CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS

This section discusses the outstanding results of factors that affect intercultural communication success, intercultural communication barriers and intercultural adaptation.

5.1 FACTORS THAT AFFECT INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SUCCESS

Three factors that affect intercultural communication success will be discussed in this section. The discussions are as follows:

5.1.1 Relationships

It was found that American, Japanese and Thai respondents perceived relationships in their organizations completely differently. The data-derived findings corresponded with those found by various researchers (Barnlund, 1989, pp. 39-40; Chaney & Martin, 2000, pp. 55-56; Fatehi, 1996, pp.165-167; Ferraro, 1990, pp. 94-95) and were supported by the personal interview with John that American respondents perceived relationships in their organizations to be insignificant because American respondents considered work-orientation more important than preserving relationships with their colleagues. As a result, American respondents perceived relationships in their organizations as individualistic.

However, for Japanese respondents, the statistical findings disagreed with those of several researchers (สุวรรณี เตชะวิรัชชน, 2541; Barnlund, 1989, p. 44; Dunung, 1995, p. 15; Fatehi, 1996, p. 165; Gudykunst, Nishida, & Ting-Toomey, 1996, p. 111; Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R., 1987, p. 107) that even though the Japanese preferred group-oriented and hierarchical communication in their society, most of the Japanese respondents had more experience with foreigners, so they seemed to be absorbed into Western value in terms of individualism. It was found that the Japanese respondents seemed to be concerned about both job performance and developing relationships with their colleagues. Therefore, the Japanese respondents perceived

relationships in their organizations between collectivism and individualism. However, the data-derived findings agreed with those of Jandt (2007, p. 163) and the personal interview with Shiro that at present, the younger Japanese and the Japanese who have experience with foreigners seemed to be moderately independent of thought and action, so they seemed to be more individualistic than the elders and ones who had less experience with foreigners.

Meanwhile, the data-derived findings of Thai respondents were consistent with those of several researchers (Holmes, Suchada Tangtongtavy, & Tomizawa, 1995, pp. 46-50; Klausner, 1993, p. 253; Leppert, 1992, pp. 79, 181, 191; McGregor & Towes, 1998, p. 189; Mulder, 2000, pp. 59, 88) and were supported by the personal interview with Siriporn in that Thai respondents considered relationships-orientation more important than professionalism at work. When there are problems at work, Thai respondents are likely to compromise and avoid confrontation in order to maintain relationships with their colleagues. As a result, Thai respondents perceived relationships in their organizations as collectivism.

In conclusion, the results show that even though Japanese and Thais are Asian, it does not mean that they perceived relationships similarly. On the other hand, even though Western culture, the U.S., is dissimilar to the Eastern culture, Japan, it does not mean that American respondents always have completely different perception from Japanese respondents. It was found that Japanese respondents seemed to perceive relationships midway between Western and Asian cultures.

5.1.2 Communication Climates

It was found that American respondents perceived communication climates in their organizations differently from Japanese and Thai respondents. For American respondents, the data-derived findings were partly in accordance with those of many researchers (Brake, Walker, D. M., & Walker, T. T., 1995, pp. 130,133; Chaney & Martin, 2000, p. 44; Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R., 1987, p. 122; Porter & Samovar, 1997, p. 308) and were supported by the personal interview with John that American respondents considered being direct and straightforward beneficial at work, so they tended to show their feeling explicitly and go to the point directly so that they

seemed to feel more comfortable to show their disagreement with their colleagues. However, it was found that as most Americans' foreign colleagues are Thais who considered showing strong emotions to be inappropriate behaviors, the American respondents sometimes avoided showing their feelings in a straightforward manner in order to keep the working atmosphere pleasant. Therefore, American respondents perceived communication climates in their organizations in between a supportive and a defensive one.

