

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) discussions, (4) conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to explore the intercultural communication problems of Thai employees at PSL and to find out the skills needed for effective communication in the organization.

5.1.1 Objectives of the study

There are four main objectives of the study as follows:

- To find out the main problems of intercultural communication of Thai employee at PSL.
- To explore the causes of these intercultural communication problems.
- To survey the attitudes of Thai employee towards their foreign colleagues.
- To measure the effectiveness of intercultural communication in the company.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials and Procedures

- **Subjects**

The population sampling of this study was 100 Thai employees working at PSL. Of the total, 47 were male and the remaining 53 were female. The majority of respondents were aged between 21-30 years old with bachelor's degrees. Most participants worked as general staff and had more than 10 years experience dealing with foreign colleagues. The majority of respondents have more than four chances a week communicate with those colleagues

- **Materials**

The instrument used in this study was a closed-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts. The first part was about the demography data of respondents such as gender, age, educational background, position, experience and the frequency of communication with foreign staff. The second part was created to find out

problems by focusing on the four skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The final part focused on the cultural problems in terms of gender, race or nationality, position, punctuality and nonverbal language.

- Procedures

The questionnaires were given to 100 respondents in the company and were collected within 2 days by the researcher. In order to get precise result, the SPSS program was used to analyze the results. The findings of the research are presented in frequency distribution and relevant descriptive statistics.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

5.2.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

Most of the respondents were female (53%), aged between 21-30 years old (42%) and 31-40 years old (41%). Most of them had bachelor's degrees (70%) and worked as general staff (87%). The majority of them had been with the company for more than 10 years (38%) and had the chance to interact with foreigner colleagues more than 4 times a week (71%).

5.2.2 The four language skills that may cause communication problems.

- Listening Problems

From the findings, the respondents felt that the inability to catch words or conversations was the major difficulty that caused intercultural communication problems. While they thought that they could cope with accents and pronunciation, unfamiliar words, and technical terms lessened their ability to remember all the information. However, there were 2 groups of respondents that had different opinions on unfamiliar slang, idiomatic expressions; 38 participants felt that it caused problems in communication while another 38 respondent felt that unfamiliar slang did not create many problems.

- Speaking Problems

The overall results show that most participants were not nervous when speaking English but they had problems with pronunciation and grammar use. Moreover, they were able to choose the right words to express their opinions or ideas. Even though most of the respondents could not speak with correct pronunciation, words and grammar, they still felt comfortable to speak with foreigners.

- Reading Problems

The findings clearly show that the majority of respondents were able to understand the essence of the message and had the capacity to understand the meaning of general words, but they were sometimes confused about words that have various meanings. However, most participants felt they could not understand the whole text correctly because of slang and idiomatic expressions and grammar knowledge.

- Writing Problems

The majority of participants agreed that inaccuracy in grammar use was the main problem in writing. Moreover, they thought that it was difficult to select and use the right words or idiomatic expression and also the right technical terms in their writing. Anyway, most of them could convey clear-cut ideas in their messages, and they did not have any difficulty when composing sentences in the order intended.

5.2.3 The difference in culture that may cause international communication problems.

In this study, the respondents thought that cultural problems slightly caused problems in intercultural communication. Differences in gender, race or nationality, occupation, punctuality, and the use of nonverbal language were not the major problems in communication nor were the attitudes towards the opposite sex, the differences in food and the ways of daily life. It can be said that most participants did not have many problems with the differences in culture.

5.3 DISCUSSION

This section concerns the intercultural communication problems in the organization.

5.3.1 From the findings, listening was the problem that the respondents slightly encountered because of unfamiliar of accents and pronunciation. Even though most of them had a lot of experience in working at the company for many years, it seems that it was difficult for them to get used to the accents and pronunciation. This is similar to Bovee & Thill (2005)' view that even though people know the vocabulary and grammar of another language, processing every conversations might not be easy since the language varies considerably in terms of tone, pitch, speed and volume. Furthermore, since many English words are not spelled in the way they are pronounced,

the listener might fail to understand what the speaker said (Holmes & Tangtongtavy, 2003). In order to improve this problem, Bovee & Thill suggest that the speaker should speak slowly and clearly so that the listener can work through the conversation step by step.

