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**The Role of Intercultural Awareness  
in Intercultural Communication:  
A Case Study of English Student Trainees at a Thai Airport**

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

York St John University

School of Education, Language and Psychology

September 2020

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“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

-Atticus Finch in *To kill a mocking bird* by Harper Lee

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## ABSTRACT

In English as a lingua franca (ELF) contexts, such as Thailand, many previous studies have focused on the importance of English in intercultural communication of students in higher education, while the role of intercultural awareness (ICA) has not been paid enough attention. In fact, when intercultural communication takes place, language and culture interact. To shed light on ICA and the complexity of culture, this study sought to investigate the role of ICA in intercultural communication through English.

Adopting interpretivism, this phenomenological study relied on a qualitative approach to understand the role of ICA through participants' experiences in intercultural communication. This resulted in the formulation of research questions aiming to explore the extent of participants' ICA and identify their communication challenges and associated strategies in intercultural communication. To collect in-depth data, the semi-structured individual interview was employed as a main research instrument. Twelve Thai university students majoring in English who worked as student trainees for the airlines at a Thai airport were selected as participants. Thematic analysis was utilised to organise data while interpretive analysis was employed to interpret data.

The findings revealed that ICA not only played a role in participants' perceptions towards cultural challenges but also had impacts on their employment of associated strategies in dealing with those challenges. They illustrated the complex relationship between ICA, communication challenges, and associated strategies since participants brought different cultural realities into their intercultural encounters. This confirms the fluid and emergent nature of culture. The findings also suggest useful abilities, namely the ability to control emotions and the ability to forgive, needed by participants in dealing with cultural challenges for successful intercultural communication through English in ELF contexts. This study, therefore, contributes to the understanding of culture and the significance of ICA in intercultural communication in both educational and occupational contexts.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

C1	First culture
C2	Second culture
CA	Cultural awareness
ELF	English as a lingua franca
ELT	English language teaching
ESL	English as a second language
ICA	Intercultural awareness
ICC	Intercultural Competence
L1	First language
L2	Second language
NES	Native English speaker
NS	Native speaker
NNS	Non-native speaker
NNES	Non-native English speaker

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTON

### 1.1 Background

With its roles in the process of globalisation, English is used in multicultural situations as a communicative tool for many different objectives, such as tourism, business, politics, and education. According to Crystal's (2003) study, non-native users of English, around 2 billion, outnumber native-English speakers around four to one. English is globally used by an increasing number of speakers. Phillipson (2008) notes that English has been used in communities by diverse groups of people such as traders, politicians, entertainers, and educators. Even in countries where English is not the official language, English can still be found in different types of media such as television, magazines, newspapers, and textbooks (Crystal, 2003). Kam (2002) adds that learning the English language has become a powerful tool in globalisation since it helps learners to access global knowledge. For those reasons, English has become one of the languages that is most studied by people from all around the world.

The importance of English skills in communication are extensively recorded. English oral skills are considered as the most vital ability of job applicants required for job interviews and evaluation in international organisations (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Forey & Lockwood, 2007; Vasavakul, 2006). In recent years, there have been high demands for newly graduated job applicants who are proficient in English oral skills since the employers think that their skills would benefit the organisations and support the needs for international businesses (Ali & Kassim, 2010; Marilyn, 2006). English skills are essential for education. In many countries, English has been widely adopted in their educational institutions as the main foreign language to improve their nations' English proficiency (Byram, 2008; Crystal, 2008; Graddol, 2006). McArthur (2003) summarises that English has been paid much attention to in many countries all over the world in order to increase their people's abilities of

English to communicate with not only people in their own countries but also in international communication.

In a particular setting such as Southeast Asia, English also plays its role in this region. Bolton (2008) reports that there are over 800 million people that use English in the region. On the roadmap of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) community, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was established in 2016. English is selected to be the main language for communication among ASEAN members, including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam (ASEAN, 2011). Kirkpatrick (2008) notes that although some other languages, such as Malay, Chinese, and French were once raised for consideration as optional languages for communication among members of ASEAN countries, they were rejected. English, then, has never been replaced and has remained as the official language of the ASEAN community. This roadmap has offered opportunities for every citizen of the ASEAN community as they are allowed to study, work, and travel to any member countries. Although ASEAN members gain benefits from AEC such as economy, tourism, and diplomacy, it is undeniable that it also presents challenges to English language education for every member of the community.

For Thailand, the English proficiency, especially oral skills, of Thai people is reported to lag behind many other ASEAN countries (Sanonguthai, 2014). There are many factors lying behind this problem. Khamkhien (2010) notes that for Thai people, English can be a major problem especially for those who have inadequate knowledge, experiences, or interactions with the language. Many researchers link this to the problems of English language teaching in Thailand. In Thai classrooms, English language teaching is reported to mainly focus on English grammar and reading in order to pass the exams whereas listening, speaking, and writing skills are normally ignored (Punthumasen, 2007; Wongsothorn et al., 2003). Although the Thai government has tried to improve curriculums and provide adequate English language education, the English language education issue has been problematic. A survey conducted by Chulalongkorn University Academic Services

(2000, cited in Baker, 2008) reports problems in implementing curriculum changes. These include (1) an overabundance of curriculum content, (2) students inadequately prepared for the level at which they studied, (3) teachers inadequately prepared and an overload of responsibilities, (4) inadequate materials and equipment, (5) insufficient budgets, (6) large class sizes, (7) inadequate assessment including an over-reliance on multiple choice tests, and (8) students being unable to transfer the skills learned in the classroom to other situations. Moreover, Chorrojprasert (2005) adds that although the new curriculum changes have been implemented, in English language teaching, they still have focused on the accuracy of standard English grammar and recognised mainly on the English cultures of the UK and US. In fact, this does not correspond to a wide variety of English nowadays. Also, it pays less attention to the notion of intercultural education. Phothongsunan (2006) reports that the English language has been mainly promoted by the government in all schools, universities, and through various media such as government-related distance learning television (DLTV) and websites for decades to increase English proficiency of Thai students. However, it seems like the Thai government has a narrow focus on the students' English proficiency based on the standard English grammar. They might have overlooked the fact that greater proficiency in the standard English grammar may not meet Thai students' need for intercultural skills nowadays. The results from various English tests of Thai students' English proficiency are considered low. For example, in the O-NET (Ordinary National Education Test), a national test through which all Mattayom 6 (Grade 12) students demonstrate proficiency in all taught subjects, including Thai, Social Studies, English, Mathematics, and Science, from 2016 to 2018, the English average scores were 27.76, 28.31, and 26.25 out of 100, respectively (NIETS, 2019). Among the five subjects, the lowest average scores were in English and Mathematics. In TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), ETS (2019) report that the Thai average score is still relatively low (80) compared to neighbouring countries such as Myanmar (81), Vietnam (84), Malaysia (91), and Singapore (98). Despite having studied English for many years, Thai students' English language proficiency is still low. Therefore, it can be argued that the English language education in Thailand has been problematic.

What is more, Foley (2005) and Browell (2000) argue that the fact that Thailand has never been colonised shows why most of Thai people are not familiar with the involvement in other language, especially with English which has become the difficult language for them to learn. Khamkien (2010) also adds that for many Thai students, the exposure to English in real-life situations is limited. With less interaction using English with people from other countries, this not only obstructs them to sharpen their English skills but also hinders them from being aware of cultural diversity. In fact, Thailand welcomes not only people from the ASEAN community, it also has been a dream destination for tourists from all around the world with more than 30 million tourists visiting the country in 2019 (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2019). This makes Thailand a cultural diversity context. Therefore, in such a context, not only English language is required, but also the awareness of cultural differences plays an important role if successful intercultural communication is to be achieved. The skills of intercultural communication are perceived as crucial skills since in such communication people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds interact (Byram, 2008).

## **1.2 Statement of problems**

Given the situation of English language education in Thailand, the issues of English communication skills have worried the Thai government. Therefore, they have made effort to tackle the problem. Pitiyanuwat (2004) and Punthumasen (2007) report that many strategies, tools, and policies, particularly in the national educational system, have been launched by the government to help Thai people to be proficient in the English language. Many schools and universities have set up English programmes and hired English speaking teachers. Besides, several approaches and programmes, such as student-centredness, communicative language teaching (CLT) and cooperative education in the higher education level have been adopted to help improve Thai students' English competencies (Kongkerd, 2013).

However, in reality, English language education in Thailand still lacks the integration of cultural contents, which would provide more knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity, into their curricula. Therefore, it can be said that the notion of intercultural awareness (ICA) is ignored. To some extent, Thai students are not able to negotiate appropriately and effectively with other people from different cultural backgrounds in intercultural communication as they lack understanding and awareness of cultural diversity. This is confirmed anecdotally by me, the researcher of this study. In 2016, I was a supervising teacher for student trainees (see Figure 1.1 and 1.2).



Figure 1.1: My supervisory visit at Suvarnabhumi Airport, 2016 (morning session)



Figure 1.2: My supervisory visit at Suvarnabhumi Airport, 2016 (afternoon session)

From the direct experiences with the student trainees when I was supervising them during their job training in the airlines at the airports, I found that, even though they were English major students, they were not always able to say what they wanted to say when using English. They had difficulties with using English to communicate with passengers. Some of them admitted that they struggled because it was a real-life situation and was totally different from classrooms where they were familiar with classmates and teachers. They also reported that different communication strategies were used during their intercultural communication through English. What is more, some claimed that they had problems when communicating with passengers caused by different cultures. Some reported that they had negative attitudes towards some particular groups of people who behaved differently and/or treated them unfairly leading them to stereotyping.

“I don’t understand why they think and act like that. But this is Thailand, not their country.” (Student 1)

“I think that all of them are the same. They are all rude. Who do they think they are?” (Student 2)

“I really want them to go back to their countries and never come back. I cannot tolerate their behaviours. I believe that Thai people are not happy with them.” (Student 3), and

“I wish the Thai government banned all people from this country. Blacklist them.” (Student 4)

The extracts above, which are translated from Thai, are some examples I recorded in the supervision report of 2016 when I supervised the students. All of them reported that they had negative attitudes towards foreign passengers and colleagues. Student 1 witnessed passengers behaving inappropriately in public. Student 2 was treated in a disrespectful way by colleagues. And Student 3 and 4 were verbally abused by passengers. In consequence, they could not and would not interact with their foreign colleagues and passengers. This can be linked to some comments from the airlines’ supervisors stating that while some students handle intercultural situations quite well, some students perform poorly when dealing with foreign

passengers. Therefore, I felt that these issues regarding students' communication challenges and communication strategies in intercultural communication should not be neglected and I was curious to know how intercultural awareness relates to these issues.

Scholars such as Deardorff (2009) and Jæger (2001) note that one of the objectives for language teaching and learning programmes is to uplift students to become 'intercultural speakers', who are able to cope with the complexities of language and culture, and participate in multicultural interactions. Therefore, it is imperative that developing not only English skills but also intercultural awareness should be taken into serious consideration for English language teaching and learning in Thailand in order to help Thai students become intercultural speakers who perform appropriately and effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **1.3 Rationale of the study**

The complexities of culture in intercultural communication through English will be focused on and discussed throughout this present study. This study attempts to offer evidence and useful contributions which may shed light on the role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication through English in the context of this study.

The interest in this area derives from different sources based on my personal experiences. It comes from my current experiences of everyday intercultural communication through the English language. English has been used for communicating with many people from different cultural backgrounds such as my supervisors, classmates, housemates, and international friends. Different cultural perspectives and world views are learned through the interactions. At the same time, my own cultural perspectives and world views are also examined. This emphasises the significance of intercultural awareness needed for intercultural communication. The most influential source probably comes from my experiences of teaching

English at a university in Thailand, a few years before I started the PhD study in 2017. The problems faced by students during their job trainings, as mentioned earlier, has captured my interest and raised my awareness of the role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication through English in Thailand. From the conversations with those students, it became obvious to me that in spite of years of English study, many Thai students are still unable to use English effectively and lack opportunities to experience real-life intercultural situations during their studies. This raised the question regarding the environments outside the classrooms. In this globalised world where English is widely adopted and connected to daily life, students will unavoidably be exposed to other people of different cultural backgrounds and new cultural forms and references beyond their language and culture outside their classrooms. These issues have made me realise the importance of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication through English outside the classrooms for Thai students, for instance at an airport.

Even though a previous study from Baker (2009, 2015) sheds light on intercultural awareness of Thai students in higher education, in which the findings showed that the participants of his study were able to engage various components of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication, he suggests that more research applying this model in different situations is needed to gain more knowledge and understandings of intercultural awareness. In his study, the participants were asked to attend three rounds of intercultural encounters he conducted at the university. These situations have led me to serious concerns and investigations of the role of intercultural awareness outside students' classrooms. To my knowledge, there is no study about investigating the role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication of Thai students outside the classrooms in Thailand. Therefore, it could create the original contribution of this present study. It is also hoped to document the role that intercultural awareness plays in intercultural communication through English and understand how intercultural awareness is employed during the real-time intercultural situation outside classrooms.

#### **1.4 Objectives and research questions**

Based on the statement of problems and rationale of the study, the objective of the research is

to investigate the role of intercultural awareness through Thai student trainees' perceptions of their communication challenges and associated strategies in intercultural communication using the English language.

This research project seeks to explore the extent of intercultural awareness of these Thai student trainees, understand how Thai student trainees experience communication challenges through English in different situations, and why they employ different communication strategies in dealing with those challenges. The investigation draws on three different perspectives of the theoretical frameworks, including intercultural awareness, communication challenges, and associated strategies. Although each perspective has its own interest, the integration of these three perspectives creates multi-perspectives which can offer more comprehensive understandings of the role of intercultural awareness in the context of this present study. Therefore, the objective will be reached by the investigation through the relationship between intercultural awareness, communication challenges, and associated strategies. These are formulated in the three research questions presented below.

1. To what extent are these Thai student trainees interculturally aware in intercultural communication?
2. What are the communication challenges experienced by these Thai student trainees in intercultural communication?
3. What are the associated strategies employed by these Thai student trainees in dealing with those challenges?

## 1.5 Context of the study

With its rich agricultural productions and fertile natural resources, Thailand's position drew the attention of many empires from Europe in the past to make diplomatic contact with the Thai kings, with the hidden political agenda of colonising the country (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005). However, among Southeast Asian countries, the Kingdom of Thailand has never been colonised by any Western countries. The word '*Thai*' means '*independence*' which signifies the country's independence. Having a long history of kingdoms, Thailand is now governed by a constitutional monarchy under the reign of King Rama X. Geographically, Thailand covers an area of 513,120 km<sup>2</sup> sharing boundaries with Myanmar and Laos to the North, Myanmar to the West, Cambodia to the East, and Malaysia to the South (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2012). Located in Central Thailand, Bangkok, also known as Krung Thep, is the capital city. Thailand consists of 77 provinces and is divided into the six main regions, including North, Northeast, East, West, Central, and South. Even though Theravada Buddhism is the national religion of Thailand, other religions such as Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, and Hinduism are also practised. These geographical and ethnical characteristics make Thailand rich in cultural diversity. Thailand has many beautiful tourist attractions ranging from beaches in the South to high mountains in the North. Thai foods and authentic cultures has also attracted tourists from all over the world to visit Thailand. The tourism industry is reported as the main source of income of the country (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2008). Due to the expansion of the tourism industry, the role of the English language has become more important as a medium for communicate between Thai people and the tourists.

Due to the concerns about English communication skills of Thai students and educational system as mentioned earlier, the National Identity Board (2000) report that the Thai government has continuously promoted the use of English in higher education in order to encourage Thai students to be able to use English effectively. To align with the government policy, in 2005, the Office of the Higher Education Commission announced the cooperative education programme as an elective course

for higher education. It combines university courses with relevant work-based learning experience at both private companies and governmental organisations. Usually, the programme takes three to four months to complete during students' fourth years. This programme is expected to provide every student of higher education with an opportunity to experience real-life employment situation and environment in order to enhance their educational and working skills and English skills during this experience. During the job training experience, supervisors assigned by the companies instruct and guide students.

Many domestic and international companies in Thailand have been participating in the cooperative education programme as a hub for student trainees to gain real-life work experiences and encourage professionals to share their previous work experiences to students. In 2013, the Office of the Higher Education Commission reported that 108 universities, 12,962 companies and 26,048 students in Thailand had participated in cooperative education. Over the past years, there has been a dramatic growth in the number of university students who chose to work for airline companies at airports in many provinces across the country (Pinpetch & Baum, 2016). They add that these students include those who study languages, tourism and hospitality, and aviation.

Since this study focuses on the complexities and significance of English and cultures in intercultural communication outside the classrooms, there are several reasons why an airport is a perfect field site to conduct this study. The airport is characterised as a multifunctional site where it develops urban cultures (Gottdiener, 2001). Gottdiener (2001, p. 22) states that "the airport supports such a large and diverse group of individuals, the majority of whom are strangers, yet are all interacting with each other in some manner, then the building ceases to be a backdrop, and instead becomes a significant independent character in the public melodrama". Due to the social density of people from all around the world, different cultures collide. In this intercultural situation, cultural negotiation between the coexistence of two cultures takes place. Therefore, student trainees will have the opportunity to engage themselves in the intercultural environments outside the

classrooms, use English for communication, and gain real-world experience at the airport. Moreover, with airlines, they will be able to develop their English and professional skills with valuable hands-on experience.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

This present study focuses on the role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication through the English language in Thailand. To be precise, this study investigates and reports evidence regarding the role of intercultural awareness of Thai student trainees' communication through their experiences of challenges and associated strategies using English in intercultural communication with passengers, colleagues, and other members of staff who have different cultural backgrounds.

Therefore, the findings of this study are hoped to offer better understandings of the role of intercultural awareness in the context studied. The findings are also hoped to be significant for making contributions to both educational and occupational contexts. Some recommendations are hoped to be useful for educational policy makers, leaders, administrators, and material and curriculum designers in implementing and designing appropriate programmes in the future, and evaluating the existing programmes as well. The findings may help material and curriculum designers to take into account intercultural perspectives, and other factors and constraints for the improvement of students' or employees' intercultural awareness and communicative strategies. Moreover, the findings may be relevant in other global contexts.

By means of this research, it is hoped to reflect the importance of language and culture in intercultural contexts and raise awareness of intercultural awareness in order to enable language users to become intercultural speakers in the era of globalisation.

## **1.7 Structure of the thesis**

Chapter 1 (this chapter) has presented an overview of the thesis, including background, statements of problems, rationale of the study, objectives and research questions, context of the study, and significance of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature and studies related to this study. The chapter begins with a review of intercultural communication. Definitions of culture are also presented alongside the discussion of two cultural paradigms, essentialist and non-essentialist. Then, it provides an overview of the use of English in the world before moving to the use of English in Thailand. It discusses the characteristics of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in Thailand which reflects the context of this study. English language learning and teaching in Thailand are discussed. This is followed by the discussion of the relationship between culture and language in intercultural communication. Finally, a review of the literature regarding three theoretical perspectives, including intercultural awareness, communication challenges, and communication strategies, which form the basis of this research, is presented. The conceptual framework of this study is proposed at end of the chapter.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology adopted in this study. This chapter provides justification for the research philosophy of this study through the discussion of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Particularly, this chapter demonstrates the methodological procedures of this study. It begins with an overview of the pilot study and how the instruments were developed. Then, it focuses on the actual study with presentations of the field site, research participants, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis, and participant selection based on the results from the questionnaire. Finally, research ethics which were adopted throughout the research procedures are presented.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the fieldwork. It focuses on the presentation of the findings from the interviews as the main research instrument. The interview data analysis procedures are presented. This section is divided into three sub-

sections following the three main research questions of this study, including the extent of intercultural awareness, communication challenges, and communication strategies. Selected extracts from the interviews are presented in each sub-section.

Chapter 5 offers discussion of the findings. An integration of three main research findings, the extent of intercultural awareness, communication challenges, and communication strategies, is conducted in order to understand their relationship. Through the relationship, the role of intercultural awareness is unfolded. This chapter illustrates how ICA components impact the participants' communication challenges and associated strategies. This chapter finally reveals the emerging abilities based on the ICA components. References to literature reviewed in Chapter 2, extracts from the interviews, and data from the participants' information are used to support the discussion.

Chapter 6 provides a summary and conclusion of this study. This chapter revisits research objectives, research questions, and research methodology and summarises the key findings of the study. Following these, theoretical contributions and practical implications are presented. The reflection on the process of conducting this study is presented through limitations and recommendations for further research are also proposed. This chapter concludes with the final summary and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter begins with an overview of intercultural communication. In the first section, definitions of culture are presented. This is followed by discussion of two cultural paradigms, essentialist and non-essentialist. Then, it moves to provide an overview of the use of English in the world, the use of English in international contexts, before narrowing down to a focus on English in Thailand. This aims to provide more details about the context of this study, Thailand, and the role of English in this environment. Then, it discusses English language learning and teaching in Thailand. Next, this chapter provides an explanation and discussion of the three theoretical perspectives related to the area under this investigation. These theoretical perspectives include intercultural awareness (ICA), communication challenges, and communication strategies. Finally, the conceptual framework of this study is presented.

#### **2.1 Intercultural communication**

Allwood (1985) refers to intercultural communication as communication between people from different cultural backgrounds where they share information and meanings with different degrees of awareness. Ting-Toomey (1999) points out that intercultural communication happens when individuals from different cultural communities share and negotiate meanings in their interactions. Gudykunst (2003) defines it as the exchange of cultural symbols such as language and gesture as parts of cultural identities among individuals with different cultures. Trevisani (2005) notes that it involves the interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds. Samovar et al. (2012) add that intercultural communication is the interaction between people whose cultural backgrounds are distinctive enough to alter the communication.

Therefore, intercultural communication can be defined as communication across different cultural boundaries where people share their cultural identities. It can be said that intercultural communication takes place when people of different cultural backgrounds meet, interact, and communicate. However, in such communication, the interpretation of the received messages or what is seen can differ from what the speaker means due to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Unavoidably, in the world of globalisation, people from all around the world connect to each other and communicate across different cultural and social groups.

### **2.1.1 Culture**

Culture plays important roles in intercultural communication. Therefore, defining what culture means is necessary. Many scholars have attempted to define meanings of culture. Keesing (1981, p. 68) states that “culture comprises systems of shared ideas, concepts, rules and meanings that underline and are expressed in the ways that humans live”. Williams (1982) further describes that culture involves people’s processes of intellectual and spiritual development which indicates their particular ways of life in general. According to Lugstig and Koester (2000, p. 30), culture is “a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms which affect the behaviours of a relatively large group of people”. From this definition, they explain that culture is acknowledged in terms of the following five characteristics:

1. Culture is learned;
2. Culture is a set of shared interpretations;
3. Culture involves beliefs, values, norms, and social practices;
4. Culture affects behaviour; and
5. Culture involves a large group of people.

1) Culture is learned. Lugstig and Koester (2000) mention that culture can be acquired, learned and relearned through not only various interactions with others, observation, imitation, but also explicit and implicit instruction in the course of one’s life, and people from the same cultural group can have different experiences

from one another in the acquisition or learning process of culture. Also, Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2012) explain different ways culture is acquired. For example, in a case of children, culture is acquired through the way they were raised by parents or family members who have it. In the case of immigration, people who live in a country different from their motherlands may eventually learn and acquire some or all new culture such as language, traditions, and beliefs. However, it should be noted that although some new culture can be acquired, it is not easy for one to accept some or all new culture since people tend to subscribe to their original cultural beliefs, norms, and practices (Bicchieri, 2006; Hausman, 2008).

2) Culture is a set of shared interpretations. People share culture on the basis of symbols, such as language, written or unwritten, and gestures, as a means of communication with one another (Lugstig & Koester, 2000; Martin & Nakayama, 2010). It means the meanings of symbols which exist in the people's minds, whose symbols are shared with other people, establish the common ground for culture. Hua (2014) adds that in the interactions which take place between people of different cultural backgrounds, they share meaning and interpretation that underlie their conceptual reality of their own culture. Hence, one who belongs to a specific culture is supposed to share more or less interpretations with others in the same culture.

3) Culture involves beliefs, values, norms, and social practices. According to Lugstig and Koester (2000), beliefs refer to a common understanding about the reality that a group of people believe if it is true or false; values are the standard that a group of people define or consider as good or bad, moral or immoral; norms are perceived as the rules of appropriateness of behaviour that people expect to see from one another and from themselves as members of a culture; and social practices are patterns of behaviours that members of a culture habitually perform. Reckwitz (2002) adds that people from different cultures vary in the ways they understand those shared beliefs, values, norms, and social practices which are taken together to provide a typical way of life for members of a culture. However, Martin, Nakayama and Flores (2002), argue that members of a culture can be described in terms of

seemingly contradictory, coexistent values and norms. Therefore, people can enact different values on a situational and relationship-dependent basis. They also add that cultures are dynamic.

4) Culture affects behaviour. The invisible shared interpretations about norms, values, and beliefs directly affect the behaviours of people in large groups (e.g., Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Lugstig & Koester, 2000; Martin & Nakayama, 2010). In other words, social practices are the standards, rules, and guidelines for how people conduct themselves or behave in a socially accepted way. It can be said that culture may help to predict behaviours in human interactions. Matsumoto (2000) argues that each cultural group can demonstrate diverse values among its members (as there are individual outliers to widespread cultural patterns in every group), and that a person's values and behaviours can vary with context.

5) Culture involves a large group of people. Lugstig and Koester (2000) refer to a large group of people as 'large culture' where people are more traditionally associated with cultures. It involves the typical society-based, culturally shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices that are brought to people's interactions. Therefore, the use of the term 'culture' involves larger societal levels. However, scholars such as Holliday (1999) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2004) argue that large cultures are seen as monolithic entities which determine that human behaviours are fixed. Holliday (2010) also emphasises that large culture is probably a source to represent typical identity of people within a cultural group. This ignores individual cultural realities since "identities can be shaped under the multiple influences, which can cross national boundaries" (Holliday, 2010, p. 165).

It can be seen that various definitions of culture suggest interpersonal dynamics between people of a cultural group. Through the notion of interpersonal dynamics, many scholars such as Hofstede (1980), Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) and House et al. (2004) have constructed theories to explain cultural difference. They tend to focus on comparison at the national level and investigation of interaction between individuals of different nations in various contexts. However, many

scholars such as Fay (1996), Holliday (1999), and Dervin (2011) have argued that researchers should not overlook the multiple layers of complex characterisations of culture and they should bring these into their consideration. For example, regarding the multiple layers of complex characterisations of culture, while Hofstede compares culture to an onion, as a large culture, containing layers, as subcultures, Holliday's proposal of small cultures (1999) has a different view on the notion of subcultures as he notes that small cultures do not necessarily have this onion-skin relationship with the large cultures. Holliday (1999, p. 237) states that "a small culture paradigm attaches 'culture' to small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour, and thus avoids culturist ethnic, national or international stereotyping".

This brief account suggests that the conceptualisation of culture in the field of intercultural communication can be categorised into two broad paradigms, an essentialist paradigm and non-essentialist paradigm. These two cultural paradigms are presented and discussed in the following sections.

#### **2.1.1.1 The essentialist paradigm**

In the essentialist view, scholars such as Hall and Hall (1990), Hofstede (2001), and Komin (1990) closely associate culture with physical entities and can be described and measured through relative categories. Nathan (2015, p. 103) notes that "the paradigm of essentialism, basically, is rooted in human nature; therefore, notions of culture within this paradigm are characterized by being static, holistic, homogeneous, deterministic and bounded". This section discusses how the essentialist view is operated in the field of intercultural communication.

##### **1) The value-orientation to understand cultures**

Many scholars have made efforts to understand the concept of culture. The notion of values, then, was raised to understand culture. Nathan (2015) notes that scholars attempted to understand culture through its value-orientations and they shared the

assumption that, in the human world, there are a limited number of commonalities. This can be categorised into five concepts of value-orientation which relate to 'all' societies, including the character of human nature, humans' relationship to nature, the focus on time, the modality of human activity, and the relationship of human-to-human. Following this value-orientation concept, Taras and Roney (2006) note that in order to assess the different aspects of culture, a number of theorists such as Haire et al. (1966), England (1967), Rokeach, (1973) and Hall and Hall (1990) have discussed the different systems of cultural dimensions with the aim of capturing the 'essence' of cultures. However, the most influential one is probably Hofstede's (1980; 2001) concepts of high/low power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term/short-term orientation.

