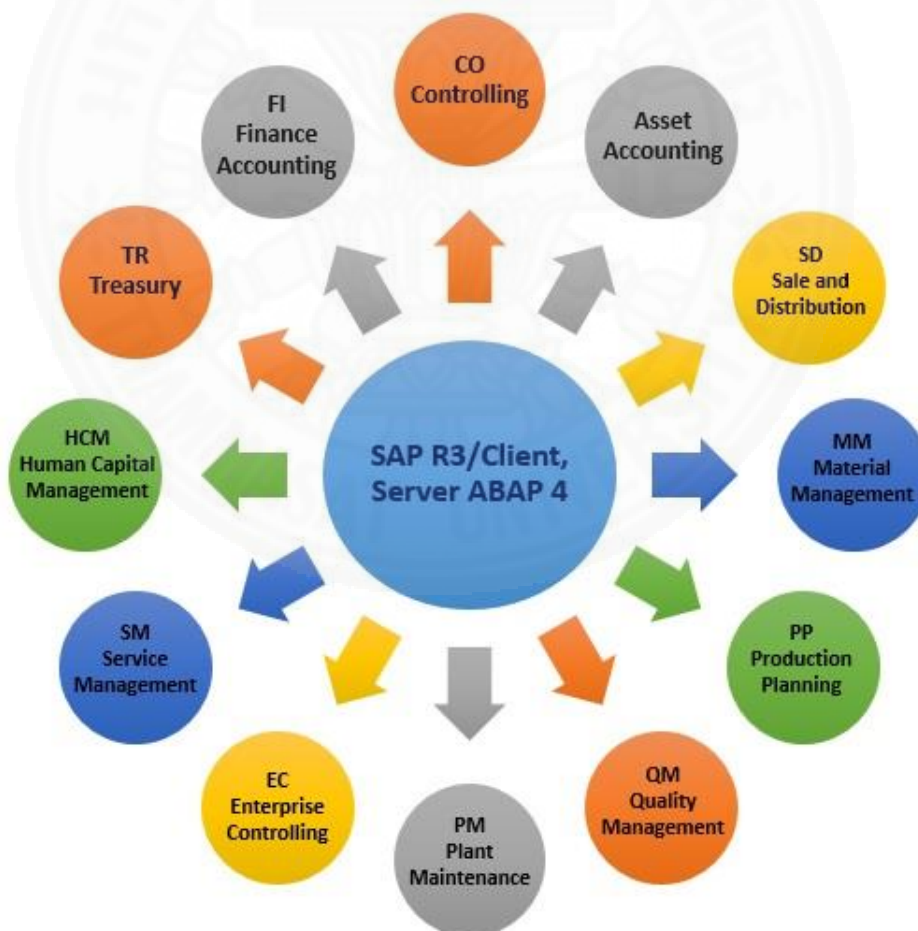
- 2.1 What is a software consultant?
- 2.2 English barriers in the aspect of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skill.
- 2.3. Interpersonal skills of intercultural communication competence in intercultural sensitivity.
- 2.4. Factor affecting communication in the workplace in the aspects of personality, relationships, and work climate.
- 2.5. Relevant research.

2.1 What is a Software consultant?

In fact, the way of success in business is characterized by networking with customers and suppliers. Modern information technology is used to provide products or services of the highest quality quickly with minimal delays according to customer demands, and continuous changing in line with economic conditions. Therefore, the business service is focused on the demand of customers, since they usually select the supplier who can best meet their requirement in terms of functionality, quality, delivery time, and price (Davidow and Malone, 1992). Today, many leading companies providing IT service not provide infrastructure platforms or IT technical solution services, but also innovative data processing in the form of software packages and applications to manage productions and services in every aspect of world industries such as consumers goods (for instance, automotive, retail, wholesale & distribution, transportation and hospitality & service), government & public services, energy resource & industrial, life sciences & health care, financial services, and technology, media & telecommunications.

A software consultant is the one IT resource who is a specialist in software development, software design, software engineering, and software applications. Their responsibilities are to design software programs according to end users' requirements, and support others technical software solutions. This study focuses on Thai software consultants who are specialists in the SAP (System, Application and Products) software program, which is a data processing software that has been widely used in many types of business covering virtually every aspect of business structures, business management, resource planning, financial management, customer relationship management, supply chain management, and human resource management etc.

Table 2.1.1 illustrates Thai SAP software consultants, called the functional team, can be categorized according to 13 SAP software modules as follows;



In addition, Thai software consultants not only serve as SAP module consultants as mentioned above, but also as the technical team that works alongside the functional team called ABAP (Advance Business Application Programming), SAP DEV (Developer), NetWeaver, IS (Information Systems) Management, XI (Exchange Infrastructure), SAP Basis, SAP BI (Business Intelligence), BIW (Business Information Warehousing), and SAP HANA. Therefore, the functional team and technical team are integrated and cooperate with each other to provide end-to-end solutions for overall business structures and business management of organization to customers.

Flexibility and adaptability are the specific characteristics and personality of software consultants since they are required to travel or relocate many places within or outside of the country for implementing SAP software package systems, monitoring software systems, conducting software training as well as coaching junior software consultants. Therefore, excellent oral conversation, presentation, and written communication skills, as well as the ability to work efficiently in a team environment, are required for this position.

2.2 ENGLISH BARRIERS

English is a language code that people use to communicate thoughts and feelings to an addressee. Nowadays, English language is accepted as the dominant language used for communication around the world among people whose first language is different. Therefore, effective English communication, accurate interpretation, and appropriate language usage are needed in business communication. However, English barriers remain a significant problem among Thai IT consultants working in multinational companies. This literature review will present the factors preventing effective English communication for whom English is the second or third language in the aspect of four components listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

2.2.1 LISTENING SKILL

Listening skill is the first significant process of communication, since the effective English communication is determined by how well message is received by senders. McLean (2010) defines the meaning of listening skill as perceiving and interpreting the messages from feedback by hearing; in the same way, Underwood (1989) also analyzes that factors affecting of poor listening comprehension and divided the causes of this problems into seven factors as follows;

2.2.1.1 Inability to follow the speech refers to the speed of a speakers' speech affecting the listeners' ability to comprehension. This factor can be linked to the nationality and cultural background of speakers illustrated from their pronunciation and accent.

2.2.1.2 Inability to request word repeating is psychomotor process of listeners; listeners feel disappointed that they are unable to follow speech, so they avoid requesting the speakers to repeat that words or sentences.

2.2.1.3 Limitation of vocabulary: when a listener perceives unknown words, vocabulary and unfamiliar phrases from the speakers, they may stop thinking about what they have heard and lose the meaning of the whole sentences.

2.2.1.4 Missing the signal words or phrases normally happens while the speakers suddenly move to another point, and listeners may miss the signal words or phrases of the speakers' speech. In addition, pitch, tone, volume, pause, and intonation of ineffective speaking can also cause problem of listening comprehension.

2.2.1.5 Lack of contextual knowledge: in light of different cultures between listeners and speakers, the listener may encounter limitation in terms of contextual knowledge even if they have perceived the surface meaning of message before, for instance, nonverbal cues (e.g. facial expression, gestures, and tone of voice).

2.2.1.6 Inability to concentrate in foreign language: when listeners are overloaded with unfamiliar content and pay too much attention to interpreting their meaning, they feel frustrated and finally, they miss the message.

2.2.1.7 Establishing the illusion of learning refers to when listeners believe that the effective listening requires understanding every single word; as the result, listeners may lose focus on the main idea because they intend to interpret every words of the sentence.

In addition, accents of the speakers can cause the problem of listening comprehension. Since listeners lost their thought and understand the meaning of the words or context that the speaker pronounced differently (Tyagi, 2003).

2.2.2 SPEAKING SKILL

Speaking skill is a primary skill that can illustrate the speakers' English proficiency at first sight. Thai software consultants must have excellent oral communication and presentation skill because it can establish their credibility among their supervisors, colleagues and customers. Speech errors are a major source of information about the way a speaker speaks (Levelth, 1989). Kevin Kelly & Struggles (2011) state that "Not only is it important to look at the technical skill set speakers have...but also the strengths on what we call the EQ side of the equation in terms of getting along and dealing or interacting with people".

However, some researchers argue that psychological problems are the primary factors that prevents some speakers from practicing English speaking, such as "fear of mistakes, shyness, anxiety, and lack of confidence" (Nunan, 1999; Schwartz, 2005; Thornbury, 2005).

2.2.2.1 Fear mistake is the feeling of afraid not being accepted. Zhang (2006) and Hieu (2001) assert that most people are afraid of making a mistake and receiving a negative evaluation from people around them while speaking English. As the result, speakers get easily depressed and finally remove themselves from the conversation.

2.2.2.2 Shyness is a sensitive emotion that speakers suffer from when presenting or speaking English in front of people. This emotion may be formed from the bad experiences of speakers. "I have nothing to say" is an excuse that many non-

native speakers usually give in the group or meeting, which means that they lack motivation, inspiration and ideas to express themselves in the group conversation (Ur, 1996).

2.2.2.3 Anxiety is a feeling of tension, and nervousness associated with a specific situation (Nascente, 2001). Horwitz and Cope (1986) identify four factors causing the speaker feel anxiety in conversations as follows;

(1) Communication apprehension refers to the speakers' ability to communicate in the target language, which is English. If the speakers have insufficient ability, they feel anxious while speaking among people.

(2) Test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety dealing with a feeling of fear of failing to perform well in a test-taking situation, job interview, presentation, or public speaking.

(3) Fear of negative evaluation refers to speakers having a feeling fear and anxiety when being evaluated by people in a group conversation, meeting, or presentation.

2.2.2.4 Lack of confidence is an emotional feeling that usually occurs when speakers recognize that their conversation have not been understood among people. Therefore, speakers will keep silent and avoid participating in a group conversation, meeting, or presentation, since they lack confidence. In addition, He and Chen (2010) also found that a significant cause of this feeling is speakers having a low skill level in speaking English and having a belief that their English-speaking proficiency is insufficient. Due to this feeling, they are unable to speak English effectively and finally, remove themselves from a group conversation or meeting.

2.2.3 READING SKILL

“Construction of reading comprehension is a complex phenomenon which involves psycholinguistic factors relating to schemata and text processing” (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Effective reading comprehension is the ability to understand messages in texts, words, and contexts. In the same way, readers who have insufficient skill,

cannot identify the main idea of a passage, inferences about contents, understand the purpose of writers, and perceive a point of view in passages. Reading comprehension skill depends on the reader's background knowledge, culture, experience, and education. Nevertheless, frequent obstacles to reading comprehension are limited knowledge vocabulary as well as misinterpretation of words and contexts in the passages. Therefore, the use of inappropriate vocabulary, words, and phrases in a message, can lead to misunderstanding, and confusion among senders and readers. Gunning (2002) divides the significant problems affecting the reading comprehension among readers into six factors categories:

2.2.3.1 Insufficient basic decoding skills refers lacking the ability to recognize words meanings and guess unknown words from contexts, which can lead to misapprehension.

2.2.3.2 Limitation of academic vocabulary knowledge refers to readers who have the obstacle of limitation in knowledge of academic vocabulary, which leads to an inability to comprehend a passage.

2.2.3.3 Lack of background knowledge refers to readers having the limitation of background knowledge in terms of a specific content, for instance, the texts about finance, engineering, medical laboratory science, and so on. When the readers are unable to recognize what a message is about and they still do not search for the meaning from a credible source, the message may misapprehend.

2.2.3.4 Failure of reading for meaning refers to readers who have insufficient decoding skill. This can be caused problems with word pronunciation and the lack of reading comprehension strategies, for instance, knowing how to guess the meaning of unknown words and unfamiliar vocabulary from the contexts.

2.2.3.5 Inadequate reading strategies refers to readers who lack the skill of reading comprehension strategy or fail to apply significant strategies in their reading. When the readers read the different kinds of messages or unfamiliar content, they may be incapable of understanding what the message is about.

2.2.3.6 Limitation of language skills refers to readers having the limitation of vocabulary, sentence structure knowledges, grammar and literature skills. When the readers read the books or texts which have long paragraphs with complex sentences and

clauses, they would be unable to understand what the content is about and easily misunderstand the overall.

In addition, Gunning (2002) also indicates that insufficient vocabulary knowledge is a significant problem in reading comprehension. Nevertheless, complex sentences which contain several complex clauses in the sentences such as coordinating conjunctions, prepositional phrases, nominalizations, can cause a lot of difficulties and obstacles to reading comprehension among readers (Scott, 2009).

2.2.4 WRITING SKILL

In business communication, good written messages are accurate, clear, concise, and direct. McLean (2010) indicates that the business writing involves selecting the formality level according to the specific situations and the target receivers. On the other hands, poor written communication skills in term of misspelling, grammatical errors, inappropriate in context, or misplacement words in sentences can lead to confusion, misunderstanding. Alfaki (2015) examined writing essays among university students in an English class and found that the problems of English writing skill among students can be divided into five categories as follows;

2.2.4.1 Own writer's problems refer to the problem of dictions, which is a linguistic problem that can prevent an effective writing skill in English such as the problem of knowledge of grammatical, mechanical and sentence structures. Similarly, Hedge (1988) indicates that the writers much compensate for an absence of prosodic analysis features based on pattern of stress, intonation in contexts, and grammar in writing; therefore, writers are unable to compose messages with a high degree of structure with careful choice of vocabulary and complex grammatical organization in passages.

2.2.4.2 Grammatical problems refers to writers have problems with subject verb agreement, pronoun references and connecter between sentences when attempting to compose a message in English, “as verbs take different forms depending on tense and subjects they are used with, they create problems for second language writing” (Tyner, 1987).

2.2.4.3 Problems with sentence Structure refers to writers have problems of writing good long sentences or essays, and they are unable to use connecting sentences, coordination or connectors between sentences and paragraph. Similarity to Zamel (1983:22) mentions that cohesive devices are also significant in effective English writing; however; linking devices such as connectors of the sentence are problematic in English writing among non-native English writers.

2.2.4.4 Problems with word choice refers to writers having a problem using the appropriate vocabulary along with grammar and sentence structure. As Reid (1983) and Melese (2007:13) stat, most non-native English writers select inappropriate vocabulary in the sentences.

2.2.4.5 Cognitive problems refer to the problem relating to punctuation, capitalization, spelling, content and organization, which can be described as follows;

(1) Punctuation problems as Byrne (1988:16) states, since there have never been universal standard rules of punctuation like other grammar rules, many non-native English writers use inappropriate punctuation when composing message in sentences and paragraphs.

(2) Capitalization problems are linked to punctuation problems since “The rules of capitalization are not universal and classify nouns in proper and common nouns is difficult for many writers” (Gowere et al., 1995). Therefore, most non-native English writers usually encounter obstacles in using capitalization properly when composing messages.

(3) Spelling Problems refers to the problem of the English spelling system and the rules of the writing. The influences of mother tongue can cause confusion with spelling and interpreting sentences among English's learners (Gowere et al., 1995).

(4) Content problems as Leki (1991) mentions in his research, traditional learning methods emphasize spelling, punctuation, and grammatical rules without encouraging the writers to convey their ideas in the essay or message. Therefore, most non-native English writers usually have a problem expression and conveying their ideas in passages to the target readers.

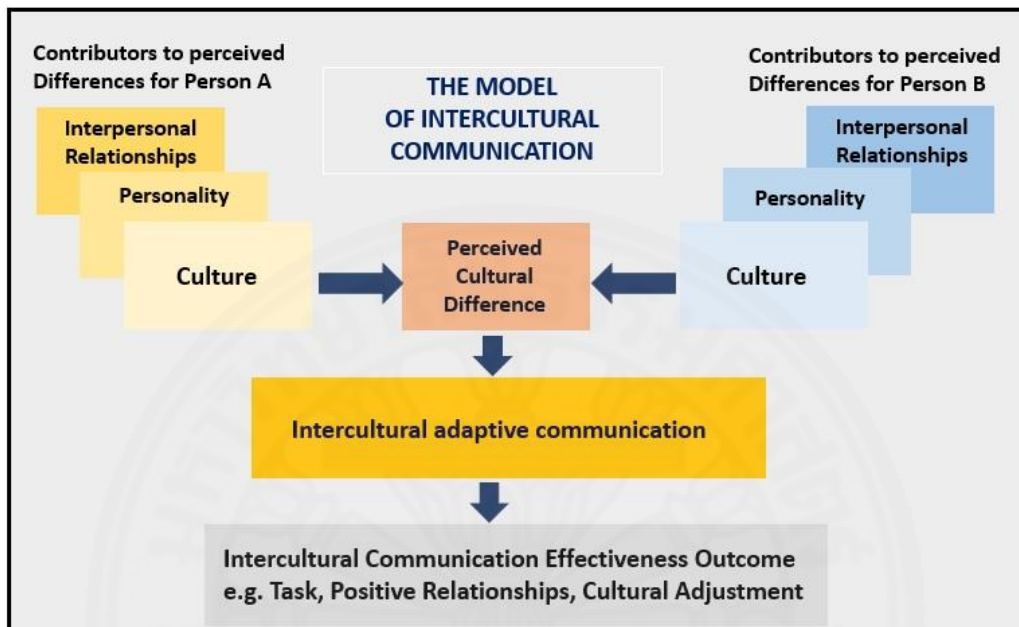
(5) Organization problem refer to the writers having the problem of structuring the paragraph, developing the topic in a paragraph, and creating a whole discourse and theme. However, the failure to use of cohesive or connecting devices inappropriately can cause the obstacle of united paragraphs and connecting the sentences in the writing as well (Pincas, 1982).

