# Factors That Cause Miscommunication

# Between Japanese Managers and Thai Employees

ปัจจัยที่ทำให้การสื่อสารผิดพลาด
ระหว่างผู้บังคับบัญชาคนญี่ปุ่นกับผู้อยู่ใต้บังคับบัญชาคนไทย

Kimiko Kawaoka*

## Abstract

This study was aimed to understand the demographic characteristics, the language usage in the workplace, and the frequency of miscommunication between Japanese managers (JMs) and Thai employees (TEs) working in Japanese companies in Thailand. Their levels of general communication skills, general knowledge, social system awareness, cultural awareness, and general attitude were also aimed to survey. In addition, the influences of the demographic characteristics, language usage and their levels in five communicative factors on miscommunication were considered.

The research was conducted using quantitative analysis based on questionnaires. The data was collected from 140 JMs and 140 TEs during March and April 2003. This study was limited to oral communication and focused on the time of giving and receiving instructions in the workplace.

The findings of the research were as follows: The JMs the TEs preferred using two languages rather than relying on any one language. English was most often used as the main language. Communication between the two groups mostly succeeded. Miscommunication occurred in 10 to 30% of all conversations in the workplace.

The factors confirmed to have an influence on the frequency of miscommunication between JMs and TEs were general communication skills, general attitude (for both groups), age, number of language(s) used and general knowledge (for TEs). While the factors that were not confirmed to have such an influence were educational level, length of time working, main language used, social system awareness, cultural awareness (for both groups), gender (for TEs), age, recruitment method, number of language(s) used and knowledge (for JMs).

For further research, it is recommended to conduct a qualitative method study by using interviews. Special research on Japanese people who regularly use Thai to communicate with Thai people is also recommended, because the group was found to exist sufficient quantity. In addition, studying Thai and Japanese cultures by comparing directly is necessary, because such studies are uncommon.

*มหาบัณฑิตสาขาวิชาภาษาและวัฒนธรรมเพื่อการสื่อสารและการพัฒนา สถาบันวิจัยภาษาและวัฒนธรรมเพื่อพัฒนาชนบท
มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

# บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาลักษณะทางประชากร การใช้ภาษา และความถี่ของการเกิดการสื่อสารผิดพลาดของผู้บังคับบัญชาคนญี่ปุ่นกับผู้อยู่ใต้บังคับบัญชาคนไทย รวมทั้งศึกษาปัจจัยทางการสื่อสาร 5 ประการ อันได้แก่ ความสามารถทางการสื่อสาร (Communication skills) ทัศนคติ (Attitude) ความรู้ (Knowledge) ความสำนึกในเรื่องระบบสังคม (Social system awareness) และความสำนึกในเรื่องวัฒนธรรม (Cultural awareness) ของทั้งสองกลุ่ม นอกจากนี้ยังศึกษาถึงอิทธิพลของปัจจัยดังกล่าวที่ทำให้เกิดการสื่อสารผิดพลาดขึ้น

การศึกษานี้เป็นการศึกษาเชิงปริมาณโดยใช้แบบสอบถามในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากกลุ่มตัวอย่าง ซึ่งประกอบด้วยผู้บังคับบัญชาคนญี่ปุ่นจำนวน 140 คน และผู้อยู่ใต้บังคับบัญชาคนไทยจำนวน 140 คน โดยศึกษาเฉพาะการสื่อสารทางวาจา เน้นกรณีการให้หรือรับคำสั่งระหว่างสองกลุ่มดังกล่าว การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้โปรแกรมคอมพิวเตอร์สำเร็จรูป SPSS เพื่อคำนวณค่าร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย และทดสอบ ความแตกต่างของค่าเฉลี่ยของตัวแปรโดยใช้ One-way ANOVA

จากการวิจัยพบว่าในการสื่อสารระหว่างกันนั้น ทั้งสองกลุ่มนิยมใช้สองภาษาปนกันมากกว่าใช้เพียงภาษาเดียว โดยภาษาที่ใช้มากที่สุด คือ ภาษาอังกฤษ การสื่อสารของคน 2 กลุ่ม ส่วนใหญ่ประสบผล มีความผิดพลาดเพียงร้อยละ 10-30