Meanwhile, Japanese and Thai respondents perceived communication climates in their organizations as defensive climates which corresponded with those of several researchers (สุวรรณี เตชะวิรัชชน, 2541; Fatehi, 1996, p. 171; Gordon & Yee, 1995, p. 19; Gudykunst, Nishida, & Ting-Toomey, 1996, p. 111; Holmes, Suchada Tangtongtavee, & Tomizawa, 1995, p. 92; Klausner, 1993, p. 379; Kriengsak Niratpattanasai, 2005, p. 12; Mulder, 2000, pp. 46-47) and was supported by the personal interviews with Shiro and Siriporn. It was found that Japanese and Thai respondents considered harmony and face saving more important in working with other people. They tended to speak indirectly and avoid showing disagreement in order to relieve tension in some situations so that they seemed to lack openness and become suspicious whether they can trust in others' communication or not. Therefore, Japanese and Thai respondents perceived communication climates in their organizations as defensive ones.

In conclusion, the results explain that even though Western culture, the U.S. is dissimilar to the Asian culture, Japan and Thailand, it does not mean that American respondents always have completely different perception from Japanese and Thai respondents. The findings show that American respondents perceived communication climates in their organizations as partly similar to the Asian side.

5.1.3 Time

It was found that American respondents perceived time differently from Japanese and Thai respondents. For American respondents, the statistical findings were consistent with those of many researchers (Brake, Walker, D. M., & Walker, T. T., 1995, p. 131; Chaney & Martin, 2000, p. 44; Elashmawi & Harris, 1993, p. 34; Fatehi, 1996, p. 173; Ferraro, 1990, p. 98; Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R.,
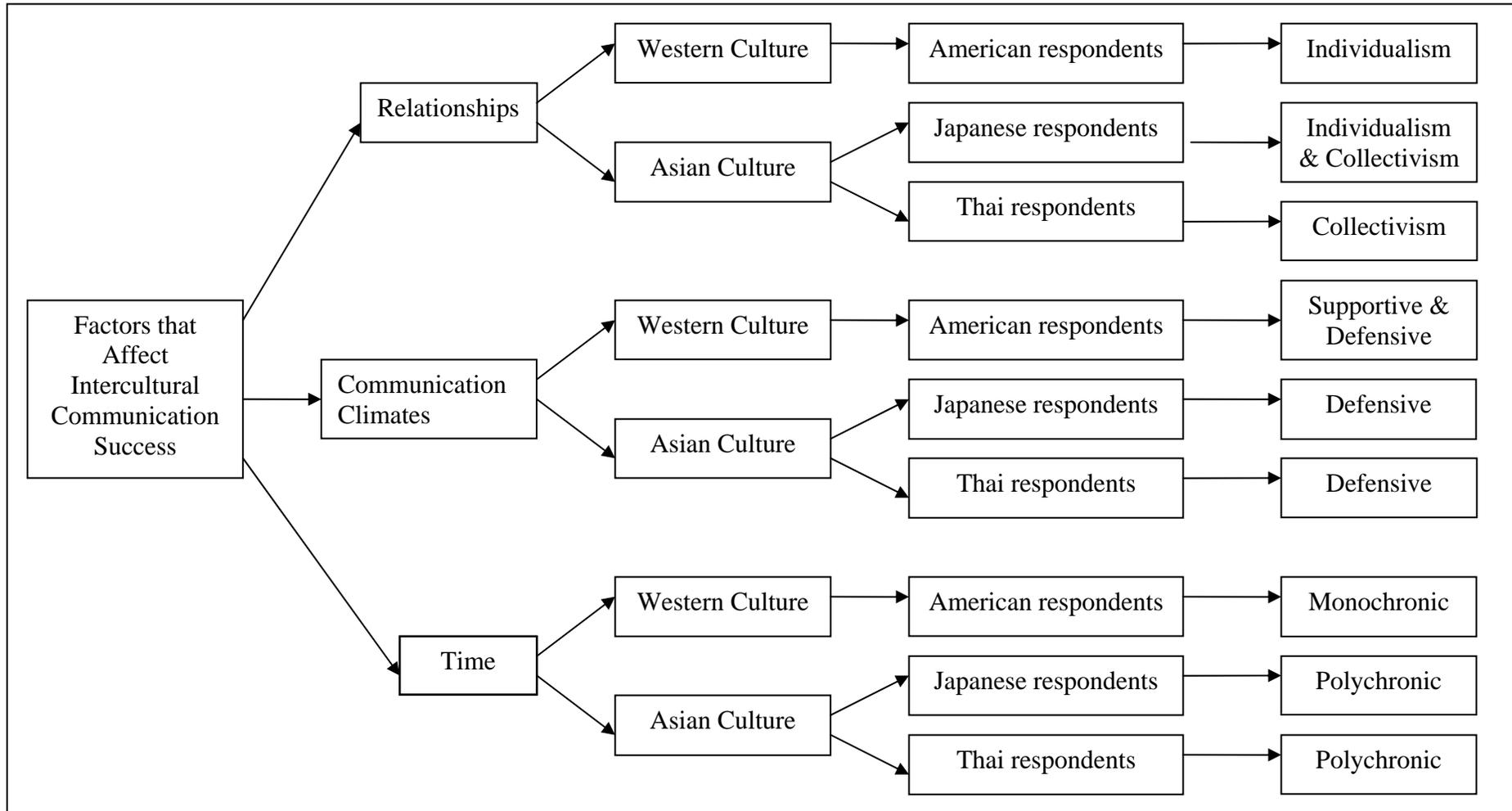
1987, p. 26; Johnson, Mott, & Quible, 1996, p. 417; Porter & Samovar, 1997, p.309) and were supported by the personal interview with John that American respondents perceived time as important in job achievement. They are likely to finish whatever they do as soon as possible, so they tend to be irritated with colleagues who are late for many work appointments. In other words, American respondents perceived time as Monochronic.