2.3 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Global business service is a brand-new evolution in business structure that many leading IT services and solutions companies have s adopted to manage their organizational structure in over 100 countries with diverse cultures. This can help organizations create common governance models, standardize infrastructure, and deliver services across geographies, business units, functions, and business processes. Many multinational IT companies that have a subsidiary in Thailand are networked under the Asia Pacific region consisting of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Singapore, China, the Philippines, and Vietnam, and Thailand; therefore, there are often IT resource exchanges between the company's subsidiaries in the same region or other regions.

Intercultural communication across culture is a communication phenomenon among people who have a different cultural background. Success in communication cannot happen until people recognize cultural diversity. Since culture and communication are linked, when people communicate with members from different cultures, misunderstandings and confliction can easily happen, if they are unaware of culture syndromes. According to Triandis (1995) cultural syndromes are a shared pattern of beliefs, attitudes, self-definitions, norms and values established in various contexts

Table 2.3.1 illustrates a model of intercultural communication in the aspects of interpersonal relationships, perceptions, task, positive relationships and cultural adjustment.



Source: “*Dynamics of Intercultural Communication (5th edition)*”, by Dodd, 1998, pp 6-7.

Many researchers state that intercultural communication competence refers to a person’s ability to perceive cultural similarities and differences. Chen and Starosta’ model (2000) presented in their research holds that intercultural communication competence actually consists of two components: self-awareness and cultural awareness. Likewise, interpersonal skills of intercultural sensitivity is also a dimension of intercultural communication competence in the aspect of a person’s acknowledgement, appreciation, and awareness of cultural differences between people from different backgrounds. Therefore, people who have the ability to recognize cultural diversity and interact with them in positive ways, would be considered to have self-esteem, self-monitoring, empathy, open-mindedness, and be non-judgmental. In order to measure intercultural communication competent in intercultural sensitivity among people from different cultural contexts, Chen and Starosta (2000) developed a

research instrument to explore a person's intercultural communication competence by analyzing their's personality and relationships in terms of five dimensions as follows;

- (1) Interaction engagement
- (2) Respect for cultural differences
- (3) Interaction confidence
- (4) Interaction enjoyment
- (5) Interaction attentiveness

2.4 FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION IN WORKPLACE

Intercultural communication competence has an effect on all forms of communication in intercultural situations (Matsumoto, Leroux & Yoo, 2005; Suthipiyathra, 2009; Barr, 2004). The best way be aware of different cultures, is people recognizing that everyone has their own identity of frame-of-reference and social norm such as genders, ages, ethnicity, and cultures (Hamilton, 2011).

2.4.1 PERSONALITY AND RELATIONSHIP

The first factor that can measure the success an organization is positive relationships between employees. If members accept the value of their co-workers and their organization, the employees will to be willing help, share, and fulfill each other's needs in order to reach the goal as intentions.

The theories of individualistic – collectivistic cultures are primary factors affecting cross-cultural communication that can explain the relationships between employees from different cultures and illustrate the different perceptions of the roles and relationships (Hofstede, G, & Hofstede, G.J., 2005, pp.74-75). Individualistic cultures value of autonomy, assertiveness, and democracy and prefer competing strategies (Croucher et al., 2012; Triandis, 1995). Therefore, prioritize individual needs and goals over the needs of the group (Triandis, Brislin & Hui, 1988). In contrast, collectivistic cultures value empathy and listening and prefer avoidance and accommodative strategies to preserve friendships and save face for themselves and others (Choi, 1991; Croucher et al., 2012; Morris, et al., 1994).

Individualistic culture is “a society in which the ties between individuals are loose because everyone is expected to look after themselves individually” (Hofstede, G. & Hofstede, G.J., 2005, p.76). Organizational culture in multinational information technology companies tend to be individualistic because of global standardized policy and the company norms of the regional headquarter companies. Therefore, some exchange employees from the regional headquarters such as Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines tend to be more individualistic than employees from collectivistic cultures such as Japan, China, Myanmar, and Thailand. Collectivistic cultures are “societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive groups, which throughout people’s lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (Hofstede, G. & Hofstede, J.,2005, P76).

Table 2.4.1.1 illustrates the different aspects of individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Hofstede, 2001). This study examines Thai software consultants’ personality and their relationships between foreign co-workers in the workplace. The distinctions between cultures can impact conflict, problem solving, goals and achievement, relationships, communication, and decision making.

TABLE 2.4.1 ASPECT OF INDIVIDUALISTIC AND COLLECTIVISTIC CULTURES (HOFSTEDE, 2001)

Aspect	Individualistic Cultures	Collectivistic Cultures
1. View of Conflict	Problem-oriented	Relationship-oriented, Face maintenance
2. Problem solving strategy	Competing	Compromising, Collaborating
3. Goal and achievement	Emphasize individual goals and achievement	Emphasize group goals and achievement
4. Relationship between group members	Weak	Strong
5. The right or freedom to express feeling	High	Low
6. Communication	Direct communication Low-context communication	Indirect communication, High-context communication
7. Decision Making	Individual decision	Group decision

2.4.2 WORK CLIMATE

A positive work climate is significant success factor for organizations because it can affect the relationships, and the communication of employees. In this study, the work climates are defined as low context or high context which refers to the information that surrounds an event (Hall & Hall, 1990) and the amount of information and how explicit and direct it is. Therefore, people who communicate with low context messages are inclined to come from individualistic culture and high context communications tend to come from collectivistic cultures.

Low context cultural communication refers to messages being conveyed clearly, directly, explicitly and unambiguously. According to Hall (1976), most information in low context cultures is transmitted in messages in order to make up for what is missing in the context both internal and external. Gudykunst & Ting Toomey (1988) states that low-context communication styles are direct, precise, dramatic, open, and based on feeling or true intentions. In contrast, high- context cultures rely on minimal spoken

words and are inclined to be brief, indirect, and implicit, and nonverbal communication such as the person's gestures, facial expressions, values and tone of voice are considered to be a major aspect of this communication forms. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) define high- context cultural messages as indirect, ambiguous, harmonious, reserved and understated. However, high-context communication involves more information in a physical context or internalized in the person; greater confidence is placed in the non-verbal aspect of communication than the verbal aspect (Hall, 1976, pp.79). Confliction between people from low-context and high-context cultures can easily arise because they have their own patterns of beliefs, attitudes, norms and values organized around a theme (Triandis 1995).

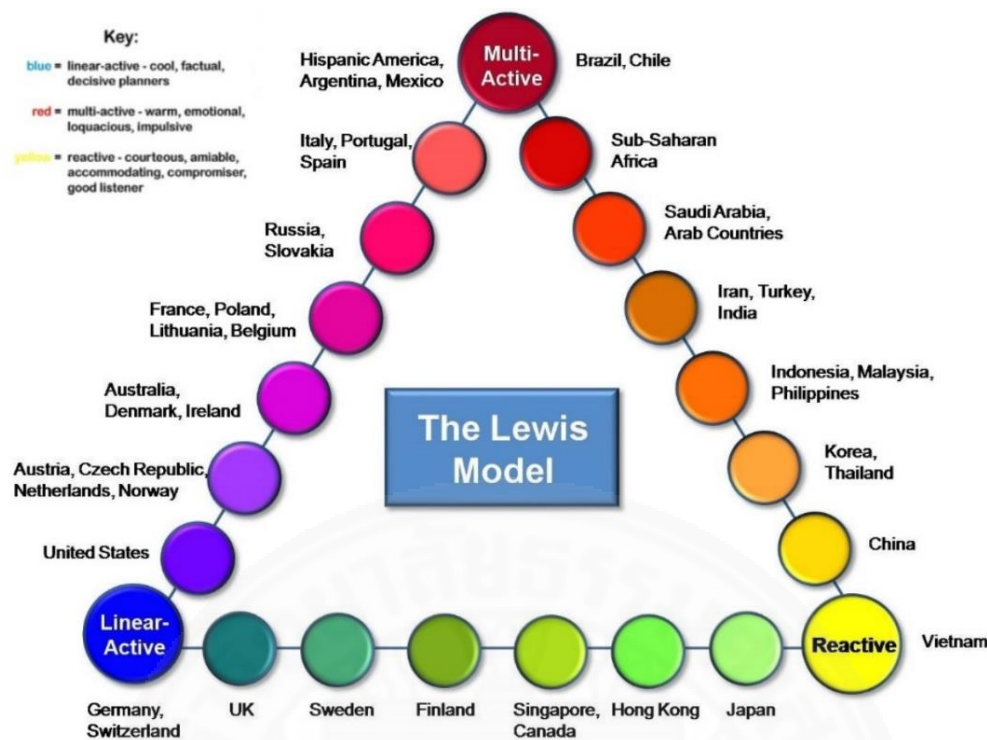
Hall (1976) categorized cultures into high context versus low context to recognize communicators' basic differences in communication style and cultural issues. Salleh (2005) found that high-context and low-context communication can be distinguished by four characteristics: sensitivity in a close relationship, straightforwardness of the message communicated, adoption of nonverbal communication, and selection of digital or analogue language.

High-context communication involves feelings and close relationships, while low-context communication is based on logical thinking (Hall, 1998). Western people tend to be low-context, in contrast, South American and Asian people rely on high-context communication, for example, in western negotiation styles, reasonableness in discussion is favored over emotionality, since "individuals are encouraged to negotiate using the principles negotiation approach" (Rothwell, 2004); therefore, this communication style focuses on content with an emphasis on objective results. On the other hand, soft negotiation, which values establishing good relations and friendships, is principled negotiation, which is categorized as low-context communication (Rothwell, 2004). In terms of high-context cultures, Leets's (2003) research investigated the perceptions of non-European people's (Hispanic Americans, Africans, Asians) sensitivity to racist speech by westerners (Europeans, Americans). The findings revealed that Asian Americans had more sensitivity to indirect racist speech (particularly the communication context) compared to Europeans and Americans, confirming that a cultural context provides the basis for the interpretation of messages.

Regarding non-verbal communication, Dsilva and Whyte (1998) found that non-verbal behavior (keeping silence) is considered to show respect and maintain harmony, for example, Vietnamese refugees choosing to keep silent to avoid conflict with a public officer while speaking negatively. It can be concluded that high-context communication reflects the perception of human behavior and thought via non-verbal communication. However, in the view of Dsilva and Whyte (1998, p. 120), “It critical that silence be not interpreted as absence of thought. It may mean time to formulate an opinion, a gathering of courage to speak in another language, providing time to allow a senior to speak first or is the form of a generally less confrontative, softer way to convey disagreement”.

In terms of digital and analogous language, Bennett (1998, p. 17) views verbal language as digital because words are symbolized in the category of phenomena in the same way that on/off code symbolizes numbers in the operation of a computer, as opposed to non-verbal language, which is analog because it presents a phenomena by creating a context that can be experienced directly. According to Hall (1976, p. 17), English is a digital language because it provides many words to name affective and cognitive states, in contrast with to Japanese language, which is a more analog than digital because it provides for inference of meaning from the context. In conclusion, in the opinion of Hall (1998), English language has many words that narrate a specific context, for example, the various degrees of emotional statements such as dislike (despise, detest, disgust, hate, and loathe); in contrast, in more analog languages, the receivers have to interpret what the speaker says by putting the words in a context (who/when/which situation/and other statements).

Table 2.4.2 shows the division of the cultural communication of western and eastern values (Lewis 2005, p. 89) into three categories: linear-active, reactive and multi-active;



Source: *The Lewis model: How to understand every culture in the world*, by Morgaine Gerlach, January 18, 2015

According to Cultural categories of communication in aspect of three dimension: Linear-active cultures, reactive, and multi-active cultures can explain people's characteristics communication forms, and work climates by comparing Western European, United States, and Asian values.

2.4.2.1 Linear-active cultures: people from this culture tend to be calm, prefer factuality, and are well-organized. In terms of work climate, they tend to be task-oriented, well-organized and value punctuality because they believe in facts and interpreting from reliable sources. For communication style, they prefer direct messages and straightforward discussions, and they have an equal proportion of discussing and listening.

2.4.2.2 Reactive cultures: people in this type of culture are polite, outwardly friendly, facilitating, compromising, good addressees, which Lewis (2005) called "listening cultures" because people often listen to speakers first before developing their own position. In terms of interaction with people in the workplace, they interact cautiously in meetings and avoid confrontation. (Lewis, 2005).

2.4.2.3 Multi-active cultures: people from this type of culture are warm, sensory, talkative, and tetchy. Their working style tends to be multi-tasking and they prefer roundabout discussion. In terms of communication style, they prefer transactional communication, indicating that they can exchange ideas at once and feel free to interrupt because they feel uncomfortable with people who keep silent.

Low-context and high-context cultures have crucial affects on communication styles, relationships, and working atmosphere. Since many information technology companies have the virtual organizational model and work as virtual teams, most software consultants work in specific terms or employees have short-term employment or conditional employment. These employees should “not expect lengthy careers in this organization but expect to have your skills tested, polished, and acknowledged such that you will continue to be value in the labour market” (Kunda & Van Maanen, 1999, p.12).

Therefore, workplace relocation and changing working environment impact employees’ relationships, interpersonal adjustments, and communication styles between people from different cultures in the workplace. However, to provide a sense of “connectedness”, virtual organizations provide their team with use of social media such as blogging, twitter, instant messaging, wikis, smartphones, and organizational and individual Facebook technologies” (Kerfoot, 2010, p.115). Communication tools, such as the internet, email, video conferencing, telephones, intranet as well as free social media and applications are widely used and applied for communicating and connecting employees. Communication has been faster and easier than the past, and it is thus unnecessary to gather in one place as every urgent issued can be resolved at once.

Table 2.4.3 illustrates the aspect of low-context and high-context cultures in the workplace. This study investigates Thai software consultants’ interpersonal relationships and communication styles in various contexts when interacting with foreign co-workers in the workplace. Low-context and high-context cultures can impact communication strategy, communication style such as verbal and non-verbal communication, agreements between people, and relationships between employees in various contexts.

**TABLE 2.4.3 ASPECT OF LOW CONTEXT AND HIGH CONTEXT CULTURE
(HAMILTON, 2011)**

Aspect	Low-context Cultures	High-context Cultures
1. Preferred communication strategy	Directness Confrontation, Clarity	Indirectness, Politeness, Ambiguity
2. Reliance on words to communication	High	Low
3. Reliance on nonverbal signs to communication	Low	High
4. Importance of the written word	High	Low
5. Agreements	Binding with writing agreements	Binding with oral agreements
6. Attention to detail	High	Low
7. Commitment between people	Weak	Strong

2.5 RELEVANT RESEARCH

The research relevant to this study focusing on English barriers and factors affecting the communication of people from diverse cultures in various contexts is summarized as follows;

Fritz, Mollenberg, Ming and Chen (2001) sought to measure intercultural sensitivity in different cultural contexts by adopted theories and research instrument from Chen and Starosta (2000). The questionnaire contained close- ended questions comprised 24 items with five factors for measuring intercultural sensitivity as follows;

- (1) Interaction engagement
- (2) Respect for cultural differences
- (3) Interaction confidence
- (4) Interaction enjoyment
- (5) Interaction attentiveness

In order to measure the dimensions of intercultural communication competent which integrates both intercultural attitudes and behavior skills in three dimension, such as intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural skills of respondents, the quantitative method was utilized to obtain the data from 541 German students of business administration at the University of Mannheim, Germany. Since random sampling was selected for this study with total number of participants being 400 German students, consisting of 253 female and 147 male students with the average age of 20.9-years-old.

Findings of this study of German students confirmed the factor analysis of intercultural communication competence of Chen and Starosta's (2002) instrument. However, some results identified minor weakness in the operationalization of the concept using more subtle diagnostic instruments of confirmation factor, for instance, the factor reliability of Cronbach's alpha in the interaction enjoyment dimension was $R = .69$, the interaction attentiveness dimension $= .59$, and interaction confidence dimension $= .58$.

In summary, Chen and Starosta's research instrument can be improved in further research and overall confirmation analysis remains effective and useful for measuring intercultural sensitivity in cross-cultural communication in different contexts.

Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) studied factors affecting EFL learners' English listening comprehension and strategies for improvement. The study was focused on the listening ability of L2 and explored the efficient strategies that can improve L2 listening comprehension by analyzing six main issues as follows;

- (1) Definition and essentials of listening
- (2) Procedure and strategies of listening comprehension
- (3) Review and analysis of problems in listening comprehension
- (4) Discussion of teaching methods in listening comprehension
- (5) Review of activities used in teaching listening skills
- (6) Discussion of the principles of teaching listening comprehension

This research was based on a review of literature and theories from many researchers alongside data analysis, which would be beneficial in terms of improvement listening comprehension for English language learners. Based on the review of literature, the definition of listening is the activity of paying attention to speakers and trying to interpret the meaning of conversation from what listeners hear (Underwood,1989:p.1); similarly to Mendelsohn (1994) mentions that listening comprehension is the ability to understand the spoken language of native speakers. In term of linguistic knowledge, Rost (2002) defines that listening comprehension as an inferential process. In addition, Brown (2001) and Clark & Clark (1977) describe the procedure of listening comprehension as listeners receiving the spoken words or sentences from speakers; firstly, listeners assign a literal meaning to the words, and then they assign the intended meaning of those words or sentences. In terms of the analysis and problems of listening comprehension, Underwood (1989) divides the barriers of listening comprehension into seven factors, such as listeners cannot follow a conversation because of how fast the speakers speak and they feel afraid to request a word be repeated; however, the lack of essential vocabulary and failure to recognize signal words are considered the primary problem of listeners. Lack of contextual knowledge is another problem for listeners. Due to the different cultures of listeners and speakers, listeners may perceive message in the opposite meaning even if they understand the surface meaning, especially nonverbal cues of speakers such as facial expression, gestures, and tone of voice. In addition, problems of listening comprehension are not only due to limitations of linguistic knowledge, but also the psychomotor problems of listeners. Boredom usually occurs when listeners are overloaded with uninteresting contents and pay too much attention to interpreting the message of speakers.

In conclusion based on the review literature, listening comprehension strategies can help English learners to become more effective at English listening comprehension. Since listening comprehension level affects the ability to improve in speaking, reading, and writing. Instructors are recommended to provide opportunities for English learners to practice listening skills as much as possible.

Pornwishulada (2012) surveyed the success factors and barriers to cross-cultural communication of Thai and Indian employees working in information technology in six aspects of social norms and cultural diversity as followed;

- (1) Individualistic and collectivistic cultures
- (2) Low-context and High-context cultures
- (3) Monochronic and Polychronic cultures
- (4) Verbal communication
- (5) Nonverbal communication
- (6) Attitudes toward people from different cultures

The quantitative method was utilized to collect the data from respondents using questionnaires consisted of three parts: personal information, success factors for cross-cultural communication, and barriers to cross-cultural communication. The data was collected from a total of 197 respondents divided into 105 Thai employees and 92 Indian employees. The findings were analyzed in terms of the success factors for cross-cultural communication in three dimensions; individualistic and collectivistic cultures, low-context and high-context cultures, and monochronic and polychronic cultures. The results revealed that Thai employees valued collectivistic culture, high-context culture, and polychronic culture while Indian employees had a low level of value collectivistic culture, a low level of high-context cultures, and a high level of polychronic culture than Thai employees. Barriers to cross-cultural communication were also analyzed in terms of three factors: verbal communication, non-verbal communication, and attitude towards people from different cultures. The findings revealed that Thai employees had a high level barriers of verbal communication, but a low level of non-verbal communication barriers, and the low barriers of attitude toward people from different cultures; meanwhile, Indian employees tend to have a high level of barriers in non-verbal communication, but a low-level barriers in verbal communication, and a high level of barriers with respect to attitudes toward people from different cultures.

In conclusion, based on findings, since many Indian population can communicate in English fluently. Therefore, Indian IT employees have a lower level of barriers to verbal communication than Thai IT employees, however; Thai IT employees have a lower level of barriers in non-verbal communication than Indians, since the latter

have use particular body movements in communication, for example, head nodding, which could lead to confusion and misunderstandings among people.

In terms of the recommendations based on conclusion, Kanyarat emphasizes the advantage of comparative research; since there are many international organizations located in Thailand, problems frequently happen among employees from different cultures. In addition, one of benefit of her study is that is can provide solutions that can help many Thai employees working in multinational companies to gain a better understanding of cross-cultural communication in the workplace.

Alfaki (2015) surveyed university students' English writing problems among English language students in a teachers' college at Nile Valley University, North Sudan, in the academic year 2012-2013. The descriptive research method was utilized to collect the data from the random sample of total 20 students. To investigate the problems of writing in English and effective strategies that could minimize the writing problems, all participants were instructed to write 250-300 words essays on the topic "A story of my hometown or village". After finishing, all pieces of writing were reviewed twice by 10 English language instructors in order to identify the errors. The findings revealed many writing problems in terms of a morphology and syntax, usage errors and mechanical mistakes (e.g. spelling, punctuation, and capitalization), insufficient writing skill development, cognitive problems and psychomotor problems.

The reviews of literature described effective strategies in effective English writing, and techniques that can reduce writing problems and the causes of ineffective English writing among English writing learners. Cognitive science and linguistic knowledge were significant theories on writing procedure and composition strategies. As Linda Flower and John R Hayes (1980) wrote in "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing", cognitive theory emphasizes comprehension of writers in the writing and composition, while other theories focus on the cognitive procedure of writing through notetaking; however, some researchers investigated the cognitive process in writing by recording writers' keystrokes with a computer during the procedure of writing. In addition, social constructionism is another theory highlighting language and group discourse. Those factors are linked since group discourse means when people have a communication between group, they create their thought and attitudes from the group

by informed by their own senses and ideas. In the case of language, this means people find language through their own from all voice, which forms people's experience. For the factors lead to ineffective writing comprehension, Byne (1994:4) and Hedge (1988:5) state that the omission of prosodic features in writing is the error usually found in written messages or long paragraphs among non-native English writers. Prosodic features as mentioned above consist of grammar (e.g. form of subject, tense, verbs), sentence structure (e.g. subordination, coordination. cohesive features), word choice (e.g. vocabulary, words), and cognitive features (e.g. punctuation, capitalization, spelling, content, and organization). However; the problem in writing is not only a lack of grammar, punctuation, spelling and poor word choice, thought and ideas are also significant factors that affect English learners when composing essays.

In terms of the conclusion and discussion, the researchers highlighted that instructors or relevant persons should emphasize that students acknowledge their problem of writing individually and encourage them to improve English writing ability by following their advisors or professionals' recommendations, for example reading a lot since reading can increase knowledge of vocabulary, grammatical structures, words; in addition, practicing writing skill through free writing practice online is good way improve writing skills. Notetaking is another technique that can help English learners to create new ideas, however; negative beliefs and self-panic in English writing among non-native English writers are major obstacles to creative and effective writing.

Sanji (2015) surveyed communication problems among Thai Employees in a multinational company, ABB (Thailand) Co, Ltd, Saraburi branch.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the problems in English communication through participants' English ability level and determine the relationships among ABB employees through their attitudes and opinions of participants' English proficiency. Due to the limitation of time, convenient sampling was utilized. Data was collected from questionnaires and English proficiency test with a total of 30 respondents, consisting of 19 males and 11 females with bachelor's degrees and tertiary degrees, which was the minimum education level. All participants were requested to respond to a questionnaire comprising three parts: demographic and general information, respondents' English proficiency background and an English

proficiency test adopted from the TOEIC preparation test online, divided into listening, reading, and vocabulary with 30 total marks 30.

The findings of study in terms of the questionnaire analyzed respondents' English proficiency background in three aspects of listening, reading, and vocabulary skills. Most of respondents strongly confirmed that they could communicate with foreign colleagues in basic English, while one-third of them strongly disagreed that they could had a conversation on phone and strongly disagreed with understanding trainings run in English language. In the aspect of reading skill, most of respondents strongly confirmed that they could understood work reports, emails, announcements in English; nevertheless, half of the respondents admitted that they encountered an obstacle in reading and understanding long paragraphs and emails in English. For vocabulary skills, most of them were confident in their knowledge of engineer terminology, while a quarter of respondents confirmed that they could not choose a proper vocabulary and could not use formal English words.

In terms of the English test, after finishing questionnaire, all the respondents were requested to complete a TOEIC preparation test to measure their English proficiency, which was comprised three parts, i.e. listening, reading, and vocabulary. The results revealed that most of respondents had a fair- proficiency level in the vocabulary, while listening and reading scores were at an average level. According to the overall scores, proficiency of most of the respondents was at a fair level. In the aspect of the association between respondents' point of view and their actual English competency skills, the overall results presented that their self-rating of listening skill correlated to the result of English test in a part of listening, since most of respondents could not understand the different accents in test and routine work; however, their self-rating of reading and vocabulary were not correlated in the test. Since the total number of respondents was only 30, Waranya confirmed that the number of participants should be larger and the number of questions in the questionnaire and English proficiency test should be increased with a shorter examination time.

In conclusion, the data collection from the reading and vocabulary results was insufficient. However, the finding of this research could help human resource departments to provide effective internal training programs suited for their employees.

All training class should be done in English use good educational materials such as bilingual terminology dictionaries in order to improve vocabulary skill.

In summary, the previous relevant research problems of English that usually happen among non-native speakers in the aspect of listening, speaking, reading, and writing was reviewed in various contexts. However, the barriers affecting intercultural communication are not the only obstacles to English communication, but cultural distinctions of people from different backgrounds is also a crucial problem that can cause conflicts and misunderstandings among people. In terms of research design, both of quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized to obtain the data from the sample and all the data were calculated into frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Most of findings from the relevant studies showed the problems of English communication in four skills as mentioned above; the significant problems that were usually found were different accents, vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures, and word choices. Finally, the research design and research methodology from the relevant research provided a guideline to investigate the English barriers and explore the factors affecting communication in the present study. The next chapter will describe the research design, the research instruments and the overall procedure of data collection and data analysis of this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes about research methodology and procedures of data collection for this study applied five sections as follows;

- 3.1 Research design
- 3.2 Participants
- 3.3 Research instruments
- 3.4 Data collection procedures
- 3.5 Data analysis

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is quantitative research which aimed to investigate the English barriers and explore factors affecting communication of Thai software consultants working in a multinational IT company. A survey questionnaire, an interpersonal skill test for Intercultural sensitivity scale, and an English proficiency test were utilized as the research instruments for this study. Therefore, the findings not only elicit a numerical data, statistic, standard deviation (SD) and mean but also presents respondents' attitudes and other essential information supporting this study.

3.2. PARTICIPANTS

Data were collected from 95 Thai software consultants and freelancers with at least one year of SAP (software application, and product) software consulting experience in a multinational IT company. Most of them had a work experience with foreign coworkers from SEA countries. The reason why this group was chosen because they have been working in an international environment which has cultural diversity and requires communicating in English language in the aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in both face-to-face and online business communication. To facilitate rapid data collection within the

timeline of the Language Institute of Thammasat University, convenience sampling was utilized to collect data from the respondents.

3.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In order to answer the research questions, the research instruments were designed according to the pilot study and others were adopted from reliable resources, consisting of three instruments as follows;

3.3.1 Questionnaire created from the pilot test with three respondents whose qualifications related to the target population.

3.3.2 Interpersonal skill test for intercultural sensitivity scales adopted from research entitled “Measuring Intercultural Sensitivity in Different Cultural Contexts”, conducted by Fritz, Mollenberg, Ming and Chen (2001).

3.3.3 English Proficiency test, CEFR level B2 – Business Vantage adopted from CEFR free test online, Cambridge English assessment webpage.

Before distributing the questionnaire, the procedures of pilot study are described in three steps as follows: the first step, all the questions in the questionnaire were created in line with literature reviews in chapter 2 by interviewing three volunteers who had qualifications in accordance with the target population of this study; then all the answers from those three volunteers were noted and transcribed into words and phrases. Once the transcribed data were completed, all the data were categorized into themes and the questionnaire was created, divided into five parts comprised of a problems of language use at work in the aspects of listening, speaking, reading, writing skill, and the factors affecting communication in the workplace. In order to examine all the content of questionnaire precisely and clearly, three volunteers were requested to assess and give feedback on the questionnaire, and all contents was revised until it was clear without ambiguity. Finally, the total number of questions in the questionnaire were 30 items, which consisted of five parts with closed-ended and open-ended questions in the last part of this study. The first part of questionnaire asked for respondents’ demographical

and general information in terms of gender, age, educational background, nationality, current position, and working experiences. The second- and third- part of questionnaire asked for respondents' English proficiency background in general use and how often the language used in the workplace in every aspect: listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. The fourth part inquired about respondents' problems of language use at work comprised of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing rated a five-point Likert scales. The last part of questionnaire asked respondents to rate the factors affecting communication for cross-cultural communication at work with open-ended questions about training interest.

To investigate and confirm respondents' actual English proficiency skills, an English proficiency test, CEFR level B2 – Business Vantage, adopted from CEFR free online test from the Cambridge assessment webpage was utilized for this study. CEFR level B2 – Business Vantage is a upper intermedia or Independent level according to standard CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) test created by the European Council (1989-1996) and European Union Council Resolution (2001), and many non-native speakers working in international companies usually have English ability at this level; However, most non-native speakers who have English proficiency at this level still lack some nuances particularly outside their field, and miss some of the subtleties and implied meanings in their routine work communication.

Overall, the format of the English proficiency test, CEFR level B2 – Business Vantage examined respondents consisted of two sections comprising 75 items with a one-hour 45 minutes examination time. The first section was a listening comprehension test with 30 items with a 30 minutes examination time. The format of this part was divided into three parts with six contexts of telephone conversations, business conversations, and radio interviews with a successful businessperson in the supply chain business. The second part was a reading comprehension test with 45 items with a one-hour examination time. This part of the test comprised five passages that contained a variety of essential vocabulary, grammar structures in general use and reading comprehension paragraphs with questions.

For the last research instrument, an interpersonal skills test for Intercultural sensitivity scale with a total of 24 items was adopted from research, conducted by Fritz, Wolfgang, Mollenberg, Antje, Chen, and Guo-Ming. Therefore, the results of measurement described respondents' personality and relationships in the aspect of intercultural communication competence in six dimensions: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction intensiveness.

Table 3.3.4 illustrates the reliability of the questionnaire. After collecting the questionnaire from respondents, all data from Google Forms and hard copies were downloaded into Excel, and then uploaded into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) in order to calculate frequency, means, standard deviation (SD). The reliability of the questionnaire in Cronbach's alpha was $R = .744$, with total N of 30 items in the questionnaire.

TABLE 3.3.4 RELIABILITY OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Reliability Statistic	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.744	30

Table 3.3.5 illustrates the reliability of the English proficiency test, CEFR level B2 – Business Vantage. The total number of test items was 75, comprised of two parts of listening comprehension and reading comprehension. After all exam papers were marked and scored according to the standard of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), they were analyzed in SPSS. The reliability of the English proficiency test in Cronbach's alpha was $R = .862$.

