

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

In the modern era, international organizations play a significant role in providing the setting from which people from different cultures have to communicate with one another. Of course, problems in terms of intercultural communication are unavoidable. Even though the problems are quite trivial, sometimes those problems make people working together feel uncomfortable communicating with others. Therefore, to communicate effectively with people from different cultures is very important in international organizations (Conaway, Easton, Schmidt, & Wardrope, 2007, pp. 4-6; Dodd, 1998, p. 3).

Many Americans and Japanese are currently working in many international organizations Thailand, so problems of different working cultures of American, Japanese and Thai employees are unavoidable (Home, Suchada Tangtongtavy, & Tomizawa, 1995, pp. 69-106). Therefore, to study the working cultures of American, Japanese and Thai employees working in international organizations in Thailand is very important. This study will be useful not only for Americans, Japanese and Thai employees but also for all people who are working in an environment of different cultures in order for them to learn and adapt themselves to one another in order to be able to work together effectively (Chaney & Martin, 2000, pp. 43-45; Dunung, 1995, pp. 13-33; Kriengsak Niratpattanasai, 2005, pp. 3-14).

Several studies have been done on the intercultural communication of foreigners working in Thailand in several aspects. The cultural training of international corporations in Thailand was conducted by Mingkwan Sinthuwong (มิ่งขวัญ สิ้นธุวงศ์, 2543). The communication behavior and adaptation of foreigners who worked in Thailand was investigated by Suwannee Taechawiratchon (สุวรรณณี เตชะวิรัชชน, 2541) and Thanit Kongkaew (ธานีษฐ์ กองแก้ว, 2544). The comparison of communication behaviors of American, Japanese and Thai employees in American and Japanese companies in Thailand was studied by Vanida Pornpirun (วนิดา พรพิรุฬห์, 2547).

However, no research has been conducted regarding the comparison of Americans, Japanese and Thais in terms of intercultural communication.

Thus, this research will focus specifically on how differently American, Japanese and Thai employees perceive factors that affect intercultural communication success, face intercultural communication barriers and adapt to people from different cultures.

## **1.2 STATEMENTS OF THE PROBLEMS**

1.2.1 How differently do American, Japanese, and Thai employees perceive factors that affect intercultural communication success?

1.2.2 How differently do American, Japanese, and Thai employees face problems of intercultural communication?

1.2.3 How differently do American, Japanese, and Thai employees adapt to people from different cultures?

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1.3.1 To investigate how differently American, Japanese, and Thai employees perceive factors that affect intercultural communication success.

1.3.2 To identify how differently American, Japanese, and Thai employees face the problems of intercultural communication.

1.3.3 To compare how differently American, Japanese, and Thai employees adapt to people from different cultures.

## **1.4 HYPOTHESES**

1.4.1 American, Japanese, and Thai employees perceive factors that affect intercultural communication success differently.

1.4.2 American, Japanese, and Thai employees face the problems of intercultural communication differently.

1.4.3 American, Japanese, and Thai employees adapt to people from different cultures differently.

## 1.5 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Definitions of the terms of this study are the following:

1.5.1 Intercultural communication refers to the communication taking place between people of different cultures who have different ways of perceiving the factors that affect intercultural communication success; of facing the problems of intercultural communication as well as of adapting to people from different cultures.

1.5.2 Factors that affect intercultural communication success refer to the collective and individual relationships between people in organizations, the supportive and defensive communication climates, and the use of time of people in different cultures in international organizations.

1.5.3 Intercultural communication barriers refer to problems in the four communication skills of writing, speaking, reading, and listening. Attitudes also interact with the intercultural communication barriers.

1.5.4 Intercultural adaptation refers to how people from different cultures improve empathy, encourage feedback, acquire social and cultural knowledge and increase contact with people from different cultures.

1.5.5 International organizations in Thailand refer to the organizations where people from various cultures are working together including American, Japanese and Thai employees.