On the other hand, the data-derived findings of Japanese and Thai respondents agreed with those of several researchers (Chaney & Martin, 2000, p.123; Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R., 1987, p.146; Holmes, Suchada Tangtongtavy, & Tomizawa, 1995, p. 78; Kriengsak Niratpattanasai, 2005, pp. 10-11; Leppert, 1992, p. 182; McGregor & Toews, 1998, p. 195; Porter & Samovar, 1997, p. 260; Sinha, 2000, p. 428) and were supported by the personal interviews with Shiro and Siriporn that Japanese and Thai respondents think that time is not an important factor in job achievement. They tended to deal with time flexibly, so they feel pressured when put upon to finish a job immediately. In other words, Japanese and Thai respondents perceived time as Polychronic.

In conclusion, it was found that the concept of time of people in Western culture is different from people in Asian culture. The results describe that American respondents perceived time completely differently from Japanese and Thai respondents.

Figure 4 illustrates the comparison between Western culture, American respondents, and Asian culture, Japanese and Thai respondents, who are working in international organizations in Thailand in terms of factors that affect intercultural communication success. The findings show that not only people in Western culture but also people in Asian culture perceived relationships differently from each other. Meanwhile, the results explain that people in Western culture perceived differently from people in Asian culture in terms of communication climates and time.

FIGURE 4

COMPARISION BETWEEN WESTERN AND ASIAN CULTURES

IN TERMS OF FACTORS THAT AFFECT INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SUCCESS

Factors that Affect Intercultural Communication Success				
Relationships	Western Culture	American respondents		Individualism
	Asian Culture	Japanese respondents		Individualism & Collectivism
		Thai respondents		Collectivism
Communication Climates	Western Culture	American respondents		Supportive & Defensive
	Asian Culture	Japanese respondents		Defensive
		Thai respondents		Defensive
Time	Western Culture	American respondents		Monochronic
	Asian Culture	Japanese respondents		Polychronic
		Thai respondents		Polychronic

5.2 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

The two factors concerning intercultural communication barriers will be discussed in this part: Communication skills and attitudes.

5.2.1 Communication Skills

It was found that the Japanese respondents faced problems of intercultural communication barriers differently from the American and Thai respondents. For American respondents, the data-derived findings corresponded with those of various researchers (Beamer & Varner, 2005, p. 163; Chaney & Martin, 2000, p. 132; Ferraro, 1990, p. 55; Porter & Samovar, 1997, p. 309) and were supported by the personal interview with John that the majority of American respondents use English to communicate with their foreign colleagues, so they are more confident to talk with their colleagues. As a result, they considered that speaking is more effective than writing at the workplace because speaking not only helps to get feedback immediately but also helps to observe the body language of one another.