TABLE 3.3.5 RELIABILITY OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.862	75

3.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

All three research instruments comprised of the questionnaires, interpersonal skills test of the intercultural sensitivity scale, and the English proficiency test were completed in the pilot study and evaluated by three volunteers, before creation of Google form online and a hard copy. In term of distributions, the URL links of the questionnaire and interpersonal skills test were attached to email and sent to 87 respondents in their personal emails. After respondents completed both of the questionnaire, and the interpersonal skills test, those who had a time to be as volunteers were requested to book a time slot for the English proficiency test. According to the survey, it was convenient for most respondents to take this examination after working hours on weekdays and weekends on Saturday to Sunday between March 23rd to April 30th, 2019. For the remaining twelve respondents, hard copies of the questionnaires, the interpersonal skills test, and the English proficiency test papers were distributed by hand at one IT company in the Thai TCC Tower, South Sathorn, Bangkok. After respondents completed their questionnaires and the interpersonal skills test, all the respondents were separated into two groups. Group one was required to take English proficiency test in a meeting room with one hour and forty-five minutes examination time, followed by Group two. Unfortunately, out of twelve respondents, only nine respondents could be obtained for this part, since the other three respondents could not finish their English proficiency test on time and some of them had an ad-hoc assignment from a customer. Thereby, the total number of respondents in this part of the study was 95 with 61 volunteering to take the English proficiency test.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The data of this study was subjected to quantitative analysis. Therefore, the findings of both the survey questionnaire and interpersonal skills test were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program version 2.7 in order to find out frequency, mean, standard deviation (SD), and then a five-point Likert scale was utilized to analyze all data as show in the table below;

Table 3.5.1 presents the five-points rating scales, with the degree of opinions for the questionnaire and interpersonal skills test range as follows: 5(Strongly Agree), 4 (Agree), 3(Neutral), 2(Disagree), 1(Strongly Disagree)

TABLE 3.5.1 RATING SCALES

Degree of Opinion	Five Likert Scale
	Positive Question
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

The measurement criterial of the rating scale is illustrated as follows;

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Class interval} &= \frac{\text{Range}}{\text{Width of class}} \\
 &= \frac{\text{highest width} - \text{lowest width}}{\text{Width of class}} \\
 &= \frac{5-1}{5} \\
 &= 0.08
 \end{aligned}$$

The details of each point are presented as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Strongly Agree} &= 4.21-5.00 \quad \text{points} \\
 \text{Agree} &= 3.41-4.00 \quad \text{points}
 \end{aligned}$$

Neutral	=	2.61-3.40	points
Disagree	=	1.81-2.60	points
Strongly Disagree	=	1.00-1.80	points

3.5.1 English proficiency test

After 61 respondents completed the English proficiency test, all the exam papers were marked and scored according to the standard of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) to measure respondents' English proficiency on a six-point scales as table below;

TABLE 3.5.2 ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF CEFR LEVEL

1. Below basic	2. Basic	3. Independent	4. Proficiency
- Below – A1 Flyer 80-90 score - Below 50 percent	- A1- Flyer - A2 – Move - A1: 100-119 score - A2: 120-139 score - A1: 50 percent - A2: 60 percent	- B1- Business Preliminary - B2 – Business Vantage - B1: 140-159 score - B2: 160-179 score - B1: 70 percent - B2: 80 percent	- C1- Business Higher 180-199 score 90 percent
Below A1	A1 – A2	B1 – B2	C1

Source: <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/>, CEFR Cambridge English Assessment, Copyright (2019).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS/FINDINGS

This chapter presents the answers of the following research questions;

1. What are English barriers among Thai software consultants working in a multinational information technology company?
2. What are factors affecting communication regarding cross-cultural communication among Thai software consultants working in a multinational information technology company?

The results of this study are divided into three parts:

1. Respondents' demographic and general information, English proficiency background, frequency of language use in the workplace, problems of language use at work, and factors affecting cross-cultural communication, presented in percentages, means, and standard deviations (SD).
2. Respondents' intercultural communication competence in five dimensions: interaction engagement, respect of cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction intensiveness. All data are presented in percentages, means and standard deviations (SD).
3. Respondents' results for the English proficiency test, CEFR level B2– English Business Vantage were analyzed and presented according to standard of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) to measure their English proficiency on a six-point scales. All data are illustrated in graphs and percentages.

4.1 DEMOGRAPHICAL AND GENERAL INFORMATION

In this part, percent, frequency, means, and standard deviations (SD) are used to analyze the results of respondents' demographic and general information as follows;

Table 4.1.1 illustrates the genders of Thai software consultants with a total 95 respondents; 60% or 57 respondents were female, and 40% or 38 respondents were male.

TABLE 4.1.1 GENDER

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Male	38	40
Female	57	60
Total	95	100

Table 4.1.2 illustrates the age groups of this study. Those aged 20-25 years old, 26-30 years old, and 36-40 years old each made up 22.1% with total 66.3%, followed by the age group of 31-35 years old or 18.9%, and 41- above at 14.7%.

TABLE 4.1.2 AGE

<i>Ages</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
20-25	21	22.1
26-30	21	22.1
31-35	18	18.9
36-40	21	22.1
41-above	14	14.7
Total	95	100

Table 4.1.3 presents the educational background of respondents. Most respondents about 58 respondents or 61.1% had graduated with a bachelor's degree, while 37 respondents or 38.9% had graduated with a masters' degree.

TABLE 4.1.3 EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Bachelor's degree	58	61.1
Master's degree	37	38.9
Total	95	100.0

Table 4.1.4 presents the positions of the Thai software consultants in this study. Most respondents 51 respondents or 53.7% were software analyst consultants, followed by software IT functional staff 34 respondents or 35.8%, project manager 6 respondents or 3.2%, digital marketing 2 respondents or 2.1%, project executive 1 respondent or 1.1%, and business analyst 1 respondent or 1.1%.

TABLE 4.1.4 JOB POSITIONS

<i>Job positions</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Project Executive	1	1.1
Project manger	6	6.3
Software analyst consultant	51	53.7
Software IT functional staff	34	35.8
Others	3	3.2
Business analyst	1	1.1
Digital market	2	2.1
Total	95	100.0

Table 4.1.5 illustrates the working experiences of respondents. Most respondents had working experience between 1-5 years 41 respondents or 43.2%, followed by more than 10 years 26 respondents or 27.4%, 6-10 years 22 respondents or 23.2% and less than 1 year 6 respondents or 6.3%.

TABLE 4.1.5 WORKING EXPERIENCE

<i>Working experience</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Less than 1 year	6	6.3
1-5 years	41	43.2
6-10 years	22	23.2
more than 10 years	26	27.4
Total	95	100.0

Table 4.1.6 presents respondents' self-rating in English proficiency. The majority of respondents had taken an English proficiency test 59 respondents or 62.1% while other respondents had no experience with English proficiency tests 36 respondents or 37.9%.

TABLE 4.1.6 PREVIOUS ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST

Previous English proficiency test	Freq.	Percent
Yes	59	62.1
No	36	37.9
Total	95	100.0

Table 4.1.7 presents respondents' self-rating of English proficiency in aspect of listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary skills. Most respondents agreed that they were proficiency in listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary skill. Listening skills at an average level at M = 2.87 or 36.8%, reading skills were M = 2.98 or 45.3%, writing skills were M = 2.69 or 38.9%, grammar skills were M = 2.56 or 40.0%, and vocabulary skills were M = 2.79 or 35.8%, meanwhile, respondent's self-rating of their speaking skill at a fair level were at M = 2.48 or 45.3%.

TABLE 4.1.7 ENGLISH PROFICIENCY SKILLS

English skills	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Level
1.Listening	8 (8.4%)	15 (15.8%)	35 (36.8%)	31 (32.6%)	6 (6.3%)	2.87	1.034	Average
2.Speaking	3 (3.2%)	1 (1.1%)	43 (45.3%)	40 (42.1%)	8 (8.4%)	2.48	.797	Fair
3.Reading	9 (9.5)	13 (13.7%)	43 (45.3%)	27 (28.4%)	3 (3.2%)	2.98	.967	Average
4.Writing	5 (5.3%)	14 (14.7%)	31 (32.6%)	37 (38.9%)	8 (8.4%)	2.69	1.001	Average
5.Grammar	4 (4.2%)	14 (14.7%)	26 (27.4%)	38 (40.0%)	13 (13.7%)	2.56	1.039	Average
6.Vocabulary	5 (5.3%)	18 (18.9%)	31 (32.6%)	34 (35.8%)	7 (7.4%)	2.79	1.009	Average

Table 4.1.8 presents English communication with expatriate supervisors.

The majority of respondents reported their work progress in English to an expatriate supervisor 62.1% or 59 respondents while other respondents occasionally reported their work progress in English to supervisor 37.9% or 36 respondents.

TABLE 4.1.8 ENGLISH COMMUNICATION WITH EXPATRIATE SUPERVISORS

English communication with expatriate Supervisor	Freq.	Percent
Yes	59	62.1
No	36	37.9
Total	95	100.0

Table 4.1.9 presents the frequency of language use at work of the respondents. Most of respondents 64 respondents or 67.4% used English communication at work every day while 14 respondents or 14.7% used English communication at work once a week, followed by 7 respondents or 7.4% who used English communication at work three times per week, and 2 respondents or 2.1% who used English communication at work twice a week. However, 3 respondents with 3.2% used English communication depending on the project, 3 respondents or 3.2 % used English communication infrequently at work, and 2 respondents or 2.1% never used English communication at work.

TABLE 4.1.9 FREQUENCY OF ENGLISH USE AT WORK

Freq. of English use at work	Freq.	Percent
Once a week	14	14.7
Twice a week	2	2.1
Three time a week	7	7.4
Every day	64	67.4
Others	8	8.4
Depends on project	3	3.2
Infrequently	3	3.2
None	2	2.1
Total	95	100.0

Table 4.1.10 describes the purpose of language use at work of the respondents. In routine work, majority of respondents used email for English communication 85 respondents or 89.5%, followed by English communication in meetings 61 respondents or 64.2% and English communication with supervisors, colleagues, and clients 60 respondents or 63.2%. In addition, 55 respondents or 57.9% used English communication for presentations, 46 respondents or 48.4% used English in teleconference, and 32 respondents or 33.7% used English conversations on the phone.

TABLE 4.1.10 PURPOSE OF LANGUAGE USE AT WORK

Purpose of Language use at work	Yes	Percent	No	Percent
Communication with supervisors, colleagues, and clients in everyday use	60	63.2	35	36.8
Meetings	61	64.2	34	35.8
Teleconferencing	46	48.4	49	41.6
Presentations	55	57.9	40	42.1
Emails	85	89.5	10	10.5
Phones	32	33.7	63	66.3

Table 4.1.11 illustrates respondents' English language courses. Most of respondents 50 respondents or 52.6% had taken English language courses, while 45 respondents or 47.4% had never taken any English language courses before but they had practiced English skills at the workplace.

TABLE 4.1.11 ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES

English Language Courses	Freq.	Percent
Yes	50	52.6
No	45	47.4
Total	95	100.0

Table 4.12 presents the results of the second part of questionnaire on English barriers in the aspect of four skills. This part presents the problem of listening skills of the respondents. Most of respondents agreed that they had an obstacle in terms of understanding the unfamiliar accents of supervisors and co-workers $M = 3.48$ or 36.8%, while they disagreed that they could not understand what supervisors, colleagues, and clients said in business meeting $M = 2.59$ or 42.1%, disagreed that they could not follow what foreigners discussed in meeting $M = 2.51$ or 44.2%, and disagreed that they could not understand content presented in English $M = 2.47$ or 42.1%.

TABLE 4.1.12 PROBLEM IN LISTENING SKILL

Listening skill	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
1. I cannot understand well what foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients speak in the business meeting.	2 (2.1%)	15 (15.8%)	29 (30.5%)	40 (42.1%)	2.59	.940	Disagree
2. I cannot follow what the people discuss in the meeting.	2 (2.1%)	13 (13.7%)	27 (28.4%)	42 (44.2%)	2.51	.944	Disagree
3. I have an obstacle understanding different accents	14 (14.7%)	35 (36.8%)	31 (32.6%)	13 (13.7%)	3.48	.977	Agree
4. I'm fully uncomprehend the contents of the presentation presented in English.	2 (2.1%)	12 (12.6%)	28 (29.5%)	40 (42.1%)	2.47	.955	Disagree

Table 4.1.13 presents the problems in speaking skill of respondents. The highest mean was $M = 2.81$ or 34.7%, indicating that most of respondents were unable to speak English confidently with foreign supervisors, colleague, and clients; meanwhile, $M = 2.78$ or 34.7% indicated that they feel uncomfortable when speaking about other topics which unrelated to their routine, then followed by $M = 2.63$ or 38.9% who confirmed that they were unable to respond in English to foreign supervisors, and clients immediately; however, $M = 2.38$ or 46.8% insisted that they were confident to report on their work progress to foreign supervisors, colleague, and clients in meetings.

TABLE 4.1.13 PROBLEMS IN SPEAKING SKILLS

Speaking skill	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
5. I cannot speak English confidently with foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients.	11 (11.6%)	13 (13.7%)	28 (29.5%)	33 (34.7%)	2.81	1.160	Neutral
6. I cannot report back my progress effectively in meeting.	3 (3.2%)	11 (11.6%)	21 (22.1%)	44 (46.8%)	2.38	1.002	Disagree
7. I feel uncomfortable when speak others topic unrelated my routine works.	4 (4.2%)	24 (25.3%)	24 (25.3%)	33 (34.7%)	2.78	1.074	Neutral
8. I cannot respond to foreign supervisors, and clients immediately.	5 (5.3%)	18 (18.9%)	22 (23.2%)	37 (38.9%)	2.63	1.102	Neutral

Table 4.1.14 presents the problems in reading skills of respondents. The highest means was $M = 2.97$ or 43.2% indicating that most of respondents had an obstacle to interpret unfamiliar words and vocabularies in email, and then followed by $M = 2.65$ or 36.8% illustrated that they had a difficulty to understand others technical terms, and abbreviations unrelated to their job filed, nevertheless, $M = 2.21$ or 55.8% confirmed that they were confident to understand sentence structures in email and $M = 2.03$ or 53.7% insisted that they were assured to perceive the content in emails and work reports written in English very well.

TABLE 4.1.14 PROBLEMS OF READING SKILLS

Reading skill	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
9. I cannot understand the content in emails and work reports written in English well.	4 (4.2%)	3 (3.2%)	11 (11.6%)	51 (53.7%)	2.03	.950	Disagree
10. I find it hard to understand others technical terms, and abbreviations unrelated to my job filed.	4 (4.2%)	14 (14.7%)	32 (33.7%)	35 (36.8%)	2.65	.998	Neutral
11. I find it hard to interpret unfamiliar words and vocabularies in email.	11 (11.6%)	16 (16.8%)	27 (28.4%)	41 (43.2%)	2.97	1.036	Neutral
12. I find it difficult to understand sentence structures in email.	2 (2.1%)	6 (6.3%)	18 (18.9%)	53 (55.8%)	2.21	.874	Disagree

Table 4.1.15 presents a problem in writing skills of respondents. The highest mean was $M = 2.65$ or 41.1% indicating that most of respondents had a difficulty choosing the right words to convey the meaning in email, while $M = 2.43$ or 45.3% confirmed that they could write a message about what they want to convey clearly. In addition, $M = 2.29$ or 45.3% indicated that they were able to write email and work reports in English well and $M = 2.18$ or 35.8% confirmed that they were confident to compose emails in English without drafting content in their native language.

TABLE 4.1.15 PROBLEMS IN WRITING SKILLS

Writing skill	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
13.I cannot write email and work report well in English	4 (4.2%)	8 (8.4%)	20 (21.1%)	43 (45.3%)	2.29	1.030	Disagree
14. I cannot compose email in English without draft content in my native language.	6 (6.3%)	10 (10.5%)	13 (13.7%)	32 (33.7%)	2.18	1.211	Disagree
15. I find it difficult to choose the right words to convey the meaning in email.	4 (4.2%)	18 (18.9%)	24 (25.3%)	39 (41.1%)	2.65	1.039	Neutral
16. I cannot write what I want to convey clearly.	3 (3.2%)	11 (11.6%)	24 (25.3%)	43 (45.3%)	2.43	.986	Disagree

Table 4.1.16 illustrates the factors affecting to cross-cultural communication in the workplace in the aspect of the personality and relationships of respondents. The highest means was $M = 4.12$ or 53.7% indicating that most respondents were willing to adapt themselves to foreign supervisors, co-workers, and client, followed by $M = 3.94$ or 53.7% confirming that they had a positive attitude towards foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients' behaviors. $M = 3.54$ or 40.0% indicated they agreed that foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients should adapt themselves to their cultures; however, $M = 3.44$ or 35.8% confirming that the rest of respondents agreed that they felt relaxed to work with foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients.

TABLE 4.1.16 PERSONALITY AND RELATIONSHIP

Personality and Relationship	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
17. I feel comfortable to work with foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients.	15 (15.8%)	34 (35.8%)	28 (29.5%)	14 (14.7%)	3.44	1.059	Agree
18. I have a good attitude towards foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients' behaviors.	21 (22.1%)	51 (53.7%)	20 (21.1%)	2 (2.1%)	3.94	.783	Agree
19. I'm willing to adapt myself to foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients' cultures.	29 (30.5%)	29 (30.5%)	51 (53.7%)	12 (12.6%)	4.12	.742	Agree
20. I agree that foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients should adapt themselves to my cultures.	15 (15.8%)	32 (33.7%)	38 (40.0%)	9 (9.5%)	3.54	.909	Agree

Table 4.1.17 illustrates the factors affecting cross-cultural communication in the workplace in the aspect of work climate. The highest mean was $M = 4.39$ or 48.4% indicated that most of respondents strongly preferred to work with good teamwork, good relationships with flexible work timelines and $M = 4.09$ or 43.2% also confirmed that they enjoyed working and learning new things from foreigners at the workplace. Nevertheless, $M = 3.69$ or 51.6% confirmed that they preferred to work independently and finish tasks punctually with a team which had a high responsibility, and $M = 2.66$ or 32.6% confirmed that they felt nervous when interacting with foreigners at the workplace.