1.5.6 American employees refer to American people who are working at international organizations in Thailand.

1.5.7 Japanese employees refer to Japanese people who are working at international organizations in Thailand.

1.5.8 Thai employees refer to Thai people who are working at international organizations in Thailand.

1.5.9 Foreign colleague refers to colleagues who are of a different nationality from the respondent's nationality.

1.5.10 Minor culture refers to the culture of the minority who are working in international organizations in Thailand.

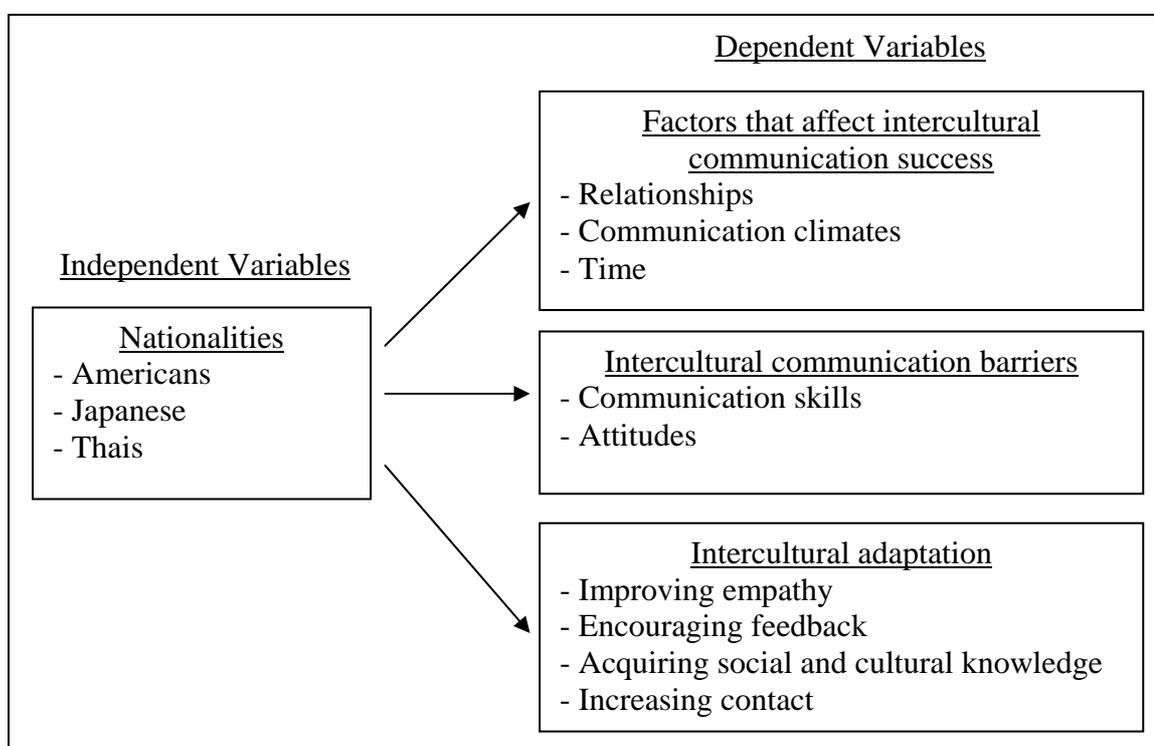
1.5.11 Major culture refers to the culture of the majority who are working in international organizations in Thailand.

## 1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.6.1 Independent and Dependent Variables

Figure 1 shows the independent variables concerning the three nationalities of the respondents, American, Japanese and Thai employees who are working in international organizations in Thailand. The three dependent variables will be discussed in terms of factors that affect intercultural communication success, intercultural communication barriers and intercultural adaptation.