The results of Japanese respondents agreed with those of many researchers (Barnlund, 1989, p. 42; Beamer & Varner, 2005, p. 162; Gudykunst, Nishida, & Ting-Toomey, 1996, p. 112; Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R., 1987, p. 147; Porter, Samovar, & Stefani, 1998, pp. 127-128) that Japanese respondents tended to use a minimum of words as much as possible and only one-third of Japanese respondents use Japanese language to communicate at work, so they considered writing is more effective than speaking in communicating at work. As a result, nonverbal communication is more effective in communication with the Japanese respondents. However, the personal interview with Shiro disagreed with the statistical findings because he mentioned that he has no problems in communicating with his colleagues, so he thinks that speaking is more effective than writing at work.

On the other hand, it was found that the data-derived findings of the Thai respondents were in contrast with those of several researchers (Holmes, Suchada Tangtongtavee, & Tomizawa, 1995, pp. 96-98; Leppert, 1992, p. 89; McGregor & Toews, 1998, pp.197, 202-205; Kriengsak Nirapattanasai, 2005, pp. 85-88) that though the Thais are afraid of not being able to speak second languages, the majority of Thai respondents had taken language courses, had worked with foreigners before

working in their current organizations as well as had foreign friends, so they are likely to be confident to communicate with their foreign colleagues. Therefore, the Thai respondents considered that speaking is more effective than writing in communicating at the workplace. Meanwhile, the statistical results agreed with the personal interview with Siriporn. Siriporn indicated that though she felt more comfortable and was more confident in communicating with her foreign colleagues, she still had problems in communicating with them. Even though she used Portuguese to communicate with her foreign colleagues, when she faced a serious problem and expected to get an exact answer from her foreign colleagues, she used English to communicate with them in terms of second language.

In conclusion, it was found that even though Japanese and Thai cultures are in similar, it does not mean that Japanese and Thai respondents faced problems of communication skills similarity. Furthermore, even though American culture is dissimilar to the Thai culture, it does not mean that American respondents have completely different problems in terms of communication from Thai respondents. The results show that speaking seemed to be more effective in communicating with American and Thai respondents while writing seemed to play a significant role for Japanese respondents.

5.2.2 Attitudes

It was found that American respondents seemed to have attitudes different from Japanese and Thai respondents. The statistical results of American respondents were in accordance with those of various researchers (Conaway, Easton, Schmidt, & Wardrope, 2007, p. 169; Fatehi, 1996, pp. 166, 171-172; Fatehi, 2008, pp. 133-134) in that even though the American respondents were more open to their foreign colleagues and thought that everyone should be open to each other rather than submitting to each other, they tended to think that as they were the minority who were working in Thailand, they should adapt themselves to Thai people who were the majority even though they had to make a bigger effort. However, the personal interview with John partly disagreed with the statistical findings because he believed in equality, so he thought that one should not submit to another, but should respect the culture of their adopted country instead.

For Japanese and Thai respondents, the data-derived findings were in contrast with those of many researchers (วนิดา พรพิรุฬห์, 2547; The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan, 1994, pp. 54-55; Dunung, 1995, pp. 13-15; Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R., 1987, p. 53; Leppert, 1992, pp. 84-85; McGregor & Toews, 1998, pp. 189; Mente, 1981, p. 174) and disagreed with the personal interviews with Shiro and Siriporn that though the Japanese and Thais were careful to build relationships with people who they were not familiar with, the majority of Japanese and Thai respondents had more experience with foreigners, so they were likely to gradually adapt to those foreign cultures in terms of ways of thinking and attitudes. It was found that Japanese and Thai respondents tended to think that they should be treated equally to any other culture rather than submitting to each other so that they seemed to be open and adapt to those culture differences. However, both Shiro and Siriporn said that they felt more appreciative if their foreign colleagues tried to learn and adapt to their cultures.

In conclusions, it was found that people in Western culture perceived attitudes differently from people in Asian culture. However, the results show that American respondents tended to adapt their attitudes to Asian culture while Japanese and Thai respondents seemed to adapt their attitudes to Western culture due to the increasing globalization of cultural diversity. As a result, the findings show that American respondents seemed to play down a bit the social status, meanwhile Japanese and Thai respondents tended to pay more respect for equality than seniority in their society.