TABLE 4.1.17 WORK CLIMATE

Work Climate	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
21. I prefer to work, independently, punctually with high responsibility.	13 (13.7%)	49 (51.6%)	49 (51.6%)	9 (9.5%)	3.69	.826	Agree
22. I prefer good teamwork with good relationship, and flexible work timeline.	46 (48.4%)	42 (44.2%)	5 (5.3%)	2 (2.1%)	4.39	.689	Agree
23. I feel nervous when interacting with foreigners at workplace.	4 (4.2%)	21 (22.1%)	24 (25.3%)	31 (32.6%)	2.66	1.117	Neutral
24. I enjoy working and learning new things from foreigner at workplace.	33 (34.7%)	41 (43.2%)	18 (18.9%)	3 (3.2%)	4.09	.813	Agree

4.2 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TEST OF INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY SCALE AFFECTING COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

This part presents the results of interpersonal skills test for intercultural sensitivity scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) for measuring the intercultural communication competence of the respondents in five dimensions as follows;

Table 4.2.1 illustrates intercultural communication competence of respondents in the dimension of the interaction engagement. The means were between $M = 4.28$ to $M = 2.81$. The highest mean $M = 4.28$ or 54.7% indicated that most respondents were open-minded and optimized, and followed by $M = 3.89$ or 48.3%, who confirmed that they were enjoyed interacting with people from different cultures, and $M = 3.62$ or 50.5%, who confirmed that they had a feeling of enjoyment towards their culturally- distinct counterparts. In addition, $M = 3.34$ or 55.8% often indicate their understanding verbally or non-verbally to people from different cultures; however, $M = 3.22$ or 58.9% tend to be waiting before forming an impression of culturally- distinct counterparts, and $M = 2.81$ or 37.9% indicated that they were avoiding all situations with culturally distinct persons.

TABLE 4.2.1 INTERACTION ENGAGEMENT

Interaction Engagement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
10. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	21 (22.1%)	46 (48.3%)	25 (26.3%)	3 (3.2%)	3.89	.778	Agree
11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally- distinct counterparts.	3 (3.2%)	26 (27.4%)	56 (58.9%)	9 (9.5%)	3.22	.702	Neutral
13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.	35 (36.8%)	52 (54.7%)	8 (8.4%)	-	4.28	.613	Strongly Agree
21. I avoid situations where I will have to deal with culturally- distinct persons.	2 (2.1%)	19 (20.0%)	36 (37.9%)	35 (36.8%)	2.81	.867	Neutral
22. I often show my culturally- distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.	6 (6.3%)	28 (29.5%)	53 (55.8%)	8 (8.4%)	3.34	.724	Neutral
23. I have a feeling of enjoyment regarding the differences between myself and culturally- distinct counterparts.	7 (7.4%)	48 (50.5%)	37 (38.9%)	3 (3.2%)	3.62	.671	Agree

Table 4.2.2 presents the intercultural communication competence in the dimensions of Respect for cultural differences. The means were between $M = 4.41$ to $M = 2.06$. The highest means was $M = 4.41$ or 49.5% illustrated that most of respondents strongly respected and valued of people from different cultures, and $M = 4.21$ or 53.7% respected to the ways that people from different cultures behave. Nevertheless, $M = 3.83$ or 52.6% did not accept the opinions of people from different cultures. On the other hand, $M = 2.21$ or 45.3% disagreed that people from other cultures are narrowed-minded, similar to $M = 2.19$ or 60.0% indicated that they like to be with people from different cultures, and $M = 2.06$ or 40.0% confirmed they never think that their culture is better than others culture.

TABLE 4.2.2 RESPECT FOR CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Respect for culture differences	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded	4 (4.2%)	8 (8.4%)	16 (16.8%)	43 (45.3%)	2.21	1.051	Disagree
7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.	2 (2.1%)	4 (4.2%)	18 (18.9%)	57 (60.0%)	2.19	.816	Disagree
8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.	47 (49.5%)	42 (44.2%)	5 (5.3%)	-	4.41	.692	Strongly Agree
16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.	33 (34.7%)	51 (53.7%)	9 (9.5%)	2 (2.1%)	4.21	.698	Strongly Agree
18. I do not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	15 (15.8%)	50 (52.6%)	29 (30.5%)	1 (1.1%)	3.83	.694	Agree
20. I think my culture is better than other cultures.	1 (1.1%)	3 (3.2%)	25 (26.3%)	38 (40.0%)	2.06	.885	Disagree

Table 4.2.3 shows the intercultural communication competence of the respondents in the dimension of Interaction confidence. The means were between $M = 3.61$ to $M = 2.88$. The highest mean was $M = 3.61$ or 43.2%, indicated these respondents were assured themselves when interacting with people from different cultures, and followed by $M = 3.29$ or 45.3% who confirmed that they can being sociable and relaxed when interacting with people from different cultures, and $M = 3.24$ or 51.6% who indicated that they were sure of themselves when interacting with culturally distinct persons, $M = 3.20$ or 46.3% who confirmed that they know what to speak with people from different cultures. However, $M = 2.88$ or 32.6% indicated that they feel uncomfortable to talk in front of people from different cultures.

TABLE 4.2.3 INTERACTION CONFIDENCE

Interaction Confidence	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.	12 (12.6%)	41 (43.2%)	35 (36.8%)	7 (7.4%)	3.61	.803	Agree
4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.	4 (4.2%)	22 (23.2%)	33 (32.6%)	31 (32.6%)	2.88	.966	Neutral
5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.	5 (5.3%)	28 (29.5%)	44 (46.3%)	17 (17.9%)	3.20	.833	Neutral
6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	7 (7.4%)	30 (31.6%)	43 (45.3%)	14 (14.7%)	3.29	.849	Neutral
10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	5 (5.3%)	27 (28.4%)	49 (51.6%)	14 (14.7%)	3.24	.768	Neutral

Table 4.2.4 displays the intercultural communication competence of the respondents in the dimension of Interaction enjoyment, the averages between $M = 2.32$ to $M = 1.98$. The highest mean at $M = 2.32$ or 56.8% shown that most respondents were encouraged when being with people from different cultures, followed by $M = 2.21$ or 57.9% who confirmed that they feel worthy when interacting with people from different cultures, and $M = 1.98$ or 51.6% who indicated that they were happy being with people from different cultures.

TABLE 4.2.4 INTERACTION ENJOYMENT

Interaction Enjoyment	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	-	4 (4.2%)	16 (16.8%)	49 (51.6%)	1.98	.785	Disagree
12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	-	9 (9.95%)	22 (23.2%)	54 (56.8%)	2.32	.789	Disagree
15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.	1 (1.1%)	8 (8.4%)	16 (16.8%)	55 (57.9%)	2.21	.849	Disagree

Table 4.2.5 displays the intercultural communication competence in the dimension of Interaction intensiveness. The means were between $M = 3.94$ to $M = 2.81$. The highest mean $M = 3.94$ or 65.3% revealed that the majority of respondents tried to obtain information as much as possible, followed by $M = 3.53$ or 45.3% who indicated that they were always observant when interacting with people from different cultures; however, $M = 2.81$ or 51.6% indicated that they were sensitive to subtle meanings in during interactions with culturally distinct counterparts.

TABLE 4.2.5 INTERACTION ATTENTIVENESS

Interaction Attentiveness	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	S. D	Degree of Opinion
14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	8 (8.4%)	43 (45.3%)	37 (38.9%)	5 (5.3%)	2 (2.1%)	3.53	.810	Agree
17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.	15 (15.8%)	62 (65.3%)	15 (15.8%)	3 (3.2%)	-	3.94	.665	Strongly Agree
19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterparts' subtle meanings during our interactions.	-	16 (16.8%)	49 (51.6%)	26 (27.4%)	4 (4.2%)	2.81	.762	Neutral

4.3 ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST

This study not only investigated the problems in English among Thai software consultants, but also respondents' English ability in general use with the English proficiency test, CEFR level B2 – Business Vantage, adopted from the CEFR free online test from the Cambridge English assessment webpage.

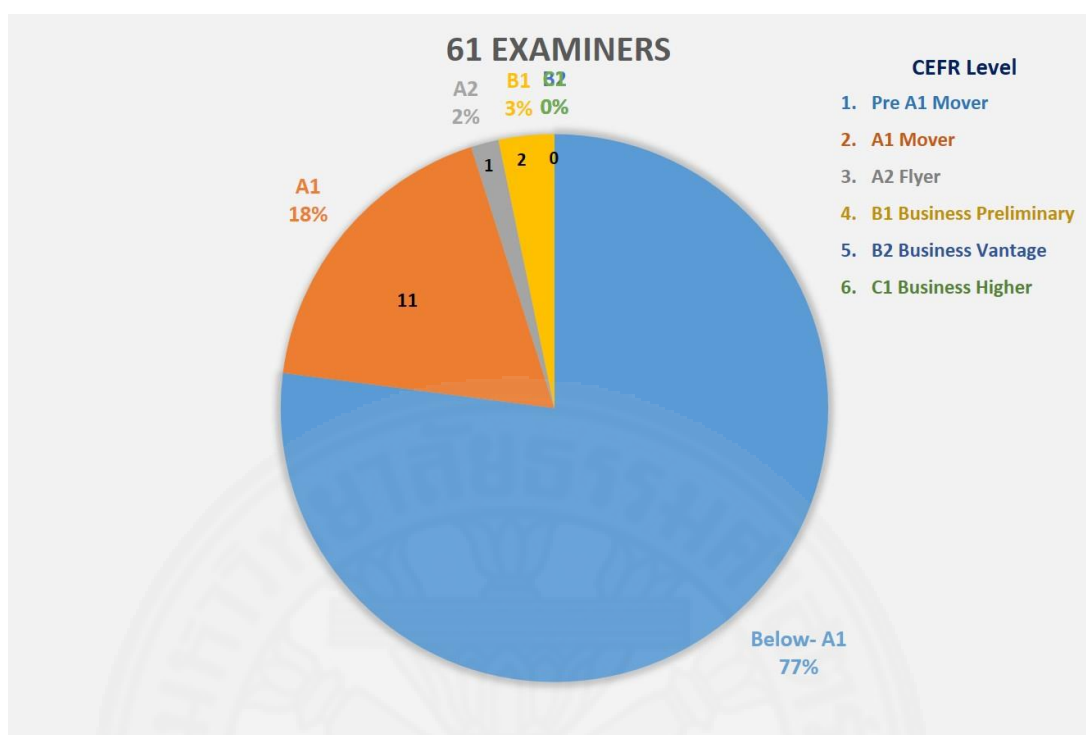
This English proficiency test, which consisted of listening and reading parts, was utilized to examine 61 respondents who volunteered to take this examination through both a google form online and a paper-based. The actual examination time was 1 hour, and 40 minutes. When the 61 participants finished the exam, the results of the English proficiency test were calculated according to the standard of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) to measure respondents' language ability on a six-point scales as shown in the table below.

Table 4.3.1 presents the CEFR (Common European Framework References) level of language ability on a six-point scale.

CEFR (Common European Framework Reference) level		Cambridge English scale score	Percent	Grade
Proficiency	1. C 1–Business Higher	180-199	90 percent	C1
Independent	2. B2 – Business Vantage	160-179	80 percent	B2
	3. B1 – Business Preliminary	140-159	70 percent	B1
Basic	4. A2 - Mover	120-139	60 percent	A2
	5. A1 – Flyer	100-119	50 percent	A1
Below basic	6. Below – A1 Flyer	80-99	Below 50 percent	Below A1

Table 4.3.2 illustrates the results of the English proficiency test. A total of 61 from 95 respondents took the CEFR level B2 - Business Vantage. The result revealed that 47 respondents calculated at 54% were below – A1 Flyer level because their score were below 50 percent or total scores between 80-99 scores, followed by 11 respondents who were A1 Flyer level calculated at 18% with total scores between 100-119 or score 50 percent; meanwhile, For 1 respondent was at the A2 Move level calculated at 2% with a total score between 120-139 or 60 percent. However, 2 respondents were at the B1-Business preliminary level calculated at 3% with total scores between 140-159 or 70 percent. Surprisingly, none of the respondents could reach level B2 – Business vantage, which was the level utilized to examine respondents of this study or C1- Business higher, which is the highest level of the CEFR (Common European Framework Reference).

TABLE 4.3.2 RESULTS OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the findings of this study consisting the conclusion, discussion, and recommendations.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This part concludes the objective of the study, the respondents, the research instrument, and the procedures utilized to collect the data of this study.

5.1.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate English barriers among Thai software consultants, focusing on specialist in the SAP (System Application Product) software package working in a multinational IT company as well as explore the factors affecting communication in cross-cultural communication in workplace. The objective was to determine Thai software consultants' problems in language use at work in the aspects of listening, speaking, reading, writing skills, their intercultural communication competence regarding different cultures, and their actual English ability through an English proficiency test, CEFR Level B2 – Business Vantage.

5.1.2 RESPONDENTS, RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

After the pilot study, the period of data collection was between 23rd March to 30th April 2019. The aforementioned research instruments were attached and sent to 87 respondents in their personal emails. Subsequently, 61 respondents from the total 95 respondents who volunteered and were requested to book a timeslot for the English proficiency test. Most of them were available to this take this examination

on weekday between 6:00AM to 10:00PM, and 9:00AM to 11:00PM on weekends. Before the examination started, organizer call to the examinees about five minutes in advance to check their readiness, and then the URL link to the English proficiency test was via their in personal email, The examination time of 1 hour and 40 minutes was controlled by the organizer; when time was running out, the examiners were requested to click on “submit” through Google Forms. For the rest of respondents 12 persons, the questionnaire, the interpersonal skills test for Intercultural sensitivity, and the English proficiency test were given to them at one an IT company, on the 27th floor, Thai TCC Tower, South-Sathorn Road, Bangkok. When they completed both the questionnaire and interpersonal skills test, all respondents took the English proficiency test in a meeting room separated into two groups. Unfortunately, three respondents could not finish the English test because they had an ad-hoc meeting with customers; thus, examination papers were collected from only 9 respondents.

After collecting all the data from respondents, questionnaire and interpersonal skills test were analyzed frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations (SD) in SPSS (Statistic Package for the Social Sciences). Meanwhile, the English proficiency test were scored and calculated according to the standard of CEFR (Common European Framework References) describing language ability on a six-point scales.

5.2 DISCUSSION

The findings are discussed into three parts as below;

5.2.1 Questionnaire consisting of respondents’ demographic and general information, English proficiency background, frequency of language use at work, problem of language use at work, and factors affecting communication in cross-cultural communication in the workplace.

5.2.2 The results of interpersonal skills test for Intercultural Sensitivity scales to determine respondents’ intercultural communication competent in five dimensions: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness.

5.2.3 The results of the English proficiency test , CEFR Level B2 – Business Vantage.

5.2.4 The finding in relation to relevant research

5.2.1 Questionnaire

For the findings on the demographic and general information of the 95 respondents attending about 60% or 57 respondents were female, while 40% or 38 respondents were male. The age groups of respondents consisted of three groups: between 20-25-year-old at 22.1%, 26-30 years old at 22.1%, and 36-40 years old at 22.1% for a total 66.3%, followed by 31-35 years old or 18.9% and 41 years old and above or 14.7%. In terms of educational background, most of respondents graduated with a bachelor's degree 61.1% and a master's degree 38.9%, and mostly in the field of information technology, computer sciences, and engineering. Surprisingly, some of respondents graduated in pharmacy, nursing and medical technology. For job positions, a half of respondents 51 respondents or 53.7% were software analyst consultants, 34 respondents or 35.8% were software IT functional staff, and followed by 7 respondents or 7.6% who were CEOs/managers. For working experience, the large group had working experiences between 1-5 years with 43.5% and followed by working experiences of more than 10 years at 27.4%, 23.2% at 6-10 years and 6.3% with working experience of less than 1 year. Out of the total of 95 respondents, 59 respondents or 62.1% had taken an English proficiency test before joining the company, while 36 respondents or 37.9% had never taken an English proficiency test before.

In terms of the second part of the questionnaire asking for respondents' self-rating of their English proficiency in the aspect of listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary, the findings revealed that most of respondents self-rated of their listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary at the average level; most of respondent agreed that they were confident to compose emails, interpret a message, write work reports, do presentations and understood what foreign supervisors, co-workers, and clients said. On the other hand, they self-rated

of their speaking skill at a fair level; most of them were not confident to speak English with foreigners and in everyday communication, they usually have conversations via intranet chat, social media and applications, thus most of them had infrequent conversation in verbal communication. As Kerfoots (2010) states the way to provide a sense of “connectedness”, in employees working in virtual organization is to provide their team use of social media such as blogging, Twitter, Instant messaging, wikis, smartphones, and organizational and individual Facebook technologies; therefore, their speaking skill was rated lower than other skills.