กลุ่มคนญี่ปุ่นมีความสามารถทางการสื่อสารในระดับปานกลาง มีทัศนคติปานกลาง และมีความรู้ ความสำนึกในเรื่องระบบสังคม และความสำนึกในเรื่องวัฒนธรรมในระดับค่อนข้างดี ส่วนกลุ่มคนไทยมีความสามารถทางการสื่อสาร และความสำนึกในเรื่องวัฒนธรรมในระดับปานกลาง และมีทัศนคติ ความรู้ และความสำนึกในเรื่องระบบสังคมในระดับค่อนข้างดี

ปัจจัยที่สามารถพิสูจน์ได้ว่ามีผลต่อในการทำให้การสื่อสารผิดพลาดได้แก่ ความสามารถทางการสื่อสารและทัศนคติในทั้งสองกลุ่ม และอายุ จำนวนภาษาที่ใช้และความรู้ในกลุ่มตัวอย่างคนไทย ส่วนปัจจัยที่ไม่สามารถพิสูจน์ได้ว่ามีผลดังกล่าวได้แก่ ระดับการศึกษา อายุการทำงาน ประเภทของภาษาที่ใช้มากที่สุด ความสำนึกในเรื่องระบบสังคมและความสำนึกในเรื่องวัฒนธรรมในทั้งสองกลุ่ม เพศในกลุ่มคนไทย และอายุ วิธีการเข้ามาทำงานในประเทศไทย จำนวนภาษาที่ใช้และความรู้ในกลุ่มคนญี่ปุ่น

ในอนาคต ควรมีการศึกษาวิจัยเชิงลึกโดยการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มตัวอย่างเพื่อพัฒนาการศึกษาดังกล่าว ส่วนการศึกษาวัฒนธรรมไทยและญี่ปุ่น ควรมีการเปรียบเทียบโดยตรง เพราะปัจจุบันนี้ยังมีไม่เพียงพอ และหากจะศึกษาเฉพาะกลุ่มคนญี่ปุ่นที่ใช้ภาษาไทยในการสื่อสารกับคนไทยก็สามารถทำได้ เนื่องจากพบว่ามีจำนวนกลุ่มคนที่เพียงพอ

# 1. Introduction

The relationship between Thailand and Japan, which started more than 600 years ago, has since grown to be very important. Nowadays there are some ten thousands of Japanese residing in the country, and a large number of communications are occurring between Thai and Japanese people. Working place (Japanese companies in Thailand) must be one of the places where the communications between these two peoples happen the most. Therefore, the researcher studied the communications between Thai and Japanese in the workplaces by focusing on the factors that may influence on the miscommunications between them.

From the contacts with both Thai and Japanese participants during collecting data, the researcher confirmed that the topic of "miscommunication between Thai and Japanese" was considerably interesting not only for a researcher, but also for many workers in the real environments, and was being expected to be explored more.

# 2. Objectives

The research objectives were to study the JMs and TEs' demographic characteristics, language usage, frequency of miscommunication, and levels in each of the five communicative factors. Moreover, it was aimed to consider the influences of the demographic characteristics, language usage, and levels in each of the five communicative factors on the frequencies of miscommunication of them.

# 3. Research methodology

This research was conducted using quantitative methodology based on questionnaires. The data was obtained from 140 Japanese and 140 Thai samples using questionnaires. The Japanese samples were all male, and at the time of the research were working for Japanese companies in Bangkok or neighbouring provinces. Each Japanese sample had TEs to whom they directly gave instructions. The Thai samples were selected from those working for Japanese companies in Bangkok or neighbouring provinces and had JMs from whom they directly received instructions.

The questionnaires compiled by the researcher consisted of questions on their 1: demographic characteristics, 2: language usage, 3: frequency of miscommunication and 4: perceived levels in each of the five communicative factors (General communication skills, General attitude, Knowledge, Social system awareness and Cultural awareness, applied from Berlo's SMCR model).

The questionnaires distributed by post were returned from 173 Japanese participants out of 500 (34.6%) and 224 Thai participants out of 600 (37.3%). 140 correctly completed questionnaires from each of the two groups were used as data. They were processed and analysed by using SPSS program. One-way ANOVA statistics set at a significant level of 0.05 was used to identify the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variables.

# 4. Results

## 4.1 Demographic characteristics (See Table 1)

The demographic characteristics considered six aspects, which were gender, age, educational level, working position, length of time working in Thailand/ working for Japanese companies, and the method of recruitment.

140 JMs studied in this research were all male as limited by the researcher. Most of them were aged 31 to 50 years old (62.9%), the majority had a Bachelor's degree (78.6%), and they worked at a management level (96.4%). A large number (69.3%) came to Thailand on their companies' request. 62.1% had been residing in Thailand between 1 to 5 years at the time of the survey.