5.3.2 The majority of respondents thought speaking problems caused ineffectiveness in intercultural communication due to an inaccuracy in grammar use, pronunciation and limited vocabulary knowledge. They sometimes could not understand the message and express their ideas effectively because of unfamiliar words. Many words have several different definitions and meaning; it is possible that someone can misunderstand or interpret words differently since people have different frames of reference. (Hamilton & Parker, 1997) The best way to improve and expand knowledge of words is to read often and in varied content areas (Wiener & Bazerman, 1999). Moreover, “the most useful strategies for facilitating comprehension include using a dictionary, asking for transition, predictions from scripted sequences and context cues and relaxing”.

5.3.3 Reading problems were of concerned to most respondents due to their inability to understand and use technical terms and slang. Since the organization runs a shipping service, all messages used in the company include technical terms and slang. These technical terms and slang phrases can be interpreted in several way, so it might be difficult for non-native speakers to understand what being talked about in a message (Bovee & Thill , 2005).

5.3.4 The results of the study show that most participants thought writing problems were the major problem. They felt that their capacity to use grammar accurately created ineffectiveness in communication. Even though they could express their ideas or opinion to their colleagues with confidence, they still considered grammar crucial for the success of communication. This is similar to Holmes & Tangtongtavy (2003)’ view that Thais feel uncomfortable to write in English since they are afraid that they might express their point poorly and other colleagues can see their bad grammar. However, “syntactic description and grammatical judgments are base largely on written language or constructed data neutral between written and spoken language, but really a data of real-time actual use of languages in naturally occurring conversation” (Kemtong Sinwongsuwat, 2007).

5.3.5 The study found that most of the respondents did not have the problems with cultural differences. It is possible that most respondents had worked with foreigners for many years so they were quite familiar with their colleagues' culture. Furthermore, most of them had chance to talk with a foreigner more than four times a week so it may have been easy for them to adapt themselves. "The effort to surmount cultural differences will open up business opportunities through the world and maximize the contribution of employees in a diverse workforce" (Bovee & Thrill, 2005).

5.4 CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

5.4.1 The inability to use correct grammar in communication was considered as the major problem by Thai employees in the company. Even though the majority of them had dealt with foreigners for many years, it seems that it was difficult to convey their opinions or ideas with correct grammar. However, they still felt comfortable communicating with foreigners.

5.4.2 The second problem faced by the participants was the inability to understand technical terms, slang, and idiomatic expressions. Even after working in the same environment and colleagues for years, most of them still did not understand the meaning of the words. However, even without this capacity, the employees felt that they could communicate with their foreign colleagues effectively.

5.4.3 The respondents agree that it was very hard to select appropriate words to use in conversations. Moreover, they could not understand the whole message because of their limited knowledge of vocabulary. It seems that this caused problems in intercultural communication as the employees interpreted the instruction in different ways.

5.4.4 The last problem encountered by the Thai employees was the unfamiliarity with pronunciation. Most of them did not understand what their foreign colleagues said since they were not acquainted with their pronunciation. Moreover, they were not confident about speaking English with the correct pronunciation.

5.4.5 From the study, it can be said that differences in culture did not cause the participants any problems. Most of them were able to adapt themselves to different

cultures very well. There are only a few number of respondents who thought this caused ineffective communication.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher has the following recommendations.

5.5.1 The research concerned the intercultural communication problems with findings from 100 Thai respondents being analyzed without the foreigner's perspective. Therefore it would be very useful if future research compared the point of view of both groups.

5.5.2 The results were only from respondents that had one year experience at least, so it might not include all the difficulties which occurred. Therefore, the sample of the study for the further research should not limit the experience in order to have a larger variety of opinions.