Figure 5 describes the comparison between Western culture, American respondents, and Asian culture, Japanese and Thai respondents, who are working in international organizations in Thailand in terms of intercultural communication barriers. The findings illustrate that even though Western culture is dissimilar to Asian culture, due to the increase of globalization, people in Western culture tended to adapt to Asian culture in terms of their attitudes while people in Asian culture seemed to adapt to Western culture in terms of communication skills and attitudes. Therefore, it was found that culture works not only for communication skills but also for attitudes.

FIGURE 5

COMPARISION BETWEEN WESTERN AND ASIAN CULTURES

IN TERMS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS
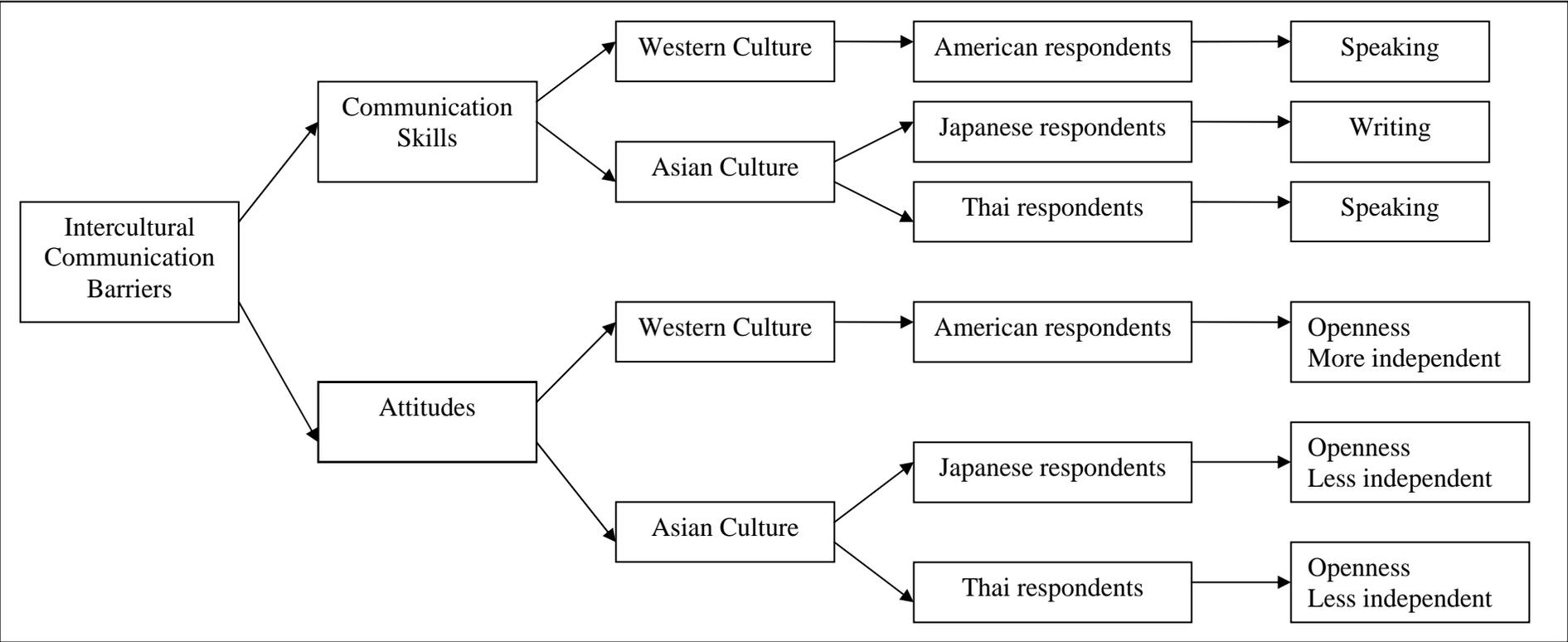
5.3 INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION

The four factors concerning intercultural adaptation will be discussed in this section. The discussions are as follows:

5.3.1 Improving Empathy

It was found that American respondents seemed to have their ability to empathize other people differently from Japanese and Thai respondents. For American respondents, the data-derived findings were partially consistent with those found by various researchers (Beamer & Varner, 1995, p. 137; Chaney & Martin, 2000, p. 44; Fatehi, 1996, p. 166; Ferraro, 1990, p. 109) and were supported by the personal interview with John in that as the Americans value equality and individualism, it was found that the American respondents tended not to expect others to come up or down to their level. So, when their foreign colleagues had problems at work, the American respondents tended to give their support even if their foreign colleagues are in lower status and/or higher status. Moreover, the personal interview with John stated that being aware of others' sensibilities is important in communicating with people from different cultures, so one should respect the culture of their adopted country.