While, 140 TEs, who were working directly for JMs in Japanese companies, were found to be made up from 90 females (64.3%) and 50 males (35.7%). Those aged from 31 to 40 years old made up 52.1% of the population, and 77.9% had a Bachelor's degree. The majority (59.3%) worked at an operation level. TEs working for Japanese companies between 1 and 5 years accounted for 32.1% of the population, while those working between 6 and 10 years made up 27.1%.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics**

| | Demographic characteristics | Japanese Ms (%) | Thai Es (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | Male | *100.0 | 35.7 |
| | Female | 0 | *64.3 |
| | Total | 100 | 100 |
| **Age (years)** | Less than 30 | 3.6 | 29.3 |
| | 31 - 40 | -32.9 | *52.1 |
| | 41 - 50 | *30.0 | 17.1 |
| | 51 - 60 | 23.6 | 0.7 |
| | 61 and above | 10.0 | 0.7 |
| | Total | 100 | 100 |
| **Educational level** | Master's Degree and higher | 5.7 | 14.3 |
| | Bachelor's Degree | *78.6 | *77.9 |
| | Less than Bachelor's Degree | 15.7 | 7.9 |
| | Total | 100 | 100 |

| | Demographic characteristics | Japanese Ms (%) | Thai Es (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Working position** | Management Level | *96.4 | 40.7 |
| | Operation Level | 3.6 | *59.3 |
| | Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Length of time working (years)** | Less than 1 | 4.3 | 7.1 |
| | 1-5 | *62.1 | *32.1 |
| | 6-10 | 17.1 | *27.1 |
| | 11-15 | 11.4 | 25.7 |
| | 16 and above | 5.0 | 7.9 |
| | Total | 100 | 100 |
| **Recruitment method** | Secondment at the companies' request | *69.3 | |
| | Secondment on the request of the | 15.7 | |
| | Locally recruited in Thailand | 5.7 | |
| | Others | 9.3 | |
| | Total | 100 | |

* indicates the range (s) that cover (s) the majority

## 4.2 Language usage (See Table 2 and 3)

Regarding the language usage, the researcher studied two different dimensions; 1: number of languages used and 2: language mainly used for conversation in the workplace by JMs or TEs.

Both JMs and TEs use one, two or three language(s), when they have working conversation. They rely on English, Thai and/or Japanese. No other languages are reportedly used.

The language used most frequently (55.7%) by JMs when instructing TEs was English either mixed with another language or by itself. Nearly half the JMs preferred using two languages and mixing these together (50.7%). Some managers did use only one language (31.4%) for communication with TEs. The popular patterns of language usages were 1: To mix English and Thai together (40.7%) and 2: To use English only (20.7%).

The language used most frequently by TEs was English (64.3%). TEs preferred using two languages and mixing these together (51.4%) rather than relying on only one language (32.1%) for conversations with JMs. The popular patterns of language usage by TEs were 1: To mix English and Thai together (44.3%) and 2: To use only English (28.6%).

**Table 2: Numbers and kinds of languages used for conversation in the workplace**

| Numbers and kinds of languages used | Japanese M (%) | Thai E (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **1 language used** | **314** | **321** |
| English only | 20.7 | 28.6 |
| Thai only | 8.6 | 2.1 |
| Japanese only | 2.1 | 1.4 |
| **2 languages used** | **507** | **514** |
| English + Thai | 40.7 | 44.3 |
| English + Japanese | 4.3 | 2.9 |
| Thai + Japanese | 5.7 | 4.3 |
| **3 languages used** | **179** | **164** |
| English + Thai + Jpn. | 17.9 | 16.4 |
| **TOTAL** | **100** | **100** |

**Table 3: Main languages used for conversation in the workplace**

| Main language | Japanese M (%) | Thai E (%) |
|---|---|---|
| English | 55.7 | 64.3 |
| Thai | 36.4 | 26.4 |
| Japanese | 7.9 | 9.3 |
| **Total** | **100** | **100** |

## 4.3 Frequencies of miscommunication (See Table 4).

To find the frequency of miscommunication (FOM) between the JMs and TEs, the researcher surveyed two different kinds of frequencies: 1. The frequency of *recognizing miscommunications* and 2. The frequency of *asking-back*, which is a behaviour made by receivers when miscommunication occurs. The sum of these two kinds of frequencies was considered as the *frequency of (total) miscommunication*.