Many studies have been influenced by Hofstede's (1980) concepts. For example, Komin (1990) conducts a survey and proposed nine Thai national characteristics, based on Thai value systems to represent Thai people's characters which include ego orientation, religio-psychical orientation, grateful relationship orientation, smooth interpersonal relationship orientation, fun-pleasure orientation, flexibility and adjustment orientation, education and competence orientation, interdependence orientation, and achievement-task orientation. In business-related studies, Alas et al. (2015) and Vitell et al. (1993) apply Hofstede's (1980) concepts to understand societies' ethical decision-making process in business of Chinese people while Sui and Yuquan (2002) adopt the concepts to understand national cultures which constitute Singaporean culture and Chinese culture through employees' expectations and working preferences in international projects. In addition, the cultural dimensions have also been applied to research in education. For example, Rienties and Tempelaar (2013) conduct a study to understand academic performances and social integrations of 757 international students from 52 countries. The students were characterised based on their original countries following Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimension scores.

From the studies mentioned above, it can be concluded that these researchers who

create new concepts of cultural dimensions or applied them to their empirical studies seem to view culture as a construct which coincides with national entities, such as ethnicities and countries. It can be said that following the concept of Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, many studies have been conducted to acknowledge the common or same values of people within a particular ethnic group, society or country as well as to summarise the differences of these values between two ethnic groups, societies, or countries. Therefore, the essence of cultures in those studies is considered to be relatively fixed. This suggests that the values shared by the people associated with specific national entities tend to remain unchanged over time. Based on the perspective these scholars have on cultures, Holliday (1999) adds that the concept of culture in the essentialist view is associated with nations and ethnic communities which are solid and separate.

## **2) Cultural patterns as representations of monolithic entities**

The assumption underlying this essentialist view is that individuals' thoughts and behaviours are ruled by their cultural values. Fang (2012) notes that the essentialist scholars believe that culture is a set of cultural patterns that are associated with value-oriented dimensions. Therefore, they investigate the patterns of cultural groups to understand their thoughts and behaviours. For example, based on cultural patterns, Hofstede (2010) argues that the British living in the UK, which he perceived as one entity, are presented as low power distance, lower uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity. The same idea of cultural dimensions was employed to conduct many studies by different scholars. For example, De Mooij (1998) claims that Greek and French people always try to avoid uncertainty and they plan everything carefully because there is society based on rules, laws and regulations, as cultural patterns, in those countries. Depending on values and behavioral patterns, Komin (1990) claims that Thai people are likely to help others. She indicates that this cultural pattern makes them unique and successful in assimilating into various ethnic groups in the country.

The focus on the patterns of culture associated with entities has been adopted as a

comparison approach to investigate culture (for example Metcalfe, 2006; Morrow et al., 2013; Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013) which seeks to produce evidence of cultural differences through the conceptions of cultural dimensions. For example, in Hofstede's (2010) study, he reports that Chinese are usually characterised as being respectful to their employers due to high power distance while it is opposite to the Westerners' expectation of equality in the workplace due to low power distance as reported in Pooley's (2005) study. That is to say, the essentialist view tends to 'stereotype' individuals on the basis of claimed cultural patterns.

### **3) The essentialist approach to compare cultures**

As discussed earlier, influenced by the point of view that culture is constituted by a set of value-oriented concepts which are stable and attached to large entities, the essentialist approach, both qualitative or quantitative, to culture tends to begin with an assumption that culture is fixed to an entity such as national, and ethnic, and collects evidence that can be fit into categories of the value-orientations. Then, those collected evidence are used to explain phenomena of that culture which institutionalises the pre-conceived cultural stereotype.

The essentialist approach believes that human essences are resolutely distinct (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993; Hills, 2002). This implies that human essences are presented as being solid or unchangeable. Therefore, from this point of view, it can be said that a group of individuals, which can be divided by country or ethnicity, is seen as homogenous and possesses solid and unchangeable characteristics based on their cultural patterns and communicative practices. These characteristics differ from those perceived by another group of individuals such as people from another religion or another country. When cultures are comparable, the essentialist approach seeks to compare the differences of different group of individuals' characteristics. However, Holliday (1999) argues that such an approach is likely to exaggerate the differences of culture. He adds that this approach is monolithic and disregards the complexity of individuals who interact with each other.

### **2.1.1.2 The non-essentialist paradigm**

In contrast to the essentialist view which tends to disregard the complexities of culture and compare the differences of different entities, the non-essentialist views culture as “a diversified entity that is dynamic, fluid and hybrid, with cultural borders being increasingly difficult to determine in a globalized world” (House, 2015, p. 36). Baumann (1996, p.11) notes that “culture is conceived not as a real thing, but as an abstract and purely analytical notion” which is not normative and predictive. Culture is seen to be neither solid nor fixed since its meaning can be explored through individuals’ subjective experiences (Goulding, 2005). Therefore, culture entails attributes that are fluid, dynamic with continuity, and changeable.

#### **1) Culture as emergent, fluid, and changeable**

The notion of an essentialist view has been challenged since many scholars agree that cultures are not static but change as they encounter each other. For example, Bowers (1980) states that cultural difference in a context could be much more than the differences between societies or countries because the attempt to define the differences of national cultures was both impracticable and unprofitable. In other words, national cultures cannot be relied on as the measure to account for cultural difference (Holliday, 1999; Dervin, 2011). Murphy (1986) notes that cultures are the products of human activity and thinking. Therefore, the elements of culture are socially constructed and, therefore, changeable. Culture should be conceived as sets of meaning emerging from individuals’ interpretations and are related to their experiences happening through the interactions between them (Nagel, 1986; Kuhn, 1996; Glasersfeld, 1996). These conceptions resonate with the conclusions of Kramsch’s (2001) intercultural communication study that the essentialist view of national entity and cultural characteristics seems to be reductionist. She adds that the essentialist view does not reflect the complexities of cultures “in which people live in multiple, shifting spaces and partake of multiple identities often in conflict with one another” (Kramsch 2001, p. 205). This implies that the focus on independent/autonomous individuals cannot be neglected.

## **2) The focus on individuals**

Kramsch (2001) states that each individual living in any culture could have multiple cultural identities. This rejects the essentialist view which claims that one nation/country corresponds to one culture. Dahl (2014) adds that understanding culture through the lens of individuals' interactions supports a more dynamic view on culture as a process which is constructed through interpersonal relations. That is to say the emergent meanings when individuals interact should be brought to light due to fluid features of culture. Kramsch (1993) emphasises the notion of individual interactions and proposed the concept of the third place. She recognises that the fluidity of individual interactions suggests that culture is dynamic and evolving. Based on Kramsh's (1993) concept, Bhabha (2004) highlights that individuals continuously interpret and understand others in the style of cultural difference that is caused by individuals' discursive practices in a hybrid process. Culture, then, exists when such a hybrid process of individuals' discursive practices occurs. That is to say, what constitutes culture, in this sense, depends on the process that individuals interpret, negotiate, and understand of cultural difference. In other words, culture consists of individual's subjectivity such as attitude of openness and curiosity which can be emergent and hybrid and occurs in the discursive practices of a group of individuals. Consequently, due to the roles of individuals and the emergent, fluid, and changeable features of cultures, scholars such as Dervin (2011) and Holliday (2011) contest the adequacy of the essentialist view which claims that the concepts of cultural dimensions can be used to measure all cultures. Based on his own view and understanding of culture, Holliday (2011) then develops the concept of small cultures and proposed a theory and approach to explore culture which is called the grammar of culture.

## **3) The 'Small Cultures' concept to understand cultures**

To understand cultures in the non-essentialist view in which cultures are seen as emergent, fluid, and changeable, Holliday (1999) proposes the concept of small cultures. The idea of small cultures is to foreground that culture could be emergent

and developed from perspectives and behaviours through a group of individuals' interactions, interpretations, and negotiations in a particular context. He adds that the idea of small culture is set against the large culture as viewed by the essentialist such as ethnic, national, or international cultures in order to examine social groupings instead.

Small is therefore not just a matter of size, but of the degree of imposition on reality. Whereas the large culture notion imposes a picture of the social world which is divided into hard, essentially different ethnic, national or international cultures, the small culture notion leaves the picture open, finding softer cultures in all types of social grouping, which may or may not have significant ethnic, national or international qualities (Holliday, 1999, p. 240).

In 2011, Holliday introduces the grammar of culture which grows from his small culture concepts. In Figure 2.1, he characterised the grammar of cultures in loose relationships between different domains.

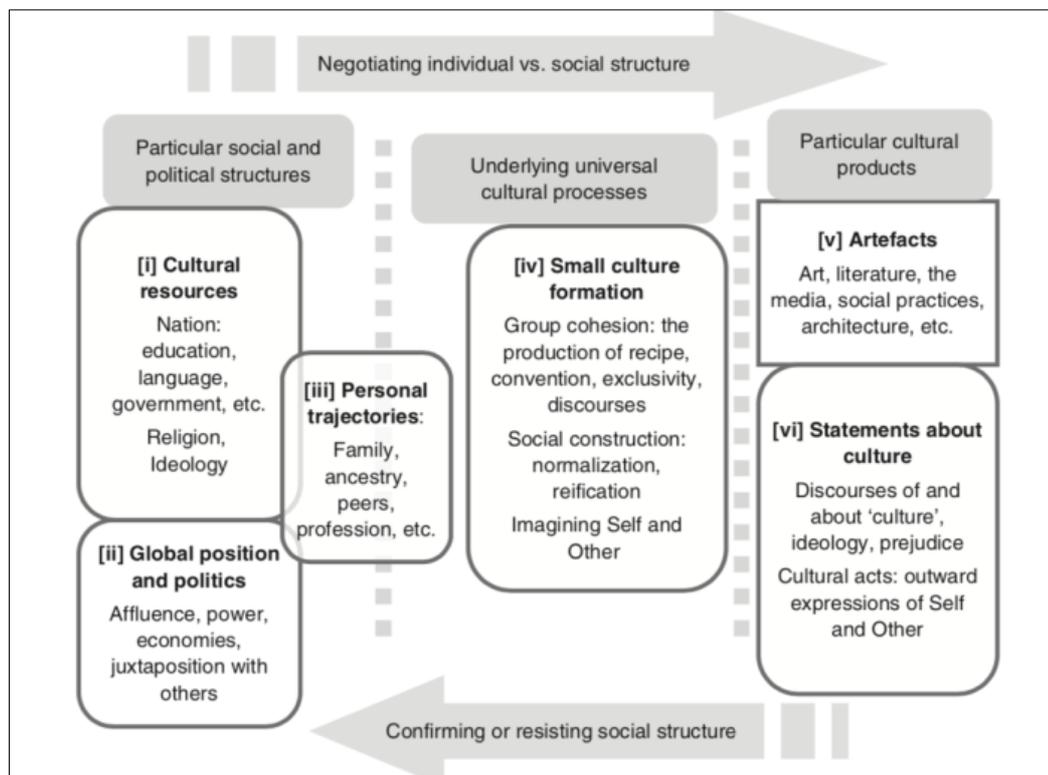


Figure 2.1: Holliday's (2011) Grammar of Culture model

The middle domain of the grammar of culture is the underlying universal cultural processes. These processes are shared by all of us. Holliday (2016) adds that this underlying universal cultural processes acknowledge the uncertain and constructed nature of culture which are across national boundaries. Small culture formation is the main area where these processes come into operation. Holliday (2013) also refers to small cultures as cultural environments where individuals participate in, negotiate meanings, and cultural realities grow.

Wherever we go, we automatically either take part in or begin to build small cultures. In this sense, small culture formation happens all the time and is a basic essence of being human. Small culture formation on the go is the continuous process of constructing and dealing with cultural realities, every day, everywhere, with whoever we meet or even think about (Holliday, 2013, p. 3).

On the left of the model (Figure 2.1), there are three elements which constitute the particular social and political structures, including cultural resources, global position and politics, and personal trajectories.

- Cultural resources refer to the cultural and/or social groupings individuals were born, brought up, and grew up in which have influence on their daily lives. These resources relate together beliefs, traditions, national institutions, ethnics, religions, education, etc. However, they do not restrict the ways one thinks and acts. This statement demonstrates how the relationship between nation and culture is viewed in a non-essentialist way since they do not have to be solidly bound together. However, the cultural resources do not ignore/deny the possible influence of individuals' ethnic or national backgrounds in the formation of small culture because individuals can decide on the extent they would like the roles of their ethnic or national backgrounds to play in their small culture.

- Global position and politics refer to the way we perceive and position ourselves and the society we live in with reference to others in the world. This position can be influenced by our cultural resources. For example, how Western people think about non-Western countries, how non-Western people perceive Western countries, or European people view each other (Holliday, 2013).
- Personal trajectories consist of individuals' personal experiences through society, bringing histories from their families, ancestors, peers, professions, etc. Through these trajectories, individuals are able to interchange with the other elements in particular social and political structures and even moves into new and/or foreign domains. In other words, this element crosses the boundaries between one's own particular social and political structures and universal cultural processes.

On the right side of the model, there are two elements under the domain of particular cultural products, including artefacts and statements about culture. Both of them are the results of cultural activity within a group of individuals (Holliday, 2011).

- Artefacts includes the visible 'big-C' cultural artefacts such as arts, media, social practices, architecture etc. Holliday (2011) also includes cultural practices as the day-to-day things that a certain group do and those things may appear strange to the people out of that group such as how we greet and how we eat. For example, in greeting each other, Thai people make a 'Wai' (a slight bow, with the palms pressed together in a prayer-like fashion), while Americans shake hands.
- Statements about culture involve the way we present ourselves and what we choose to call our cultures. However, the statements may not represent how things really are. For example, 'in my culture we are always on time', 'we always respect elder people', 'we like to help other

people’. In fact, not all individuals are on time, respect elder people, or like to help other people in ‘my’ culture. Holliday (2013) notes that such statements can represent ways that one might think about culture but ‘very often without being aware’.

The arrow moving from left to right shows that individuals introduce their cultural realities into the social structure while the arrow moving from right to left shows confirming or resisting processes of the existing structures based on their cultural realities (Holliday, 2013).

The foregoing discussion has highlighted the notion of culture in intercultural communication. The following section shifts the focus to language used in intercultural communication, in this study the English language. It contextualises the present study by examining the use of English in intercultural contexts. The discussion begins with an overview of English language use in the world. This is followed by a more detailed discussion on the characteristics of English use and English language teaching in Thailand.

### **2.1.2 English in the world**

English is a language which is widely spoken by a great number of people from all around the world. Crystal (2003) notes that the spread of English was influenced by two factors which are the expansion of British colonialism in 19<sup>th</sup> century and the growth of the United State of America’s economic and political power in 20<sup>th</sup> century. English is, then, globally used by people from different languages and cultural backgrounds across the world in order to connect for various purposes. People who use English include not only native English speakers (NES) but also speakers of other languages who acquire and use the language for different reasons, such as education, commerce, and migration.

Nowadays, English plays a major role in many domains. In education, researchers such as Ahmadi and Derekhsham (2014), Srakang and Jansem (2012), and Zhao

and Zhang (2005) note that there has been a great number of English textbooks in various subjects published for students in all educational levels from all around the world. Balan (2011), Carless (2003) and Newton and Bui (2017) state that many countries have started using English in primary school level and have been promoting the advantages of the language for students and learners as a useful language for their further studies in the future. Nunan's (2003) study in the Asia-Pacific region notes that English has had a significant influence on education policy thereby making English a compulsory subject in many countries. At higher education level, Crystal (2003) reports that a great number of students from many non-English speaking countries are studying English in order to undertake their further studies in English speaking countries. Kitao (2001) adds that students who undertake their further studies in non-English speaking countries such as China and Japan also study the English language alongside the native languages. To be able to study in those countries, students must demonstrate their good command of English, proven by international standardised tests of English language proficiency such as IELTS or TOEFL. Scholars such as Okuno (2007), Tanabe (2004), and Kongkerd (2013) agree that this situation has had an impact both on home countries of the students and the universities. In students' home countries, the numbers of private English training institutions and private tutors have rapidly grown following the needs of English language learning while at the receiving universities, they extensively provide language assistance and courses such as pre-sessional courses for international students to help them develop their English proficiency.

In the economic domain, English is also considered an important communication tool. Graddol (2006) noted that approximately 80 percent of the world's business is transacted in English. Therefore, it is necessary to have staff that are able to communicate in English in order to have more advantage in the global market (Mckay, 2002). In doing business, interactions happen in both face-to-face and online manners. Crystal (2003) also notes that these interactions do not only involve traders from countries where English is used as the first language, but also from countries where English is used as a second or foreign language. He adds that traders need to use English in order to connect with other traders from different

linguistic backgrounds and to compete or take part in worldwide business. Therefore, most entrepreneurs adopt English as their preferred language of communication (McKay, 2002).

In the tourism and hospitality domain, the role of English is important as a means to communicate and negotiate with tourists and passengers by employees. Since the tourism industry is one of the fastest-growing industries and English is mainly used in the industry, Blue and Harun (2003) even propose that English should be termed as the language of hospitality. The Tourism Authority of Thailand also encourages that Thai people who are directly involved in tourism business such as hotels and airlines should improve their English. Studies from Ting (2010), Cutting (2012), and Phithakphongphan (2016) report that airline ground staff whose English is not their mother language are aware that English is important for their career as they desire to communicate with passengers fluently and effectively.

In the domain of publication and the Internet, the majority of press and websites are written and created in English. Nishanthi (2018) states that English is the primary language of the press and publication since it is used more in newspapers and textbooks than any other language. Dewey (2015) adds that most textbooks, reference works and supplementary materials are in English language which have been produced by English and American publishers, such as Cambridge, Oxford, Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Macmillan, and Longman. In the online world, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn allow users to create and share content and participate in social networking sites which require the usage of English for communication. Even though websites and social media are produced in many other languages, the option of English translation is still offered. With the use of English, Graddol (2000) notes that one can access and discover an incredible amount of information on the internet which can be utilised in a variety of ways such as in education and research. Internet World Stats (2013) report that English is the most popular language used by people to contact one another within social media websites. This shows how English is widely spread and employed nowadays.

With the spread of English, definitions of the English language are challenged since it is spoken by speakers around the world. Kachru (1988) has proposed the theories of three concentric circles which include the inner, outer and expanding circles (see Figure 2.2) with the aim to define speakers of English who come from various first-language backgrounds. According to Kachru, the Inner Circle refers to speakers of English as their mother language, such as British, Americans, and Australians; the Outer Circle refers to speakers whose English is used as a second language, such as Singaporeans and Indians; and the Expanding Circle refers to speakers whose English is used as a foreign language, such as Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thais.

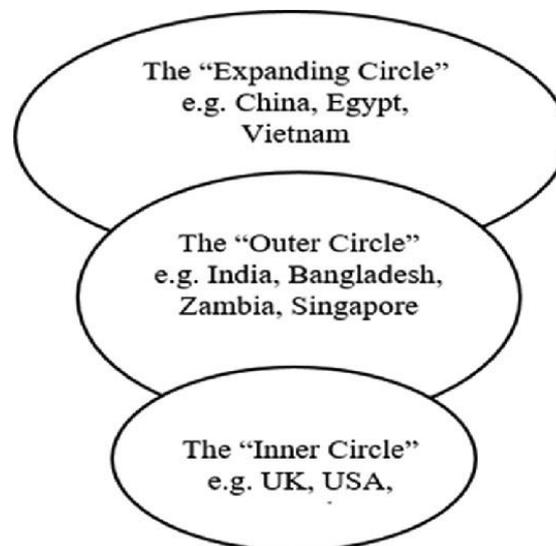


Figure 2.2: Kachru's (1985) Theory of The Three Circles

However, many scholars have challenged Kachru's proposal of three concentric circles. Seidlhofer (2005) notes that many definitions are now used as alternatives such as English as a Global Language, English as a Lingua Franca, and World Englishes. Crystal (2003) proposes English as a Global Language as he focuses on the spread of using English for communication rather than focusing on the countries of residence as the basis for the categorisation of English language speakers. "Of course, English is a global language, they would say. You hear it on television spoken by politicians from all over the world. Wherever you travel, you see English signs and advertisements. Whenever you enter a hotel or restaurant in a foreign city, they will understand English, and there will be an English menu" (Crystal, 2003, p.

2). English as a lingua franca (ELF) is proposed by Jenkins (2003), amongst others, as she adds that English may be used as a lingua franca among people who do not have the same mother language. ELF involves “a good deal of local variation as well as substantial potential for accommodation - the scope for its users to adjust their speech in order to make it more intelligible and appropriate for their specific interlocutor(s)” (Jenkins, 2009, p. 201). She also adds that the English language spoken by people nowadays varies linguistically and socio-culturally. To define the phenomenon of English language use for communication purposes, Kirkpatrick (2007) refers to the term World Englishes as a wide variety of English used across the world. Kirkpatrick (2007, p. 3) states that, “by World Englishes I mean those indigenous, nativised varieties that have developed around the world and that reflect the cultural and pragmatic norms of their speakers”.

These proposals suggest that the English language that people around the world use nowadays can no longer be claimed as the language of the British, Americans, or Australians. In other words, the English language has transformed itself into different forms used by various groups of people with various purposes and is unique in its own context of uses.

### **2.1.2.1 English language use in Thailand**

Historically, English became important in Thailand during 1868-1960, in the reign of King Rama V, as he perceived that it would be a useful tool to modernise Thailand. However, English language teaching at that time was reserved only to members of the royal family and nobility. He later established schools for Thai commoners where English was integrated into curricula of primary and secondary education (Duronphan et al., 1982). Chutisilp (1984) reports that during the reign of King Rama VI, in 1921, English was promoted to be a compulsory subject for students in the fifth grade. English, therefore, has established itself in Thai formal education since. Even though, in the past, English indicated a high status of those Thai who were able to use the language since it was known to provide exclusively for the privileged, nowadays, for Thais “English is no longer a luxury but a

necessity” (Foley 2005, p. 233). According to Foley (2005), the role of English is stressed in many parts of the country, such as education, tourism, business, and media. The importance of English has increased, especially in the age of globalisation. Therefore, more opportunities in life will be offered to those who can master the language.

According to Kachru (1998), Thailand has been categorised as part of the Expanding Circle where English is not a first language and is used as a foreign language. Phillipson (1992) refers to a country like Thailand where English is taught as a foreign language as a periphery English country. Even though other languages such as Lao, Malay, and Chinese are spoken by the groups of minority in Thailand, English is still raised to be the most important foreign language of the country (Wiriyachitra, 2001). The Royal Thai government has announced that English proficiency development is one of the most important developments which must be promoted for improving the skills of Thai people in globalisation (Nakhon, 2013; Wongprom, 2000; Wiriyachitra, 2002). Following the government’s guidance, the Office of the Basic Education and the Office of the Higher Education Commission, who provide educational policies, put English in compulsory subjects taught from primary to tertiary levels (Wongsothorn et al., 1996). English, therefore, is regarded as a foreign language in Thailand. Previously, there was an attempt to position English as an official second language in order to increase the opportunities and encourage Thais to utilise English on a daily basis. However, the proposal was rejected by a group of Thai scholars since they strongly believe that using English as a second language (ESL) might lead to conflicts and misunderstandings which imply that Thailand had a history of being colonised in the past (Kirkpatrick, 2011). Thailand prides itself upon having never been colonised and having Thai as one official language of the country (Wiriyachitra, 2001). Due to this strong sense of independence background, Thais has perceived it as their pride.

In language acquisition, Hall et al. (2011) note that infants forge changes in their mother tongue by creatively constructing the system in each generation, and these

changes fade or spread to the extent that they are generalised across the members of a language community. Similarly, non-native speakers (NNS), like Thai people, use the materials of the other language(s), like the English language, which they are exposed to in order to innovate. These innovations then become distinctive characteristics of non-native varieties, despite the influence of the standard language ideology. However, in spite of the wide-spread use of English in Thailand, Butler (2005) states that the variety of Thai-English within Thailand is still unidentifiable. In examining ‘Thainess’ in the English language, Watkhadarm (2005) notes that a variety of Thai-English, similar to Indian-English or Singlish (Singaporean-English), still needs to be developed. She adds that a possible reason to explain this is that Thai people have felt that it is not necessary to make English become their own language. Moreover, they view English as the language of outsiders or others. The fact Thais have been using the Thai language in their daily lives makes them avoid to get involved with other languages, especially English. Therefore, English is viewed as a strange and difficult language to Thai people (Wiriyachitra, 2001; Khamkhien, 2010). However, in Tan’s (2005) study of a corpus of written English by Thai learners, a number of features unique to Thai-English in local sociocultural context has been identified. Baker (2009) notes that a term for the unique features of English influenced by Thai has been created and known as ‘Thinglish’.

Given the current uses of English, the rejection of ESL, and the unidentifiable variety of Thai-English nowadays, Thailand may be appropriately characterised as a lingua franca context, in which English is used by Thais as the main language for intercultural communication. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) defined by Jenkins (2009, p. 200) is “the common language of choice, among speakers who come from different linguacultural backgrounds”. Seidlhofer (2011, p. 88) concludes that ELF “is indeed the process of language dynamics whereby the language is adapted and altered to suit changed circumstances of its use [...] The appropriation of the language as a lingua franca necessarily focuses attention not on what is proper English in reference to standard or native-speaker norms, but what is appropriate English for new and different communicative and communal purposes”. Jenkins

(2011, p. 931) adds that ELF users, “skillfully co-construct English for their own purposes by treating the language as a shared communicative resource within which they have the freedom to accommodate to each other, code-switch, and create innovative forms that differ from the norms of native English and do not require sanctioning by native English speakers”. These characteristics reflect English language use in Thailand making ELF a frequent term used when characterising Thailand (Baker, 2009; Kirpatrick, 2007; Kongkerd, 2013; Taylor, 2006). Therefore, it is reasonable and appropriate to categorise the use of English within Thailand as English as a lingua franca (ELF).

### **2.1.2.2 English language teaching in Thailand**

In Thailand’s educational system, the Office of the Basic Education and the Office of the Higher Education Commission play the most important role in providing teaching and learning policies and curriculum designs. Consequently, Thai English teachers are mandated to follow theoretical principles and pedagogical techniques which are approved and considered by them to be appropriate teaching and learning methods. Normally, those theoretical principles and pedagogical techniques are conceptualised and materialised by Western theorists following the norms of NES (Boriboon, 2011; Methitham, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

In 1996, one of the key objectives of National Education Curriculum was to promote students’ ability to use English to communicate effectively. However, the main teaching method in Thailand was a teacher-centred method. Watson Todd (2005, p. 45) states that “English teaching in Thailand has been dominated by the traditional talk-and-chalk approach where classrooms are teacher-centred and explanations of English grammar given in Thai predominate”.

In 1999, the National Education Act (NEA) was introduced to reform education in Thailand at all levels in order to keep up with international trends to a more learner-centred approach and in response to the needs of international communication. This educational reform covered administrative reform, curriculum reform, teacher

reform, and school reform (Darasawang, 2007). English, therefore, was placed at the forefront of national intellectual development (Wongsothorn et al., 2003). The new curriculum of the English language was based on four strands, including culture, communication, connection, and community, which was called the 4Cs (Baker, 2008). According to the Ministry of Education (2008), the 4Cs aimed to promote and develop students' ability to use English for communicating in situations in diverse community and society, seeking new knowledge, and undertaking further education. This included the ability to understand the cultural diversity of the world community. The learner-centred approach was also introduced and included in this reform (Watson Todd, 2015).