For English communication at work, the majority of respondents reported direct to expatriate foreign supervisors 62.1%, while the rest 37.9% indirectly reported to expatriate foreign supervisors. In terms of frequency of English use at work, most of them had everyday English communication at the workplace 67.4%, followed by three time a week 2.1%, twice a week 14.7%, once a week 8.4%, infrequently 3.3%, and no English communication 5.3% because the majority of clients were Thai. In terms of the purpose of language use at work, in routine work, most respondents used Email for English communication about 89.5%, followed by meeting 61%, communication with foreign supervisors and foreign co-workers 63.2%, presentation 57.9%, teleconferencing 48.4%, and phone conversation 33.7%. For English language courses, a half of respondents 50 respondents or 52.6% had taken an English language course, while 45 respondents or 47.4% had never ever taken an English course and they usually practice English at work.

The third part of questionnaire presents the results of English barriers in the aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of respondents. In terms of problems in listening skill, the majority of respondents agreed that they had difficulty understanding the unfamiliar accents of foreign supervisors and co-workers. As Tyagi (2003) mentions the accent of the speakers can prevent effective listening because when listeners missed the meaning of the words or contexts of the conversation because the speakers pronounced accent differently. Since non-native English listeners usually lost their thought and easily miss the meaning of the words of conversation because of speakers' pronounced accent differently. Similarity to Underwood (1989) found that causes of problems

in listening comprehension consist of seventh factors: Inability to follow the speakers' speech because they speakers may speaker fast; listeners being afraid to request words to be repeated because the listeners are afraid to interrupt the speakers in the meeting; listeners having a limitation from lack of vocabulary; listeners miss the signal words or phrases of speakers while changing to another topic, such as pitch, tone, volume, pause, and intonation; listeners had an insufficient contextual knowledge even if they can perceive the surface meaning of passage, such as the nonverbal cues, facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice of speakers; listeners feel frustrated and bored when they listen to an unfamiliar topic; listeners believing that good listeners should understand every single word or sentence, thus they may become worried and disappointed when they are unable follow what the speaker said. In addition, most respondents were unable to comprehend the content in English because they could understand the topic or the contents was unrelated to their field and background knowledge.

For the problem of speaking skill, most of the respondents are unable to speak English confidently with foreign supervisors and co-workers because they feel uncomfortable when speaking about topic unrelated to their job and knowledge background. As He and Chen (2010) indicated, most non-native speakers believe that their English proficiency in speaking is insufficient; therefore, they may keep silent and avoid conversations with foreigners. Similarly, Nascente (2001) determined that anxiety is a significant factor inhibiting non-native speakers' speaking skills. In addition, Ur (1996) indicated that most non-native speakers feel more comfortable to communicate and respond to someone who has the same mother tongue.

In terms of the problems in reading skill, the majority of respondents are unable to interpret unfamiliar words and vocabulary in Email and have difficulty understanding technical terms and abbreviations unrelated to their field and background knowledge. As Gunning (2002) found insufficient vocabulary knowledge and decoding skill are the main problems in reading comprehension. Scott (2009) also determined that the structure of complex sentences containing several complex clauses in the sentence can cause difficulties in reading among non-native English readers.

For the problem in writing skill, the majority of respondents had difficulty choosing the right words and phrases to convey the meaning in emails because they feel nervous when composing messages to executives or clients, especially in serious

situations in their jobs such as the report status of software system failures, missing data, software defects, and so on. As Mclean (2010) mentions business writing involves selecting level of formality according to the specific situations and receivers. Similarly, Hedge (1998) states that since the writing of non-native English writers usually does not contain prosodic analysis, the writers have difficulty with a high degree of structure, choice of vocabulary, and complex grammatical organization. In addition, according to Alfaki (2015) the problems of word choice is a problem of focusing appropriate vocabulary. Therefore, selection of the appropriate words and use of proper grammar and sentences structure are crucial problems among non-native English writers. However, most of respondents were confident to compose messages in emails, work reports, and presentations related to their job and background knowledge.

The third part of questionnaire presents the results on the factors affecting communication in the aspect of the personalities and relationships of respondents. As Hostede (2011) mentions, the theories of individualistic and collectivistic cultures can be used to explain the people's personalities and relationships between people from different cultures. Most respondents were willing to adapt themselves to their foreign supervisor and co-workers. Thai software consultants are from a collectivistic culture that values empathy, compromise in relationships. In terms of working as a team, those from collectivistic cultures tend to prefer group's decision making in order to maintain the group's relationship and avoid conflict with others. "Societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in group, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede, G. & Hofstede, J., 2005, p.76).

In aspect of work climate in a cross-cultural context, most respondents strongly agreed that they prefer good teamwork with good relationships, group's decisions, and flexible work timelines without pressure. According to Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988), in high context cultures the messages are indirect, ambiguous, harmonious, reserved and understated. People in high-context cultures rely on minimal spoken words and are inclined to be brief, indirect, and implicit, using non-verbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, and tones of voice as the major of communication. Since the personalities and relationships of Asians such as those from India, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand tend to be empathetic,

compromising and avoid showing the conflict with others around them, the work climate of people from collectivistic cultures are compromising to considerate of people's feelings indirect avoid conflict in every situation, and relaxed.

5.2.2 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TEST FOR INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY SCALES

This part presents the findings on the interpersonal skills test of intercultural sensitivity scales that reveal the intercultural communication competence of respondents in five dimensions: interaction engagement, respect for cultural difference, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness.

In the first dimension of interaction engagement, the majority of respondents were ready to be open-minded to people from different cultures. As Hofstede (2001) states, people from collectivistic cultures emphasize group goals, value empathy and are compromising in relationships. When making an important decision, people from collectivistic cultures prefer a group decision. In summary, most of respondents had a strongly positive attitude toward people from different cultures because they had a positive feeling, were ready to open-minded, and enjoy working with their culturally distinct counterparts.

In terms of the second dimension of respect for cultural differences, most respondents respect the values of people from different cultures. As Chen and Starostas' model (2000) proposes when people acknowledge the different cultural backgrounds of counterparts, they can make a good relationship and respect each other's values. In conclusion, most respondents accept the values of people from different cultures and acknowledge the different backgrounds of counterparts, thus making them feel relaxed and comfortable to work together.

For the third dimension of interaction confidence, the majority of respondents were sure of themselves when interacting with people from different cultures. According to Chen and Starosta (1996) intercultural communication competence integrates the features of both cross-cultural attitudes and behavior skills models; thus, Intercultural sensitivity is a dimension of Self-esteem, Self-monitoring, Empathy, Open-mindedness, Non-judgmental and Social relaxation. As a result, most

respondents' personalities were self-confident, open-minded, compromising, optimistic, and comfortable to work with people from different cultures.

In terms of the fourth dimension of interaction enjoyment, most respondents were never easily discouraged and did not feel worthless when they were with people from different cultures. According to Hofstede (2001), people from collectivistic cultures emphasize group goals, value empathy and compromise in relationships. In conclusion, the respondents were ready to be open-minded, compromise, adaptable, accepting, and enjoy working with people from different cultures.

For the last dimension of intercultural communication competence, interaction attentiveness, the majority of respondents strongly intended to obtain as much information as they can when interacting with people from different cultures. According to Dodd's (1998) model of intercultural communication, the effectiveness of intercultural communication can be evident in the task, relationships, and cultural adjustments when people perceive cultural differences. In summary, most respondents were enthusiastic and mindful of obtaining as much information as possible when they had an interactions or conversations with culturally distinct counterparts.

5.2.3 ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST

In terms of the English proficiency test, out of 95 respondents, 61 respondents volunteered to take this examination. The results of English proficiency test revealed that 47 respondents or 77% had English ability in below the A1 Flyer level according to the standard of CEFR (Common English frame of reference) because their scores were below 50 percent indicating that they could understand basic English content from books, the internet and in basic English conversations.

Meanwhile 11 respondents or 18% had English proficiency at the A1 Flyer level because their scores were between 50-59 percent, indicating that they could understand basic instructions (basic notes, information), complete basic forms, write notes (including times, dates, and places), and communicate in a simple conversation.

For one respondent or 2% had English proficiency at the A2 Mover level since their score was between 60-69 percent, which means they could understand simple

written English, perceive basic phrases and expressions, communicate in familiar situations and interact with English speakers who speak slowly and clearly with them.

For two respondents or 3% had English ability at the B1 Business Preliminary level because their scores between 70-79 percent, illustrating that they could discuss business subjects, understand charts and graphs, write a short business email, and follow short telephone conversations.

Surprisingly, no respondent attained the CEFR Level B2- Business Vantage, which is the targeted English proficiency level of this study or the C1 High business level which is the highest level of the standard CEFR (Common European Framework Reference).

5.2.4 THE FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE RELEVANT RESEARCH

The findings from five previous studies reviewed in Chapter 2 are now compared with the results of the current study as follows:

Fritz, Mollenberg, Ming and Chen (2001) provided a useful research instrument for measuring intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication competence adopted from Chen and Starosta's (2000) Intercultural sensitivity scale comprising 24 items with five factors as follows:

- (1) Interaction engagement
- (2) Respect for cultural differences
- (3) Interaction confidence
- (4) Interaction enjoyment
- (5) Interaction attentiveness

In fact, this research instrument was created in English language for measuring intercultural sensitivity among students in the United States, and after that was translated into German and utilized for testing a sample of German students of business administration at the University of Mannheim, Germany.

Chen and Starosta's (2000) research instrument enable clear understanding of the personal characteristics of respondents, such as personal traits, attitude, motivation, behavior, and performance in terms of interpersonal skill in intercultural

communication competence in different contexts. In addition, the results of the interpersonal skills test for intercultural sensitivity can be analyzed alongside the fourth part of questionnaire in the aspect of factors affecting cross-cultural communication in the workplace as well.

Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) studied the factors affecting EFL learners' English listening comprehension and strategies for improvement. This research consolidated many significant listening comprehension theories, strategies of listening comprehension improvement for teaching, and many references to relevant research by many credible researchers. This research focused on four main factors affecting English listening comprehension and strategies for listening improvement in L2.

The findings regarding to the problem of listening skill in the questionnaire, and English proficiency test, are correlated with the analysis of problems in listening comprehension theories in terms of the obstacle of different accents of speakers, as Tyagi (2003) found that the accent of the speakers can prevent an effective listening. Similarly, Underwood (2003) mentions the further obstacles of the inability to follow conversations because fast of speaking, fear of requesting words be repeated by speakers, vocabulary limitations, the inability to follow signals such as pitch, tone, volume, pause, and intonation, insufficient contextual knowledge background, and frustrate when listening to unfamiliar topics.

Pornwishulada (2012) surveyed the success factors and barriers to cross-cultural communication of Thai and Indian employees working in an information technology company. This research was used the guideline for this study, since the background of participants in terms of education, occupation, English proficiency, type of company, company environment, and forms of communication firm were similar to those in the current study.

According to the factors affecting communication, the personality and relationships of IT consultants working in an information technology company were similar, with the findings revealing that most respondents valued collectivistic, high context cultures. As Hofstede (2001) states that theories of individualistic and collectivistic cultures can explain a person's personality and the relationships between

people from different cultures. Therefore, people from collectivistic cultures emphasize group goals and prefer group decisions when making an important decision. In addition, in terms of the factors affecting communication in the aspect of work climate, the findings from both the questionnaire and interpersonal skills test of intercultural sensitivity scale were in line correlated with Pornwischulada's (2012) findings.

The findings revealed that IT consultants working in an information technology company tend to be high context and collectivistic because when working as a team, they prefer good teamwork with good relationships, group's decisions and flexible work timelines. Therefore, communication is indirect, and aims to maintain harmony. According to Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988), in high context cultures, the messages are indirect, ambiguous, harmonious, reserved and understated. In addition, high-context cultures rely on the minimal spoken words and are inclined to be brief, indirect, and implicit with non-verbal communication such as a person's gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voices considered to be a major feature.

Sanji (2015) conducted a study of the English communication problems of Thai Employees in a multinational company, ABB (Thailand) Co., Ltd).

In the findings on the English proficiency background in Sanji's (2015) research and this study, the majority of respondents had a similar self-rating of listening, vocabulary skills at an average level, while reading skill was at a good level. Most of Thai employees said that they could understand what foreign supervisors and co-worker communicated with them and most of them know a lot of technical terms related to their job field, since they were graduated in engineering same as this study that most of respondents graduated in a field of IT and computer science.

In terms of the result of English proficiency test consisting of listening reading, and vocabulary parts, most respondents were at a fair level in all four skills which means that the actual English language competency, which was in accordance Sanji's (2015) result of the English proficiency test results indicated that most respondents could understand basic English content in books which is relevant to routine job.

Alfaki (2015) conducted a study on non-native University student's English writing problems, focusing on writing skill. This research also consolidated significant

theories and relevant research from many credible researchers, which provide a good reference this study.

The findings revealed four significant problems: mechanical problems (e.g. sentence structure, word choice), linguistic problems (e.g. grammar, composing sentence, paragraph), cognitive problems (e.g. punctuation, capitalization, spelling, content and organization), psychomotor problems (e.g. lack of motivation, inadequate time, lack of practice). The results of this study confirm the finding of Alfaki. Most respondents self-rated their writing skill at the average level and were able to compose messages in emails, reports, and presentations; however; the results of English proficiency test indicated that most of them had a fair level of writing skill. Most participants mis-spelled word, omitted punctuation, used incorrect capitalization at the beginning of nouns and pronouns that made grammar and structure errors.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the English barriers and explore the factors affecting communication among Thai software consultants working in a multinational IT company. The findings from the questionnaire, interpersonal skill test for intercultural sensitivity and the English proficiency test are concluded in this part.

5.3.1 CONCLUSION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

In conclusion, the result of the demographic and general information indicated that all respondents had a good educational background. Most of them graduated with a bachelor's degree or master's degree and worked in profession that had a relaxed environment. In terms of self-rated of English proficiency in the four skills, most respondents were at good level in listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary skill; however; they self-rated speaking skill at a fair level. For the problems of language use at work, most of them had a problem with listening skill since they were unable to follow conversations due to the different accents of foreign supervisors and colleagues. Similar to the finding on speaking skill, they were unable to speak English confidently because of a lack of essential vocabulary. In terms of writing skill, most of

them were unable to choose the right words to convey the meaning in email, especially when composing a message to executives and clients; likewise, in terms of reading skill, most respondents faced the obstacle of unfamiliar vocabulary in email and a lack of decoding skill when reading messages unrelated to their background knowledge and their job fields.

5.3.2 CONCLUSION OF FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION REGRADING DIFFERENT CULTURES IN THE WORKPLACE

In terms of factors affecting communication in the workplace in the aspect of personality and relationships, most respondents were willing to adapt themselves to foreign supervisors, co-workers and clients. Since Thai employees come from a collectivistic culture, their personalities were empathetic, compromising, and sensitive to the feelings of people around them. In the aspect of work climate, the respondents came from a high-context cultures, so they preferred good teamwork with good relationships, group's decisions and flexible work timelines. Therefore, the communication was indirect, and ambiguous with minimal spoken words in order to preserve friendships and save face of the people around them.

5.3.3 CONCLUSION OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TEST FOR INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY SCALES

The findings on interpersonal skills test for intercultural sensitivity scale can be discussed in five dimensions of intercultural communication competence as follows;

5.3.3.1 Interaction engagement: Most of respondents were ready to be open-minded with people from different cultures because they had a positive feeling when interacting with their culturally- distinct counterparts.

5.3.3.2 Respect for cultural differences: Most of respondents respected the values of people from different cultures and acknowledged the different cultural backgrounds of counterparts.

5.3.3.3 Interaction confidence: The majority of respondents were sure of themselves when interacting with people from different cultures, since they had good intercultural communication competence and acknowledged people's distinct backgrounds.

5.3.3.4 Interaction enjoyment: Most of respondents were not easily discouraged and did not feel useless when they were with people from different cultures; at the same time, they feel enjoy doing activities and working with foreign supervisors, co-workers, and clients.

5.3.3.5 Interaction attentiveness: The majority of respondents sought to gain as much information as possible when interacting with people from different cultures. In a group's decisions, they had much paid attention in conversations with foreign supervisors and co-workers in order to find the right solutions.

In summary of the finding on interpersonal skills of intercultural sensitivity of the respondents in five dimensions of intercultural communication competence, Thai software consultants had a strong positive attitude and were open-minded toward people from different cultures. Most of them tend to recognize culturally distinct counterparts, demonstrate effective intercultural communication competence, and seek to preserve relationships with their foreign supervisors, co-workers, and clients.

5.3.4 CONCLUSION OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST

The main problems in English proficiency among Thai software consultants is that most of them have not really acknowledged their actual English language competency. Since they had self-believed they were effective in English communication and understood what foreign supervisors and co-workers said to them, they may overlook their actual problems in language communication skill. Therefore, the key findings on the actual English proficiency of Thai software consultants is that most respondents had effective English communication in terms of listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary skill on topics or related directly to their background

knowledge and their field. In particular, vocabulary was a significant deficiency that needs to be shored up with regular practice on social media or online learning.