51.4% of the JMs *recognized* that the working conversation with the TEs failed between 10 and 30% of the time. 61.4% encountered *asking-back* by their TEs when giving instructions between 10 and 30% of the time. Therefore, the majority (56.4%) of the JMs experienced *total miscommunication* during working conversations with TEs between 10 to 30% of the time.

Regarding the TEs, 59.3% *recognized* that the working communication with JMs failed between 10 and 30% of the time. 57.2% of the TEs reported that they needed to *ask-back* to their JMs between 10 and 30% of the time. Totally, the majority (58.6%) of the TEs experienced *total miscommunication* with JMs 10 to 30% of the time.

**Table 4: Frequencies of miscommunication**

| Frequency of miscomm. | Japanese Ms (%) | | | Thai Es (%) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Recognizing miscomm. | Asking-back | Total | Recognizing miscomm. | Asking-back | Total |
| All the time | 2.9 | 1.4 | **2.1** | 0.0 | 6.4 | **3.2** |
| 70- 90% of the time | 11.4 | 1.4 | **6.4** | 3.6 | 7.9 | **5.7** |
| 40- 60% of the time | 24.3 | 19.3 | **21.8** | 12.1 | 22.9 | **17.5** |
| 10- 30% of the time | 51.4 | 61.4 | **56.4** | 59.3 | 57.9 | **58.6** |
| Never | 10.0 | 16.4 | **13.2** | 25.0 | 5.0 | **15.0** |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 | **100** | 100 | 100 | **100** |

## 4.4 The levels in each of the five communicative factors

The five communicative factors surveyed in this research were Communication skills, Attitude, Knowledge, Social system awareness, and Cultural awareness. Each communicative factor has many indicators within itself. In this study, the researcher selected only some indicators out of many possible ones as a standard for surveying and determining the samples' levels in each communicative factor. All the results depended on the data obtained from the questionnaires, which adopted a self-reporting style. Therefore, the levels in five communicative factors presented are all *perceived* levels.

Table 5 shows the objectives (selected indicators) surveyed by each of the 26 (for the JMs) or 25 (for the TEs) questions, and their means recorded in each of the questions. The means between 1 and 5 were calculated from the answers of participants. A higher mean features to better communication skills, better knowledge, better awareness, and more positive attitude. According to the sample groups' means in each of the five communicative factors, they were defined into five levels (Figure 1).

The JMs were found to have:
- a *moderate* general communication skills,
- a *moderate* general attitude,
- a *relatively good* general knowledge,
- a *relatively good* awareness of social system and
- a *relatively good* cultural awareness.

The TEs were found to have:
- a *moderate* general communication skills,
- a *relatively positive* general attitude,
- a *relatively good* general knowledge,
- a *relatively good* awareness of social system and
- a *moderate* cultural awareness.

**Table 5: Objectives surveyed and means**

| | Questions for the Japanese Ms | | Questions for the Thai Es | | Scale of level mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q. Objectives to survey | Mean | Q. Objectives to survey | Mean | **Mean 5** |
| Communication skills | 1 English skills of the JM | 2.75 | 1 English skills of the TE | 3.72 | **Good:** comm.skills, knowledge, or awareness |
| | 2 Thai skills of the JM | 2.09 | 2 Japanese skills of the TE | 1.60 | |
| | 3 Encoding & decoding skills of the JM | 2.36 | 3 Encoding & decoding skills of the TE | 3.22 | |
| | 4 Encoding & decoding skills of the JM | 2.34 | 4 Encoding & decoding skills of the TE | 3.39 | |
| | 5 Quality of the thought processed by the JM before giving instructions | 4.11 | 5 Message decoding quality of the TE | 3.61 | **Positive:** attitude |
| | Total | **2.73** Moderate | Total | **3.11** Moderate | |
| Attitude | 6 Attitude towards the TEs | 3.41 | 6 Attitude towards the JM | 3.71 | **3** Moderate |
| | 7 Attitude towards the TEs | 2.91 | 7 Attitude towards the JM | 3.94 | |
| | 8 Attitude towards the subject matter being presented to the TEs | 2.39 | 8 Attitude towards the subject matter that the JM is giving instructions | 4.02 | |
| | 9 Attitude towards the subject matter being presented to the TEs | 4.17 | 9 Attitude towards the subject matter that the JM is giving instructions | 3.41 | **Poor:** comm.skills, knowledge, or awareness |
| | 10 Attitude towards self (The JM's opinion of himself as a manager) | 3.46 | 10 Attitude towards self (The TE's opinion on him/herself as an employee) | 3.56 | |
| | Total | **3.27** Moderate | Total | **3.73** Relatively positive | **Negative:** attitude **Mean 1** |