For Japanese respondents, it was found that the data-derived findings agreed with those of several researchers (The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan, 1994, pp. 54-55; Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R., 1987, pp. 80-81) as the Japanese value hierarchy, they considered seniority very important in their society. Therefore, when there are problems at work, the Japanese respondents tended to give priority to their seniority and people of their own culture rather than their foreign colleagues who are considered as outsiders. Moreover, the personal interview with Shiro stated even though everyone should respect one another, he paid more respect to the level of rank at the workplace so that he tended to think that subordinates should respect and adapt to their seniors.

While the data-derived findings of the Thai respondents were in accordance with those of many researchers (Holmes, Suchada Tangtongtavy, & Tomizawa, 1995, pp. 28-30, 53-55; McGregor & Toews, 1998, pp. 176-177, 196-197; Kriengsak Niratpattanasai, 2005, p. 12) and were supported by the personal interview with Siriporn which pointed out that as the Thais are collectivistic, the Thai

respondents tended to pay attention not only to maintaining relationships with other people but also to seniority relationships. Due to the value of seniority, it was found that when there are problems at work, even though the Thai respondents tended to help and support each other, they seemed to feel uncomfortable to show and give their opinions to their seniors because it not only shows that they do not respect the superiors' opinions but it also shows that they do not know who are the positions above and below.

In conclusion, it was found that people in Western culture seemed to improve empathy differently from people from Asian culture. The results describe that the American respondents value individuality while the Japanese and Thai respondents value hierarchy.

5.3.2 Encouraging Feedback

It was found that Japanese respondents differ in encouraging feedback from American and Thai respondents. For American respondents, the data-derived findings corresponded with those found by many researchers (Beamer & Varner, 1995, p. 150; Copeland & Schuster, 2006, p. 55) and were supported by the personal interview with John in that American respondents considered that to discuss about problems immediately to be very important because it not only helps to discover and solve those problems but also helps to improve understanding of each other.

Meanwhile, it was found that the statistical findings of Japanese respondents agreed with those of several researchers (Elashmawi & Harris, 1993, p. 40; Gudykunst, Nishida, & Ting-Toomey, 1996, pp. 113-115; Porter & Samovar, 1997, p. 261) that Japanese respondents value seniority and tend to keep quiet and listen, so it is difficult to get ideas and feedback from them. So that Japanese respondents were likely to think that showing their opinions not only weakens the seniority system but it also seems to be a waste of time. However, the personal interview with Shiro disagreed with the statistical findings because he indicated that when there are problems at work, he usually asks his subordinates' opinions in order to avoid a conflict escalation.

For Thai respondents, the data-derived findings were not in accordance with those of various researchers (Holmes, Suchada Tangtongtavy, & Tomizawa,

1995, pp. 88-90; McGregor & Toews, 1998, pp. 178, 203-204; Sinha, 2000, p. 421) that even though Thai people considered showing ideas or disagreement as a negative trait, most of the Thai respondents had worked with foreigners before working in their current organization and/or had foreign friends, so they were more familiar with the assertiveness of Western culture. As a result, the Thai respondents seemed to feel more confident to discuss and exchange ideas with each other. However, the personal interview with Siriporn supported the statistical findings in that she usually found out problems at work with her colleagues in order to correct those problems and improve understanding with each other.

In conclusion, the results explain that even though Western culture is different from Asian culture, it does not mean that people in Western culture differ in encouraging feedback from people in Asian culture. On the other hand, people in Asian culture are not always likely to encourage feedback similarly. It was found that the American and Thai respondents tended to take an assertive technique in a role of communication while keeping silent was more beneficial in communicating with the Japanese respondents.