Meanwhile, the 61 respondents who took this English proficiency test were more concerned about their weakness and intend to improve their English ability; most of them believed that if they had a sufficient English ability, they would have a good job offer and opportunities for advancement. However, some of the examinees gave a feedback on the English proficiency test, saying that it was too difficult for them. This may have been because the format of the examination was different from other English proficiency tests. Nevertheless, the CEFR (Common European Framework Reference) is the international standard for measuring language ability, along with TOFLE, IELTS, or TOEIC.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the summary of study, discussion, and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations for further study are made:

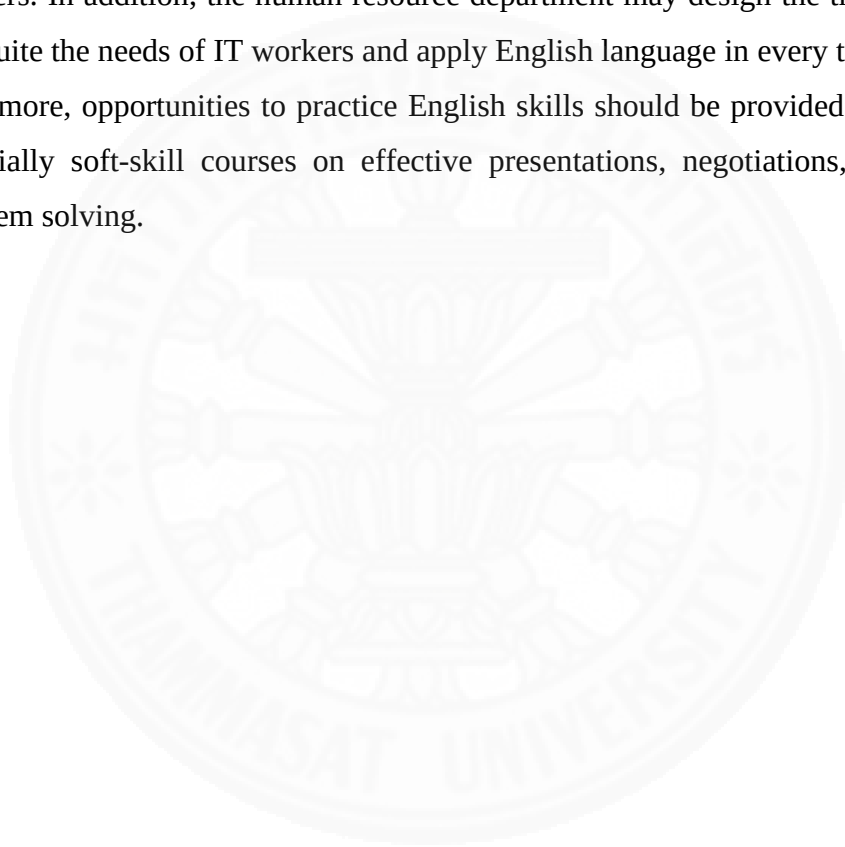
5.4.1 Further studies compare Thai IT workers and other foreign IT workers in order to analyse other dimensions of intercultural communication competence in multinational IT companies.

5.4.2 Further studies might be examined the phenomenon of World Englishes communication of IT workers working in a multinational IT company because most exchange employees in SEA (South East Asia) are members of AEC (ASEAN Economic Community). The result would help IT workers be aware of the distinctions of English communication between employees in the workplace.

5.4.3 Further studies should survey of English proficiency before the examination since the format of CEFR (Common European Framework Reference) test is quite different from other English proficiency tests and unfamiliar to some Thai learners.

5.4.4 Further studies should increase the number of items in the questionnaire in order to cover more aspect of cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, the instructions for the English proficiency test should be explained more clearly in order to obtain more accurate data from the respondents.

5.4.5 The findings of this study should be beneficial to upper managers and executives in a multinational IT companies in terms of increasing the potentiality of IT workers. In addition, the human resource department may design the training courses that suite the needs of IT workers and apply English language in every training course. Also more, opportunities to practice English skills should be provided to employees, especially soft-skill courses on effective presentations, negotiations, and complex problem solving.



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APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondents,

This questionnaire is a part of Independent study entitled “English language barriers and factors affecting communication among Software consultants working Multinational Information Technology companies in Thailand”. This study aimed to investigate the barriers of English language proficiency among Software consultants and study the factors affect their communication in workplace. Please be assured that all information provided by respondents will be used for academic purposes and no personal information will be revealed in the study without permission.

The questionnaire is divided into five parts:

- Part I: Demographic and General Information
- Part II: English Proficiency background
- Part III: How often language use in workplace
- Part IV: Problems of language use at work
- Part V: Factors affecting communication to cross-cultural communication

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Regards,

MS. Kotchakorn Puapuntuma

Student in Master of Arts in CEIC program

Language Institute of Thammasat University

PART I: DEMOGRAPHIC AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Direction: Please complete the questionnaire below by putting a tick (☒) in the space provided.

1. Gender

(☐) Male (☐) Female

2. Age

- (☐) 20 - 25
- (☐) 26- 30
- (☐) 31- 35
- (☐) 36- 40
- (☐) 41- above

3. Educational background

- (☐) High Vocational School
- (☐) Bachelor's degree
- (☐) Master's degree
- (☐) Doctoral degree

4. Nationality

(☐) Thai (☐) Other (Please specify.....)

5. Position

- (☐) Project Executive
- (☐) Project Manager
- (☐) Software analyst consultant
- (☐) Software IT functional staff
- (☐) Others (Please specify.....)

6. What is your SAP function module? (You can answer more than 1 choice)

- ☐ Finance Accounting (FI) ☐ Controlling (CO)
☐ Material Management (MM) ☐ Sales Distribution (SD)
☐ Treasury (TR) ☐ Enterprise Controlling (EC)
☐ Production Planning (PP) ☐ Material Management (MM)
☐ Quality Management (QM) ☐ Plan Management (PM)
☐ Service Management (SM) ☐ Human Capital Management (HCM)
☐ Advanced Business Application Programming (ABAP)
☐ Others (Please specify.....)

7. How long have you been working in this field?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
☐ 1-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ More than 10 years

PART II: ENGLISH PROFICIENCY BACKGROUND

9. Have you ever taken an English proficiency test?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

10. If your answer item 9 is “Yes”, please specify the type of English proficiency test and latest scores.

- ☐ TOEFL/Score.....
☐ IELTS/Score.....
☐ TOEIC/Score.....
☐ CU-TEP/Score.....
☐ TU-GET/Score.....
☐ Other (Please specify...../Score.....)

11. Please rate your English proficiency skills according to the table below;

English Proficiency skills	Weak	Fair	Good	Command	Proficient
Listening skills					
Speaking skills					
Reading skills					
Grammar					
Vocabulary					
Writing skills					

PART III: HOW OFTEN LANGUAGE USE AT WORK

12. Do you report to expatriate supervisor or boss?

() Yes () No

13. How often do you use English language in your job?

- () Every day
 () Once a week
 () Twice a week
 () Three time a week
 () Other (Please specify.....)

14. What is the purpose of language use? (You can answer more than 1 choice)

- () Communication with colleagues in everyday use
 () Meetings
 () Teleconferencing
 () Presentations
 () Emails
 () Phones

15. Have you ever taken English language (s) course?

() Yes () No

If yes, please specify courses' name;

16. Have you ever taken any course(s) that company provided?

() Yes () No

If yes, please specify courses' name;

Online questionnaire is available on the link below;

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1v96PTbCbsXLGUZzMtLz-duu9HtfCDQKsgT_8tWoLeg4/edit

PART IV: PROBLEMS OF LANGUAGE USE AT WORK

This part aims to investigate the problems of language use at work of software consultants working in multinational Information Technology companies in term of Listening, Speaking and Writing.

Direction: Please tick (✓) in the box only one which best describes your opinion in each statement below

Degree of Agreement

5= Strongly Agree
4= Agree
3= Neutral
2= Disagree
1= Strongly Disagree

Statements	Degree of Agreement				
	Strong Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neutral = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
• Listening Skill					
17. I cannot understand what foreign supervisors, colleagues and clients speak in business meetings.					
18. I cannot follow what the people discuss in meeting.					
19. I have an obstacle understanding different accents.					
20. I'm fully comprehend the content of presentations presented in English					
• Speaking Skill					
21. I cannot speak English confidently with foreign supervisors, colleagues and clients.					
22. I cannot report back my progress effectively in meeting.					
23. I feel uncomfortable when speak others topic unrelated to my routine work.					
24. I cannot respond to foreign supervisors, and clients immediately.					

Direction: Please tick (✓) in the box only one which best describes your opinion in each statement below

Degree of Agreement

5= Strongly Agree

4= Agree

3= Neutral

2= Disagree

1= Strongly Disagree

Statements	Degree of Agreement				
	Strong Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neutral = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
• Reading Skill					
25. I cannot understand the content in emails and work reports written in English well.					
26. I find it hard to understand others technical terms, and abbreviations unrelated to my job filed,					
27. I find it hard to interpret unfamiliar words and vocabularies in email.					
28. I find it difficult to understand sentence structures in email.					
• Writing Skill					
29. I cannot write emails and work reports well in English.					
30. I cannot compose emails in English without draft content in my native language.					
31. I find it difficult to choose the right words to convey the meaning in emails.					
32. I cannot write what I want to convey clearly.					

PART V: FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN WORKPLACE

This part aims to explore Factor affecting communication to cross-cultural communication in workplace in term of Individualistic-Collectivistic cultures and High context – Low context cultures.

Direction: Please tick (✓) in the box only one which best describes your opinion in each statement below

Degree of Agreement

5= Strongly Agree

4= Agree

3= Neutral

2= Disagree

1= Strongly Disagree

Statements	Degree of Agreement				
	Strong Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neutral = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
• Cross-cultural Communication in workplace					
33. I feel comfortable to work with foreign supervisors, colleagues and clients.					
34. I have a good attitude towards foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients' behaviors.					
35. I'm willing to adapt myself to foreign supervisors, colleagues, and client's cultures					
36. I agree that foreign supervisors, colleagues, and clients should adapt themselves to my cultures.					
37. I prefer to work, independently, and punctually with high responsibility.					

Direction: Please tick (✓) in the box only one which best describes your opinion in each statement below

Degree of Agreement

5= Strongly Agree

4= Agree

3= Neutral

2= Disagree

1= Strongly Disagree

Statements	Degree of Agreement				
	Strong Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neutral = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
• Cross-cultural Communication in workplace					
38. I prefer good teamwork with good relationships, and flexible work timeline					
39. I feel nervous when interacting with foreigners at the workplace.					
40. I enjoy working and learning new things from foreigners at the workplace.					

41. Training program you need

- () Listening
- () Reading
- () Speaking
- () Writing
- () Effective Communication cross-culture
- () Negotiation with hard-customers.
- () Complex problem solving.
- () Figure out people
- () Other (please specify).....
-
-
-

42. Training program you interested in (please specify)

.....
.....

Online questionnaire is available on the link below;

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScC_WDWWM_QP2Lr4dEM7aZWCXe0PMRxATauDwFxU06m6S3ng/viewform?usp=sf_link



APPENDIX B
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TEST FOR INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION IN SENSITIVITY SCALE

Dear respondents,

This Interpersonal skill test for Intercultural Sensitivity scale is a part of Independent study entitled “English language barriers and factors affecting communication among Software consultants working in a Multinational IT companies”. This test is aimed to examine Interpersonal skills for Intercultural Sensitive scale alongside with to investigate the barriers of English language proficiency in workplace.

Please be assured that all information provided by respondents will be used for academic purposes and no personal information will be revealed in the study without permission.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Regards,

MS. Kotchakorn Puapuntuma

Student in Master of Arts in CEIC program

Language Institute of Thammasat University

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TEST FOR INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY

This test is aimed to examine Interpersonal skills for Intercultural Sensitive scale in workplace.

Direction: below is a series of statements concerning Intercultural communication, please indicate only one which best describes your opinion in each statement below.

5 = strongly agree

4 = agree

3 = uncertain

2 = disagree

1 = strongly disagree

Statements	strongly agree = 5	agree = 4	uncertain = 3	disagree = 2	strongly disagree = 1
1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.					
2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.					
3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.					
4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.					
5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.					
6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.					

Statements	strongly agree = 5	agree = 4	uncertain = 3	disagree = 2	strongly disagree = 1
7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.					
8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.					
9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.					
10. I feel confident when interacting people from different cultures.					
11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally- distinct counterparts.					
12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.					
13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.					
14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.					

Statements	strongly agree = 5	agree = 4	uncertain = 3	disagree = 2	strongly disagree = 1
15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.					
16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.					
17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.					
18. I do not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.					
19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interactions.					
20. I think my culture is better than others cultures.					
21. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.					
22. I avoid situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.					

Statements	strongly agree = 5	agree = 4	uncertain = 3	disagree = 2	strongly disagree = 1
23. I often show my culturally distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.					
24. I have a feeling of enjoyment regarding differences between myself and culturally distinct counterparts.					

Online questionnaire is available on the link below;

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf_2NPSH7Ac1ls5b0pZsLpUkDNF05iswwXFPceiLdWJjxzv9Q/viewform?usp=sf_link

APPENDIX C

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST



**Cambridge Assessment
English**

English Proficiency test

NO. 1

Listening

Time 30 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Do not open this question paper until you are told to do so.
- Write your name-surname, contact number, and email address on this page in this sheet paper.
- Listen to the instructions for each part of the paper carefully.
- Answer all questions.
- At the end of the test, hand in your paper sheet.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- There are three part to the test.
- Each question carries one mark.
- You will hear each piece at one time.
- For each part of the test there will be time for you to look through the questions.

PART ONE**Section Two**

- **Question 1-12**

Instruction: You will hear three telephone conversations or messages. Write one or two words or a number in the numbered spaces on the note below.

Conversation One

- **Question 1-4**
- Look at the notes below.
- You will hear a woman telephoning a conference Centre office

NOTES ABOUT SEMINAR

Date: 21st February

Title: (1)

Time: 10 am – 4 pm.

Venue: (2)

Topic of extra workshop: (3)

Amount payable in advance: (4) per person

Conversation Two

- **Question 5-8**

- Look at the form below.
- You will hear a man calling a computer supplier.

HILLS PC SUPPLIES Customer Services Telephone Message	
Caller's name:	James Firth
Client:	Allen and Brown Ltd
Item(s) ordered:	(5)
Order no/date:	HPC02345 / 12-3-02
Notes:	order was delivered late by the (6) and was supplied without (7)
Action:	call to apologise and discuss (8)

PART TWO**Section One****• Question 1-5**

Instruction: You will hear five people advising how to identify a member of staff with management potential. For each recording what advice the speaker is giving. Write **one** letter (**A-H**) next to the number of the recording.

Do not use any letter more than once

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1 | A Listen to the views of the person's colleagues. |
| 2 | B Notice how the person relates to their line manager. |
| 3 | C Test the person out in a temporary position of responsibility. |
| 4 | D Check the person's loyalty to the company. |
| 5 | E Take the person's career goals into account. |
| | F Use objective tests to assess the person. |
| | G Observe the person under pressure. |
| | H Match the person to the skills necessary for the post. |

Section Two**• Question 6-10**

Instruction: You will hear five people talking about customer service. For each recording, decide what advice the speakers give on improving customer service. Write **one** letter **(A-H)** next to the number of the recording.

Do not use any letter more than once

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 6 | A Encourage feedback from customers. |
| 7 | B Respond appropriately to customer feedback. |
| 8 | C Update customer information regularly. |
| 9 | D Make use of information you already possess. |
| 10 | E Set your staff targets for customer service. |
| | F Ensure communication between departments. |
| | G Pay attention to your existing customers. |
| | H Invest in a suitable computer package. |

PART THREE**• Question 23-30**

Instruction: You will hear a radio interview with **Jose' Martinez**, the director of **Pizza Rapida**, a pizza delivery chain in Spain. For each question, mark one letter **(A, B or C)** for the correct answer.

23. Jose' Martinez became successful by

- A.** taking over a well-known competitor.
- B.** establishing an innovative a retail business.
- C.** gaining a reputation for high quality.

24. Before Jose' Martinez set up his pizza delivery service, he

- A.** tested samples on potential clients.
- B.** handed out product questionnaires.
- C.** assessed demand in different areas.

25. According to Jose' Martinez, the Spanish fast food business

- A.** is different from that of the U.S.
- B.** has slowed slightly in its rate of growth.
- C.** employs an increasing number of women.

26. Jose' Martinez wants his trainee managers to

- A.** develop a competitive attitude.
- B.** try out some of the shop – floor jobs.
- C.** spend some time working abroad.

27. Jose' Martinez believes that at first people invested in Pizza Rapida because they

- A.** were attracted by what the company offered.
- B.** saw that the shares were performing well.
- C.** thought food companies were a safe investment.