(continue)

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge | 11 | Knowledge of the subject matter in which the JM is instructing TEs | 4.54 | 11 | Knowledge of the subject matter being instructed by the JM | 3.54 |
| | 12 | Knowledge of own characteristics (personal traits) in the working situation | 4.16 | 12 | Knowledge of own characteristics in the working situation | 4.13 |
| | 13 | Knowledge of the TEs' characteristics in the working situation | 3.85 | 13 | Knowledge of the JM's characteristics in the working situation | 3.81 |
| | 14 | Knowledge and use of various channels to communicate directions to TEs | 4.16 | 14 | Knowledge and use of various channels for conversation in the workplace | 3.83 |
| | 15 | Knowledge and use of various channels to communicate directions to TEs | 4.26 | 15 | Knowledge of the JM's role (willingness to sacrifice himself for his employees) in the workplace | 2.46 |
| | 16 | Knowledge of the TEs role (willingness to sacrifice themselves for their manager) in the company | 3.94 | | | |
| | **Total** | | **4.15** | **Total** | | **3.55** |
| | | | Relatively good | | | Relatively good |
| Social System Awareness | 17 | Grasp of the real situation (The JM's relationship with the TEs) | 3.84 | 16 | Grasp of the real situation (The TE's relationship with the JM) | 3.82 |
| | 18 | Knowledge of the kind of social system in the workplace, in which the manager is operating | 4.21 | 17 | Knowledge of the kind of social system in the workplace, in which the TEs are operating | 4.51 |
| | 19 | Active participation in the position within the social system that exists in the workplace | 4.37 | 18 | Accepting the kind of social system (hierarchical) in which TE operates | 4.35 |
| | 20 | Conducting the various functions required in workplace such as development of the skills of TEs | 4.33 | 19 | Understanding the functions directed in the workplace (such as following the manager's direction) | 4.44 |
| | 21 | Knowledge of the relationship between the workplace social systems and communication | 3.31 | 20 | Knowledge and understanding of the relationship between the workplace social systems and communication | 2.36 |
| | **Total** | | **4.01** | **Total** | | **3.89** |
| | | | Relatively good | | | Relatively good |
| Cultural Awareness | 22 | Knowledge of the Thai cultural beliefs and values that are dominant | 2.48 | 21 | Knowledge of the Japanese cultural beliefs and values (, which are dominant for the JM) | 2.94 |
| | 23 | Knowledge of the Thai cultural beliefs and values that are dominant | 3.18 | 22 | Knowledge of the Japanese cultural beliefs and values (, which are dominant for the JM) | 2.46 |
| | 24 | Interest in the Thai cultural beliefs and values | 3.76 | 23 | Interest in the Japanese cultural beliefs and values (, which are dominant for | 3.39 |
| | 25 | Knowledge and interest in different cultures (other than Thai) | 4.09 | 24 | Knowledge and interest in different cultures (other than Japanese) | 4.15 |
| | 26 | Knowledge of the relationship between culture and communication | 3.65 | 25 | Knowledge of the relationship between culture and communication | 3.09 |
| | **Total** | | **3.43** | **Total** | | **3.24** |
| | | | Relatively good | | | Moderate |



**Figure 1: Comparison of the levels in each of the five communicative factors**
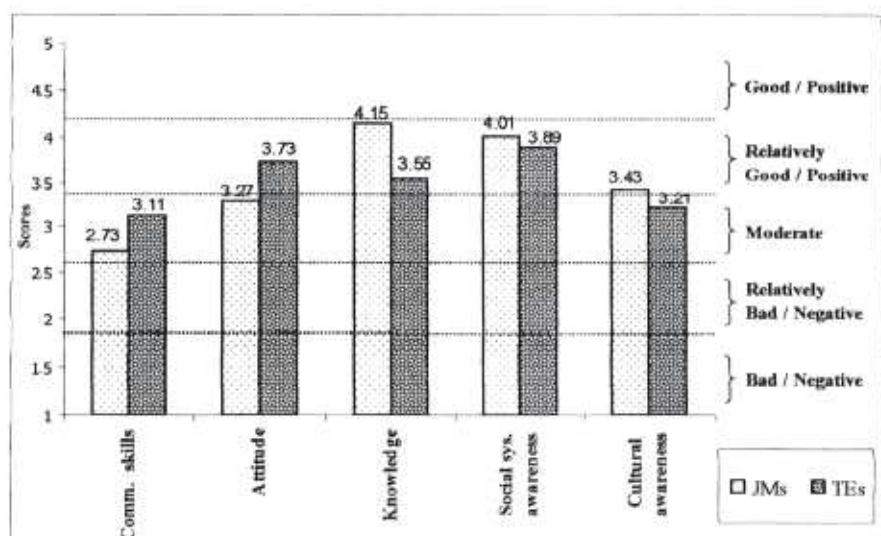
## 4.5 Testing the influences of the factors on the frequency of miscommunication