Even though the learner-centred approach has been promoted over teacher-centred, Watson Todd and Keyuravong (2004, p.18) note that "most of the books focus on teaching grammar, provide trivial content based largely on British or American culture, and assess proficiency through closed-ended exercises. Generally, the content of these textbooks does not match the objectives and methodologies of the NEA and the learning standards". Phonhan et al. (2012) add that most textbooks do not meet students' educational levels and language proficiency levels. Some textbooks do not cover all language skills thereby causing imbalance among the four language skills, such that listening and speaking skills are paid less attention (Srakang & Jansem, 2012). Khamkhien (2010) observes that Thai teachers often put emphasis on grammatical competence, accuracy, and sentence memorisation. In such classes, less attention is paid to listening or speaking. Even in communicative language classrooms, actual communication practice is rarely provided, needless to mention the exposure to intercultural environments. The limitation of class time amount allocated to English subject, 145 minutes per week, is another obstacle to teaching cultures effectively (Noom-ura, 2013). Teachers often give priority to English grammar and reading and writing skills. Therefore, cultural contents are often ignored. Although cultural courses are provided, these courses are designed to provide learners only with knowledge of the English or American culture (e.g., history, geography, political systems, festivals, etc.) (Khamkhien, 2010; Wongsothorn et al., 2003). Therefore, it seems to neglect the

importance of the role of culture in cross-cultural communication where English is not only used by the British or Americans. That is to say, English language teaching in Thailand, at all levels, focuses on the accuracy of standard grammar of NES, and mainly recognises the English cultures of the UK and US.

Kirkpatrick (2010) argues that the benefits of native speaker models from the Inner Circle countries such as American-English and British-English, which are considered as standard and goals for teachers and students in teaching and learning English, need to be questioned in the setting like ASEAN where English is employed as a medium of communication by speakers of various cultural backgrounds, either English is a second or other language. To be precise, it is no longer the goals of teaching and learning English in the ASEAN community to reach a native like competence. Kirkpatrick (2010) states that in multilingual societies such as ASEAN, it is inappropriate and unnecessary to adhere to a single target norm. The point presented here is not to contradict that students should not use or learn English based on the norms of native English speakers but the contexts where English is used should be taken into consideration for English language learning and teaching. Dewey (2007) stresses that ELF's position in the world has become interconnected as it is associated with globalisation. Therefore, English should be focused as fluid, flexible, hybrid and deeply intercultural. Hall's (2013) notion of 'Plurilithic English' also seems appropriate in an ELF context. He states that focusing on accuracy of standard norm of NES grammar to assess language proficiency implies a monolithic ontology which denies the plurilithic view of the language. A plurilithic conception incorporates the view of shifting, diverse forms of English (Hall et al., 2017). This suggests that English language teaching in Thailand should pay attention to diversity and move beyond the NES norm of grammar.

In addition, Baker (2008) highlights how Thai cultures, such as hierarchical relationships, the concepts of 'Krengjai' and 'Sanuk', play a role in English language learning and teaching in Thai classrooms. The importance of the hierarchical distinction between teacher and student plays an important role in Thai

classrooms. Teachers assume a senior role while Thai students assume a junior role. The teacher's role causes a feeling of 'Krengjai' in students towards teachers. 'Krengjai' is the feeling of being considerate not to cause any inconvenience or discomfort for another person (Knutson, 2004). It is also a characteristic that shows politeness representing good standard manners in Thai culture and society (Prommak, 2019). Therefore, asking questions would be perceived as an inappropriate and ungrateful behaviour (Foley, 2005; Mulder, 2000). Another concept found in Thai classroom behaviour is 'Sanuk' (fun-pleasure orientation). Komin (1990) and Pongsapich and Kuwinpant (2002) note that Thai students are likely to treat everything joyfully but easily get bored. Komin (1990) observes that this concept implies students' lack of perseverance in doing difficult and unpleasant work. This may imply that for those students who find that English is too difficult for them, they tend to be demotivated to study easily. Saengboon (2004) notes that such values and concepts gave rise to the perception of Thai learners being uncritical and unquestioning when compared to Western learners. As mentioned above, it may suggest that in ELF context like Thailand, it is necessary to create teaching pedagogy and materials which are culturally relevant to intercultural communicative practices of learners. Due to this notion, Baker (2015) offers recommendations for incorporating ICA into language teaching, including exploring the complexity of local cultures, exploring cultural representations in language learning materials, exploring cultural representations in the media and arts both online and in more 'traditional' mediums, making use of cultural informants, and engaging in intercultural communication both face to face and electronically. However, he also notes that these recommendations may not be applicable as absolute guidelines to all settings due to different context and situation of ELT. Therefore, in a similar manner, it should also be noted that even though the above discussion may suggest that Thai culture is relevant to English language learning and teaching in Thai classrooms, the Thai cultural concepts mentioned above also do not apply to all Thai students in all settings.

The section has highlighted the notion of how English language is used in a global

context, how English language is characterised as a lingua franca in Thai context, and how English language is taught in Thailand. The following section presents the relationship between culture and language. This understanding of the connection between culture and language is relevant to the interest of this study, in which English is used in intercultural communication.

### **2.1.3 Culture, language and ELT**

The relationship between culture and language is complex since they are closely related to each other. Kim (2003) and Trueba and Zou (1994) note that culture and language are interconnected and it is difficult to clearly define the boundary of culture and language, and whether culture has an impact on language or vice-versa. Culture has many definitions as presented in section 2.1.1. In brief, it is a shared set of beliefs, norms, values, traditions, and a way of life of people. Language is also viewed as a part of culture which creates and symbolises cultural identities as the system of communication consisting of codes and symbols used by humans to store, retrieve, organize, construct, and communicate their knowledge and experience (Clifford, 1986; Joseph, 2004; Omar, 1998). The influences, roles, and characteristics of language, in this case English, are also presented in section 2.1.2. Peirce (1995) states that, similar to culture, language is not static but dynamic and continually shifts across space and time.

In communication using a second language, Kramsch (1993) views the relationship between culture and language as a ‘third place’ where there is a negotiation process between the language users’ own first language and culture and the target language and culture. The ideas of a ‘third place’ aid in an understanding of the way in which cultural and linguistic practices can engage new forms and meanings that are not likely to have been caused by any one culture. Therefore, this relationship can be seen as dynamic and fluid in second language communication which is, more or less, relevant to creating new understanding between language users. She adds that the relationship between culture and language is emergent rather than established or given.

Risager (2006) investigates the relationship between culture and language in a transnational and global perspective. She views that cultures spread across languages and languages also spread across cultures. She refers to this dynamic nature as the 'global flows' where cultural and linguistic practices flow through social networks in the world along different paths and across national structures and communities. She claims that all languages, especially international languages such as English, can engage new cultural meanings depending on the language user and context, and that "the link between language and culture is created in every new communicative event" (Risager, 2006, p. 185). She refers to this notion as 'languacultures'. Therefore, in this sense, a language such as English can and will have as many new cultural meanings as there are language users.

Baker (2009) explores the relationship between culture and language in intercultural communication of ELF contexts with Thai university students. His findings suggest that the English language use in expanding circle settings like Thailand allows for the liminality of identities in which individual agency is forefronted. Baker (2009, p. 220) notes that "these dynamic identities exist alongside and even in contradiction to their 'Thai' identities". His study reflects the complex, dynamic, liminal, and emergent relationship between culture and language which moves between individual, local, national, and global references.

Therefore, it can be said that the relationship between culture and language expressed through English in intercultural communication is likely to be complex, dynamic, emergent and continuously adapting to communication across cultures, global influences, and individual identities.

Due to the complex relationship between culture and language, researchers have integrated this notion with English language teaching in various contexts. Yu and Van Maele (2018) study how intercultural awareness is developed in the context of an English reading course at an independent college of a major Chinese university by integrating intercultural learning with critical thinking through English texts on the aspects of Chinese culture. The study shows that a majority of participants

demonstrates a level beyond basic awareness. Kusumaningputri and Widodo (2018) investigate the use of digital photograph-mediated intercultural tasks to promote students' critical intercultural awareness of literature students in Indonesia. The findings show that the integration between cultural contents and digital photograph-mediated intercultural tasks in ELT help the students enhance their critical awareness. Abdzadeh and Baker (2020) integrate intercultural teaching into English education in an Iranian English language classroom. The study reveals that this course has a positive effect in developing students' levels of cultural awareness. The results from these studies suggest that it is necessary to integrate culturally relevant contents with English language teaching as it play roles in the development of students' cultural awareness which is one crucial element needed for successful intercultural communication.

This section has presented the complex relationship between culture and language and how it should be taken into consideration in ELT. The following sections provide an explanation and discussion of the three theoretical perspectives related to the area under this study's investigation, including intercultural awareness (ICA), communication challenges, and communication strategies.

## **2.2 Intercultural awareness**

In intercultural contexts in Thailand where Thai and other cultures collide, it is important to raise awareness that potential problems regarding various cultural backgrounds, traditions, religious and social practices etc. may occur among individuals in their interactions. Therefore, understanding about intercultural awareness is necessary since it involves conscious understandings of the complexities of cultures between one's own and other people from different cultural backgrounds whose beliefs, values, and attitudes vary. This section presents developments in the study of intercultural awareness, its definition, characterisation, and theoretical model.

### **2.2.1 Development of ICA concept**

Since intercultural awareness (ICA) has been based on cultural awareness (CA), this section will explain how the concept of ICA has been developed by providing an explanation and applications of cultural awareness, discussing the limitations, and resulting in the proposal of intercultural awareness.

Cultural awareness is defined in relation to language practices by Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, p.5) as “sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behaviour on language use and communication”. They identify three elements representing cultural awareness qualities, including awareness of our own culturally induced behaviour, awareness of others’ culturally induced behaviour, and the ability to explain our cultural perspective. Based on the notion of cultural awareness, they propose an approach of teaching culture which deviates from ‘Big C’ (cultural products relating to literature, art, history, geography) and focuses more on ‘little c’ (culturally based perspectives and practices). This teaching approach emphasises cultural awareness is one of the important parts of the language learning process. Although they acknowledge the use of English in diverse cultural contexts, their study focus on the contexts of the UK and North America.

Jones (1995, p. 1) relates cultural awareness to the notion of otherness which incorporates “knowledge about, thinking about, and talking about otherness as well as ensuing attitudes and value judgements”. He notes that knowledge of another culture will be revised and developed through more information and experience gained and cultural awareness can be increased through developments of understandings and attitudes towards others within a target language community. In Jones’ (2000) study, he proposes an approach to intercultural awareness which highlights the relation between cultural awareness and using language for communication and how cultural identities influence interactions. He adds that cultural identities are fluid and complex which stress that cultural knowledge and understanding are provisional. However, his studies still concentrate on cultures

which are associated with NES norms such as French-English, German-English, and Spanish-English.

Byram (1997) examines how cultural awareness can be acquired by language learners through his intercultural communicative competence (ICC) model. He proposes five *savoirs* constituting ICC which are attitudes (*savoir être*), knowledge (*savoir*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and critical cultural awareness/political education (*savoir s'engager*). He notes that ICC and these five *savoirs* are reinforced by *savoir s'engager* or critical cultural awareness. He considers it as a key component employed in acquiring ICC because this component initiates the cultural comparative ability used in language learning and teaching. Moreover, it enables language learners to engage critical thinking which they put into the ability to mediate between their own and other cultures. Byram (1997, p. 53) defines critical cultural awareness as “an ability to evaluate critically, and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries”. Although Byram’s ICC model is probably applicable to various learning and teaching environments, he particularly focuses on classroom interactions between language learners who communicate with native speakers of the target language in the European context.

The previous studies from Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), Jones (1995), and Byram (1997) share some similarities. They focus on the inner circle such as the UK and US. There is also a focus on cultures of NES although cultures are complex, fluid and emerge through individual interactions within a site rather than being stereotyped by nationality or ethnicity (Holliday, 1999; Kramsch, 2013). Moreover, they pay less attention to individuals (for example Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993). Baker (2009) points out that the major flaw in presentations of cultural awareness is to fail to acknowledge individuals of different groupings in which cultural realities and identities are being negotiated. Risager (2006) argues that choosing only a variety of English, either British or American, based on their dominance of the English language, is not admissible to the wide range of English uses as it is

also used in international contexts. Baker (2009) adds that this is an inappropriate aim for the expanding circle because it does not reflect the realities of a wide variety of English uses in ELF contexts. That is to say, in such settings, it cannot be anticipated that English users or learners will have all the knowledge of different cultures in the communication they may interact in. Baker (2009, 2015) notes that although knowledge of specific cultures is necessary for the development of an awareness of cultural differences, it should be integrated with an awareness of fluidity, hybridity, and emergence of cultural influences in intercultural communication.

The previous discussion of ELF shows that cultural identities and frames of reference are fluid and provisional in intercultural communication. Therefore, while CA may be relevant to the contexts, with a focus on the cultural norms of the UK or US, of the previous studies, it needs to be developed with reference to intercultural communication in wider contexts and acknowledge the dynamic attributes of how sociocultural contexts are constructed. Therefore, what is more appropriate and required for intercultural communication using English language in the expanding circle and ELF contexts does not reside in just cultural awareness (CA) but intercultural awareness (ICA) with the aim to enable English users to negotiate the diversity of culture in intercultural communication successfully (Baker, 2015).

### **2.2.2 Definitions of ICA**

Based on the discussion above, some common definitions of cultural awareness are observed. First, culture influences human perspectives and behaviours in communication. Second, the differences between cultures at national levels is acknowledged. Moving from cultural awareness to intercultural awareness, the reference to culture in Baker's ICA (2015) does not attach culture to nationalities or countries since it incorporates the notion of the relationship between culture and language in intercultural communication which is fluid, complex and emergent.

According to Baker (2015, p. 185),

“intercultural awareness is a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices and frames of reference can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in communication.”

He states that intercultural awareness (ICA) here does not oppose cultural awareness, but rather extends a more appropriate and applicable concept to intercultural communication in ELF contexts in the expanding circle.

Korzilius et al. (2007) note that becoming aware of our own cultural representations as well as those we use to identify others helps us understand who we are in relation to the other. According to Korzilius et al. (2007, p. 2),

“intercultural awareness is the ability to empathize and to decentre. More specifically, in a communication situation, it is the ability to take on the perspective(s) of (a) conversational partner(s) from another culture or with another nationality, and of their cultural background(s), and thus, to be able to understand and take into consideration interlocutors’ different perspective(s) simultaneously.”

Another definition of ICA is presented by Zhu (2011, p. 116) who notes that

“intercultural awareness can be regarded as the foundation of communication. It involves two qualities: one is the awareness of one’s own culture; the other is the awareness of another culture.”

Based on the definitions presented above, it can be said that ICA involves the awareness of one’s own and others’ culture and the ability to stand back from one’s own cultural perspective and become aware of both one’s own and others’ cultural values, beliefs, and practices in intercultural communication.

However, in addition to the definition of ICA and a proper understanding of what this ICA means, Baker (2015), thus, characterises features of ICA into twelve components which will be presented in the following section.

### 2.2.3 Characterisations of ICA

Baker (2015) identifies twelve components of intercultural awareness, as follows:

1. An awareness of culture as a set of shared behaviours, beliefs, and values.
2. An awareness of the role culture and context play in any interpretation of meaning.
3. An awareness of our own culturally based behaviour, values, and beliefs and the ability to articulate this.
4. An awareness of others' culturally based behaviour, values, and beliefs and the ability to compare this with our own culturally based behaviour, values, and beliefs.
5. An awareness of the relative nature of cultural norms.
6. An awareness of cultural understanding as provisional and open to revision.
7. An awareness of multiple voices or perspectives within any cultural grouping.
8. An awareness of individuals as members of many social groupings including cultural ones.
9. An awareness of common ground between specific cultures as well as an awareness of possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between specific cultures.
10. An awareness of culturally based frames of reference, forms and communicative practices as being related both to specific cultures and also as emergent and hybrid in intercultural communication.
11. An awareness of initial interaction in intercultural communication as possibly based on cultural stereotypes or generalisations but an ability to move beyond these.
12. A capacity to negotiate and mediate between different emergent communicative practices and frames of reference based on the above understanding of culture in intercultural communication.

These twelve components set out to conceptualise understandings, knowledge and skills that a language user, such as English as a lingua franca, needs to be equipped with in order to successfully participate in intercultural communication. Baker (2015) notes that these features of ICA are built on the commonality of CA features

which were identified in Byram's (1997) study. The notion of knowledge and understandings of one's own culture, specific cultures, and the awareness that this knowledge and understanding may influence communication, is acknowledged in Component 1 - 9. However, he further extends the features which fit the fluid nature of intercultural communication through English. Baker (2015) recognises that stereotypes/generalisations based on monolithic cultural frames of reference may initially arise in intercultural communication. Therefore, he proposes Components 10 - 12 which attempt to go beyond stereotypes/generalisation. Particularly, these components are the understandings and awareness of emergent cultural references and practices alongside the knowledge of specific cultures. He adds that the abilities to negotiate and mediate between these emergent cultural understandings are needed for moving beyond stereotypes/generalisations in intercultural communication.

Baker (2015, p. 195) states that "how this awareness is developed or can be developed is of high importance for second language education that seeks to equip learners for successful intercultural communication".

#### **2.2.4 A model of intercultural awareness**

Baker (2009) conducts a study with university students in Thailand where the use of English in intercultural communication is categorised as a lingua franca. He develops a more robust conception of ICA which comprises the relationships between ICA components and abilities. To achieve that, he gathers examples as empirical evidence of intercultural communication which have validated the twelve components, the connections between them, and how they were employed. He also combines the evidence with ethnographic data related to participants' intercultural experiences, attitudes, and motivation which holistically offered characteristics of the participants and ELF settings which represent examples of intercultural communication with the aim to provide a better understanding of the model.

Baker's (2015) ICA model in Figure 2.3 attempts to show the relationships between

twelve components of ICA and go beyond the simple listing presented earlier. To illustrate this, the distinctions between different levels of awareness, types of cultural knowledge and skills, and the abilities used in interactions are drawn. Three levels of awareness have been specified. These include basic cultural awareness (level 1), advanced cultural awareness (level 2), and intercultural awareness (level 3). This model also presents a distinction between Conceptual ICA and Practice Orientated ICA. Conceptual ICA involves the types of attitudes towards cultures and cultural knowledge engaged in intercultural communication. This Conceptual ICA has contributed to Practice Orientated ICA which involves the application of the conceptual awareness in real-time situations of intercultural communication and put it into practical skills/abilities. In Figure 2.3, Baker (2015) divides previous single components into Conceptual ICA and Practice Orientated ICA. This has resulted in the expansion of ICA components from twelve to fifteen.

It should be noted that the dashed lines indicate the ‘porous’ characteristic of the distinctions not only within the three levels of ICA but also between Conceptual ICA and Practice Orientated ICA. The dashed lines also indicate that each ICA component feeds into the others showing that each component influences another component in developing higher awareness. The thick double-headed arrows on both side of the model illustrate that all ICA components interrelate through all three levels in top-down and bottom-up manners. Also, the arrows moving across Conceptual ICA and Practice Orientated ICA indicate that the knowledge, skills and abilities of the individual are constantly in change. The double lined box at the bottom of the model highlights the crucial features of ICA needed for successful intercultural communication. Lastly, the arrows moving between the levels and across the conceptual and practice sections is an attempt to indicate (in as far as is possible in a static two-dimensional representation) the dynamic nature of the model in which the knowledge, skills and abilities of the individual are constantly in change.

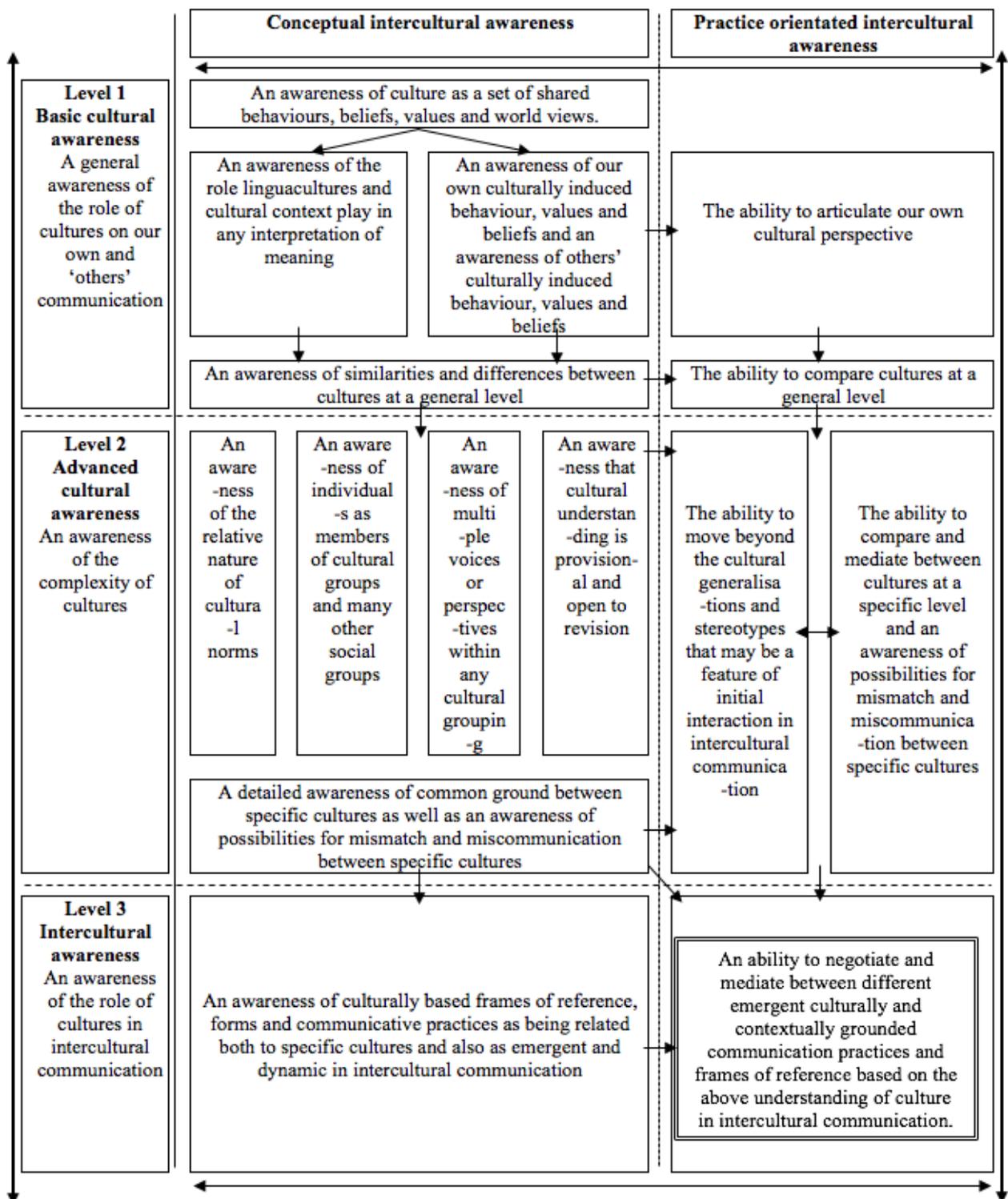


Figure 2.3: A model of intercultural awareness (reproduced from Baker, 2015: 190)

It should be noted that the dashed lines indicate the ‘porous’ characteristic of the distinctions not only within the three levels of ICA but also between Conceptual ICA and Practice Orientated ICA. The dashed lines also indicate that each ICA component feeds into the others showing that each component influences another component in developing higher awareness. The thick double-headed arrows on both side of the model illustrate that all ICA components interrelate through all three levels in top-down and bottom-up manners. Also, the arrows moving across Conceptual ICA and Practice Orientated ICA indicate that the knowledge, skills and abilities of the individual are constantly in change. The double lined box at the bottom of the model highlights the crucial features of ICA needed for successful intercultural communication. Lastly, the arrows moving between the levels and across the conceptual and practice sections is an attempt to indicate (in as far as is possible in a static two-dimensional representation) the dynamic nature of the model in which the knowledge, skills and abilities of the individual are constantly in change.

Level 1, basic cultural awareness, refers to an awareness of the role of our own and other cultures in communication. It shows the awareness at the general level which is relevant to knowledge and an understanding of cultures. It mainly focuses on a generalised understanding of the first culture (C1) in intercultural communication. This level also incorporates a conscious understanding of the individual’s own linguaculture and cultural practices which influence their values, beliefs, and behaviours in intercultural communication. This leads to generalised concepts about the first culture which may be characterised as cultural stereotypes. There is also the awareness of second culture’s (C2) culture and cultural practices. It shows that the awareness at this level involves the ability to articulate our own cultural perspectives and the ability to compare cultures between C1 and C2 at a general level.

Level 2, advanced cultural awareness, refers to an awareness of cultures as fluid, dynamic, and multi-voiced. It incorporates more complex understandings of cultures and also concerns understandings of cultural relativity. Moreover, cultures,

in this level, are perceived as diverse groups rather than homogeneous. The awareness at this level involves the ability to make predictions based on specific cultural knowledge and frames of reference for possible misunderstanding and miscommunication between target communities as one of many social groupings, although this maybe at national level. This level also integrates the need of knowledge, understandings, and skills from the previous ICA components with the ability to move beyond the cultural stereotypes/generalisations that may be a feature of initial interaction.

Level 3, intercultural awareness, refers to an awareness of the role of cultures in intercultural communication which moves from advanced cultural awareness. This level incorporates the understandings of language, culture, and communication that move beyond “one’s own or other” context. The concept of cultures at this level goes beyond national level and cultural boundaries that linguaculture and cultural practices are not tied to any community of single native speaker. Therefore, this level reflects the nature of much intercultural communication as hybrid and emergent. This level engages previous components with the ability to mediate and negotiate between different cultural frames of reference and practices emerging in intercultural communication.

The model starts from the awareness of basic knowledge and understandings of cultures in communication with a focus on own culture (level 1), to the awareness of more complex understandings of cultural knowledge and frames of reference which involve specific cultures (level 2), and finally to the awareness of the most complex understandings of diverse cultures as they are fluid, dynamic, hybrid and emergent (level 3).

This section has presented the notion of ICA, from its developments to theoretical model, providing a better understanding of what ICA means in intercultural communication. The following section will be focusing on the challenges occurring in intercultural communication.

## **2.3 Challenges in intercultural communication**

Cultural diversity can be controversial when presumptions occur in intercultural communication between people from different cultural backgrounds due to different attitudes, values, beliefs, and norms together with languages they share in the communication. These can cause misunderstandings and miscommunication which lead to challenges in such communication. Researchers such as Hains-Wesson (2011), Aydin and Koch, (2012), Abdo and Breen (2010), and Suksiripakonchai (2013) report that, in English language classrooms of L2 learners, linguistic differences and cultural diversity presenting in classrooms can cause negative attitudes and misunderstandings between students and students, students and teachers, and teachers and teachers. In international workplaces, with culturally diverse employees, differences between cultures, such as ethnic and religious, and different English proficiency levels of employees create possible tensions and conflicts (Barinaga, 2007; Zaidman & Drory, 2001; Richard, 1999). In intercultural communication in ELF contexts, Sharifian (2009) notes that ELF interlocutors in most cases think in their first language (L1), relying on their own cultural conceptualisation. When different cultural perspectives collide, this could result in misunderstandings between them.

Therefore, this section aims to present the challenges occurring in intercultural communication through English which can be divided into two categories, including challenges with the English language and challenges with cultures.

### **2.3.1 Challenges with the English language**

One of the impacts of global English use lies in the challenges and/or problems that users may encounter during their face-to-face communication. In intercultural communication, this is more challenging when the language used as a medium in communication is used by second language users or foreign language users. Unavoidably, people exposed to a new language face challenges and/or problems with the language patterns. Harper (1997, p. 13) notes that “lack of language skills

is a strong barrier to effective cultural adjustment and communication, whereas lack of knowledge concerning the ways of speaking of a particular group will reduce the level of understanding that we can achieve with our counterparts”.