28. Jose' Martinez left the first company he worked for because it

- A.** set the staff impossible targets.
- B.** offered insufficient incentives.
- C.** provided inadequate support.

29. Jose' Martinez finds that popular sports events

- A.** are good places to advertise his service.
- B.** raise brand awareness through team sponsorship.
- C.** increase public demand for his products.

30. What does Jose' Martinez plan to do in the future?

- A.** develop a chain of restaurants.
- B.** set up a franchise operation.
- C.** expand into the frozen food market.

..... **END**





English Proficiency test

Reading

Time 1 hour

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Do not open this question paper until you are told to do so.
- Write your name-surname, contact number, and email address on this page in this sheet paper.
- Read the instructions for each part of sheet paper carefully.
- Answer all questions.
- Complete the sheet paper with the time limit.
- At the end of the test, hand in your paper sheet.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- There are three part to the test.
- Each question carries one mark.
- You will hear each piece at one time.
- For each part of the test there will be time for you to look through the questions.

A

Market awareness of the mobile telephone has exploded and the retailer who specialises in mobile phones is seeing growth like never before. Admittedly, some customers buy their first mobile phone in the supermarket, but for advice, add-ons and particular services they turn to the specialist. There are a large number of mobile phone retailers and I can't help but feel the market only has room for four players. Undoubtedly, customer service is the factor that differentiates operators and I think this year we will probably see rationalisation in the sector.

B

When I first started in the industry, mobile phones were retailing at a thousand pounds and were as large as box files. Now, prices are constantly being driven down and handsets are considerably more compact. There is intense competition between the network providers and every time they lower their tariffs, more people

come into the market. This will continue, and while retail dealers' profits will be affected dramatically, network providers will have to generate more revenue by offering internet provision and data services to the mobile user.

C

Over a few years, prices have dropped sharply and technological advances have meant products have changed – and are changing. Successful retailers must try to keep on top of these developments and invest in the training of employees so they are able to offer impartial advice to customers. E-commerce is taking off but this won't necessarily replace traditional retail outlets. In order to stand out, you need innovative ideas on customer service. We don't believe in criticising other retailers, but there's nothing particularly exciting out there at present.

D

The mobile phone business is behaving like the internet industry in take-up and the pace of innovation and it's important not to be left behind. We must continue to innovate in delivering the product to the customer. In terms of service provision, you can draw comparisons between us and our closest rival,

but clearly all the main mobile phone retailers have succeeded in taking the industry forward. Growth has accelerated rapidly and the mobile telephone has changed from simply being a business tool, to being a means of communication for everyone.

PART ONE

- **Question 1-7**

Instruction: Look at the statements below and the comments given on the opposite page by mobile phone retailers. Which section (**A, B, C or D**) does each statement **1-7** refer to? For each statement **1-7**, mark one letter (**A, B, C or D**) on this sheet paper.

You will need to use some of these letters more than once

Example:

0 the extent to which mobile phones have changed in size

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☒	☐	☐

1. the need for retail staff to stay informed about the mobile phones they are selling

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. the belief that the market will not sustain the present number of mobile phone retailers

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. the use of mobile phones no longer being restricted to a specific group of people

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. the relationship between charges and the number of mobile phone users

0	A	B	C	D
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. a negative view of competing mobile phone retailers

0	A	B	C	D
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. a comparison between change in the mobile phone industry and that in a different sector

0	A	B	C	D
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. those services available at mobile phone outlets that are not provided by other retailers

0	A	B	C	D
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

PART TWO

• Question 8-12

Instruction: Reading the article below about domain names. Choose the best sentence from the opposite page to fill each of the gaps. For each gap 8-12, mark one letter (A-G) on your answer sheet.

Domain names

Monica Porter meets a man who invests in website names

In the initial growth years of the internet James Coakes received some shrewd advice from a friend. 'He told me the interest was going to be very big,' he recalls, 'and that a lot of businesses would need good domain names for their websites and there would be a market in selling these. (0)..... So I bought a few likely-sounding names for about £30 each.' It was a good move. Before long, a number of other people had switched on to this upcoming investment area, and by the mid-90s, he says, the best names had all gone.

Coakes runs a corporate events company, and initially the domain names he bought related to his own industry. Then he acquired other generic business names, such as auditing.co.uk and valeting.co.uk. 'I bought those some time ago and am still holding on to them. As a pair, they have to be worth £25,000 now.' (8)..... He currently owns around 100 names and sells a few each year via a domain-name trading website, typically for about £5,000 each.

'I'm surprised more people don't make offers for names that are already registered. There are really good names available for very reasonable prices. Once you own the domain name, it's an asset and I believe prices will only ever go up.' The .com domain is the most sought-after and valuable, but good names with that suffix are getting harder to find, so new ones are constantly cropping up. (9)..... 'It's a bit too trendy,' he explains. 'Whereas if your site has a .com suffix, it says "we're a serious business".'

Coakes believes it is impossible to overestimate the value to a business of a good domain name. His own company uses teambuilding.co.uk, as it runs teambuilding events for corporate customers. 'Nearly half our traffic comes to the site by prospective clients putting the word "teambuilding" directly into their internet browser. (10)..... For us it equates to half a million pounds worth of revenue each year.'

Coakes says, 'It may be more difficult now than it was in the boom years, but you can still pick up for a few pounds a name that will probably at some future point be worth thousands. (11)..... You need to immerse yourself. Every day I look at domain names, keep an eye on the registers and watch for renewal dates. There are many websites for registering, buying and selling names and you have to catch out someone who has forgotten to renew a good name, or grab one fast enough from a company which has gone bust.'

Coakes believes that if he sold all his domain names today, he would make more than £1m. (12)..... 'This market hasn't yet matured. There are only a handful of people trading in it, getting into position ahead of the main wave.'

Choices

- A. But as with any other sort of investment, you can't just wander into it and make money.
- B. Choosing a domain name is a brand-awareness exercise for these companies.
- C. He estimates he has so far spent a similar figure on his domain name portfolio, including registration and annual renewal fees.
- D. But he's in no hurry to do so.
- E. This is how a lot of people locate services nowadays
- F. One such is .biz but, according to Coakes, it hasn't really become popular.
- G. He said they'd be worth a lot of money to the right companies.

PART THREE

• Question 13-18

Instruction: Read the article below about the process of benchmarking to improve company performance and the questions and the opposite page. For each question 13-18, mark one letter (A, B, C or D) on your answer sheet for the answer you choose.

Benchmarking at Darringtons

Slava Taran, managing director of speciality chemical company Darringtons, describes his company's experiences of benchmarking.

We had been manufacturing for over 60 years when a few years ago we found ourselves facing financial pressure from increasingly heavy overheads. The management team all came up with possible solutions as to what could be done. But in the end, we agreed we needed something more concrete to guide us. I first heard about benchmarking when someone I met at a networking event mentioned his company had been involved in benchmarking. I got in touch with some business consultants, who suggested putting our company on their Benchmark Index programme. They convinced me that by comparing our performance with those of similar companies, we'd end up with a useful analysis of our current position.

We initially had to make decisions as to which kinds of companies we should be compared against. Other chemical manufacturers were an obvious choice, but we opted to benchmark against several food processing companies. That might sound strange, but in fact what we had in common was the business model of combining ingredients in a production process to create a finished product.

We sent out questionnaires to the companies we wanted to target and emphasised that the process could well be of mutual benefit. Generally, companies were positive. But we also made sure our partner companies signed up to an agreement specifying limitations on how the information we'd be sharing could be used. Otherwise there's a danger that the partner company could use the data to gain competitive advantage. We then sent our analysis to the partner companies to verify the facts and figures we'd gathered, and get their feedback on Darringtons' operation.

From the data, it soon became glaringly obvious that aspects of the business were in dire need of innovation, such as our manufacturing operation. And although we were among the best for R&D, we did badly on capital investment in equipment and premises, and also in customer satisfaction, which we were unaware of. We'd evidently worked in the same way for years without examining closely whether we were truly effective and competitive.

As a result of benchmarking analysis, we looked at ways of improving certain areas, but soon realised the capital investment needed would be huge. The alternative was to outsource production of a high percentage of our products, which would cut overheads and capital spending dramatically. We chose the outsourcing option. This enabled us to redirect resources so that we could create innovative solutions to suit our customers' needs and market them effectively. Outsourcing also resulted in more accurate profit analysis, which led us to make changes to our mix of products.

Looking back over the whole process, there are things I would have done differently. I think we should have implemented benchmarking as soon as our problems became apparent, but there was a lot of fence-sitting in the early days as people were hesitant about committing to a process they had no experience of. But people couldn't argue with the benefits that the process would undoubtedly bring and personally, I was determined not to waste time. In fact, it turned out to be the catalyst we needed for major operational and cultural change at Darringtons.

13. What made Slave Taran decide benchmarking was the best solution for this company?

- A. the discussion he had with his management colleagues.
- B. the presentation he heard at a networking event.
- C. the fact that his company was making a loss.
- D. the confidence of the consultants he contacted.

14. Taran wanted Darringtons to be compared against companies that

- A. manufactured similar products to Darringtons.
- B. had also been through financial difficulties.
- C. used similar manufacturing methods to Darringtons.
- D. represented a broad range of sectors.

15. Taran says that when exchanging information with partner companies, it is important to

- A. restrict what they can do with the information.
- B. supply feedback to them on their operations.
- C. explain how the information will be analyzed.
- D. specify what the mutual benefits will be.

16. What did benchmarking analysis reveal about Darringtons?

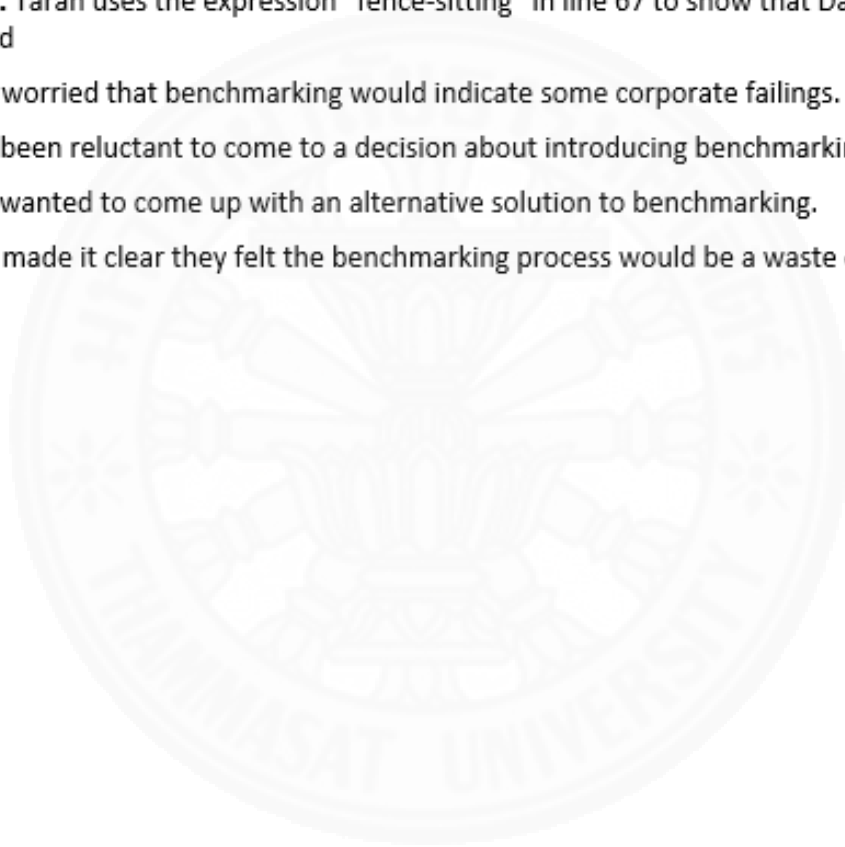
- A. It had dealt effectively with failing client satisfaction.
- B. Its manufacturing processes had not improved despite recent innovations.
- C. Its R&D department compared well with those of other companies.
- D. It had made poor decisions to invest in other companies.

17. What did Darringtons do after the benchmarking analysis?

- A.** They altered the range of products they offered.
- B.** They invested heavily in up-to-date equipment.
- C.** They consulted customers more as to their needs.
- D.** They outsourced production of all their products.

18. Taran uses the expression “fence-sitting” in line 67 to show that Darringtons had

- A.** worried that benchmarking would indicate some corporate failings.
- B.** been reluctant to come to a decision about introducing benchmarking.
- C.** wanted to come up with an alternative solution to benchmarking.
- D.** made it clear they felt the benchmarking process would be a waste of time.



PART FOUR

- Question 19-33

Instruction: Read the advice below about the use of technology in presentation. Please choose the correct word to fill each gap from A, B, C or D.

There is an example at the beginning (0)

Guidelines for giving Presentations

Most presentations today (0)B..... on the use of some sort of technology, such as a laptop computer linked to a projector. While this technology can help to (19)..... presentations better, it also has a (20)..... of getting in the way. As a general (21)....., it is better to (22)..... on the content of a presentation as a means of (23)..... your audience's attention, rather than relying on sophisticated equipment.

Bear in mind that when an organisation invites (24)..... for a contract, they may (25)..... four or five presentations from different companies on the same day. Each of these companies will probably be using the same computer graphics (26)..... and the same equipment. The chances are the presentations will be similar too.

That's why the content and (27)..... of what you say are important. Think about what you want to say and how to say it as clearly as possible. As a first step, you need to (28)..... the main points you want to get across. Audiences are easily bored and (29)..... to remember only the most entertaining, exciting or unusual ideas.

Next create your materials, choosing the images for your presentation carefully. Remember you do not want to stop your audience from listening to you, nor do you want to (30)..... them.

Finally, make all the necessary (31)..... for the equipment you need. If technology is to be an important (32)..... of your presentation, make sure you know how to use it (33)..... and test it out beforehand.

Example:**A.** calculate**B.** Depend**C.** determine**D.** lean

0	A	B	C	D
☐	☒	☐	☐	☐

19.**A.** produce**B.** make**C.** construct**D.** build

0	A	B	C	D
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20.**A.** behavior**B.** habit**C.** practice**D.** routine

0	A	B	C	D
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

21.**A.** method**B.** law**C.** rule**D.** course

0	A	B	C	D
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

22.**A.** focus**B.** define**C.** target**D.** direct

0	A	B	C	D
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

23.**A.** gaining**B.** acquiring**C.** collecting**D.** taking

0	A	B	C	D
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

24.

A. requests

B. calls

C. bids

D. commands

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

25.

A. appoint

B. programme

C. schedule

D. catalogue

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

26.

A. parcels

B. packets

C. bundles

D. packages

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

27.

A. formation

B. design

C. structure

D. system

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

28.

A. catalogue

B. label

C. mark

D. identify

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

29.

A. point

B. tend

C. lead

D. move

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

30.

A. disorder

B. mistake

C. confuse

D. complicate

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

31.

A. appointments

B. procedures

C. arrangements

D. organizations

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

32.

A. share

B. role

C. function

D. element

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

33.

A. precisely

B. suitably

C. properly

D. accurately

0	A	B	C	D
	☐	☐	☐	☐

PART FIVE

- Question 34-45

Instruction: Read the text below about delegation work. In most of the lines 34-45 there is one extra word. It is either grammatically incorrect or does not fit with the meaning of the text and some lines are correct.

If a line is correct, write **CORRECT** in the blank.

If there is the extra word in the line, write **the extra word** in CAPITAL LETTERS on your answer spaces.

Delegation

0. It is impossible for one chief executive, or even one executive committee, to perform

Answer: CORRECT

00. about all the functions and duties necessary for an organization to operate efficiently.

Answer: ABOUT

34. It is therefore necessary to delegate certain areas of work to these subordinates.

Answer:

35. Without this process of delegation, around the business world would effectively be

Answer:

36. reduced to a set of individuals who working independently. In fact, delegation is one of

Answer:

37. the major functions consisting of good management. It frees managers from

Answer:

38. being involvement in the day-to-day aspects of running a busy department, and it

Answer:

39. allows them to spend more time on their primary functions of managing, pursuing

Answer:

40. to objectives and dealing with policy problems. What it does not release them

Answer:

41. from, however is responsibility for ensuring that the tasks which they have delegated

Answer:

42. to others are correctly and efficiently performed. Many managers find that it difficult to

Answer:

43. delegate. This may be because they feel their subordinates are such inexperienced, or

Answer:

44. because they themselves feel insecure, or because they fear that they may tend

Answer:

45. become out of touch with daily events. Yet effective management has depended on proper delegation and skilled managers recognize this.

Answer:

END

Online English Proficiency test is available on the link below:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd2EDWLsMGGrkhLjCqOZrUQ2PYzHpm7TcuwiWRnaUa3XFBcr5Q/viewform?usp=sf_link

BIOGRAPHY

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