In this research three factors (demographic characteristics, language usage, levels in five communicative factors) were considered whether they have influences on the FOM between the JMs and TEs by using One-way ANOVA statistics. The FOM were calculated into scores between 2 and 10 according to the scales set by the researcher. The higher scores indicate to less miscommunication (more successful communication), and the lower scores indicate to more miscommunication (scale at Table 6).

### 4.5.1 Testing the influences of the demographic characteristics on the frequency of miscommunication
(See Table 6).

For the JMs, the influences of five sub-factors (age, educational level, working position, length of time working in Thailand and recruitment method) on the FOM were individually tested. All of these five factors were *not confirmed* to have an influence on the FOM.

For the TEs, the influences of five sub-factors (gender, age, educational level, working position and Length of time working in Japanese companies) on the FOM were individually tested. Only age was *confirmed* to have an influence on the FOM. Gender, educational level, working position and length of time working in Japanese companies were *not confirmed* to have such an influence.

**Table 6: Influences of the demographic characteristics on the frequency of miscommunication**

| | | Japanese Ms Mean | Sig | Thai Es Mean | Sig | | | Japanese Ms Mean | Sig | Thai Es Mean | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | (n=0) | | 7.34 | .252 | Working position | Management level | 7.42 | .333 | 7.72 | .197 |
| | Female | 7.44 | - | 7.63 | | | Operation level | 8.00 | | 7.40 | |
| Age | Less than 30 years | 7.40 | .329 | 7.63 | .041 | Length of time working ** | Less than 1 year | 7.67 | .152 | 7.20 | .183 |
| | 31-40 years old | 7.52 | | 7.30 | | | 1-5 years | 7.29 | | 7.42 | |
| | 41-50 years old | 7.31 | | 8.13 | | | 6-10 years | 7.38 | | 7.66 | |
| | 51-60 years old | 7.24 | | (n=1) | | | 11-15 years | 7.94 | | 7.33 | |
| | 61 years and above | 8.07 | | (n=1) | | | 16 years and above | 8.29 | | 8.45 | |
| Educational level | Master's Degree and higher | 7.38 | .471 | 7.45 | .306 | Recruitment method | Secondment at the companies request | 7.38 | .581 | | |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 7.51 | | 7.61 | | | Secondment on the request of the individual | 7.36 | | | |
| | Less than Bachelor's Degree | 7.14 | | 6.91 | | | Locally recruited in Thailand | 7.75 | | | |
| | | | | | | | Others | 7.85 | | | |

(Sig Level 0.09) ** Length of time working in Thailand or length of time working in Jpn companies

Scale of mean: Mean10 less miscomm (more successful comm) ... Mean2 more miscomm

### 4.5.2 The influences of the language usage on the frequency of miscommunication (See Table 7).

The language usage had two different dimensions: 1. Number of language(s) and 2. Main language used in the working conversation.

In regard to the JMs, both of the number of languages and main language used for conversation were *not confirmed* to have an influence on the FOM.

For the TEs, number of languages used was confirmed to have an influence on the FOM. Between the TEs, one-language-users had least miscommunication (mean: 8.11), two-languages-users had the second least (mean: 7.42) and three-languages-users had the most miscommunication (mean: 6.74). While the main language used was not confirmed to have an influence on the FOM.

**Table 7: Testing the influences of language usage on the frequency of miscommunication**

| Numbers of languages | Japanese Ms | | Thai Es | | Main Language | Japanese Ms | | Thai Es | | Scale of mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Sig. | Mean | Sig. | | Mean | Sig. | Mean | Sig. | Mean 10 less miscomm. (more successful comm.) |
| 1 language-users | 7.73 | | 8.11 | | English | 7.50 | | 7.61 | | |
| 2 languages-users | 7.27 | .186 | 7.42 | .001* | Thai | 7.51 | .166 | 7.38 | .667 | |
| 3 languages-users | 7.44 | | 6.74 | | Japanese | 6.73 | | 7.38 | | more miscomm. Mean 2 |

(Sig. Level=0.05)

### 4.5.3 The influences of the five communicative factors on the frequency of miscommunication (See Table 8).

For the JMs, general communication skills and general attitude were *confirmed* to have an influence on the FOM while the other three communicative factors (the level of knowledge, awareness of the social system, or cultural awareness) were *not confirmed* to have an influence on the FOM.