In oral communication through a new target language, Dörnyei and Scott (1997) classify problems which usually occur during communication into four types of problems, including resource deficit, processing time pressure, own-performance problems, and other-performance problems. Resource deficit refers to language learners’ insufficient knowledge of the target language and cultures. This insufficiency causes an incomplete speech system since learners are unable to plan and encode preverbal messages. The processing time pressure refers to the lack of automaticity which causes learners to require too much time to construct sentences in the target language. Learners usually apply fillers and repeat the target language words several times. Jamshidnejad (2011) adds that this problem usually occurs in spontaneous communication between learners and the native speaker of the target language. The own-performance problems refer to the deficiencies of learner's own language output or language skills where NS norms are expected or desired. These include mistakes in the target language productions such as incomplete or incorrect target language forms or structures. The other-performance problems refer to the difficulties associated with interlocutors’ target language speech performance as perceived by learners. Dörnyei and Scott (1997) note that learners find interlocutors’ speech confusing since learners have not yet acquired words, structure system and idioms of the target language thereby perceiving unintended meaning from the interlocutors’ utterances.

Spolsky and Hult (2008) and Richards (2008) mention that some typical challenges affecting the users when speaking English include lack of English vocabulary, poor English grammar, and poor English pronunciation, whereby *poor* they mean *ineffective*.

### **1) Lack of English vocabulary**

It is usually faced by L2 learners that they might be unfamiliar with or never

exposed to the vocabulary required for a communicative goal (Spolsky & Hult, 2008). Although it is impossible that L2 learners will know all English words and meanings, with adequate amounts of necessary English vocabulary, they can communicate effectively (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). The problems of vocabulary occur when users lack the vocabulary needed to talk and do not know how to combine words into a sentence. Khan (2006) notes that the numbers of students who learn English as a foreign language have difficulties to use words and expressions to speak. Gordon and Trudgill (2004) add that insufficient English vocabulary obstructs the ability to effectively express speakers' views and ideas in their own voice. Having limited English vocabulary size also negatively impacted on speakers as they do not understand their interlocutors (Kamil, 2003; Koda, 1997; Snow et al., 2007).

## **2) 'Poor' English grammar**

Poor English grammar is perceived as one of the most reported challenges by English users (Richards, 2008). English language users are not able to communicate effectively through English if they lack knowledge of English grammar. Celce-Murcia (2001) states that English grammar is difficult because learners do not learn the language structures all at once. Zhang (2007) also adds that although learners clearly know what they are going to say in English, with the insufficient knowledge of English grammar, they cannot produce appropriate English sentences. Zhang (2007) notes that when they have to switch into the target language such as English, they often get confused to combine and use the effective English grammar. For example, in case of Thai students using English, Srisuruk (2011) notes that it can be observed at first glance that the Thai and English languages are strikingly different. The Thai language is a member of the Tai-Kadai (or Kadai) language family, while English is in the Indo - European language family. Although the standard word order of Thai and English is the same (subject-verb-object), the grammatical structure differs significantly. Some of the language interference challenges of Thai learners of English are, for example, Thai has a contour tone that determines the meaning of words (Srisuruk, 2011). Adjectives and adverbs

functioning as verbs are other sources of interference (Swan & Smith 2001). Besides, the syntax of auxiliary verbs in Thai differs from English, which makes the use of basic constructions for questions and negative sentences in English challenging (Srisuruk, 2011). Also, a study by Premsrirat (2006) indicates that there are no suffixes, articles or standard auxiliaries that indicate plurality in Thai language.

### **3) 'Poor' English pronunciation**

Poor English pronunciation causes many difficulties in communication. It connects with the complexity of the vowel sound system existing in English and the inconsistency of accent variations (Spolsky & Hult, 2008; Richards, 2008). According to Burns (2003), a listener will not understand the speaker as he or she perceives that the speaker is not intelligible because the meaning of words is not available due to an ineffective pronunciation. Harmer (2007) adds that although vocabulary and grammar are important elements of language, they can be useless if the speakers cannot pronounce words intelligibly. He highlights that with the intelligible pronunciation, native speakers of the target language can understand people, despite their grammatical errors. Researchers such as Hinofotis and Bailey (1980), Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), and Lin (2014) affirm that problems regarding English pronunciation and accent are the most salient issues of spoken English language. The impact of poor English pronunciation and accent-associated issues can be linked to stereotypical views that may lead to inaccurate judgment on speaker's English proficiency (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011).

#### **2.3.2 Challenges with cultures**

Many changes, such as in politics, education, transportation, and technology in local and worldwide interactions, have made the world smaller. These changes provide people with the convenience that allows them to connect with other people, experience new cultures, and visit many countries in the world within a short travelling time. Moxley et al. (2005) note that since the world has become a global

village, the opportunities for people to interact with those from different cultures increase, while at the same time, adjusting to the global village is by no means easy. Therefore, intercultural communication can involve challenges due to the distinctions of different cultural aspects.

Samovar and Porter (2001) note that when we are exposed to a new culture or move out of our culture, the experience of culture shock may arise. Similarly, Oberg (1960) states that culture shock occurs in interactions and communication between people from different cultures and they experience feelings of dissimilar interpretation or lost in translation because they are not able to understand the perspectives and behaviours of those people. He adds that these feelings develop into both physical and psychological symptoms. Dodd (1987, p. 201) defines culture shock as “the special transition period and the accompanying feelings after entering a new culture and it is similar with stress and anxiety, but the concept particularly fits the unique feelings a person experiences during the first weeks to over a year after entering a new culture”. Lustig and Koester (2006) report the frequently used terms relating to challenges in intercultural communication include *unpredictable*, *weird*, *mysterious*, *unusual*, *unfamiliar*, and *strange*. They add that sometimes newcomers of a culture can perceive themselves as children because they cannot understand all these new experiences at once and are not knowing how to behave in the new culture they are not familiar with.

In intercultural communication, there are different types of cultural challenges one might face. Barna (1997) notes that some typical challenges include ethnocentrism, stereotype, prejudice, discrimination, issues with touch, time, and nonverbal misinterpretation.

### **1) Ethnocentrism**

Sumner (1940, p. 12) introduces this concept and refers to ethnocentrism as “the view of things in which one’s own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it”. This concept highlights characterisations

that people strongly adhere to their own 'folk' way and intensify everything in their own cultural values and practices which differentiates them from others. Gudykunst and Kim (1997) and Lustig and Koester (2006) note that ethnocentrism lies in every culture and people of a culture are ethnocentric to some level since they are likely to view their own cultural norms, values and beliefs as more real, right, and universal while those of different cultures are considered wrong or worse. In other words, ethnocentrism leads to the perspective that one feels and believes that his or her culture is better than others.

## **2) Stereotype**

According to Samovar and Porter (2001), a stereotype is a form used to generalise a particular group of people based on opinions and perceptions towards the general characteristics of all people belonging to that culture. Barna (1997, p. 341) states that "stereotypes persist because they are firmly established as myths or truisms by one's own national culture and because they sometimes rationalize prejudices. They are also sustained and fed by the tendency to perceive selectively only those pieces of new information that correspond to the image held". People can also construct stereotypes through the way they were raised. He, therefore, refers to stereotype as 'a stumbling block' for intercultural communicators since they obstruct the complex viewing of other person's reality. Spencer-Oatey and Stadler (2009) note that stereotypes label cultural norms into one-mould-fits-all behaviours which aim to generalise particular groups of people. Zhang and Deng (2009) also add that stereotypes influence people's perceptions towards other from different cultures since they not only can reflect accurate cultural-level predictions about their behaviour but also judge them inappropriately due to factors such as religion, race, and gender.

## **3) Prejudice**

Allport (1954) refers to prejudice as an irrational generalisation to categorise people supported by little or no direct evidence. It involves one's irrational evaluation

towards other people or culture based on emotion or personal bias. Macionis (1998) adds that individuals with prejudice targets on people of a different cultural group or particular group of race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. For example, “sexual identity is a form of social identity, and in the case of lesbians and gays it has often been formed in the face of stigma, shame and exclusion” (Morrish & Sauntson, 2010, p. 28). Gudykunst (2003) points out that prejudice in intercultural communication come in less obvious forms such as sarcasm, written statements, or symbols.

#### **4) Discrimination**

While prejudice involves individuals’ minds, including negative attitudes, emotions, and evaluation, discrimination refers to the behavioural expressions based on prejudice. William (1947) states that it involves behaviours in which members of other cultural groups are treated unfairly based on differences, either perceived or actual. Quillian (2006) notes that discrimination focuses on behaviour which may be motivated by prejudice, stereotypes, and racism. It can be said that discrimination is the way of expressing negative attitudes, more or less obvious, that one might have towards other people from different cultures based on various factors, such as race, religion, sexual orientation, in intercultural communication. Discrimination based on language or dialect is also documented. Phillipson (1992) refers to it as linguicism. “Linguicism may be in operation simultaneously with sexism, racism, or classism, but linguicism refers exclusively to ideologies and structures where language is the means for effecting or maintaining an unequal allocation of power and resources” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 55). Samovar and Porter (2001) also refer to discrimination as various forms of unequal and unethical treatments regarding differences of religion, race, gender, or language. It can be seen in the forms of physical violence or offensive words.

#### **5) Touch**

Jones and Yarbrough (1985) point out that although touch is a basic constituent of

human communication, touch varies in meanings depending on the intention of a person who touches. For example, it is used to indicate the expression of feelings and emotions, either positive or negative, such as a feeling of protection through hugging or a feeling of anger through hitting. Touch is also represented as a friendly sign used for signaling other people not to take some incidents or issues too seriously. On many occasions of socialising purposes, touch is the act of greeting such as hand-shaking or hugging. However, Lustig and Koester (2006) note that cultures vary in what part of the body is allowed to be touched. For example, in Thai culture, one is not allowed to touch other people's heads since Thai people believe that it is a sacred part of the body while in other cultures such as American, touching the head is perceived as a normal practice.

## **6) Time**

Samovar and Porter (2001) state that the value and importance of time orientations differ in cultures based on cultural rules and practice of members of the cultures. Time is used by people to organise a set of activities and practices in different cultural ways. Therefore, in intercultural communication, when people who value time orientations differently based on their cultural value interact, misunderstandings could occur. For example, Hall and Hall (1990) point out that time is conventionally viewed as money in American culture. This perspective emphasises the importance of job schedules, punctuality, and getting the job done. Therefore, those who do not agree to the same value of time orientation may be perceived as unreliable, inefficient, or disrespectful.

## **7) Non-verbal misinterpretation**

Non-verbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, tones of voice, and movements presented in communication (Zuckerman & Driver, 1989; Kimble & Seidel, 1991). In intercultural communication, people from different cultures interpret meanings differently to non-verbal codes and signal different communication form and style (Richmond & McCrosky, 1995). For example, in

Indian culture, nodding head means 'No' while in many other cultures such Thai and American, it indicates 'Yes'. Therefore, in intercultural communication, the lack of knowledge of non-verbal signs and misinterpretation of those signs can lead to challenges and misunderstandings between interlocutors because meanings in one culture are shared and interpreted differently in another culture.

As presented in this section, there are two main challenges in intercultural communication, including challenges with the English language and challenges with cultures; the following section, then, reports associated strategies that have been identified to deal with communication challenges.

#### **2.4 Communication strategies**

Communication strategies are those required for effective communication between people from different cultural backgrounds in intercultural communication. Deardorff (2006) and Fantini (2009) note that one's language skills combining with intercultural knowledge, understandings, and skills are required to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations. That is to say while linguistic strategies are considered as a crucial element for successful intercultural communication, they are not the only requirement since intercultural communication also requires strategies to deal with different cultural perspectives and behaviours.

Associated strategies, then, are considered a bridge to successful intercultural communication. Terrel (1977, p. 334) states that "communication strategies are crucial at the beginning stages of second language learning". O'Malley and Chamot (1990) point out that communication strategies are not only used for overcoming difficulties in oral communication, but they are also used for negotiating meanings between interlocutors of different cultural backgrounds whose languages and cultural norms are not shared.

### **2.4.1 Strategies in dealing with the English language**

There are different types of communication strategies employed by different groups of people. Some strategies employed by a group of people can be similar to or different from those employed by another group of people in intercultural communication. Wenden and Rubin (1987) state that language learners who emphasise the importance of using the language employ communication strategies during their communication. O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 43) add that "communication strategies are an adaptation to the failure to realize a language production goal" while Dörnyei and Scott (1997, p. 182-185) note that "the main purpose of communication strategies was purportedly to work through communicative problems, that is, communication strategies were thought to be consciously deployed when interactants realized that communication was being interrupted". Therefore, communication strategies have been documented and classified in a variety of ways as linguistic devices for language users to apply while they are interacting to solve communication problems and to negotiate meaning. Cohen (1990, p. 56) affirms that "a major trait of successful speakers is that they use strategies to keep the conversation going... Communication strategies compensate for deficits the speaker may have".

Researchers, such as Dörnyei (1995), Nakatani (2006), and Kirkpatrick (2007) have proposed various communication strategies based on different perspectives.

#### **1) Dörnyei's (1995) communication strategies**

Dörnyei's (1995) regards the use of communication strategy as indicating that a speaker is having difficulty expressing their intended meanings in a second language. Based on studies from several scholars, such as Bialystok (1990), Færch and Kasper (1983), and Tarone (1977), he proposes three strategy types which include avoidance or reduction, achievement or compensatory, and stalling or time-gaining strategies.

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Avoidance or Reduction strategies</b>	1. Message abandonment: leaving a message unfinished because of linguistic difficulties. 2. Topic avoidance: avoiding topic areas or concepts which pose linguistic difficulties.
<b>Achievement or Compensatory strategies</b>	3. Circumlocution: describing or exemplifying the target object or action (e.g., the thing you open doors with for key). 4. Approximation: using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical item as closely as possible (e.g., ship for sail boat). 5. Use of all-purpose words: extending a general, empty lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking (e.g., the overuse of thing, what-do-you-call-it). 6. Word-coinage: creating a nonexistent L2 word based on a supposed rule (e.g. vegetarianist for vegetarian, paintist for painter). 7. Use of nonlinguistic means: mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation. 8. Literal translation: translating literally a lexical item, an idiom, a compound word or structure from LI to L2. 9. Foreignizing: using a LI word by adjusting it to L2 phonologically (i.e., with a L2 pronunciation) and/or morphologically (e.g., adding to it a L2 suffix). 10. Code switching: using a LI word with LI pronunciation. 11. Appeal for help: turning to the conversation partner for help either directly (e.g. What do you call. . .?) or indirectly (e.g., rising intonation, pause, eye contact, puzzled expression).
<b>Stalling or Time-gaining strategies</b>	12. Use of fillers/hesitation devices: using filling words or gambits to fill pauses and to gain time to think (e.g., well, now let me see, as a matter of fact).

Table 2.1: Dörnyei's (1995) Communication strategies

Table 2.1 summarises Dörnyei's (1995) communication strategies with an explanation for each strategy. The first type involves abandonment of message and avoidance. The second type presents alternative plans so that the communicative goal can be accomplished by compensating for the linguistic deficiencies. The third type has a different function from the other strategies since it is used to buy time. It does not negotiate any linguistic deficiencies but to think and to keep the communication flow.

## 2) Nakatani's (2006) Oral Communication Strategy Inventory

For English language learners, Nakatani (2006) notes that using specific communication strategies enables them to negotiate with the language in real-time situations to meet the requirement of the ongoing communication. In other words, he is concerned with strategic behaviours to overcome communication problems

which occur real-time during interactions between a speaker and an interlocutor. Therefore, his perspective on communication strategy focuses not only on a speaker's problem-solving behaviour but also on strategies to enhance the effectiveness of communication. He, then, proposes an Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) consisting of two categories which are strategies for coping with speaking problems and strategies for coping with listening problems.

Strategies	Explanation
<b>Strategies for Coping with Speaking Problems</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social-affective strategies involve learners' affective factors in social contexts.</li> <li>2. Fluency-oriented strategies are related to fluency of communication.</li> <li>3. Negotiation for meaning while speaking strategies are relevant to the participants' attempts to negotiate with their interlocutors.</li> <li>4. Accuracy-oriented strategies are concerned with a desire to speak English accurately.</li> <li>5. Message reduction and alteration strategies involve avoiding a communication breakdown by reducing an original message, simplifying utterances, or using similar expressions that can be confidently used.</li> <li>6. Nonverbal strategies while speaking require using eye contact, gestures, or facial expressions to give hints and to help the listener guess the intended meaning.</li> <li>7. Message abandonment strategies are associated with message abandonment by learners in communication.</li> <li>8. Attempt to think in English strategies involve thinking as much as possible in the foreign language during actual communication. The importance of these strategies is that oral communication usually requires a quick response to interlocutors.</li> </ol>
<b>Strategies for Coping with Listening Problems</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meaning-negotiation strategies while listening are clearly characterized by negotiating behavior while listening.</li> <li>2. Fluency-maintaining strategies involve paying attention to the fluency of conversational flow.</li> <li>3. Scanning strategies include focusing on specific points of speech, such as subject and verb, the interrogative, and the first part of the speaker's utterance, in which important information is usually contained.</li> <li>4. Getting-the-gist strategies require paying attention to general information contained in speech rather than to specific utterances and considering the context and the speaker's previous sentences to guess overall meaning.</li> <li>5. Nonverbal strategies while listening are related to making use of nonverbal information, such as speaker's eye contact, facial expression, and gestures.</li> <li>6. Less active listener strategies represent negative attitudes towards using active listening strategies for interaction. Students who utilize this strategy translate the message into their native language little by little and depend heavily on familiar words.</li> <li>7. Word-oriented strategies reflect a learner's tendency to capture the meaning of speech by paying attention to individual words.</li> </ol>

Table 2.2: Nakatani's (2006) Oral Communication Strategy Inventory

Table 2.2 presents Nakatani's (2006) Oral Communication Strategy Inventory detailing eight strategies for coping with speaking problems and seven strategies for coping with listening problems.

### 3) Kirkpatrick's (2007) communicative strategies

In the field of English as a lingua franca where it no longer focuses mainly on the model of English native speakers, Kirkpatrick (2007) conducts research regarding communication strategies employed by ELF users in the ASEAN context. His communicative strategies include strategies of listener and speaker. These strategies are based on (1) the goal of successful intercultural communication emphasizing the linguistic features that can block mutual understandings, (2) the manners cultures can vary and the implications of such variations for intercultural communication, and (3) the communication strategies that can promote successful intercultural communication.

<b>Strategy type (Listener)</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
1. Lexical anticipation	- Giving someone the word needed
2. Lexical suggestion	- Suggesting a better alternative to the word used
3. Lexical correction	- Correcting a misused word
4. Don't give up	- Working together to understand what is being said in moments on non-understanding
5. Request repetition	- Request repetition of the point
6. Request clarification	- Request clarification of the point
7. Let it pass	- Letting moments of non-understanding pass perhaps signalling uncertainty
8. Listen to the message	- Focusing on the message when the language is unclear
9. Participant paraphrase	- Paraphrasing the speaker's point by a fellow participant to help the addressee understand
10. Participant prompt	- Clarifying the speaker's point by a fellow participant to help the addressee understand
<b>Strategy type (Speaker)</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
1. Spell out the word	- Spelling a word out loud when it is not understood
2. Repeat the phrase	- Repeating a phrase when it is not understood
3. Be explicit	- Verbalising communicative intent
4. Paraphrase	- Paraphrasing a point made but not understood
5. Avoid local/idiomatic referents	- Edit out any terms or idioms that may cause misunderstanding

Table 2.3: Kirkpatrick's (2007) communicative strategies

Table 2.3 shows Kirkpatrick's (2007) communicative strategies which are divided into two main types, Listener consisting of ten strategies and Speaker consisting of five strategies.

In addition, various communication strategies have been explored in ELF contexts which involves speakers' adaptation to their interlocutors' language forms and speech patterns. For example, Listener support which refers to using backchannels or confirming comprehension (Bjørge, 2010; Cogo & Dewey, 2012), Joint achievement which refers to supporting an interlocutor's standpoint or providing the intention of an interlocutor's message (Georgieva, 2009), and echoing which refers to Repeating what an interlocutor has just said (Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Mackenzie, 2014; Mauranen, 2012).

In sum, various oral communication strategies facilitate the overcoming of gaps in using the English language, resolve difficulties that they encounter in expressing intended meaning, and allow the English learners to keep the conversations going. They can also enhance the quality of interpersonal and intercultural interaction. Moreover, they also acknowledge the implications of variations of English for intercultural communication such as in ELF contexts.

#### **2.4.2 Strategies in dealing with cultures**

Verderber and Verderber (2008) state that effective intercultural communicators should be able to adopt communication strategies to handle communication challenges and apply appropriate skills to negotiate the differences across cultures. As individuals possess different cultural backgrounds, frame of reference, and skills, LaFromboise et al. (1993) add that these variations should be distinguished into strategies showing how individuals apply them in cultural diversity.

For dealing with cultural diversity, researchers such as Coleman (1995), Berry (1997), and DiBlasio (1998) have called attention to strategies of adjusting oneself to a culturally diverse society with respect to their own cultural perspectives and

practices and other cultures. Their strategies in dealing with cultures are presented as follows.

### **1) Coleman's (1995) strategies for coping with cultural diversity**

Coleman (1995) states that not only a single strategy is employed to cope with intercultural situations but also various strategies are applied depending on one's ability and the situation. He, then, categorises six specific strategies employed by individuals to deal with challenges in cultural diversity. These strategies include separation, assimilation, acculturation, alternation, integration, and fusion. These strategies can be categorised into two groups, mono-cultural strategies and multicultural strategies.

#### **1.1) Mono-cultural strategies**

Three strategies, including separation, assimilation and acculturation, are mono-cultural strategies. They reflect a desire to communicate and/or interact with only members of one cultural group. The separation strategy focuses on an orientation only towards one's own cultural group. It involves strong positive attitudes towards one's own cultural group and strong negative attitudes towards members of the other cultural group. One avoids contact and interaction with others from different cultural group. The assimilation strategy refers to one's decision to replace behaviors and beliefs from the one's own heritage culture with ones from the receiving culture. The acculturation strategy involves the desire to interact with members of different cultural groups, either because individuals do not accept the values and behaviors of their own cultural group or because they benefit from the interaction.

#### **1.2) Multicultural strategies**

These strategies include alternation, integration and fusion. They incorporate positive attitudes toward one's own and other cultural groups and the

understandings that the roles and values of individuals of different cultural groups can establish positive relationships in the interaction. The alternation strategy assumes that it is possible to alternate between the home and the host culture, much in the same way a fully bilingual can easily adapt to context-necessary language. In the integration strategy, the two cultures are more deeply integrated into the personality structure, and the person becomes bicultural maintaining their culture of origin and incorporating language, customs, and values from the host culture. Finally, in the fusion strategy, culturally diverse individuals in regular contact with one another fuse to create a new culture that includes the value system, behaviours, and traditions of the individually represented cultures.

## **2) Tolerance**

Berry (1997) proposes that a tolerance strategy is the link between attitudes and actual behaviour in intercultural interaction. He refers to tolerance as a strategy which involves an individual's attitudes and degree of comfortable feelings in certain situations. This strategy is similar to Allport's (1954) notion of a social sensitivity which is a flexible capacity to know one's own and another's state of mind. Martin and Nakayama (2010) note that in cultural diverse situations, individuals with tolerance are self-aware, know their roles and responsibilities. In contrast, an individual with low tolerance level may leave the situation they feel uncomfortable with or communicate in a less effective manner. Klyuev (2016) views that tolerance is an active endurance of the complexity of the world and positive attitude towards the others based on the feelings of acceptance and respect. Byrne (2011) adds that a tolerance strategy is not only viewed as a form of acceptance to what is perceived inappropriate but also defines an individual's moral and political influence in a society under the conditions, including difference (another value beyond an individual's beliefs), importance (something considered important), opposition (different things which an individual do not fit or belong to) and power (ability, authority or power).

### **3) Forgiveness**

DiBlasio (1998) introduces the concept of forgiveness as a communication strategy which incorporates a development within the individual's mind so that they suspend negative thoughts towards the offender and seek no harm or revenge. McCullough and Worthington (1994) add that employing forgiveness as a strategy in intercultural conflicts can minimise the feelings of anger, resentment, and suspend negative judgments on the offender. According to Worthington (2003), a forgiveness strategy includes decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness. Decisional forgiveness involves individuals' decision to control their negative behaviour towards the offenders since they are aware of the consequence. Even though they suffer from the offence, they try to restore the relationship. Emotional forgiveness incorporates positive emotions, love, and compassion against the anger and the feelings of unforgiveness about the offence. It can also lead to the change of attitudes and perspectives from negative to neutral or even positive. Verderber and Verderber (2008) relate forgiveness to empathy, which refers to the ability to understand what the other person is experiencing and why they are behaving that way when one places themselves in the other person's cultural environment and put the understanding into the concept of forgiveness.

In sum, various associated strategies are proposed for dealing with the diversity of culture in intercultural communication. They are employed to adjust one's attitudes and behaviours during the intercultural interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds in order to achieve goals of communication.

The previous sections have discussed the theoretical perspectives related in this study. The following section, then, presents the conceptual framework of this study.

#### **2.5 Conceptual framework**

Based on the related literature discussed in this chapter, the conceptual framework

of this study, to be expanded in subsequent chapters, involves three theoretical perspectives, including intercultural awareness, communication challenges, and communication strategies as presented in Figure 2.4.

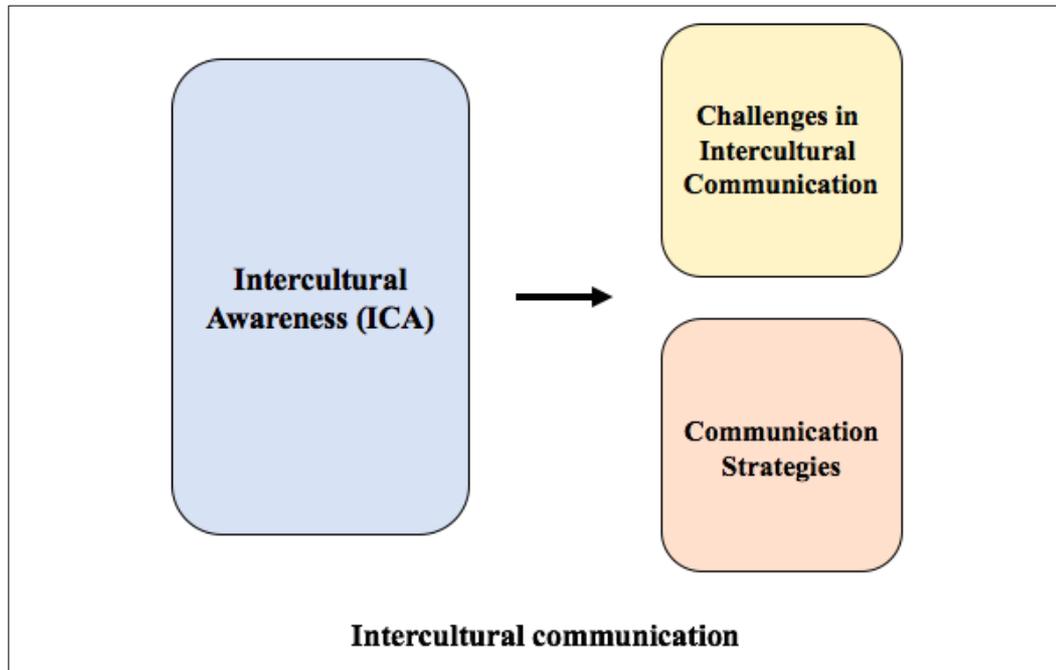


Figure 2.4: Conceptual Framework

The Figure 2.4 shows that these three perspectives are found to be central to the objective of this study which aims to investigate the role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication through English. As ICA involves cultural understandings and practical skills in intercultural communication, the arrow moving from left to right shows that ICA may play role and have impact on communication challenges and communication strategies. The relationship between these three perspectives will be further elaborated through the discussion based on the findings of this study.