5.3.3 Acquiring Social and Cultural Knowledge

It was found that American respondents acquired social and cultural knowledge differently from Japanese and Thai respondents. For American respondents, the data-derived findings were not in accordance with those found by many researchers (Copeland & Schuster, 2006, pp. 58-59; Hodge, 2000, pp. 38, 45) that even though the Americans are not likely to develop close relationships with other people, it was found that the American respondents tended to spend time learning the life style of their foreign colleagues. So, American respondents seemed to get along with their foreign colleagues more easily. Moreover, the personal interview with John indicated that how long people adapt to other people is determined by one's individual personality, as well as the characteristics of the people one socializes with.

For Japanese respondents, it was found that the data-derived findings disagreed with those of several researchers (Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R., 1987, pp. 26, 67,132; Mente, 1981, p. 98) that even though the Japanese considered socializing very important in working with other people, it was found that the Japanese respondents

tended to socialize with people in their group rather than with their foreign colleagues. As a result, the Japanese respondents seemed to spend a bit more time adapting themselves with their foreign colleagues. However, the results of the personal interview with Shiro stated that as Japanese and Thai cultures are not much different, it is not difficult for him to learn and adapt to his Thai colleagues.

Meanwhile, the results of Thai respondents found that the statistical findings corresponded with those of various researchers (Klausner, 1993, p. 290; McGregor & Toews, 1998, p. 182) that as the Thais considered relationships very important in doing business, the Thai respondents were likely to go out often and develop relationships with other people. Therefore, the Thai respondents tended not to take much time to adapt themselves to their foreign colleagues. However, the personal interview with Siriporn indicated that it was not difficult for her to learn about work, but it may take a while to learn and adapt to her foreign colleagues.

In conclusion, the results explain that people in Western culture differ in acquiring social and cultural knowledge from people in Asian culture. It was found that American respondents seemed to adapt to their foreign colleagues in a high-moderate degree. Japanese respondents tended to adapt to their foreign colleagues in a low-moderate degree while Thai respondents seemed to adapt to their foreign colleagues in a moderate degree.

5.3.4 Increasing Contact

It was found that Japanese respondents increase contact differently from American and Thai respondents. For American respondents, the data-derived findings were not consistent with those found by many researchers (Copeland & Schuster, 2006, pp. 58-59; Hodge, 2000, pp. 38, 45) in that though the Americans would rather spend only a small amount of time talking about personal issues in a workplace, the American respondents tended to spend more time socializing with their foreign colleagues because it not only helps them to better understand the communication behaviors of each other but it also helps them to communicate with their foreign colleagues more effectively. However, the personal interview with John supported the statistical findings because he pointed out that to have a group activity can lead to better communication.

While, the statistical findings of the Japanese respondents disagreed with those of many researchers (Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R., 1987, pp. 26, 67,132; Mente, 1981, p. 98) that even though the Japanese considered socializing and drinking after work can help to foster interpersonal relationships with other people, the Japanese respondents seemed to be more comfortable to spend their personal time going out with their group rather than their foreign colleagues. Moreover, the personal interview with Shiro supported the data-derived results that he rarely went out to have dinner and/or a party with his foreign colleagues.

For the Thai respondents, the data-derived findings were in contrast with those of many researchers (Klausner, 1993, p. 290; McGregor & Toews, 1998, p. 182) that even though the Thais are likely to insist on getting to know other people if they don't know them well, it was found that the Thai respondents tended to socialize more with their foreign colleagues in order for them to become acquainted and develop personal relationships with each other. However, the personal interview with Siriporn stated that she usually participates in the organization activities, but she rarely socialized with her foreign colleagues after working hours.

In conclusion, the findings illustrate that people in Western culture do not always increase contact differently from people in Asian culture. On the other hand, people in Asian culture are not always likely to increase contact in a similar way. It was found that the American and Thai respondents seemed to be more sociable while the Japanese respondents tended to socialize with their foreign colleagues in a moderate degree.

Figure 6 describes the comparison between Western culture, the American respondents, and Asian culture, the Japanese and the Thai respondents, who are working in international organizations in Thailand in terms of intercultural adaptation. It was found that not only did people in Western culture tend to adapt themselves differently from people in Asian cultures but even people in Asian culture seemed to adapt themselves differently from each other. However, the results show that even though the respondents among the three groups differed in adapting to other people, the Japanese respondents seemed to adapt themselves to people from different cultures in a low moderate degree in comparison to the American and the Thai respondents.