JMs who considered themselves to have relatively good communication skills had the highest mean (8.73), which points to the least miscommunication. Those with poor communication skills had the lowest mean (6.56), or the most miscommunication. Those who had a positive attitude had the highest mean (8.43), which points to the least miscommunication. Following this, those who had a relatively positive attitude (7.86), a moderate attitude (7.37), and a relatively negative attitude (6.74).

For the TEs, general communication skills, general attitude and the level of knowledge were *confirmed* to have an influence on the FOM while the other two communicative factors (the level of the social system awareness, or the cultural awareness) were *not confirmed* to have an influence on the FOM.

TEs who considered themselves to have relatively good communication skills had the highest mean (8.21), which points to the least miscommunication, while those with poor communication skills had the lowest mean (5.78) or the most miscommunication. TEs with a relatively positive attitude had the highest mean (8.21), or the least miscommunication, while those with moderate level of attitude had a mean of 7.72, positive attitude 7.67, relatively negative attitude 6.83, and negative attitude 5.78. Regarding the level of knowledge, those with a relatively good knowledge had the highest mean (7.67) or the least miscommunication. A mean of 7.66 was recorded at the moderate knowledge level, a mean of 6.64 at the good level, and a mean of 6.50 at the relatively poor level (6.50).

**Table 8: Testing the influences of communicative factors on the frequency of miscommunication**

| | | Japanese Ms Mean | Sig | Thai Es Mean | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level of perceived comm. skills | Good | 8.50 | | 7.67 | |
| | Relatively good | 8.73 | | 8.21 | |
| | Moderate | 7.56 | .000* | 7.72 | .000* |
| | Relatively poor | 7.22 | | 6.83 | |
| | Poor | 6.56 | | 5.78 | |
| Attitude (Japanese Ms N=139) | Positive | 8.43 | | 8.50 | |
| | Relatively positive | 7.86 | .001* | 7.72 | .000* |
| | Moderate | 7.37 | | 6.79 | |
| | Relatively negative | 6.74 | | 7.33 | |
| | Negative | (n=1) | | (n=0) | |
| Level of knowledge (Japanese Ms N=138) | Good | 7.67 | | 6.64 | |
| | Relatively good | 7.28 | 0.119 | 7.67 | .038* |
| | Moderate | 6.83 | | 7.66 | |
| | Relatively poor | (n=1) | | 6.50 | |
| | Poor | (n=1) | | (n=0) | |

| | | Japanese Ms Mean | Sig | Thai Es Mean | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level of social system awareness (Thai Es N=139) | Good | 7.58 | | 7.12 | |
| | Relatively good | 7.38 | .744 | 7.69 | .170 |
| | Moderate | 7.43 | | 7.32 | |
| | Relatively poor | (n=0) | | (n=1) | |
| | Poor | (n=0) | | (n=0) | |
| Level of cultural awareness | Good | 7.33 | | 6.38 | |
| | Relatively good | 7.53 | | 7.45 | |
| | Moderate | 7.42 | .978 | 7.81 | .081 |
| | Relatively poor | 7.35 | | 7.35 | |
| | Poor | 7.50 | | 7.25 | |

(Sig. Level=0.05)

Scale of mean: Mean 10 less miscomm (more successful comm.) ↑ ↓ more miscomm Mean 2

# 5. Discussion

Totally (Table 9), the factors that were statistically confirmed to have an influence on the FOM between JMs and the TEs were age, number of language used, general knowledge (for TEs), general communication skills and general attitude (for both JMs & TEs). Nevertheless, some of the factors that were not statistically confirmed also seemed to have somewhat influence, when we consider the means attentively.

Regarding the language usage during a conversation in the workplace, the JMs and TEs had similar patterns as seen in Table 2 and 3. Only three languages (English, Thai, and Japanese) were found to be used by both two groups. English is a widely accepted international language, and perhaps the first foreign language for most Japanese and Thai people. Thai is the national language of Thailand, and is the dominant language in the workplace, where both two groups operate. Japanese is a minor language in their workplace, and seen only as a native language for the JMs. About a half of each groups used two languages, by mixing them together.