## 2.6 Summary and conclusion

This chapter provided a review of literature and previous studies related to the present study. The discussion in this chapter highlighted the complexity and

significance of culture and language, in this case English, in intercultural communication. It began with an explanation of intercultural communication which involves interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds. In the field of intercultural communication, the conceptualisation of culture can be categorised into two broad paradigms, including essentialist and non-essentialist. In brief, while the essentialist tends to disregard the complexities of culture and compare the differences of different entities at national levels, the non-essentialist focuses more on a diversified entity which is dynamic, fluid, and hybrid. The use of language was also examined in this chapter as it is another element used in intercultural communication. The significance of English was presented, from global to local. The characteristics of English used in Thailand were presented for the better understanding about the context of this study. Based on the review, English in Thailand is best conceived as English as a lingua franca (ELF). Once the significance of culture and language, in this study English, were discussed, it moved to the focus on intercultural awareness (ICA) which is one crucial element in successful intercultural communication. ICA is concerned with conscious understandings of the role culturally based perspectives and behaviours can have in one's intercultural communication, and an ability to apply these understandings into practice appropriately. In intercultural communication where different groups of people, language, and culture collide, there are challenges in such communication. Therefore, challenges in intercultural communication were presented together with associated strategies. Finally, the chapter presented the conceptual framework of this present study which was drawn from three theoretical perspectives, including intercultural awareness, challenges in intercultural communication, and communication strategies.

The next chapter describes the research methodology, the research instruments, and the data collection procedure adopted in this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter begins with an overview of the research philosophy, including ontology, epistemology, and methodology, adopted for this study. It then moves on to a more focused presentation of this study, including the pilot study, how the research instruments were developed. There are explanations of the research context, participant selection, and research instruments selected. Also, data collection, data analysis, and participant selection are discussed. Finally, research quality and research ethics are presented.

#### **3.1 Research philosophy**

Research philosophy is important for conducting a study because it enables a researcher to select an appropriate research framework for his or her study. Research philosophy involves the attributes of the knowledge related to our research that researchers construct and generate through their ‘worldview’ (Olsen et al., 1992; Fossey et al., 2002). Guba (1990, p. 17) refers to worldview as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action”. Through examination of worldview, researchers know and understand certain things that other people think and do so that they can explain society. Guba (1990) notes that worldview can be understood through a research paradigm which consists of three dimensions: ontology (What is reality?), epistemology (How do you know something?), and methodology (How do you go about finding it out?). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) add that a research paradigm is an interrelated system of thinking and practice for conducting research. Therefore, as a researcher, it is vital to understand different aspects of worldview.

The importance of understanding research paradigms is noted by Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) who state that it can help researchers determine their research designs based on the type of data, data collection procedure, and data interpretation. They

also add that understanding research paradigms may introduce researchers to new research designs that they overlooked. This means research design can also be changed to be more suitable with research topics and research questions due to the notion of research paradigm selected.

This study fits within an ‘interpretive’ research paradigm. The reasons why interpretivism is adopted will be explained through the discussion of ontology, epistemology, and methodology in the following sections.

### **3.1.1 Ontology**

Ontology involves the nature of ‘reality’, including how reality exists, how reality is structured, what exists in reality, and how researchers categorise reality (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Lawson, 2004). It is also important to understand research ontology since it allows researchers to discover and understand how people perceive and construct social reality and how their perspectives influence on and shape the social action (Lawson, 2004; Bracken, 2010).

This study followed subjectivist ontology which views that realities are multiple and socially constructed as they are created by individuals’ perceptions and actions. Subjectivism is defined by Bryman (2008, p. 19) as “an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors”. It implies that reality is created from actions and perceptions of individuals, as social actors, through social entities that they experienced and interacted with. Therefore, realities are different as there are different actors. Subjectivist researchers focus on each individual’s unique perspectives which reflect multiple realities (Creswell, 2007). This study sought to understand meanings that influenced the perspectives and behaviours of the Thai student trainees as participants of this study. Creswell (2007) notes that subjectivist researchers embrace these multiple realities from different people who give various statements, perspectives about reality through observations and/or experiences.

### **3.1.2 Epistemology**

Epistemology involves knowledge of reality, what can be described as knowledge, and how researchers can gain that knowledge (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Thomas, 2009). This study adopted ‘interpretivism’. Interpretivism is related to subjective experiences of individuals as it is believed that knowledge of reality can be acquired through their perceptions and experiences of the external world (Willis, 1995). Interpretivism focuses on the complexity of individuals in making senses of emerging situations and/or surroundings of their everyday lives (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). In other words, knowledge of reality is produced through individuals lived experiences. Interpretivist researchers use qualitative methods such as interviews, case study, or observations in order to understand the meanings and explain the reasons behind individuals’ perceptions and actions (Gephart, 1999).

The study focuses on knowledge of reality which can be acquired through subjective meanings of individuals. To be precise, the focus is on the perceptions of Thai student trainees, as social actors, as inferred from their reports of intercultural interactions between them and foreign passengers and colleagues where they construct realities. This study aims to explore participant’ perspectives regarding intercultural awareness with respect to communication challenges and associated strategies that exist in intercultural communication through English and explain what is happening. To discover and understand the individual participant’s meanings regarding the role of intercultural awareness, this study relies on a qualitative method using in-depth interviews. Therefore, interpretivism is appropriate for this study.

### **3.1.3 Methodology**

Methodology involves particular approaches and practices used to gain knowledge of reality based on the ontology and epistemology adopted for a study (Krauss, 2005). It is also the broad term referring to research approaches, strategy of enquiry,

and methods used to find out answers for research questions and collect data (Keeves, 1997; Myers, 2009). Creswell (2009) notes that ontology and epistemology contribute to a methodology. Based on the previous discussion of ontology and epistemology, this section will present the research approach, strategy, and methods used in this study.

### **3.1.3.1 Research approach**

The research approach is a well-planned procedure, including the steps from broad methodological assumptions to data collection methods, data analysis, and data interpretation (Myers, 2009). Bryman and Burgess (1999) suggest that adopting a research approach depends on underlying research philosophy, the context, purpose and nature of the research questions. The qualitative approach was appropriate for this study since a set of in-depth data about individual perspectives was required. A qualitative approach is used to gain an in-depth data with rich descriptions in order to discover and understand the meanings of social behaviours which cannot be obtained through a quantitative approach (Thomas, 2009). Berg and Lune (2012) add that qualitative data is presented in forms of texts, definitions, and full descriptions which present the knowledge of reality through researchers' interpretations for better understanding of social behaviour and real-life situations. Creswell (2009) notes that qualitative researchers incorporate subjectivism and interpretivism in their studies. Qualitative methods involve interviews, case study, observations, and other qualitative methods which can provide in-depth and abundant data.

This study aimed to investigate the role of intercultural awareness through Thai student trainees' communication challenges and associated strategies in intercultural communication using English language. This could be understood through their thoughts and behaviours related to their responses. Detailed understandings of the role of intercultural awareness can be found by interviewing participants directly which allowed them to share their stories, feelings, and experiences. In addition, it can be seen that a quantitative approach is not

appropriate for this present study in many ways. For example, quantitative methods cannot explain why Thai student trainees experience a certain type of communication challenge or employ a certain type of communication strategy rather than another in different intercultural situations. The question of how intercultural awareness plays a role during the interaction between the Thai student trainee and passengers could not be answered by numerical data. Moreover, quantitative methods overlook the uniqueness of the backgrounds and experiences of Thai student trainees in the study, which could be obtained by using a qualitative method, in this study in-depth interview.

### **3.1.3.2 Research strategy**

Research strategy provides specific directions for research procedures. Saunders et al. (2009) state that an appropriate research strategy has to be based on not only a research approach selected for a study, but researchers need to carefully consider other related elements of the study such as the existing knowledge of the research area, the time amount, and available resources. For qualitative approach, Creswell (2007) proposes five strategies which are narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (see Table 3.1).

This study adopted phenomenology as a research strategy for directing research procedures in order to achieve the aim of the study by investigating the role of intercultural awareness through Thai student trainees' communication challenges and associated strategies in intercultural communication using English language. Phenomenology concentrates on understanding essential meanings of individuals' perspectives through their daily life experiences, socially constructed reality (Van Maanen, 1990). From a point of view of intercultural communication, Patton (2002) notes that phenomenological researchers focus on the 'essence' of one's experience, so that researchers can better understand what their particular experience in intercultural interaction is like. In other words, phenomenological research emphasises on the meanings that individuals perceive on what happens to them in their daily life experiences. Creswell (2007, p. 59) states that

“phenomenology is also seen as an interpretive process where the researchers interpret the meaning of lived experiences”.

	<b>Narrative Research</b>	<b>Phenomenology</b>	<b>Grounded Theory</b>	<b>Ethnography</b>	<b>Case Study</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Exploring the life of an individual	Understanding the essence of the experience	Developing a theory grounded in data from the field	Describing & interpreting a culture-sharing group	Developing an in-depth description & analysis of a case or multiple cases
<b>Type of problem best suited for design</b>	Needing to tell stories of individual experiences	Needing to describe the essence of a lived phenomenon	Grounding a theory in the views of participants	Describing & interpreting the shared patterns of culture of a group	Providing an in-depth understanding of a case(s)
<b>Unit of analysis</b>	Studying one or more individuals	Studying several individuals that have shared the experience	Studying a process, action, or interaction involving many individuals	Studying a group that shares the same culture	Studying an event, a program, an activity, more than one individual
<b>Data collection form</b>	Using primarily interviews & documents	Using primarily interviews with individuals, documents, observations, & art may also be considered	Using primarily interviews with 20-60 individuals	Using primarily observations & interviews, but perhaps collecting other sources during extended time in the field	Using multiple sources e.g. interviews, observations, documents, artefacts
<b>Data analysis strategies</b>	Analyzing data for stories, “restorying” stories, developing themes, often using a chronology	Analyzing data for significant statements, meaning units, textural & structural	Analyzing data through open coding, axial coding, selective coding	Analyzing data through description of the culture-sharing group; themes about the group	Analyzing data through description of the case & themes of the case as well as cross-case themes
<b>Written report</b>	Developing a narrative about the stories of an individual’s life	Describing the “essence” of the experience	Generating a theory illustrated in a figure	Describing how a culture-sharing group works	Developing a Detailed analysis of one or more cases

Table 3.1: Creswell’s (2007) Five Strategies to Qualitative Approach

To this notion, phenomenology strategy, therefore, best suits this study since I attempted to understand the essential meanings through the participants' points of views and make sense of the experiences these participants described. To be precise, I tried to understand the role of intercultural awareness of Thai student trainees through their perceptions of the experiences in intercultural encounters using English. Also, the number of the participants, the methods used for data collection, the time frame of data collection, and data interpretation were also guided by this phenomenology strategy.

### **3.1.3.3 Research methods**

Methods refer to “the techniques or procedures used to gather and collect data related to some research question or hypothesis” (Crotty, 2003, p. 3). In this study, relying on qualitative approach and phenomenology strategy, I used ‘in-depth interview’ as a qualitative method for data collection. It is an appropriate method to assist in exploring and understanding the role of intercultural awareness through English of the participants of this study. Crotty (1998) suggests that to understand people’s subjective experiences requires a flexible approach that can be adapted to the data as it emerges. Therefore, using interviews was appropriate to access different perspectives of people during the interactions (Gumperz, 2003). More details about research methods, including data collection procedures and data analysis will be presented later in this chapter (see section 3.2.5 Data Collection Procedure).

## **3.2 The study**

The previous section presents the research paradigm and rationale for adopting it. This sections mainly focuses on the study, including particular topics such as pilot study, field site, research participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

As explained in the previous chapters, the focus of this study is on the role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication and how it impacts communication challenges and associated strategies of Thai student trainees through English. This has been formulated into three main research questions.

1. To what extent are these Thai student trainees interculturally aware in intercultural communication?
2. What are the communication challenges experienced by these Thai student trainees in intercultural communication?
3. What are the associated strategies employed by these Thai student trainees in dealing with those challenges?

The first question (RQ1) aimed to explore the extent of intercultural awareness the participants had. The second question (RQ2) aimed to identify the communication challenges the participants experienced in intercultural communication. The third question (RQ3) aimed to identify the communication strategies employed by the participants in dealing with those communication challenges.

### **3.2.1 Pilot Study**

A pilot study is a feasible study which is a small-scale study conducted in planning and preparing for a main study (Polit et al., 2001). Baker (1994) states that a pilot study is a pre-testing of particular research methods, instruments, or procedures. Researchers conduct pilot studies for a number of reasons. One of the benefits from a pilot study is it gives signals about whether the selected approaches or instruments are inappropriate where the main research study could fail.

The reasons for this study are to (1) verify the clarity of the questions used in data collection, (2) collect preliminary data to help develop the research project, and (3) train myself, as the researcher of this study, in many aspects of the research

procedures, including interview techniques and uncovering potential problems of the research project. To emphasise the benefits of this pilot study, it describes the issues emerging during conducting the study as well as the modifications for the main study as a result of the pilot work.

### **3.2.1.1 Procedures**

From July to November 2017, three pilot studies were conducted. Each pilot study was conducted with a different group of 15 respondents from three universities in Songkhla, Thailand. Although I was in the UK during my pilot studies, with the great help from my friends who were lecturers at those universities, I was able to recruit the respondents for these three pilot studies. All respondents of these pilot studies were 4<sup>th</sup> year students majoring in English. The first pilot study was conducted in July 2017 with fifteen respondents. Questionnaires on language and culture (described below) were distributed to the respondents. Five students were later selected for phone interviews with me. The second pilot study was conducted in October 2017 with fifteen respondents. Questionnaires on intercultural competence (see below) were distributed to these students. Five students were selected for phone interviews with me. Finally, the third pilot study was conducted in November 2017 with fifteen respondents. Five students were selected for phone interviews with me.

As the pilot studies progressed, there were some changes in the use of questionnaire and interview questions. The following section, then, will present how the instruments used in data collection were developed.

### **3.2.1.2 Developments of instruments**

These three pilot studies assisted me in generating new ideas to modify the data collection instruments, familiarising myself with the procedures of the main study, and also sharpening my interview skills.

In these pilot studies, two main instruments, questionnaire and phone interview, were used in data collection. The questionnaire was aimed to be used for participant selection while the phone interview was expected to approximate face-to-face interviews. The questions used in both questionnaire and phone interview were in Thai.

In the first pilot study, I found that the questionnaire regarding attitudes towards language and cultures was not suitable for the study and the results from the questionnaire did not contribute to the research question asking about the extent of intercultural awareness. It is true that the questionnaire of attitudes towards language and cultures gave me some useful data because attitude is one of the components in intercultural competence and intercultural awareness. However, I found that having only the data on attitudes was not going to be enough to claim that the respondents really engaged with intercultural awareness because it involves attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. The results from the questionnaire was analysed using the SPSS programme to find the mean and reliability. Cronbach's Alpha was employed to test the reliability of internal consistency of the individual items used in the questionnaire. However, the reliability score of the questionnaire was quite low at 0.67 (see Table 3.2). For phone interviews, the questions were about language and cultures. I found that the given answers from the respondents were inadequate and some were irrelevant. The main reasons were that the interview questions were too narrow. They tended to lead the respondents to answer 'Yes' or 'No'. For example, *Is English important to you? Is working abroad good?* Moreover, I did not dig deep enough to gain more in-depth answers from the respondents due to lack of interview techniques. Then, I decided to conduct the second pilot study.

In the second pilot study, I used a new questionnaire regarding intercultural competence. It was adapted from Fantini's *Exploring and Assessing Intercultural Competence* (2007). As a result, I found that the questionnaire could represent respondents' engagement of intercultural awareness since the questionnaire

included all components of intercultural awareness. The results from this questionnaire also helped guide me in selection participant for the actual study. Specifically, it allowed me to select participants from different levels of intercultural competence. The result of the reliability test of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha showed that the total alpha score was 0.81, indicating that the questionnaire had high internal consistency. The total score indicates that this questionnaire was considered good and acceptable. For phone interview questions, I adjusted questions to be broader in order to allow respondents to be able to express their point of views towards language and culture more. Moreover, I established a good rapport with the respondents and avoided interruption and leading questions. I found that the respondents gave more in-depth answers which were relevant to the study. Some answers led to new areas which I found useful for this study. However, there were still some unclear elements in some questions that respondents kept asking for clarification about. Therefore, a third pilot study needed to be conducted.

For the third pilot study, the questionnaire from the second pilot study and questions from phone interviews were revised based on the comments from respondents and suggestions from my supervisors to ensure the appropriateness of the content and reliability. Some question items in the questionnaire were rearranged. The results showed that the alpha score of this questionnaire was 0.83. It was higher than the alpha score of the second pilot study. However, both versions of intercultural competence questionnaire were reliable at good level. Therefore, after the tests of clarity and reliability of the questionnaire from the second pilot study, I planned to use the final version of questionnaire for the actual study. See Appendix A and B for the questionnaire of intercultural competence. For the phone interview, the questions were simplified and broad but they were still capture the focus of the study which was about language and culture. I found that the respondents were able to give more answers as the interview periods spent with each respondent were longer than the previous pilot studies. See section 3.2.4.2 Interview for questions asked in the interviews.

<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

Table 3.2: Cronbach's Alpha Score Interpretation

Table 3.2 shows how alpha scores ranging from 0 to 1 are interpreted to show the quality of internal consistency of the questionnaire ranging from unacceptable to excellent. Reliability is measured from the internal consistency of the question items allocated in the questionnaire. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) note that if all question items are completely independent from each another, they are not consistent and correlated. Therefore, the selected question items should share correlation and measure the same idea. They also suggest that researchers should remove any item that has a lot lower or higher score than the other items to make the question items consistent and create reliability.

From the pilot studies, I was able to reflexively monitor my own thoughts and feelings occurring during the phone interviews. Although letting the respondents share their stories before starting the interview could create a good rapport, it wasted the interview time if they shared too much irrelevant information. Therefore, in the actual interviews, I not only managed to create good rapport with participants appropriately but also stayed focused on the interview questions and related emerging topics under discussion. From the reflection, I managed to be a good listener and a note-taker during the actual interviews. Although it was my main role to ask them questions, I was aware that most of the data recorded should be from the participants.

### 3.2.2 Field site

The field site selected as a fieldwork for this study was Suvarnabhumi Airport. Located in Thailand where the English language is categorised as a lingua franca,

this airport was suitable for the investigation of the role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication through English in ELF context. The screenshots (Figure 3.1 and 3.2) are taken from Airports of Thailand’s website (AOT, 2020) showing Suvarnabhumi Airport and its crowded terminal.



Figure 3.1: Suvarnabhumi Airport, Thailand



Figure 3.2: Terminal 1, Suvarnabhumi Airport, Thailand

According to the information from Airports of Thailand PLC, the airport “covers an area of 3,240 hectares (8,000 acres), making it one of the biggest international airports in Southeast Asia and a regional hub for aviation. It is the twentieth busiest airport in the world, ninth busiest airport in Asia, and the busiest in the country,

having handled 53 million passengers in 2016, and is also a major air cargo hub, with a total of 95 airlines”. Moreover, due to the great numbers of passengers from all around the world arriving the airport, over 200,000 passengers per day (AOT, 2020), it not only allows the participants to frequently use English for communication but also provides the opportunity for them to experience real-life intercultural communication outside their classrooms where they might face with communication challenges and employed strategies to handle those challenges. This, then, has provided the answers to the research questions of this study.

### **3.2.3 Research participants**

For this study, the participants were 4<sup>th</sup> year students majoring in English at a university in Songkhla, Thailand. They worked as student trainees for airlines at Suvarnabhumi Airport during March and June 2018. All of them had passed the ordinary national examination test (O-NET) to be admitted into the English major, in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. They undertook many English courses at the university, including English grammar, English reading and writing, oral communication, as well as courses of English and American literature.

This study adopted a qualitative approach which usually requires a small number of participants so that researchers could explore their perspectives in depth and produce detailed findings. In conducting a qualitative study, Boyd (2001) suggests two to ten participants while Creswell (1998) mentions five to twenty-five as sufficient to reach data saturation. This study included twelve participants. These participants were accessible so that I, as a lecturer at the participants’ university, could draw samples for this study. They were purposively selected from an initial pool of 50 English major students. The questionnaire regarding intercultural competence was used as a tool for participant selection. They were selected because they had particular experiences and characteristics that could contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon studied. Although they shared some similarities such as their major, their job training workplace, in this case Suvarnabhumi Airport, and their nationality, there were some differences such as their genders, their religions, and their intercultural experiences.

As student trainees, their job responsibilities included passenger services at the airport upon departures and arrivals. Under supervision of the airline supervisors, they were assigned and rotated to perform their shift duties following the airlines' policies, procedures, and operations. Also, they had to coordinate with members of airline staff, from the same and other airline companies, in various functions of services. The participants reported the following job responsibilities:

1. Provide special passenger services for infants, handicapped passengers, elderly, and passenger with language problems, etc.;
2. Issue airline documents;
3. Assist passengers in the airline lounges at the airport;
4. Check passengers' tickets and travel documents;
5. Issue boarding passes and baggage tags;
6. Board passengers to the aircraft and control boarding procedures upon departure;
7. Stand by to assist the arriving passengers upon arrival at the gate;
8. Handle cases of lost or damaged baggage; and
9. Stand by at the baggage claim point to assist passengers with any problems they may have.

### **3.2.4 Research instruments**

This study applied a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The Thai language was used in the questionnaire and interviews as it is the participants' mother tongue. This enabled participants to express themselves more fully and freely (Rossman & Rallis 2003), and thereby increased the quality of the data obtained (Esposito, 2001). While the questionnaire was used for the purpose of participant selection, interviews were used for in-depth data collection. Even though different instruments were employed, interview, as a qualitative approach, was the main instrument for data collection of this study.

### 3.2.4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire of intercultural competence (see Appendix A for the English version and Appendix B for the Thai version) was used as the instrument for participant selection. It was adapted from Fantini's Exploring and Assessing Intercultural Competence (2007) questionnaire. His questionnaire involves a complex of abilities that one needs to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with other people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in intercultural communication. This concept closely links to Byram's ICC model (1997) and Baker's (2009, 2011, 2015) which influence this present study.

To make sure that the adapted questionnaires were translated into Thai correctly, I, therefore, asked two Thai PhD candidates who were currently studying in the UK to help check the questionnaires as interraters. I also asked them to translate the questionnaire from English into Thai. Both of them have experiences in teaching translation in Thai universities. After that I compared their versions with mine to see if the translations were similar and mutually understood. As a result, I found that the translations were similar in both meaning and sentence structure. Both close-ended and open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts which included respondents' information and intercultural competence.

Part 1 consists of general demographic information, including name, gender, age, and experiences in foreign countries.

Part 2 consists of 20 questions related to intercultural competence. Questions were divided into four sections, which are knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness.

Examples of items from each section include:

Section A: Knowledge

From my intercultural experiences using English,

1. I know the essential norms and taboos of the different cultures (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviours, etc.)
2. I know some techniques to aid my learning of the different language and culture.

#### Section B: Attitude

From my intercultural experiences using English, I demonstrated willingness to

6. interact with my interlocutor(s) (I didn't avoid them or primarily seek out my compatriots).
7. learn from my interlocutor(s), their language, and their culture.

#### Section C: Skills

From my intercultural experiences using English,

11. I adjusted my behaviour, dress, etc., as appropriate, to avoid offending others from different cultures.
12. I used strategies for learning the language and culture from my interlocutor(s).

#### Section D: Awareness

From my intercultural experiences using English, I realise the

16. differences and similarities across my own and those of different language and culture.
17. dangers of generalising individual behaviours as representative of the whole culture.

It should be noted that the use of questionnaire in participant selection systematically helped select the participants since it was based on their overall scores. Although these participants have some similar characteristics, their ICC scores from the questionnaire reflect variation among them which could provide differences in findings and contribute to a greater understanding of the phenomenon studied. See 3.2.6.1 Questionnaire analysis for criteria of participant selection.

### 3.2.4.2 Interviews

Interview was mainly employed in this study to collect in-depth information from the participants. Audio-recording was used during the interviews to record conversations between the participants and me. All interviews were conducted in Thai and were later transcribed and translated into English. Richards (2003, p. 47 - 48) notes that “interviews form the mainstay of qualitative research. They can provide an effective way to elicit in-depth personal information, explain motivations and attitudes, and gain an understanding of personal perspectives in a way that is difficult to achieve through surveys, or from observation”. Davis (1995) adds that many studies of language and culture have adopted interviews which can be used to gain the different perspectives of individuals on situations or explain human interactions.

Participants were asked to attend two individual interviews. The first interview was about languages and cultures and the second interview was about challenges in communication and strategies they used in dealing with those challenges based on their intercultural encounters during their job training. The aim of the data collected from these interviews was to contribute to the research questions of this study.

Semi-structured technique was used during the interviews. However, the wordings and order of prepared questions were not fixed. This technique incorporates conversational aspects between researchers and participants. Follow-up questions connected to participants' answers were also used to keep the conversation flowing. This technique provides researchers with the ability to probe participants to get more details about participants' thoughts, feelings, and opinions (Creswell, 2012). The prepared questions used in the first interview were based on the aspect of intercultural competence where all components, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness, interrelate (Byram, 1997). Therefore, each question provides the opportunity to access those components. That is to say the answers from the participants can offer evidence of the awareness they have. As intercultural awareness is relevant to components of intercultural competence, which stresses

understanding of a language user's own culture, as well as other cultures, it is, therefore, important to discover participants' attitudes towards their own language and culture at the individual, local and wider social levels, their knowledge, their skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction, and their critical cultural awareness. The questions were aimed to answer the Research Question 1 which explores the extent of intercultural awareness of these Thai student trainees in general situations. Prepared questions for the first interview are as follows:

1. What do you think about the English language?
2. What is your opinion about studying English with non-native English teachers and native English speaking teachers?
3. How do you feel about communication nowadays where people from different cultures and different countries have more chances to meet and communicate with each other?
4. As an English major student, if you have a chance to study or work abroad after graduation, would you like to take the chance?

For the second interview, the prepared questions were aimed to answer the Research Questions 2 and 3 which aim to identify communication challenges and communication strategies of these Thai student trainees. The answers given by the participants were also hoped to answer Research Question 1 which explores the extent of intercultural awareness, specifically in intercultural encounters they had at the airport. There was only one general prepared question with three sub-questions for the second interview since my intention was to allow the participants to talk about their experiences without using any leading questions.

1. Can you tell me about your experiences in your job training?
  - 1.1 What are your job responsibilities?
  - 1.2 Do you enjoy the job training?
  - 1.3 Do you have anything else to share with me?

As the interviews progressed, the participants talked about the challenges they had and how they dealt with those challenges. I was aware of my role as the participants' teacher which might have influenced their responses during both interviews. Therefore, the reasons behind conducting two rounds of interviews were not only to gain more in-depth information but also to make participants feel comfortable to share their experiences of their job training with me. See Appendix C for the Thai version of the prepared questions.

Having only the interview as a main instrument of this study was enough to produce adequate data to achieve the aim of this study. Since this research applies phenomenological strategy which intends to explore in-depth understanding of the individual lived experiences in relation to intercultural awareness and intercultural communication, I was able to identify a phenomenon or human experience by collecting data from those who experience it through the use of in-depth interviews with the Thai student trainees. In addition, I also kept a diary detailing both the research progress and the collected data. At the pilot stage of this study, the diary helped me in tracking back to the points that needed to be developed and checking if I was still on track of my study progress. In coding and creating themes, the diary helped me in organising data and also helped me see clearer interactions between the participants and me and any influences on the data due to this.

### **3.2.5 Data collection procedure**

The data collection took place over a six-month period from January to June 2018. The participants were asked to follow three steps of the data collection procedure.

Firstly, in January 2018, the questionnaire session took place at the participants' university. With the great help of my colleague, 50 students majoring in English were arranged to complete the questionnaire of intercultural competence. They were informed about the study and their rights as participants (see Appendix F). The session took about 20 minutes. All completed questionnaires were later forwarded to me. After analysing using the SPSS programme, twelve students were

selected as the main participants of the study. See section 3.2.6.1 Questionnaire analysis for criteria used in participant selection. They were later divided into three groups based on the scores from the questionnaire, namely low, medium, and high. Each group consisted of four participants. Participants information is presented in Chapter 4, 4.2 Findings from the questionnaire.