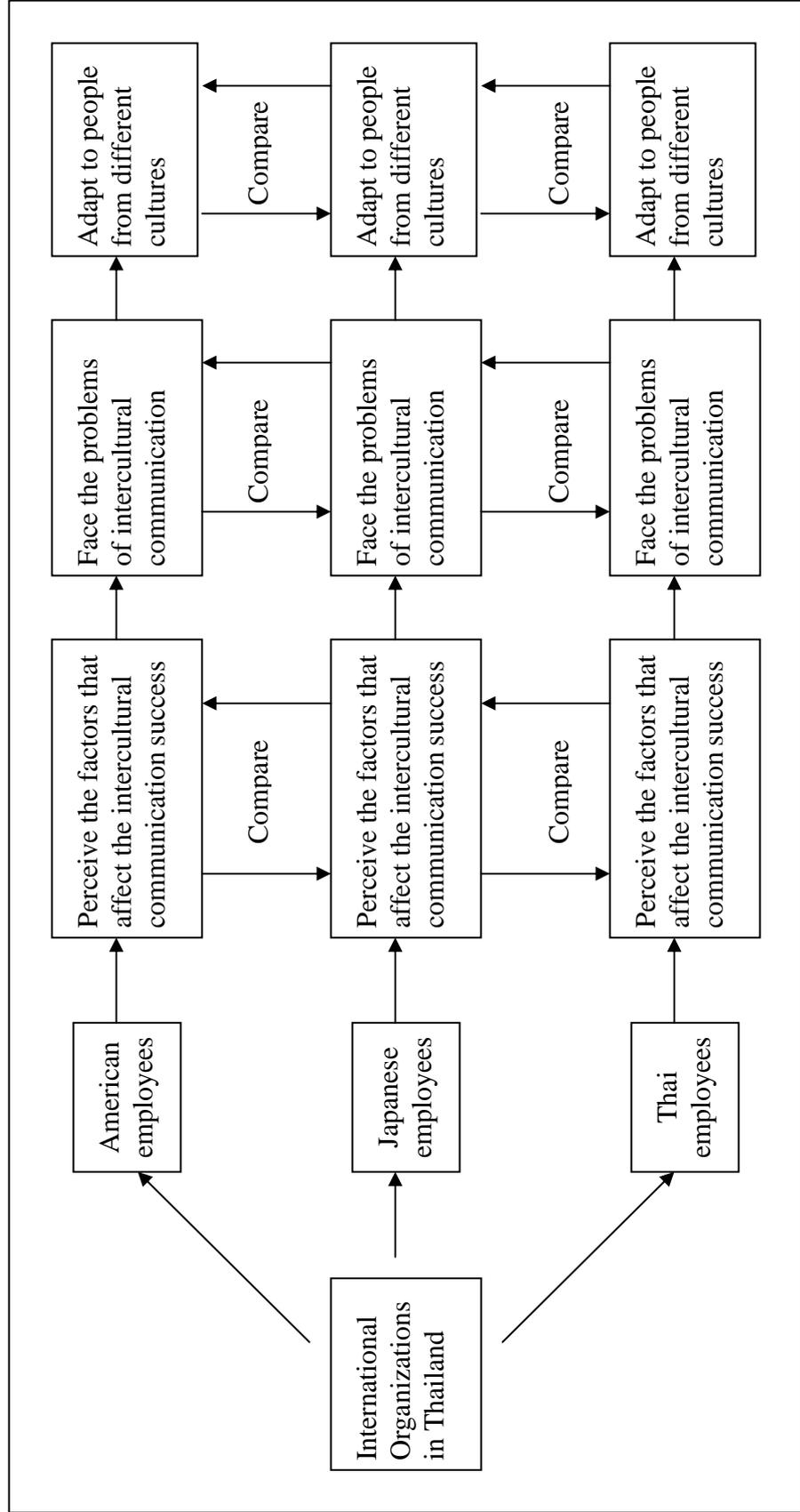
FIGURE 1  
INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLE



### 1.6.2 Cultural Adaptation Framework

Figure 2 explains the cultural adaptation framework of the study relating to the comparison of the American, Japanese and Thai employees who are working in international organizations in Thailand in terms of how differently American, Japanese, and Thai employees perceive factors that affect intercultural communication success, face problems of intercultural adaptation and adapt to people from different cultures.

FIGURE 2  
CULTURAL ADAPTATION FRAMEWORK



## **1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

1.7.1 The research explored the communication behaviors of American, Japanese, and Thai employees who are working in international organizations in order to establish the factors that affect intercultural communication success, including relationships, communication climates, and time. Moreover, this research investigated the intercultural communication barriers in organizations, focusing on the four communication skills of writing, speaking, reading, and listening and attitudes towards self and towards other people. Finally, intercultural adaptation techniques of improving empathy, encouraging feedback, acquiring social and cultural knowledge, and increasing contact were investigated in this research.

1.7.2 The participants of this research were American, Japanese, and Thai employees who were working with international organizations in Thailand.

## **1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of this study is as follows:

1.8.1 The findings of this study can help not only American and Japanese employees but also Thai employees to learn and understand communication behaviors of each other in terms of intercultural communication.

1.8.2 The findings of this study can help the American, Japanese and Thai workforce who are working with international organizations in Thailand to learn and understand working cultures in a multi-cultural environment in terms of factors that affect intercultural communication success, intercultural communication barriers, and intercultural adaptation.

1.8.3 The findings of this research are especially useful for people who are working with American, Japanese, and Thai employees in order to learn their communication behaviors and working cultures so that they can work with them more effectively.

## **1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The study of intercultural communication of American, Japanese, and Thai employees who are working in international organizations in Thailand is divided into six chapters in this paper:

Chapter 1 consists of the background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, hypotheses, definitions of terms, and conceptual framework. Scope, significance, and organization of the study are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 2 concerns the review of literature related to this study. There are six main parts included in the review of literature. The first part is about intercultural communication. The second part focuses on the factors that affect intercultural communication success. The third part discusses intercultural communication barriers. The fourth part deals with intercultural adaptation. The fifth part discusses working culture. The sixth part deals with relevant research.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the research including population, sampling, instruments, data collection method and data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the results of questionnaires, documentary research, and personal interview.

Chapter 5 shows the discussion from the findings.

Chapter 6 illustrates the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of the study of intercultural communication of American, Japanese, and Thai employees who are working in international organizations in Thailand.

In summary, this chapter presents background, statements of the problem, objectives of the study, hypotheses, definitions of terms, conceptual framework, scope of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the study. In the next chapter, various concepts in connection with this study will be reviewed.