Both of the JMs and the TEs used English the most. Following this were Thai, and then Japanese. The two nationalities working together in Japanese companies in Thailand send and receive their messages using English, which is a non-native language for both parties. An interesting point was that the JMs (36.4%) used Thai as their main language more than the TEs (26.4%) used Thai.

Considering the means in Table 7, the researcher thinks that to promote only one language in the workplace may help to improve successful communication between Japanese and Thai in the workplace. The one language should be English, which is used as the main language most often by both groups.

Regarding the frequency of total miscommunication, both of the JMs and the TEs had similar results. Nevertheless, it should be remarked that the frequency of recognizing miscommunication and the frequency of asking-back resulted in a difference between the JMs and TEs. Regarding the recognizing miscommunication, the JMs had higher frequency ranges than their TEs. In addition, 10% of the JMs reported that they did not

recognize miscommunication at all, while up to 25% of the TEs did not. The JMs thought a working conversation failed more frequently than the TEs did. The result of the frequency of asking-back can imply that the JMs thought that they were asked-back less than the TEs reported they did.

The level of cultural awareness was not statistically confirmed to have an influence on the FOM. This result appears not to be in agreement with the concepts concerning intercultural communication, which are that, the level of knowledge and the acceptance of the beliefs and behaviours of others has important implications for intercultural communication. To explain this disagreement, the researcher proposes three possible explanations.

The first possible explanation is that the cultures of the both sample groups were similar. The questions used to survey the sample groups' cultural awareness were focused on racial culture, such as Japanese culture and Thai culture. The Japanese and Thai cultures are both Asian cultures. In addition, it should be taken into consideration that within both Thai and Japanese society, the traditional values are changing to Western ones, especially for the younger generation in urban areas.

A second possible explanation is both sample groups share one social culture such as the company or organization culture. In this research, the sample groups

were those working together, and in the same social section. Therefore, two people from different racial cultures can perhaps communicate successfully if they well understand their shared social culture, even though they know less of the other's racial culture.

A third explanation may be because the sample groups for this research were limited to those with direct and frequent contact with their managers or employees. This direct and frequent contact possibly made them close and they knew the *personal* cultures of each other. Knowing the personal cultures of one another possibly encourage two people to communicate successfully, even without knowing the other's racial culture sufficiently.

The second and third reasons mentioned above explain that the two sample groups in this research (the JMs and the TEs) were different from the general strangers commonly mentioned in intercultural issues. The commonly discussed strangers often include those who have non-frequent contact, and those who have non-close relationships. While the JMs and the TEs in this research had a different premise, they had a frequent and close relationship within a shared social area, a workplace or a company, which usually has a relatively strong unity. Therefore, some common intercultural concepts were found not to be in agreement with the results, the researcher generated.

**Table 9: Total results of the testing of the influences**

| Demographic characteristics | Japanese Ms | Thai Es | Language usage | Japanese Ms | Thai Es |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | | not confirmed | Numbers of languages | not confirmed | *confirmed* |
| Age | not confirmed | *confirmed* | Main language | not confirmed | not confirmed |
| Educational level | not confirmed | not confirmed | **Communicative factors** | **Japanese Ms** | **Thai Es** |
| Working position | not confirmed | not confirmed | General communication skills | *confirmed* | *confirmed* |
| Length of time working * | not confirmed | not confirmed | Attitude | *confirmed* | *confirmed* |
| Recruitment method | not confirmed | | Knowledge | not confirmed | *confirmed* |
| * Length of time working in Thailand or length of time working in Japanese companies | | | Social system awareness | not confirmed | not confirmed |
| | | | Cultural awareness | not confirmed | not confirmed |

## 6. Recommendation

The researcher has six recommendations for further researches as follows:

1. A qualitative method by using interviews for further research (so that the survey can collect more details)

2. A non self-reporting method in collecting data

3. To focus on only one of the factors (to understand the influence of each factor more fully)

4. To study specifically on Japanese who regularly use Thai to communicate with Thai people (It was confirmed in this research that there were sufficient numbers of Japanese who do use Thai to communicate with Thai people.)

5. To study the language usage of Japanese or Thai groups from the view of linguistics. (This research found that nearly 70% of the two groups use two or three languages by mixing the languages. To study the typical styles of language usage such as code switching would be interesting.)

6. To study Thai-Japanese culture comparatively (Most of the concepts concerning Thai or Japanese cultures were considered individually or by comparing them with western cultures.)

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