Secondly, in February 2018, the participants were directly contacted by me, explained their rights as research participants, and asked to attend two individual interviews. After all of them agreed, the consent forms were given to the participants on the 1<sup>st</sup> interview date (see Appendix G). The first interview was arranged in the first week of March 2018 before the participants started their job training. All the interviews were scheduled following participants' convenience at the coffee shop at Suvarnabhumi Airport. For every interview, I reached the coffee shop early and waited for them until they showed up at the actual interview time to check the recorder, prepare for the interview, and show my readiness to the participants. The environment at the coffee shop was relaxing. Moreover, we could drink some coffee and talk at the same time. This made participants feel more comfortable to share with me. All the interviews were conducted in Thai. As evidenced in the pilot studies, the participants could understand the interview questions easily and express their opinions fully and freely through Thai. Moreover, some cultural concepts expressed through some specific Thai words, slang, idioms, and proverbs could be easily and mutually understood by both sides. Examples include: *Sat-lok-yom-pen-pai-tarm-kam* ('all beings are directed by karma'); *Nam-khoon-wai-nai, Nam-sai-wai-nok* ('biting one's tongue'); and *Tam-rhoy* ('being conceited and arrogant'). *Tam-rhoy* (highlighted in yellow in Appendix J, Example 1), is a regional word spoken by the southern people of Thailand. I was able to understand it because I am also from the South. This would not have emerged if the interviews were in English and perhaps would have been less likely in a more formal context. The interview duration was expected to be not over an hour in order not to exhaust both the participants and me. However, the duration was flexible and they could extend it. Each participant took nearly an hour, approximately 40 – 55 minutes, to finish the interviews. The interview was mainly about language and

culture. The prepared questions mentioned in the previous section (3.2.4.2 Interview) were used at this stage.

In the first interview, I started by talking about the participants' backgrounds given in the questionnaire, not only to obtain some data relevant to the study, but also to break the ice and create good rapport with them. During the interviews, I followed what I learned from the pilot studies and the related literature. I attempted to avoid asking multiple questions and leading questions. However, it was not possible to avoid yes-no questions since they were used to confirm the answers that the participants gave. I always gave them time to think and respond and encouraged them to share their stories with me. Even though some of their answers sounded peculiar to me, I tried to control my facial expressions, such as frowning, eye-rolling and other signs of disagreement. Once I noticed emerging new aspects, I posed further probing questions. More importantly, I avoided giving my own ideas or correcting their answers. Although these interviews were audio recorded, notes were also taken during the interview when I found some particular interesting issues. It might interrupt the flow of the interview but it seemed to encourage the participants to express themselves more. Examples from the first interview are given in Appendix I.

Finally, the second individual interview based on their job training experiences were scheduled in the first week of April 2018, four weeks after the participants started their job training. In this second interview, there were some difficulties to make appointments with the participants since they were assigned to work following their shifts. Some schedules were rearranged. However, all participants were able to manage to attend the second interviews as agreed. The interviews with all participants took place at the same coffee shop as the first interview. The interviews were still conducted in Thai. This time, the interview was mainly about their experiences of job trainings. The data from this interview were hoped to show evidence of challenges they experienced in intercultural communication and the strategies they employed to deal with those challenges. Although some participants shared their bad experiences which I deeply felt for them, I tried to control my

emotions and focus on the interviews. They were advised to stop in case they were unhappy and uncomfortable to talk about sensitive topics. I attentively listened to what they were sharing to understand their experiences and feelings. Above all, I respected their individual differences and sensitivities. All these interviews were also audio recorded and later transcribed and translated into English. Examples from the second interview are given in Appendix J.

### 3.2.6 Data analysis

This study employed questionnaires for participant selection and interviews for main data collection. The appropriate analysis, then, was done based on the chosen research instruments and nature of the collected data.

#### 3.2.6.1 Questionnaire analysis

For the questionnaire, data was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. It is used to present trends, scores, and percentages of the data. A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Extremely Low) to 5 (Extremely High), was used to rate the respondents' level of intercultural competence. Based on five rating scales, the mean range was calculated and divided into three main ranges as presented in Table 3.3. Based on the overall scores from the questionnaire, students were divided into three groups; High, Medium, and Low.

Mean Range	Level Interpretation
3.68 – 5.00	High Intercultural Competence
2.34 – 3.67	Medium Intercultural Competence
1.00 – 2.33	Low Intercultural competence

Table 3.3: Criteria of ICC level interpretation

Based on the criteria in Table 3.3, cluster sampling was adopted. Following the cluster sampling, the researchers have equal participant sizes with mutual characteristic within each group (cluster) (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). In this study, the respondents were divided into three separate groups, High, Medium, and Low, then selected only participants who had the highest overall scores from each

group. Each level consisted of four participants. Participant selection procedure is provided in section 3.3.

### **3.2.6.2 Interview analysis**

Interpretive analysis was used as a tool to analyse the interview data. The interpretation involves understanding the meaning of the participants' experiences in order to provide a thick description or an in-depth narrative story of the phenomenon under the investigation which can explain why participants perceived or behaved the way they did (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Interpretive analysis is often not concerned with searching for specific answers or how the language is used, but with understanding or 'making sense of' a dynamic social process as it unfolds through participants' perspectives. Therefore, pragmatic strategies are not being examined in this study. In interpretative analysis, Bhattacharjee (2012) notes that the data may be interpreted differently due to different frames of references a researcher brought to the study. In this study, I detailed what I had brought to the study through the presentation of my personal backgrounds and experiences, the context of this study, my motivation for conducting this study, and the research philosophy which determined the selection of the research strategy of this study. By so doing, it shows the aspects which influenced the way the data was analysed, interpreted, discussed and presented.

This study also applied thematic analysis. Although this analysis takes time and depends on the interpretation of each researcher, it is a widely used qualitative analysis method due to its flexibility, easy implementation, and potential to provide richness of data (Braun & Clarke 2006; Guest et al., 2012). Following the process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Guest et al. (2012), Figure 3.3 presents the thematic analysis process adopted in this study.

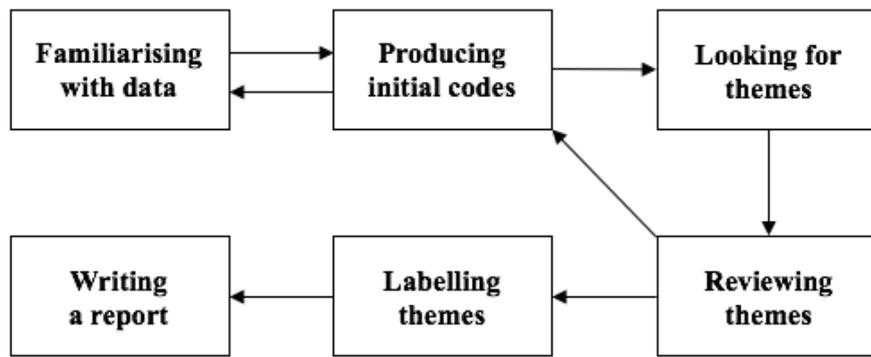


Figure 3.3: Thematic analysis process

In the process of producing initial codes, I also followed the steps suggested by Creswell (2012, p. 244).

1. Initially read through text data
2. Divide the text into segments of information
3. Label the segments of information with codes
4. Reduce overlap and redundancy of codes
5. Collapse codes into themes

The codes were guided by the research questions. I created the codes from the findings of each individual participant since it allowed me to familiarise myself with, and understand, the characteristic of the codes and the findings. Thus, I was able to generate appropriate and relevant codes for this study. Also, interpretive analysis was used as a way of interpreting meanings and understanding the orientation to the identified themes. (See Appendix N)

The findings from the interviews will be presented in the next chapter. It should be noted that the findings are narratively analysed as a qualitative, empirical, data-driven study of the role of intercultural awareness. The following section presents how research participants were selected.

### **3.3 Participant selection**

This section presents the results from the questionnaire and discusses participant selection based on the questionnaire score. In this study, the questionnaire of intercultural competence was used as the main instrument for participant selection. It was adapted from Fantini's (2007) Exploring and Assessing Intercultural Competence (see section 3.2.4.1). The questionnaire includes both close-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire consists of two main parts which are respondent information and intercultural competence.

All the questionnaires were properly completed by the respondents. No item was left unanswered. The answers given in the questionnaire were analysed separately based on the nature of answers in each part, written and Likert's scale. For the respondent information part, frequency and percentage were adopted to analyse and present the results. In the intercultural competence part, as a 5-point Likert's scale was used to rate the respondents' level of intercultural competence from extremely low to extremely high, SPSS programme was used for calculation. Answers were tabulated into sections, including Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Awareness. The criteria for the rating scale were presented in section 3.2.6 Data analysis, Table 3.3. The results from the questionnaire were presented in the form of tables alongside with brief descriptions.

#### **3.3.1 Results from the questionnaire**

This section begins with the results from Part 1 regarding the respondent information. Then, it will be followed by the results from Part 2 summarising the overall score of intercultural competence. Finally, it presents the selected participants of this study based on the questionnaire score.

##### **1) Respondents information**

The respondents had to respond to the items provided in the questionnaire regarding

general information, consisting of gender, age, their first time studying English, and their experiences in foreign countries. The data are presented in the tables as follows:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	18	36
Female	32	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3.4: Gender of respondents

Table 3.4 shows the gender breakdown of the respondents of this study. There were 18 male and 32 female respondents. In other words, males were 36% and females were 64%.

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
20	17	34
21	32	64
22	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3.5: Age of respondents

Table 3.5 presents the ages of the respondents. Thirty two respondents or 64% were 21 years old. Seventeen respondents or 34% were 20 years old while one respondent or 2% was 22 years old. The average ages of the respondents reflect the educational standard age of Thai students which are around 20-21 years old when they are in the fourth year at higher education level.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Kindergarten	40	80
Primary school	10	20
Secondary school	0	0
High school	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3.6: Respondents' first time studying English

Table 3.6 shows the respondents' first time studying English. Forty respondents or 80% started studying English in kindergarten while 10 respondents or 20% started

studying English at the primary school level. No respondent or 0% started studying English at the secondary school or high school level.

<b>Experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Have experience	42	84
Never have experience	8	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3.7: Respondents' experiences in foreign countries

Table 3.7 presents the respondents' experiences in foreign countries. Majority of the respondents or 84% had experiences in foreign countries for educational and travelling purposes while 16% or 8 respondents never had experiences in foreign countries. Malaysia is reported the most visited country while other countries include Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Australia, USA, Canada, Mexico, and Brazil.

## 2) Intercultural competence

Fifty respondents as an initial pool of participant selection had to complete the questionnaire of intercultural competence. The scores of each component and overall score are presented in Table 3.8.

<b>Components</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Level</b>
Knowledge	4.18	0.58	High
Attitude	4.25	0.46	High
Skills	4.15	0.51	High
Awareness	3.58	0.63	Medium
<b>Intercultural competence overall score</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 3.8: Respondents' intercultural competence overall score

Table 3.8 indicates that the respondents possessed a high level of intercultural competence. This is shown clearly by the average mean score of 4.04 (SD = 0.54). There were three components rated at a high level while one component rated at the medium level. From the results, Attitude had the highest mean score of 4.25 (SD = 0.46) at the high level, followed by Knowledge (M = 4.18, S.D. = 0.58) and Skills

( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ). However, Awareness had the lowest mean score of 3.58 ( $SD = 0.63$ ) at the medium level. For each individual respondent score, see Appendix H.

### **3.3.2 Research participants' information**

Twelve participants were selected from 50<sup>th</sup> year English major students through purposive sampling based on the questionnaire scores. Following a cluster sampling approach, they were divided into three groups of four participants: Group Low, Group Medium, and Group High, based on their intercultural competence overall scores. The final participants were four males and eight females. While this might lead to the question of gender balance, it should be noted that the selection was based on the individual scores. Another reason the number of female participants was higher than male participants came from the initial number of the respondents, 18 males and 32 females, from which they were selected. Pseudonyms were given to all participants by me.

#### **1) Group Low**

**Aoy:** A female participant aged 20. She had been studying English for sixteen years. Her first time of studying English was when she was at kindergarten level. She had never been abroad. Her ICC score was 2.25, the lowest among the participants.

**Ekky:** A male participant aged 20. He had been studying English for sixteen years. His first time of studying English was when he was at kindergarten level. He had never been abroad. His ICC score was 2.30.

**Kro:** A female participant aged 21. She had been studying English for sixteen years. Her first time of studying English was when she was at primary level. She had never been abroad. Her ICC score was 2.30.

**Kim:** A female participant aged 21. She had been studying English for sixteen years. Her first time of studying English was when she was at primary level. She had never been abroad. Her ICC score was 2.30.

## **2) Group Medium**

**Fon:** A female participant aged 21. She had been studying English for seventeen years. Her first time of studying English was when she was at kindergarten level. She had been to Malaysia and Indonesia several times for educational and travelling purposes. Her ICC score was 3.60.

**Joy:** A female participant aged 20. She had been studying English for sixteen years. Her first time of studying English was when she was at kindergarten level. She had been to many countries such as Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, for both educational and travelling purposes. During her study at university, she took a summer course in Australia for three months. Her ICC score was 3.65.

**Ohm:** A male participant aged 21. He had been studying English for seventeen years. His first time of studying English was when he was at kindergarten level. He had never been abroad. His ICC score was the lowest of the medium group at 3.55.

**Pond:** A female participant aged 22. She had been studying English for sixteen years. Her first time of studying English was when she was at primary level. She is the only Muslim among these participants. She had never been abroad. Her ICC score was 3.60.

## **3) Group High**

**Joe:** A male participant aged 21. He had been studying English for seventeen years. His first time of studying English was when he was at kindergarten level. He had been to many countries such as USA, Malaysia, Singapore, for educational and vacation purposes. His ICC score was 4.70.

**Meow:** A female participant aged 21. She had been studying English for seventeen years. Her first time of studying English was when she was at kindergarten level. She had been to many countries such as USA, Mexico, Brazil, Malaysia, Singapore. She enrolled in Work and Travel programme and had spent three months in the United States of America. Her ICC score was at 4.75, the highest among the participants.

**Peter:** A male participant aged 22. He had been studying English for sixteen years. His first time of studying English was when he was at primary level. He enrolled in Work and Travel programme and had spent three months in the United States of America. He also had been to Canada, Singapore, and Philippines for educational and vacation purposes. His ICC score was 4.70.

**Yuan:** A female participant aged 22. She had been studying English for seventeen years. Her first time of studying English was when she was at kindergarten level. She had been to Malaysia and Singapore for educational and vacation purposes. She was also an exchange student participating in an English camp in Malaysia. Her ICC score was 4.70.

This section has presented the participant selection based on the questionnaire score and the information of each participant. The following section discusses the quality of this study.

### **3.4 Research quality**

Each research, whether quantitative or qualitative, has its own quality. While quantitative research is concerned more with objectivity and generalisability of the research findings, for qualitative research, the quality involves trustworthiness of its findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This section attempts to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative research through the discussion of its credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

## **1) Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to credibility as authenticity of the collected data which is truthful according to the participants' perspectives in order to increase the confidence in the research findings. To establish credibility of the research, they suggest that a member checking technique which allows participants to verify and confirm the accuracy of their transcripts should be adopted. It means that the member checking technique suggests the researchers bring the transcripts back to their participants to confirm with them whether they agree with the researchers or not. If the participants confirm that the transcripts are correct and consistent with their own beliefs, then, it may be assumed that the researchers are correct and the findings are credible.

Therefore, I followed the member checking. I brought the interview transcripts, both original and English translated versions, back to the participants to confirm if the transcripts were transcribed and translated correctly and report any inaccuracies. For the English translated versions, they were asked to compare only the selected extracts and examples presented in this study with their original versions in Thai. All participants confirmed that the transcripts were correct.

## **2) Dependability**

Dependability is related to the consistency of the research findings over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell (2013) notes that dependability involves the extent to which similar research findings will be reported if it is conducted with similar participants in similar contexts. Shenton (2004) suggests that dependability of research can be enhanced through thick descriptions of one's research so that other researchers can get the similar findings from the same research procedures and methods that they follow.

In this study, I provided the thick description and clear outline of research philosophy research strategy, data collection procedure, and data analysis (see

section 3.1 Research philosophy, and 3.2.6 Data analysis) so that different researchers could follow. However, it should be noted that qualitative research is not adopted to replicate findings of the previous studies. In fact, it is adopted to present in-depth data provided by participants at particular points of time and contexts.

### **3) Confirmability**

Confirmability is concerned with the ensuring that the research data is directly collected from the research participants and research process can be confirmed and traced back by other researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To confirm that the data of this study was derived from the participants, not from me as the researcher of this study and other researchers can audit the research procedures, I provided an audit trail. The audit trail is a collection of the original data, notes, memos, and documents related to the study in order to provide an account of all research decisions and activities throughout the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, I provided logs of research activities such as notes regarding data collection and data analysis, related forms, and the original extracts from the interviews in Thai. This will benefit researchers who are interested in this study so that they can trace back the research process. Moreover, it will provide the justification for the process and findings of this study as new research designs may emerge over time.

### **4) Transferability**

While generalisability lies with quantitative research, transferability, then, is the responsibility of qualitative research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Trochim (2000), transferability refers to other participants, settings or contexts which the results/findings of qualitative research can be transferred to. Transferability describes the application process of the research results in one

situation to other similar situations. Qualitative researchers can enhance transferability by doing a thorough examination of describing philosophical assumptions, methodological procedures, and context researched that are important to the research (Trochim, 2000). Therefore, qualitative researchers must provide detailed descriptions of their research philosophies, research methods, and research contexts.

In this study, I provided detailed descriptions of research philosophy, research methodology, and context of the study in order that the research results of this qualitative research may/can be transferred to other similar contexts where English is used as a medium in intercultural communication.

### **3.5 Research ethics**

For qualitative research, which involves human sensitivities, ethical consideration must be taken into account “prior to conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, in data analysis, in reporting the data, and in publishing a study” (Creswell, 2012, p. 57). Throughout the study, ethical guidelines provided by York St John University were followed.

Ethics application for this study was approved by the relevant institutional Research Ethics Committee. See Appendix D.

#### **1) Access to data**

Being a lecturer at the university, it was convenient for me to conduct participant recruitment at the institution. However, it was better to seek approval from some university members about the recruitment. Because the participants were under the supervision of the Department of Western Languages, the letter of permission for participant selection and data collection was sent to the Head of Cooperative Education Programme, Department of Western Languages (see Appendix E).

All participants were given an information sheet (see Appendix F) and a consent form (see Appendix G) to understand the research project thoroughly. The information sheet and the consent form given to the participants contained the information of the research, including the principles of rights as research participants, anonymity, and confidentiality. After they signed two copies of consent form, they were asked to keep one with them.

Since the airport was the data collection site of this study, I also contacted one of the authorities of the airline company asking if the letter of permission was required in data collection. I was advised by them that a letter of permission was not necessary since the participation was voluntary and on the basis of informed individual consent.

## **2) Rights as research participants**

Participants have rights on four matters: the right to their own safety, the right to withdraw from the study at any time prior to analysis without proving a reason, the right to consult with independent consultant if any issues arise, and the right to make complaints if any concerns arise.

## **3) Offers of anonymity**

In the process of transcription, translation, and data analysis, I ensured the participants that their names were completely anonymised. Pseudonyms were given to all participants in reporting of findings so that they would not be identifiable. My supervisors and interraters knew participants only from the given pseudonyms and only saw anonymised quotes or excerpts of the interviews. In addition, the data was not shared with either participants' university or the airline companies.

## **4) Offers of confidentiality**

I enhanced the confidentiality based on three practices. First, I used anonymisation

for the participants and data throughout the research process. Second, electronic data such as audio-recording files, transcripts, and online chats between the participants and me were kept secure in my personal laptop and external storage devices with password protection. Third, any hand-written materials such as diary, notes, or documents were kept secure at my house.

### **5) Uses of the research findings**

The findings of this research would be reported in my thesis and might also be published in academic journals or presented at seminars and/or conferences in the future.

### **6) Roles of the researcher**

I was aware of my roles that might have affected the study. Known as reflexivity, it is the process of careful examination of oneself as a researcher and involves the relationship between a researcher and participants, and how the relationship influences the study (Ortlipp, 2008). In this study, although the participants were familiar with me, as their lecturer, the role of seniority might obstruct the participants to express their true feelings in the interviews as Asian upbringing patterns are characterised by authority, obedience and respect for elders (Chao, 1995). However, Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest that participants who feel secure and comfortable with researchers will talk and share more details about their perspectives experiences. Therefore, I tried to position myself as one of their friends to make them feel relaxed and unthreatened, and trust me, during the interviews and throughout the study, so that they could share detailed set of information with me.

Moreover, it is my roles to prevent personal bias from influencing the study because a qualitative study deals with the subjective nature of data interpretation. Since the collected data were translated from Thai into English, I, as a non-native English speaker, discussed the data with both Thai and English speaking interrater to ensure

the accuracy of translation and avoid subjectivity of data interpretation. “In this way an ‘objective’ outside perspective on the research process will be obtained to balance the more subjective participant-observer role of the researcher” (Baker, 2009, p. 118).

### **3.6 Summary and conclusion**

This study followed the interpretivist philosophy since it aimed to understand the meanings based on individuals’ perceptions and experiences of the world. In other words, the focus of this study was on the role of intercultural awareness through Thai student trainees’ intercultural experiences with people from different cultural backgrounds through English. In intercultural interactions, individual participants would experience various challenges and perceive them in different ways based on how they viewed the world. Therefore, there are multiple realities regarding intercultural awareness across a wide range of intercultural situations they experienced. This could be understood by adopting a qualitative approach which allowed me to explore the extent of participants’ intercultural awareness in intercultural communication through English (RQ1), and identify the communication challenges they experienced (RQ2) and associated strategies they employed in dealing with those challenges (RQ3). In-depth interview was mainly used as a research instrument to collect in-depth data as abundant set of data was required for data interpretation using interpretive analysis. Furthermore, the research ethics was applied throughout the process of study.

Based on the collected data from the questionnaire and the interviews, the findings of this study will be presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the findings from the interviews. of this study. It begins with the findings the interview data analysis procedure. Then it moves to the key findings of from the interviews. This section specifically presents the findings related to the three main research questions of the study which aimed to explore the extent of intercultural awareness the participants had and identify the communication challenges the participants experienced and the associated strategies they employed in dealing with those challenges in intercultural communication.

#### **4.1 Interview data analysis procedure**

In total, two interviews were recorded in Thai with each of the twelve participants. The first step began with transcribing the interviews. A Thai professional transcriber was hired to transcribe verbatim all interview recordings. However, decisions had been made on what to include and exclude in the transcriptions before they would be translated from Thai into English. This study focused on the ‘essence’ of the participants’ answers rather than their manners and voices during the interviews. Therefore, prosodic features were excluded.

After the interviews were transcribed, they were manually coded for evidence related to the research questions, including the extent of intercultural awareness, communication challenges, and associated strategies. As the study progressed, the codes were created, organised, and grouped into themes. The coding process applied thematic analysis (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.3). In coding, Mackay and Gass (2005) note that as the coding process is done by a different individual researcher, the data may not be coded the same way other researchers do. Therefore, in this study, the codes were based on the characteristics of data and my own interpretation. Frequency, similarities, and differences of the data were also noted.

Therefore, evidence of the codes was presented in both numbers and extracts. Relevant extracts were selected to support the findings. As discussed in Chapter 3, 3.2.6 Data analysis, the coding employed interpretive analysis to interpret meanings of answers gave by the participants and understand participants' perspectives towards intercultural experiences and their engagement of intercultural awareness. After the analysis was completed, the codes, themes, topics, and only selected extracts and examples were translated from Thai into English. Meaning-based translation was employed in order to keep the original meanings the translated language while the sentence structure of the target language was maintained (Larson, 1998). In translation, Emmel (1998) suggests that different translators are required to check the transcripts in order to ensure the accuracy of the translation and avoid personal bias. Therefore, two Thai PhD candidates with experience in translation were asked to help validate the translated data. Figure 4.1 illustrates the procedures of interview data analysis.

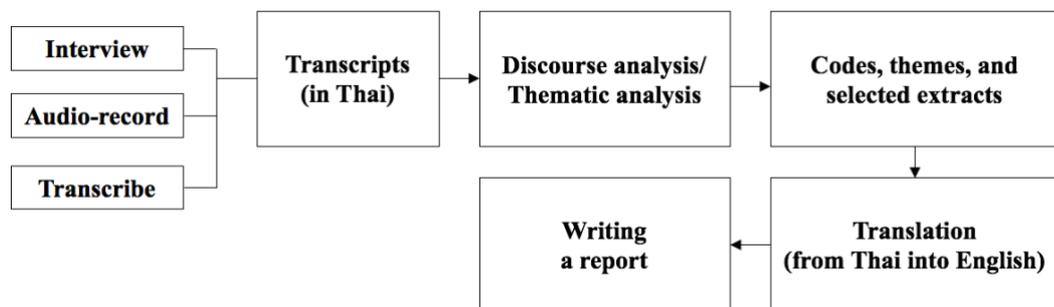


Figure 4.1: Interview data analysis procedure

## 4.2 Interviews length

This section presents the interviews length. Each participant was asked to attend two rounds of individual interview. Semi-structure approach with prepared questions was adopted in all interviews (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.4.2). Audio-recording was used to record conversations between the participants and me during the interviews.

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Interview</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Interview</b>	<b>Total (Minutes)</b>	<b>Total (Hours)</b>
<b>Group Low</b>				
Aoy	40.30	30.03	70.33	1.10
Ekky	40.20	31.15	71.35	1.11
Kro	42.55	40.18	83.03	1.23
Kim	41.52	40.55	82.47	1.22
<b>Group Medium</b>				
Fon	50.12	48.18	98.30	1.38
Joy	46.11	47.21	93.32	1.33
Ohm	48.45	43.10	91.55	1.31
Pond	43.09	47.30	90.39	1.30
<b>Group High</b>				
Joe	50.05	49.05	99.10	1.39
Meow	53.15	54.08	107.23	1.47
Peter	54.13	55.15	109.28	1.49
Yuan	52.10	52.17	104.27	1.44
<b>Total</b>				<b>18.28</b>

Table 4.1: Interviews length

Table 4.1 shows the interview length of each participant. All participants were informed to take two interviews. The total length of the recorded interviews with all participants is 18.28 hours. Overall, participants in group high spent the most interview time with 7.39 hours while participants in group low spent the least with 5.12 hours. Individually, Peter, a participant from group high, spent the most interview time with 1.49 hours while Aoy, a participant from group low, spent the least time with 1.10 hours. However, it should be noted that all participants were asked with the same prepared questions and were given equal opportunities to answer.

### 4.3 Overall topics

This section presents the overall topics. The analysis of the transcripts has led to the establishing of topics which were grouped from emerging codes. These topics aim to reflect the overall conversations throughout the interviews. Overall, there are seven main topics shown in the Table 4.2.