FIGURE 6

COMPARISION BETWEEN WESTERN AND ASIAN CULTURES

IN TERMS OF INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION
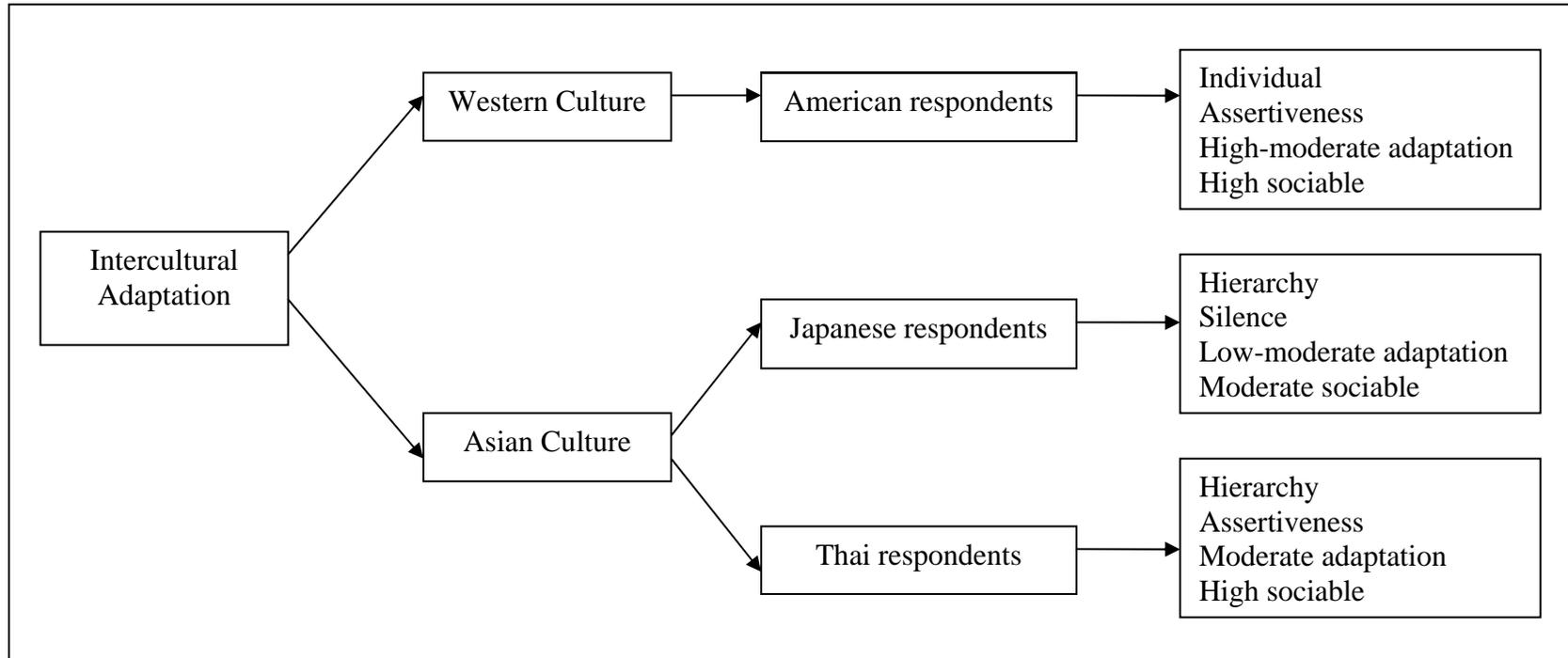
In summary, this chapter presents the discussions of the outstanding results of the study in three main parts in terms of factors that affect intercultural communication success, intercultural communication barriers, and intercultural adaptation. Moreover, the comparison between Western culture and Asian culture is discussed in order to compare how differently Western and Asian cultures perceive factors that affect intercultural communication success, face problems of intercultural adaptation and adapt to people from different cultures. In the next chapter, the conclusions, recommendations and limitation of study will be presented.