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1. Education</b>		
Being a Thai student, Thai educational system and environment, and comparison between Thai and other educational systems	31	16.49
<b>2. Languages</b>		
Thai language, English language (e.g. importance of English, variety of English, problems in using English), other languages (e.g. Malay, Japanese, Chinese, French), comparison between languages,	35	18.62
<b>3. Family and personal relationship</b>		
Thai parents, upbringing, lovers, premarital cohabitation, comparisons between Thai families and families in other countries	20	10.64
<b>4. Cultures</b>		
Own culture (e.g. manner, dress, gestures, beliefs, ways of life, seniority system, local life, social expectation), comparisons between Thai and other cultures	68	36.17
<b>5. Generation</b>		
The way of thinking between old and young generations (e.g. Thainess, gender identity, feminism, work)	13	6.91
<b>6. Religious influence</b>		
The influences of Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity on the way of thinking, practices, and communication with Thai and foreigners	13	6.91
<b>7. Harassment</b>		
Harassments (e.g. sexual, religious, verbal, gesture)	8	4.26
<b>Total</b>	188	100

Table 4.2: Overall topics from the interviews

Table 4.2 attempts to present the overall topics emerging from the interviews. It is obvious that the topic about cultures occurs the most frequent with 36.17%. The conversations regarding Thai culture such as manner, dress, gestures, beliefs, ways of life, seniority system, local life, social expectation, and comparisons between Thai and other cultures were discussed during the interviews. This is followed by the languages topic with 18.62%. The sub-topics raised in this topic are Thai language, English language, and other languages such as Malay, Japanese, Chinese, and French. These include the importance of English, variety of English, problems in using English, and comparisons between languages. The education topic has 16.49%. The conversations regarding education include being a Thai student, Thai educational system and environment, and comparison between Thai and other

educational systems. Cultures, languages, and education were the most frequently discussed during the interviews. These three topics might relate directly to the participants' role as Thai university students majoring in English who were experiencing intercultural encounters during their job trainings. Also, the prepared questions asked during the interviews which were close to them might make them feel comfortable to contribute. The family and personal relationship topic with the sub-topics regarding Thai parents, upbringing, lovers, and premarital cohabitation has 10.64%. This is followed by the generation topic and the religious influence topic. Both have the equal percentage at 6.91%. In the generation topic, the conversations regarding the way of thinking between old and young generations such as Thainess, gender identity, feminism, and work were raised. In the religious influence topic, the conversations regarding the influences of Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity on the way of thinking, practices, and communication with Thai and foreigners were presented. The last topic is harassment with the least percentage at 4.26%. This topic was reported by participants who experienced different forms of harassments such as sexual, religious, verbal, and gesture.

#### **4.4 Findings from the interviews**

This section begins with the overall topics emerged and discussed in the interviews. Then, it is divided into three main parts of the findings based on three main research questions, including the extent of intercultural awareness of Thai student trainees (RQ1), communication challenges experienced by Thai student trainees (RQ2), and communication strategies employed by Thai student trainees (RQ3). The findings are presented alongside with selected extracts from participants as evidence to support each finding with some explanations. The discussions of the findings will be presented in the next chapter. The findings here will also be presented in the table form. Even though frequency and percentage are presented in the findings, the findings are narratively analysed as a qualitative, empirical, data-driven study rather than a quantitative study.

#### **4.4.1 The extent of intercultural awareness of Thai student trainees**

This section aims to answer the first research question (RQ1): To what extent are these Thai student trainees interculturally aware in intercultural communication? In other words, this section explores the extent of ICA of the participants through their experiences. Selected extracts from the interviews will be presented to illustrate their engagement with twelve ICA components identified by Baker (2015) (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.3). Then, it is followed by the table showing the numbers of participants engaging with each component of ICA. However, it should be noted that a fuller set of extracts will be analysed and discussed in the following chapter.

##### **4.4.1.1 Extracts from the interviews**

This section offers extracts from the interviews to illustrate the features of each ICA component for better understanding. Employing interpretive analysis, the extracts were selected as examples to support and portray the characteristic of each ICA component which was utilised in intercultural communication as reported by the participants in the interviews. Twelve ICA components together with supporting extracts are presented as follows.

##### **1. An awareness of culture as a set of shared behaviours, beliefs, and values**

This component is the primary level of all ICA components showing the aspects of cultural awareness which incorporates an understanding of cultures with a main focus on a speaker's own culture at a very general level. It involves a conscious understanding of C1. The extent of cultures here presents the level of daily life experiences based on perspectives, beliefs, values and behaviours based on a speaker's own culture.

As mentioned earlier, this component deals with everyday lived experiences, the themes of the extracts presented below are about parents, family, and religion, in this case Buddhism which are close to participants. From these extracts, roles and influences of parents were mentioned by the participants.

(Extract 4.1)

1. Kro: I think parents have a huge influence on their children in
2. Thai society. Even if it means abandoning the future career
3. they really want, if their parents think they should study Law
4. in university and be a lawyer, they will do so.
5. Int: What about your parents?
6. Kro: Luckily, my parents don't force me to study what I don't
7. like. I understand why many children obey their parents.
8. This is because parents are believed to be the house gods.

Kro described what she felt about the influence of parents on their children in Thai society. She gave a clear example showing the shared values of Thai cultures that parents influence their children on decision making about studies and careers. Then, she compared her parents to the other Thai parents. She felt that she was lucky that her parents did not force her to study what she did not like. Kro also showed the awareness of culture as a set of shared beliefs by mentioning that Thai children believe that their parents were the house gods based on the belief influenced by Buddhism.

(Extract 4.2)

1. Ohm: I feel that Thai parents always treat their children like they
2. are little kids. They are very protective and possessive. So,
3. no matter how old we are, we are still their little kids.
4. Int: Are your parents protective?
5. Ohm: Yes they are. I have to admit that sometimes I feel
6. uncomfortable.

Another interesting piece of evidence showing the awareness of culture as a set of shared behaviours of Thai parents is reported by Ohm. Ohm mentioned that Thai parents always treat their children like they are still young even though they get older and he admitted that this made him feel uncomfortable.

(Extract 4.3)

1. Peter: I feel that in our society, parents are never wrong. Children
2. are children forever in the eyes of their parents and children
3. cannot do anything without their parents' permission or
4. guidance.
5. Int: Do you have to ask for your parents' permission to do

6. things?
7. Peter: I do. But it depends on what kind of thing that I'll do.

Peter felt the same way as Ohm that Thai parents think that their children are always young in their eyes. He felt that children have to follow their parents' guidance. This goes together with the extract from Kro which is about the influence of Thai parents in decision making of Thai children.

## **2. An awareness of the role culture and context play in any interpretation of meaning**

This component focuses on the role of culture and context as a mean of explaining meaning. It engages a speaker's own culture and context as they affect how he/she interprets or values things from his/her cultural point of view. This involves the ability to interpret utterances, behaviours, practices, or customs from his/her own cultural perspective and/or everyday lived experiences.

The selected extracts from Joy, Meow, and Kro illustrate the characteristic of the second component of ICA. This offers evidence of explaining different perspectives and attitudes towards part-time job and spending money in terms of different cultures.

(Extract 4.4)

1. Int: Is it more difficult for you to study and do a part-time job at
2. the same time?
3. Joy: Well, it's not that difficult if you manage your time wisely. I
4. know that many Thai people think that students who do
5. part-time jobs are poor. But for me I don't think that.
6. Int: Why?
7. Joy: I want to help my parents and I don't want to feel bad when
8. I spend money on cosmetics. (laugh) American and British
9. students usually do part-time job as a part of their lives. It's
10. normal for them, for their cultures. I think part-time job help
11. people grow up. And instead of using parents' money for
12. shopping, drinking or partying, I'm happier to spend my own
13. money on things I want.

Joy mentioned that doing part-time jobs is for poor students. She suggested that this showed the role of parents in Thai culture in which they financially support their children. And for children doing part-time job, in Thai culture, she interpreted that their parents do not have enough money to support them. She clearly showed the awareness of the role culture and context play in any interpretation of meaning through her own culture's perspective. She, then, went on to compare Thai students with American and British students in relation to work. Interestingly, the extract from Joy shows the different components of ICA overlap as she interpreted meanings of different cultures and compared them. This extract also reflects the different interpretation of meanings, attitudes, and beliefs between cultures.

(Extract 4.5)

1. Meow: My friends and I enjoy shopping and partying. That's why
2. we do part-time jobs and save money.
3. Int: Good for you.
4. Meow: I feel it's inappropriate for the people at my age, Thai
5. university students to be precise, to spend a lot of money
6. buying expensive bags or getting drunk at parties because
7. that's not their money. It's their parents' money. Their
8. parents work hard to earn money. In Thai culture, this kind
9. of children are called Dek-Pret. (laugh) They should think
10. before spending money. They should be grateful for that.

Meow also talked about doing part-time jobs. She did a part-time job because she did not want to feel bad when she asked her parents for money to spend on her own pleasure. She felt that it was inappropriate for Thai children to spend their parents' money on something unnecessary. That was when she showed the awareness of the role culture and context play in any interpretation of meaning because she felt that children who did like this were bad children. She used the word '*Dek-Pret*' which means children from hell. *Dek* means 'children' and *Pret* means 'a ghost', in Thai beliefs influenced by Buddhism, which is punished in hell for doing bad things to parents when it was being human. This shows that her own culture and context, in this case Thai, affect how she interpreted this behaviour. She also mentioned gratitude which is a shared value in Thai culture.

(Extract 4.6)

1. Kro: There's a new opening pub in Songkhla but I don't go there yet.
- 2.
3. Int: Are you planning to go?
4. Kro: No, I'm not. My friend was there last week. Honestly, I feel that it's not right when she talked about how she got drunk at the pub. It makes her look bad because drinking is against the Lord Buddha's guidance. I don't drink alcohol. I don't want to look like a bad person.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Another extract showing an awareness of the role culture and context play in any interpretation of meaning is reported by Kro. She felt that it was not the right thing to do for her friend to get drunk at the party because drinking makes her friend look bad and it is not allowed for Buddhists to drink alcohol. In her case, she was aware that if she drank alcohol and got drunk, she would be perceived as a bad person in other people's eyes. This clearly shows how Buddhism context played in her interpretation of meaning.

### **3. An awareness of our own culturally based behaviour, values, and beliefs and the ability to articulate this**

This component still focuses on a speaker's own culture. Although this awareness is based on a speaker's own cultural perspectives and behaviours, it gets more pronounced since it requires the ability to verbally articulate a speaker's culturally based values, beliefs, perspectives to various intercultural situation or wider context.

The selected extracts provide good examples of Joe and Peter in discussions on the difference between Thai perspectives and attitudes and foreign towards dealing with problems. They offer their own culturally based behaviour, values, and beliefs into a wider social context. Joe and Peter show how they expressed their culturally based behaviour and perspectives in dealing with problems.

(Extract 4.7)

1. Joe: Thai people like to smile. It's Thai way of dealing with

2. problems. I think we smile a lot even we're in trouble.
3. Int: Did you smile when you're in trouble?
4. Joe: I did. At the airport, I saw many angry foreign passengers
5. when their flights delayed. Some of them shouted at the
6. check-in counter where I worked. They asked why I was still
7. smiling. I said to them I felt sorry for them but no one wanted
8. this problem to happen. I felt that being angry didn't make
9. their flights arrive faster. And I said "Thai people smile even
10. in uncomfortable situation. That's how we deal with
11. problem. That's who we are. That's why we are known as
12. 'A Land of Smile'. Keep calm and smile".

Joe expressed the articulate account of his cultural perspective that Thai people like to smile and he pronounced that smiling is Thai culturally based behaviour in dealing with problems. He talked about his experience as a trainee when he saw foreign passengers react to the delayed flight as they got angry and some of them shouted at the check-in counter. He felt sorry for those passengers because shouting or getting angry did not change the situation. During the intercultural communication, he finally expressed his Thai cultural perspectives to the passenger (line 9 – 12).

(Extract 4.8)

1. Peter: '*Mai pen rai*' is a word that Thai people use a lot.
2. Int: What makes you think that?
3. Peter: Well, I think we always say it to make ourselves and other
4. people feel better and to make a situation less serious. It
5. translates to "no worries" in English and it is used in many
6. situations.
7. Int: Like what situation?
8. Peter: Like when my Malaysian colleague spilled the tea on my
9. bag, I said '*Mai pen rai*'. I told her it means no worries. Then
10. I said "Thai people know that getting angry or upset about
11. something won't probably change matters. That's who we
12. are. So, why waste your time and energy and distress
13. unnecessarily?" She thanked me. I don't want her to feel bad
14. and I don't want to get mad as well. She told me that if this
15. happened in Malaysia, she'd get scorned at or she might need
16. to pay for the damages.

Peter used a Thai value of the word, '*Mai pen rai*', meaning no worries, in dealing with problems. Peter said that Thai people always use this word because they

believe that it makes them and other people feel better when they hear this word. Peter talked about how he dealt with his colleague who spilled tea on his bag. He said ‘*Mai pen rai*’ to her because he did not want her to feel guilty and he did not want to get mad as well. It shows that, as a Thai person, he expressed this culturally based perspective in dealing with problems to the intercultural context claiming that this cultural value belongs to Thai people by saying “That’s who we are”. This extract also shows the different way of dealing with problem from the different perspective of a Malaysian person as she would get rebuked or need to pay for the damages if this happened in Malaysia.

#### **4. An awareness of others’ culturally based behaviour, values, and beliefs and the ability to compare this with our own culturally based behaviour, values, and beliefs**

This component is the last component categorised in basic cultural awareness. It is more complex since it moves from the ability to articulate cultural perspectives to the ability to compare one’s own culturally based behaviour, values and beliefs with others’ at the general level. It deals with the awareness that other people may have similar or different perspectives, beliefs and behaviours based on their own cultures.

The chosen extracts provide good examples in a discussion on the difference between Thai culture and others at the general level. The participants explained their own culturally based perspectives and extended these to general comparisons with other cultures.

(Extract 4.9)

1. Joe: Well, it’s like some behaviours are inappropriate to do in
2. some countries like kissing, shouting, or some gestures, or
3. some words. Local people might get offended by those
4. behaviours. I think this could lead to the conflict in
5. communication between the local and the foreign people.

Joe talked about different behaviours in general since some behaviours, gestures, or words are considered inappropriate when performed in public. He mentioned kissing and shouting. Also, he showed his awareness that it could lead to conflict among people from different cultural backgrounds.

(Extract 4.10)

1. Joy: I know that '*Farang*' people are very strict about time and
2. punctuality. They're concerned about their time and plans.
3. They tend to be strict to time such as work shift or meetings.
4. That's why the passenger was mad at me the other day.
5. Int: What happened?
6. Joy: I took him to the wrong place. I was quite new to the airport.
7. Int: Did he say or do anything to you?
8. Joy: He told me that his friend was waiting for him. So, he was
9. furious and he yelled at me. I apologised to him many times.
10. Well, you know Thai people are not that strict. Ten or fifteen
11. minutes late is okay. But if I were him, I would do the same.
12. Int: Why?
13. Joy: Because I know that '*Farang*' people are punctual, confident
14. and they speak up, even yell at people. Just like what he did
15. to me. (laugh)
16. Int: So, if this happens to you, what would you do?
17. Joy: I wouldn't yell at people. I think because I'm Thai. I think
18. mostly Thai people are quite shy. We tend to keep emotions
19. although we get mad.

Joy talked about punctuality. She compared her culturally based values of time and behaviours to '*Farang*' (a word commonly used by Thais which refers to Westerners based on their Caucasian appearances). Prior to this conversation, Joy admitted that she was not familiar with the airport and it took her and the passenger a while to get to the lounge. Joy was aware that punctuality is important in western culture. She believed they are concerned about their plans and they tend to be strict to time such as working hours, meeting hours, or appointments. She compared this to Thai culture saying that Thai people are not strict. Ten to fifteen minutes late is still acceptable in Thai culture. Joy demonstrated an awareness of how she felt that western values of time influence their ways of life. She also showed the awareness that people from different cultural backgrounds might have different reactions and perceptions towards someone's mistakes, in this case Westerners and Thai people. Because of her mistake, Joy got yelled at by the passenger. She added that

Westerners are confident and they are not shy to show their emotions. Then she compared this behaviour to her own culturally based behaviour saying that Thai people are quite shy and tend to keep emotions even when they get angry.

(Extract 4.11)

1. Ekky: I was born in a big family just like other families in Thailand.
2. My grandparents are very strict. So, I have to be careful of
3. my behaviour. They always tell me not to shout at people.
4. Some people from some cultures like Chinese can be quite
5. loud and noisy but not Thai people. Being loud and noisy is
6. not a good manner in Thai culture, I must say.

Ekky also compared his Thai culturally based behaviour to other cultures. He began to talk about his family and how he was influenced by his grandparents. He had to be careful of his behaviour especially when he was in public. He added that Thai people are quiet and well-behave unlike people from other cultures, in this case Chinese, who are loud and noisy. He mentioned that being loud and noisy is considered bad behaviour in Thai culture. This shows that he was able to compare his own culturally based behaviour to others’.

## **5. An awareness of the relative nature of cultural norms**

This awareness deals with the relative nature of different cultural norms and how a speaker relates his own cultural norm to others’ on a particular one. This component also engages the awareness of not judging other cultures based on our own standards of what is right or wrong, better or worse.

The selected extracts are about relationship and premarital cohabitation. The extracts from Ekky and Joy demonstrate relative attitudes towards their cultures and others’. Even though the norms or perspectives of their own culture are opposed to others’, they do not judge or disapprove those alternative perspectives.

(Extract 4.12)

1. Int: So you think that there’re differences between Thai culture
2. and others’ culture, right?

3. Ekky: Yes I do. I think relationship and intimacy between lovers
4. can be different such as premarital cohabitation. Western
5. people, mostly, can have sex with their lovers even though
6. they don't get married. It's normal in their culture, although
7. it's quite different from our culture in which lovers are not
8. allowed to have sex until they get married. It doesn't mean
9. that Thai culture is old fashion or Western culture is modern.
10. (laugh)

Ekky demonstrated a relative attitude towards cultural norms about premarital cohabitation. He believed that relationships between lovers are different between Western and Thai cultures. Western people, in his opinion, can have sex with their lovers even though they do not get married. Even if it ran counter to the norm of Thai culture, he did not convey disapproval of Western culture. This extract offers an example of cultural relativity, with Ekky directly stating that premarital cohabitation is normal in Western culture and he did not evaluate which culture is better.

(Extract 4.13)

1. Joy: Some of my friends lived with their boyfriends.
2. Int: When they studied at uni?
3. Joy: Yes. But now they don't because they are in different
4. provinces.
5. Int: They are on job training, aren't they?
6. Joy: Yes, they are. Well, I do have a boyfriend but I don't move
7. in to live with him at the moment. My parents would get mad
8. if I do it. (laugh) I think they are very conservative just like
9. other Thai parents. But I don't mean that it's wrong. I'm not
10. going to say which one is better, conservative or non-
11. conservative. Undergrads in foreign countries like America,
12. Australia live with their lovers and their parents are okay
13. with that.

Joy also talked about premarital cohabitation. She said that her friends move in with their boyfriends. Although she had a boyfriend, she did not do that because she was afraid of her parents getting angry at her if they knew. She added that her parents are conservative. She, however, did not make a judgment about this. She also mentioned under graduation students in foreign countries such as America as they live with their lovers but their parents understand. She also did not judge them.

Joy's extract is interesting because it shows different perspectives within her own cultural norms, in this case between her friends and herself, and between her own culture and others'.

## **6. An awareness of cultural understanding as provisional and open to revision**

This awareness deals with cultural understanding of a speaker. It involves the ability to modify or revise the understanding about the speaker's own culture that it is provisional and open. This can lead to changing his/her attitudes towards his/her own culture.

The selected extract from Ohm demonstrates a relative attitude towards cultures about premarital cohabitation as he shows the awareness that cultural understanding is provisional and open to revision.

(Extract 4.14)

1. Ohm: Many Thai lovers nowadays move in together. Compared to
2. my parents' generation, it's like people in this generation of
3. Thai society don't think that premarital cohabitation is no
4. longer a bad thing. Sex is not only for married couples. They
5. focus on the good sides of it. And I think there are many
6. advantages of premarital cohabitation.
7. Int: Why?
8. Ohm: Personally, I think it's acceptable because everybody needs
8. love and wants to spend time with who they love no matter
9. who we are, Thai or American, old or young. We get to learn
10. about someone we love, about what they like or dislike. For
11. me, I think if I meet someone in the future and she loves me,
12. I'll ask her move in before we get married. But
13. unfortunately, I'm still single. (laugh)

As can be seen from the extract, Ohm was able to revise his attitudes towards his cultural characterisations of premarital cohabitation. Ohm said that things has changed in Thai society between the old and the new generation. He added that even though premarital cohabitation is unacceptable in Thai culture, he focused on the good side of it and then conceded that he would ask his future girlfriend to move

in with him. Thus, Ohm showed that he modified and revised his cultural understanding through his changing characterisation.

### **7. An awareness of multiple voices or perspectives within any cultural grouping**

This component deals with multiple voices or perspectives of people within a speaker's cultural group. It engages the awareness of different attitudes and perspectives although culture influences the way in which people within a cultural group think or believe.

The selected extracts are about different perspectives on different topics. Both Joy and Yuan talk about Buddhism but in different aspects.

(Extract 4.15)

1. Joy: Even though I'm Buddhist, I don't usually go to temple or
2. offer food to the Buddhist monks in the morning. (laugh)
3. Int: (laugh) Really?
4. Joy: Really. But my parents always offer food to the Buddhist
5. monks every day. They go to temple to listen to sermons
6. every week. They are very strict. It's a Thai way of life.
7. Int: I see.
8. Joy: I don't know about Buddhists in other countries. But in
9. Thailand they usually do that. Then, there is a person like
10. me. I think that there are still many ways to be a good
11. Buddhist such as giving things to those in needs and blood
12. donation. I think that many Buddhists in the younger
13. generation feel the same way.

In Joy's case, she showed the awareness of multiple perspectives within her own cultural group, Buddhists. Joy was aware that strict Buddhists, in general, offer food to the Buddhist monks and go to temple to listen to sermons but there are also groups of Buddhists who are less strict and perform differently. She perceived herself as a less strict Buddhist. She felt that being less strict did not mean that she was a bad Buddhist because there were many other ways to do as a good Buddhist such as giving things to those in need and blood donation. She also felt that many people in the younger generation are less strict and feel the same way as her. The

extract from Joy shows an interesting point that generation creates multiple voices or perspectives within Buddhism.

(Extract 4.16)

1. Yuan: Well, I think many Thai people are still unaware of the
2. importance of English.
3. Int: Why do you think that?
4. Yuan: It might be because of social contexts like people in
5. countryside or in rural areas. They don't use English. They
6. just live their ways of life. Just like my grandparents. I have
7. a big family and we live in a rural area of Songkhla. Most of
8. the people in my village are very strict Buddhists including
9. my grandparents. They live their lives following the Lord
10. Buddha's guidance such as offering food to Buddhist monks,
11. praying at nights, going to the temple, donating money to
12. build new temples in another village.
13. Int: I can say that they are really strict.
14. Yuan: They are. They do everything to maintain Buddhism in the
15. village. But many times, when there are foreign tourists
16. visiting our village, I could tell that my grandparents are very
17. unhappy. They want to chase them away. They told me that
18. those tourists might brainwash the villagers to become
19. Christians. But this is totally different from my friend's
20. grandparents who live in the same village and are also strict
21. Buddhists.
22. Int: How is it different?
23. Yuan: Because they welcome those tourists and try to speak
24. English with them. They used to tell my grandparents that
25. we could earn more money from tourism but my
26. grandparents were not convinced. I feel that even people
27. from the same religion, even same generation, can see things
28. differently.

In Yuan's case, she talked about Buddhist ways of life, generation, and English language. She described her village and how strict the Buddhist villagers were in following Lord Buddha's guidance. Yuan presented how the villagers, including her grandparents, lived their lives. They did everything to maintain Buddhism and were not open to other religions. Yuan said that her grandparents did not welcome foreign tourists as they were afraid that they came to the village on missionary work. Unlike her friend's grandparents who lived in the same village, they welcomed tourists and even tried to speak English with them. They also said that they could earn more income from tourism. However, Yuan's grandparents were not

convinced. From this incident, Yuan obviously showed her awareness of multiple voices or perspectives within her cultural grouping, in this case Buddhist, by saying that even people from the same religion or generation could see things differently.

### **8. An awareness of individuals as members of many social groupings including cultural ones**

This component mainly focuses on awareness of individuals. This moves from one's own cultural grouping to many social groupings. It engages a speaker's awareness of him/herself as a member of many social groupings, including his/her own cultural one as a speaker plays different roles and engages with different identities.

The selected extracts present a variety of cultural groupings where the participants feel that they are parts of different cultural and social groupings besides their own ones.

(Extract 4.17)

1. Int: You filled in the questionnaire that you've been to Australia.
2. How's the experience?
3. Joy: Yes I have. Well, I took a summer course in Australia for
4. three months. But when I was there I felt like I was a stranger
5. to Australian people.
5. Int: Why?
6. Joy: Because I'm Asian and I don't look like most of them. In the
7. first place, I was quite unhappy but I had to be patient. On
8. the first day of the summer course, I was the only Thai girl,
9. the only Asian, to be precise. Other classmates were from
10. Spain, Chile, and Algeria.
11. Int: How many students in the class?
12. Joy: Our class was quite small with 15 students. I was a bit shy
13. when I first met them. I was not confident with my English
14. but their English was not that good either. I didn't want to
15. offend them in any way because we're from different
16. countries and different cultures. But when we got to know
17. each other more, I felt more comfortable.
18. Int: Good for you.
19. Joy: Most of my classmates were Christian. I was the only
20. Buddhist in the class. What surprised me was when I

21. discovered that some of my classmates were atheists. But we
22. seemed to get along well. Even though they asked some
23. weird questions about Buddhism, I was still happy to answer
24. their questions as a Buddhist and as a friend. And I think
25. although we are from different religions, we could be
26. friends.

Joy portrayed the image of an individual as a member of many social groupings, including her own cultural one very well when she talked about a summer course she took in Australia. There were different identities she possessed such as Thai and Buddhist. Joy first talked about how she felt as a stranger when she was in Australia because of her look. However, this showed that she was aware that there were people who look different from her and she lived among different social groupings. Then, she talked about nationalities. Her classmates had different nationalities and different cultures. She reported that she was aware of herself as Thai but she had to study with those who were from different countries and different cultures. This time, not only she was aware of being a Thai student, she was also aware that the different cultural background might cause some problems between her and her classmates. She showed her awareness of being a Buddhist living among many other religions, in this case Christian and atheist. Also, she showed that she played different roles and deals with different identities, including being a Buddhist and being a friend when she agreed to answer those ‘weird’ questions asked by her atheist friends.

(Extract 4.18)

1. Peter: I think many Thai people cannot deal with the diversity.
2. They are strict to the old thought which they think it is right.
3. Int: In what context? Can you be more specific?
4. Peter: In different context like genders and religions. They are strict
5. to the mythology that there are only two genders in the
6. world. It’s quite difficult to be gay in Thailand.
7. Int: Why do you think it’s difficult?
8. Peter: Because Thailand is a Buddhist country and Buddhists
9. believe that being gay is a sin. We do have Muslims in
10. Thailand as well. And being gay is prohibited in Islam. Yes,
11. I am gay and I live in Thailand. I live among Buddhists and
12. Muslims. (laugh)
13. Int: So how do you feel?
14. Peter: Well, gay people are not weird and are not sinners. I am a

15. good son of my parents. I never do drugs. I am a good
16. student. I never cheat in the exam. Sometimes I feel bad
17. when someone talks about gay people in negative ways.
18. They judge gay people that they are bad and all they think
19. about is sex. We are not. Even straight can be bad. But I try
20. not to listen to bad comments. There are many positive
21. comments that gay people are creative and beautiful. And
22. Thailand are well known for its beautiful lady boys shows.
23. We also have Miss Queen International. And people should
24. be proud of that.

Although Joy's extract (Extract 4.17) involves with more social groupings and nationalities as she was in Australia, the extract above from Peter involves different social groupings within Thailand. Peter talked about himself as a gay person. Different social groupings that he mentioned in the extract were Buddhist, Muslims, and gay people. He showed his awareness of individual as a member of many social groupings when he talked about how difficult it was to live, as a gay person, in Thailand where both Buddhists and Muslims feel that being gay is sinful. Obviously, he showed that he was aware that he played different roles and identities, including a gay person, a son, and a student. Moreover, he also engaged the component 7 when he said that there are different perspectives about being gay, negative and positive. This also shows the overlap between different ICA components.

### **9. An awareness of common ground between specific cultures as well as an awareness of possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between specific cultures**

Although the ability to compare between cultures is mentioned earlier in Component 4, it tends to focus on the comparisons at the general level. This component is more complex. It particularly deals with the detailed awareness of common ground between specific cultures and engages the ability to make particular comparisons between specific cultures as well as the awareness that the differences between these culturally based practices may lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication. It can be said that this component also engages a speaker's knowledge background of the specific cultures.

The selected extract is from Fon. She talks about her experience about people from ASEAN countries where they share some common grounds and possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication.

(Extract 4.19)

1. Fon: For ASEAN people, we share some cultures such as religions
2. and foods like Thailand and Malaysia. Religions in Thailand
3. and Malaysian are quite similar especially in the deep south
4. of Thailand. People are mostly Muslim. They always pray to
5. Allah. Like Buddhists pray to the Lord Buddha. In Ramadan,
6. they fast.
7. Int: You know quite a lot.
8. Fon: I know it because I grew up in a Muslim community.
9. Int: That's why.
10. Fon: Well, foods sold in Yala and in Malaysia are very similar. I
11. personally like Malaysian food. I like *Nasi Goreng* (fried
12. rice) which is similar to Thai pineapple fried rice and *Ayam*
13. *Goreng* (deep-fried chicken) which is less spicy than Thai
14. fried-chicken. They are delicious.
15. Int: Sounds delicious!
16. Fon: They are! You know what? Malaysian people still eat food
17. with their hands. Instead of using spoons, forks, and knives,
18. they use their hands. When I visited my friend in Kedah,
19. I used my hands to eat dinner as well.
20. Int: Was it difficult?
21. Fon: It was. But I tried my best. Although my friend told me that
22. it's OK to use cutlery, I decided not to. I felt that I might
23. offend other people if I was the only one who use cutlery at
24. the dinner table. Her parents and grandparents might think
25. that I insulted them and I disrespected their culture.

Fon showed that she was aware that there are common grounds between Thai and Malaysian cultures. She was aware that there are similarities between these two cultures as she mentioned religions and foods. She not only showed the detailed awareness of common ground between Thai and Malaysian cultures, but also the awareness of possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between these cultures. What makes this extract perfectly shows her awareness of possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between these two cultures is when she talked about her experience about eating food with her hands when she visited her friend in Kedah, Malaysia. Instead of asking for cutlery like she always used in Thailand, she decided not to do it because she was aware that it might offend other people at

the table. This shows that she combined her knowledge with her awareness. She felt that using cutlery for eating, which is culturally based practice in Thailand, could offend those who were from different cultures, in this case Malaysian. Therefore, she used her hands to eat dinner.

#### **10. An awareness of culturally based frames of reference, forms and communicative practices as being related both to specific cultures and also as emergent and hybrid in intercultural communication**

This component focuses on the awareness of culturally based frames of reference, forms and communicative practices as they are coherent and meaningful sets of activities in any culture. They refer to the general kind of practice that people are engaged and what people in particular cultures actually think they are doing when they communicate. This awareness engages the understanding of own and another specific culture and cultural practices as emergent and hybrid.

The selected extract demonstrates Joe's awareness of culturally based frames of reference in the interpretations of head-touching.

(Extract 4.20)

1. Joe: I used to avoid one of the exchange students.
2. Int: Why? What happened?
3. Joe: Because he liked to touch and pat my head.
4. Int: Where's he from?
5. Joe: He's from Australia. I was wondering why he did that. So, I
6. decided to talk to him about this. I told him not to touch other
7. people's heads. So he asked me why. I told him it's because
8. Thai people treated the head as the sacred part of the body.
9. It's inappropriate to touch other people's heads. It shows
10. disrespect.
11. Int: Oh. What did he say?
12. Joe: He was quite shocked when I told him that and he was really
13. sorry. He didn't know that. He told me he thought that we
14. were friends. He said that in his culture touching friends'
15. heads is normal. It shows the closeness between friends.
16. That's when I understood why he touched my head and other
17. classmates' who're close to him.
18. Int: So, how did you feel at that moment?

19. Joe: I felt like it's not bad at all. It kind of represents friendship.  
20. Then, I touched his head. (laugh)  
21. Int: (laugh) Did he say anything?  
22. Joe: He laughed. Although I'm okay with head-touching between  
23. friends, I told him that I didn't think it's appropriate to do  
24. with older people although we're close to them. I think we  
25. both learned something new and head-touching could mean  
26. something else in other countries.

This appears to be a misunderstanding on Joe's part at the beginning as he felt that it was inappropriate because, in Thai belief, the head is a sacred part of the body. On the other hand, his friend presented an Australian image of head touching as a friendly gesture between friends. Head-touching manner here created emergent cultural associations between these two. That is to say, Joe's friend now had the alternative meaning of head-touching explained by Joe based on his cultural perspective. At the same time, Joe was introduced to the new meaning of head-touching described by his friend. Joe conceded that this gesture is acceptable in other cultures, as hybrid. He, then, touched his friend's head as it emerged to him that head-touching also showed the closeness between friends.

### **11. An awareness of initial interaction in intercultural communication as possibly based on cultural stereotypes or generalisations but an ability to move beyond these**

This component mainly focuses on cultural stereotypes or generalisations which are widely held, generalised and simplified conceptions or images of a specific group of people during the initial stages of intercultural communication. Stereotypes may be fundamental to the way a speaker processes information and make sense of their experience. However, this component also engages a speaker's the ability to move beyond these.

The selected extracts provide good examples of this awareness. Stereotypes are expressed by the participants in different aspects. Stereotypes expressed at the beginning of each extract do not remain intact since these participants are able to move beyond them.

(Extract 4.21)

1. Joe: My family has a guest house in Songkhla. It's not a big one.
2. It's more like homestay. I usually help my parents with
3. foreign guests.
4. Int: What a good son!
5. Joe: I get paid though. (laugh)
6. Int: (laugh) Any experience about foreign guests to share?
7. Joe: Some guests surprised me. I was quite surprised when I met
8. a family from South Africa because they are white with
9. blonde hair. But I didn't say anything. I thought they were
10. from Europe or America. I checked their passports many
11. times if the details matched and they did. But then I realised
12. that there are different races in the world. People from South
13. Africa are not always black. It's like Thai people. Not all
14. southerners have darker skin and thick hair. Sometimes, I got
15. asked "You're from the South but why is your skin fair?"
16. Int: So how did you feel?
17. Joe: I was tired of that question. As I said not all southerners have
18. dark skin. I feel like that guests might be offended if I asked
19. them why they're white.

The first extract is about Joe's stereotype experience about people's appearances and races. Joe talked about his stereotype in initial interaction with a family from South Africa. He admitted that he was surprised to see that they are white. It shows that he initially stereotyped that people from South Africa were all black. However, he was able to move beyond it when he realised that there are different races in the world and people from South Africa are not always black. He even related this incident to his own country, Thailand, by saying that not all Thai people from the southern part have darker skin and thick hair. He was aware that he stereotyped but then moved beyond it.

(Extract 4.22)

1. Joy: When the exchange student from Malaysia introduced
2. herself to us and said that she's Muslim, I was a bit shocked.
3. Int: What happened?
4. Joy: Because she's not wearing hijab. She even dyed her hair.
5. You know Malaysia is an Islamic country. Even in Thailand,
6. my Muslim friends are wearing hijabs. They wear hijabs all
7. the time even when they play volleyball.
8. Int: OK. You were shocked and what happened next?
9. Joy: But then I realised that not all female Muslims. Like the fruit
10. seller at the canteen, she's Muslim but she doesn't wear

11. hijab. They can be Muslims even though they are not
12. wearing hijabs. I think I was wrong to judge her at the very
13. beginning. So, I'm glad that I didn't ask her why she didn't
14. wear hijab. She might think that I was really mean to her if I
15. did.

This extract is from Joy's initial interaction when she first met an exchange student from Malaysia. In Joy case, the stereotype involves with religions, in this case Muslim, and cultural practices, in this case wearing hijab. Joy was shocked when she first heard that the exchange student was Muslim but she did not wear hijab and she even dyed her hair. She believed that Malaysia is an Islamic country and female Muslim must wear hijab. She also added that even her Thai Muslim friends wore hijabs. However, she moved beyond the stereotype when she realised that not all female Muslims in Malaysia or in the world wear hijabs and they are still Muslim without wearing hijabs.

(Extract 4.23)

1. Meow: As I told you I've met many customers from all around the
2. world when I was serving food in America.
3. Int: So what do you think about those customers?
4. Meow: I used to think that Chinese customers were the most difficult
5. to deal with.
6. Int: Why?
7. Meow: Because I heard that they were noisy and unfriendly. But my
8. first Chinese customers were different. I thought they would
9. be demanding and noisy. But they're not. In fact, they were
10. polite and friendly. So, it occurred to me at that moment that
11. Chinese people are different. They can be noisy and
12. temperamental. But not all Chinese people are like that.
13. Int: I see.
14. Meow: And not all Chinese people eat dog and cat. Like when
15. Chinese customers came in with their pet dogs, my American
16. colleague liked to tell other colleagues to pray for those dogs
17. because they might get cooked. I always hate this joke when
18. he made fun of them. I felt like it's not fair to all Chinese
19. people to be judged as dog eaters. Some eat but some don't.

The last extract from Meow is about stereotype based on people's nationalities and characteristics. She talked about her experiences when she worked at a restaurant in America and how she was able to deal with stereotypes. Meow began by talking

about how she initially stereotyped Chinese people as she felt that they all were noisy and unfriendly. Then, she could move beyond it because the Chinese customers she met were polite and friendly. These characteristics were different from what she heard about Chinese people's characteristics. This has made Meow aware that not all Chinese are noisy and moody. Moreover, she also talked about how her colleague stereotyped that all Chinese ate dog and cat. Although she knew that some Chinese might do so, she refused to agree with that stereotyping idea and moved beyond it.

## **12. A capacity to negotiate and mediate between different emergent communicative practices and frames of reference based on the above understanding of culture in intercultural communication**

This component is probably the most challenging component of ICA because it incorporates the ability to negotiate and at the same time mediate between what is heard, read, or viewed which emerges as relevant during communication and different frames of reference.

The selected extract from Peter presents the characterisation of this component quite well since he was able to show the ability to negotiate and mediate between what he heard and viewed and different cultural frames of reference which emerged as relevant during his intercultural communication with his Malaysian passenger.

(Extract 4.24)

1. Peter: There was an awkward moment between me and a
2. passenger. She's Muslim and she's from Malaysia. I was
3. asked to assist her because it was her first time visiting
4. Thailand.
5. Int: Was she here for studying?
6. Peter: No, she was visiting her Thai relatives in Songkhla. I'm
7. familiar with Songkhla. So, I told her a lot about food,
8. places, and people. But all of a sudden she asked me why I
9. wore earrings. I told her that I love fashion and I enjoyed
10. wearing accessories.
11. Int: I can tell. And what happened next?
12. Peter: Well, she said that men shouldn't wear earrings. She even

13. said it's weird. I was quite shocked but I tried not to show  
14. her that I was offended.

15. Int: What did you do?

16. Peter: I told her that it's my preference and I liked it. Then, she  
17. asked me whether this was against Thai culture or not. I  
18. answered that it's against the old Thai culture which men  
19. should behave like men and women should behave like  
20. women including the way they act or the way they dress. I  
21. think It's about the generation. Old people might think that  
22. it's weird and unacceptable. But not all people from the old  
23. generation think like that. My parents still think that it's  
24. fashionable. Nowadays, it's globalisation and full of  
25. diversity.

26. Int: Keep going.

27. Peter: I think she's not wrong if she felt that men shouldn't wear  
28. earrings. It might be because of her religion and her  
29. background.

30. Int: What do you mean?

31. Peter: I mean we were born and raised differently. We have  
32. different backgrounds of our lives.

33. Int: I see.

34. Peter: Then I told her that for me I think men and women should  
35. wear what they want to wear. Women don't wear only skirts  
36. nowadays. They wear shorts, jeans, and trousers. The fun  
37. part was while we were talking she's wearing jeans. (laugh)

38. Int: (laugh) Did you two talk about this.?

39. Peter: Well, I looked at her jeans and I said "I hope you don't mind  
40. if I'm wearing earrings".

41. Int: What did she say?

42. Peter: We laughed. So, I told her that it's time to embrace the  
43. diversity. I meant not only the way of dressing but also  
44. genders. They don't have to be gay to wear earrings or  
45. rainbow shirts. But then, she said if I were Muslim I would  
46. be punished or stoned to death for being gay.

47. Int: I've heard about that.

48. Peter: Really? It was the first time I heard of it. I was shocked. It's  
49. sad, isn't it? Then, I told her that it's different from  
50. Buddhism because it's about forgiveness and killing is a sin.  
51. I said "Just like I forgave you for asking me with that kind  
52. of question. I was offended. I could have get mad at you but  
53. I decided to forgive you because anger cause me suffering".  
54. But I also told her that there's no right or wrong for being  
55. Muslim or Buddhist or which one was better. Just do  
56. whatever we believe and have faith in.

57. Int: What did she say?

58. Peter: She nodded. At the end of the day, we are still friends. Still,  
59. I feel like religious issue is sensitive to talk about.

60. Int: What's your meaning of 'we'? Do you still keep in touch

61.                   with her?  
62.   Peter: No I don't. I mean Buddhists and Muslims can be friends.  
63.   Int:     I see.

In this extract, although Peter knew that wearing earring is against the old Thai norm and is perceived by people from the old generation as inappropriate, he tried to negotiate that not all people from the old generation would think the same way. He added that his parents, as people from the old generation, felt that wearing earring was something fashionable. Moreover, he also reflected negotiation with this passenger about gender equality by giving example of women wearing jeans instead of skirts. And he felt that it should be acceptable when men wear earrings. Peter demonstrated that he consciously negotiated different cultural frames of references with this passenger. As seen in the last part of the extract, he was able to show the ability to act as a mediator when the passenger told him that gay people, in Islam, would be punished and stoned to death. He, then, presented his opinion to her as a Buddhist. Moreover, he tended to understand her point of views and background as she is Muslim. At the end of the extract, he still managed to mediate between what the passenger said and his frames of reference based on his understanding of culture without judging which one is right or wrong and concluded that they should do what they believe in (line 54 – 56). Although their religions were different, they could still be friends. Clearly, this extract suggests that cultural frames of reference are relevant to the ability to negotiate and meditate between cultures.

#### **4.4.1.2 Participants' engagement of ICA components**

As mentioned earlier that frequency and percentage will also be presented, this section, then, presents the numbers of the participants from each group engaging each component of ICA based on the findings from both interviews. However, it should be noted that although one participant might have provided more than a single piece of evidence in each component, this study only focused on the extent of participants' ability to engage each component ranging from Component 1 to Component 12. The twelve components have been divided into three levels (Baker, 2015) as presented in Table 4.8.

Twelve Components of Intercultural Awareness	Participants				%
	L	M	H	Total	
<b>Level 1: Basic cultural awareness</b>					
1. An awareness of culture as a set of shared behaviours, beliefs, and values	4	4	4	12	100
2. An awareness of the role culture and context play in any interpretation of meaning	4	4	4	12	100
3. An awareness of our own culturally based behaviour, values, and beliefs and the ability to articulate this	2	3	4	9	75
4. An awareness of others' culturally based behaviour, values, and beliefs and the ability to compare this with our own culturally based behaviour, values, and beliefs	4	4	4	12	100
<b>Level 2: Advanced cultural awareness</b>					
5. An awareness of the relative nature of cultural norms	2	2	4	8	66.7
6. An awareness of cultural understanding as provisional and open to revision	2	3	3	8	66.7
7. An awareness of multiple voices or perspectives within any cultural grouping	3	4	4	11	91.7
8. An awareness of individuals as members of many social groupings including cultural ones	2	3	4	9	75
9. An awareness of common ground between specific cultures as well as an awareness of possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between specific cultures	0	0	1	1	8.3
<b>Level 3: Intercultural awareness</b>					
10. An awareness of culturally based frames of reference, forms and communicative practices as being related both to specific cultures and also as emergent and hybrid in intercultural communication	0	0	1	1	8.3
11. An awareness of initial interaction in intercultural communication as possibly based on cultural stereotypes or generalisations but an ability to move beyond these	0	3	4	7	58.3
12. A capacity to negotiate and mediate between different emergent communicative practices and frames of reference based on the above understanding of culture in intercultural communication	0	3	4	7	58.3

Table 4.3: Numbers of participants engaging each component of ICA

Table 4.3 clearly shows that participants were able to engage in basic cultural awareness the most and in intercultural awareness the least. It can be seen that different participants made different engagement of the ICA components. Peter, a participant from the high group, was the only participant who provided the evidence that he was able to engage all twelve components of ICA. Still, the rest of the participants in the high group were able to engage components in all three ICA levels. Although participants from the medium group did not provide all engagements in all the levels of ICA, most of them were still able to engage components in intercultural awareness, the highest level of ICA. In contrast, participants from the low group were not able to engage all components. Their extent of awareness remains in the first two levels of ICA, namely basic cultural awareness and advanced cultural awareness.

In level 1, basic cultural awareness, participants of all groups were able to engage all the components. All participants (100%) from three groups showed that they were able to engage Component 1, Component 2, and Component 4. Moreover, among twelve components of ICA, these three components were reported to be the most awareness that the participants had. This is followed by Component 3 with eight participants (75%). Four participants were from the high group. Three participants were from the medium group and two participants were from the low group.

In level 2, advanced cultural awareness, only the high group was reported to be able to engage all the components ranging from Component 5 to 9 while the medium and low group were not able to engage Component 9. The majority of the participants (91.7%) was able to engaged Component 7. There were three participants from the low group and four participants each from the medium group and the high group. This is followed by Component 8 with nine participants (75%). Four participants were from the high group. Three participants were from the medium group and two participants were from the low group. Component 5 and 6 were reported by eight participants (66.7%). In Component 5, two participants each were from the medium group and the low group and four participants were from

the high group. In Component 6, two participants were from the low group and three participants each were from the medium group and the high group. Component 9 was reported to have the least evidence with only one participant from the high group (8.3%).

In level 3, it is obvious that participants were able to engage the component the least among the three levels of ICA. There was none of evidence contributed by any participants of the low group but still there is evidence reported by participants from the medium and high group. Component 11 and 12 were reported by seven participants (58.3%). Four participants were from the high group while three participants were from the medium group. This is followed by Component 10 which was reported by only one participant from the high group (8.3%).

#### **4.4.1.3 Summary**

The findings show that the extent of intercultural awareness these participants engage is ranging from basic cultural awareness to intercultural awareness. Participants from the medium and high group provide the evidence that they are able to engage more components than participants from the low group. The most common and frequent components are about their own cultures, interpretation of meaning, and articulating those own cultural perspectives and beliefs to a higher level of awareness. Cultural comparison is also a frequent occurrence highlighting the importance of comparing their own cultural perspectives with others which might or might not be developed to a higher level of awareness. Awareness of multiple perspectives within their own cultural groupings and their roles as members of many social and cultural groupings are reported by many participants as they show that they are well aware of them. There is evidence showing that participants are aware of culturally based stereotypes/generalisations and able to move beyond them through their capacities of negotiation and mediation between different emergent culturally and/or contextually grounded communication modes and frames of reference based on the cultural understandings in intercultural communication.

#### 4.4.2 Communication challenges experienced by Thai student trainees

This section aims to answer the research question (RQ2): What are the communication challenges experienced by these Thai student trainees in intercultural communication? In other words, this section will specify communication challenges that the participants reported experiencing in intercultural communication at the airport. Adopting thematic analysis, two main themes associating with participants' communication challenges emerged from the data. These were English language difficulties and non-linguistic cultural issues.

##### 4.4.2.1 English language difficulties

The challenges regarding English language reported by the participants refer to some aspects of difficulties that they reported experiencing during communication with colleagues and passengers. These include *English grammar, vocabulary size, English pronunciation, different English accents, and rapid speech.*

##### 1) English grammar

Generally, English grammar and Thai grammar are quite different because they are from different linguistic families. The difficulties regarding English grammar experienced by the participants resulted from various factors such as wordings arrangement, typological differences, and influence of the mother language.

(Extract 4.25)

1. Aoy: English grammar is a problem for me. I'm not good at it. It's
2. difficult. I'm confused with sentence structure which is
3. different from the Thai language, especially when I had to
4. speak more complex sentences.

(Extract 4.26)

1. Ekky: You know our language is different from the English
2. language, right? So, when I communicate with passengers, I
3. usually have a problem with English grammar, like tenses,
4. and sentence structure. It's confusing.

(Extract 4.27)

1. Kro: When I'm giving information to passengers, I've found
2. that English grammar is a problem for me. Many times, I'm
3. confused with the English grammar structure. You know,
4. it's difficult. I have to change verbs and tense. I take a long
5. time to give info to passengers.

(Extract 4.28)

1. Meow: English grammar is complicated. They have subject verb
2. agreements. They have tenses. It's very confusing.
3. Compared to Thai, we don't change verbs even though we
4. talk about something in the past. I think English grammar is
5. a problem for me.

(Extract 4.29)

1. Joy: Even though I can use English quite well, I found that
2. English grammar is still difficult to use. It's different from
3. Thai language. It confuses me.
4. Int: Well, how does it confuse you?
5. Joy: English has tenses but Thai doesn't. English needs to change
6. verbs when subject changes but Thai doesn't. Many times, I
7. forget to change verbs when I talk about events in the past
8. with passengers and colleagues.

Aoy, Ekky, Kro, Meow, and Joy reported that English grammar was a problem for them when they had to deal with passengers. They reported that the differences between English grammar and Thai caused the problem because English grammar is complicated and the structures are different from Thai language.

(Extract 4.30)

1. Peter: Many times I cannot speak well English because I'm
2. concerned about using appropriate English grammar.
3. Int: What do you mean?
4. Peter: I mean I have to take time to think about appropriate English
5. grammar structures before I speak. So, passengers have to
6. wait for me. I feel bad. I think I haven't practiced it enough.
7. But sometimes I met passengers who were not good at
8. English. It also took me a while to understand them. I could
9. tell that they had difficulty with English grammar to construct
10. sentences. It's like I was seeing myself. (laugh)

In Peter's case, he felt that English grammar was a problem for him and it obstructed him to speak English well. He added that English grammar was not only a problem for him but also for some passengers he met.

## 2) Vocabulary size

A lack of English vocabulary was also reported as a problem for the participants because they needed to use the appropriate vocabulary to communicate with their interlocutors and understand the vocabulary to comprehend what they were listening to.

(Extract 4.31)

1. Aoy: I don't know all English words. So, when I talked to them, I
2. paused many times to think.

(Extract 4.32)

1. Ekky: I don't like when I work at the information counter.
2. Passengers ask too many questions. Many times, I cannot
3. think of English words, so, I cannot answer them instantly.

(Extract 4.33)

1. Ohm: Lack of English vocabulary is a major problem that I have in
2. communicating with passengers.
3. Int: Why is it your major problem?
4. Ohm: Because I don't know what the exact English words to use.
5. Many times, I could not give them proper information about
6. tourist attractions in Thailand. I wish I could give them more
7. but I didn't know how to explain it to them in English.

Aoy, Ekky, and Ohm reported that due to limited English vocabulary they were unable to express their ideas orally in English.

(Extract 4.34)

1. Peter: Mostly, I struggled with vocabulary. I couldn't remember
2. English words even the simple ones. It's on the tip of my
3. tongue. Sometimes I didn't understand them. There was
4. miscommunication. I mean probably they used unfamiliar
5. words. So, I didn't understand. Sometimes, I used my own

6. words, but they didn't understand. There are many English
7. words that I don't know.

Peter reported that having limited English vocabulary was a disadvantage for him as well and it resulted in misunderstanding between him and passengers.

(Extract 4.35)

1. Pond: Many times I cannot think of English words when I speak
2. with passengers. There are a lot of English words that I don't
3. know especially in a specific context like airlines industry.
4. Int: For example.
5. Pond: Like it happened when I was talking to a foreign passenger.
6. When I worked at the information counter, a passenger asked
7. me where the jetway was but I didn't know what it meant. I
8. paused and took a little while to think about the word before
9. I continued to talk with him. I saw that the passenger
10. patiently waited for me. I don't know if it was another
11. passenger, I might get a complaint because I was wasting
12. their time.

Not only general English vocabulary, Pond mentioned that English words in a specific context, in this case airlines, caused some problems of discontinuance in communication and could possibly lead to passenger's dissatisfaction.

### **3) English pronunciation**

With regards to English pronunciation, some participants found that it was a barrier to successful communication because of its complexity of the vowels sound system of the English language.

(Extract 4.36)

1. Fon: I think English pronunciation is quite difficult to deal with
2. because there're a lot of English words that I don't know
3. how to pronounce appropriately. I think mispronunciation of
4. English could confuse people especially when making
5. announcements.
5. Int: Announcement?
6. Fon: Yes. Like passenger announcement or boarding
7. announcement.
8. Int: Oh! I got it.

9. Fon: Yes. Many times, it's difficult to understand what they
10. announce and it can cause passengers to miss their flights.
11. This is a big problem for me and for airline business as a
12. whole.

Fon reported that mispronunciation caused misunderstanding and it was not only a problem between her and the passengers but the misunderstanding also had a negative effect on the airline business.

(Extract 4.37)

1. Kro: I think the problems are from me, mostly because I forget
2. how to pronounce English words, where to stress, the first or
3. the second syllables. So, when I communicated with
4. passengers, I was not sure if I pronounced words
5. appropriately. I think mispronunciation leads to
6. miscommunication like passengers might go to the wrong
7. place or wrong country.

In Kro's case, she agreed that English pronunciation confused her because she forgot how to stress the English word appropriately. She also showed that she realised this problem could lead to miscommunication.

(Extract 4.38)

1. Joe: I think pronunciation of English words is an obstacle in
2. communication because if you don't pronounce words
3. appropriately, chances are people don't understand you. It
4. takes time to understand each other.
5. Int: Can you give me some example?
6. Joe: Like the word "hour". It should be pronounced with 'O'
7. sound not 'H'. It's confusing. I know that some alphabets
8. may be difficult for some people to pronounce because in
9. their country they don't have that sound like Z sound in
10. English. Thai doesn't have Z sound. Many Thai people find
11. it difficult to pronounce as well.

Joe said that mispronunciation confused him. He made his opinion clear by giving an example of the word *hour*. He also compared his language, Thai, with English, mentioning that there is no /z/ phoneme in Thai.

#### 4) Different English accents

Many participants agreed that communication challenges caused by different English accents had led them to encountering difficulties in understanding their passengers and colleagues.

(Extract 4.39)

1. Aoy: There are many passengers from many countries and they
2. have different accents when they speak English. I have to
3. admit that it's difficult for me to deal with those accents. It's
4. confusing.

(Extract 4.40)

1. Kro: Passengers have different accents. It's difficult for me to
2. understand all of them.

Aoy and Kro clearly stated that different English accents confused them.

(Extract 4.41)

1. Fon: Oh, English accent is one of the problems, a main problem
2. for me. There are variety of accents I've experienced so far.
3. It's very difficult to deal with. Many passengers are fluent in
4. English but their accents are very difficult for me to
5. understand.
6. Int: Who are the passengers you're talking about?
7. Fon: Some passengers like Indian and Japanese are difficult to
8. deal with. Their accents are difficult to understand. It's
9. difficult to catch words. I think it's because of the nature of
10. their mother languages. So, when they speak English, they
11. rely on their mother tongue. Just like when Thai people
12. speak English, it is monotone because in Thai language we
13. don't have various stresses like English.

Fon reported that she realised a variety of English accents. She also claimed that the problems with different English accents were caused by both their own and passengers' accents. Fon talked about the difficulty with English accents. She stated that it was a main problem for her.

(Extract 4.42)

1. Kim: The main problem that I've found when I'm at the check-in
2. counter is the English accent of passengers. I feel that when
3. I listen to passengers who are not native English speakers
4. speak English, I don't understand them. I'm not sure. Maybe
5. it's because my listening skill is bad. I need more training.
6. For example, Indian passengers, they are good at English but
7. it's difficult for me to understand what they are saying.

Kim also reported that different English accents were difficult to deal with. Kim felt that the problem was also caused by her own performance. She said that her listening skill was poor and she needed more training.

### **5) Rapid speech**

The participants reported that dealing with passengers who spoke fast in English was a problem to them. They agreed that when passengers spoke in English too fast, it confused them and they did not understand the passengers. All participants of this study reported that they had difficulties with rapid speech. The selected extracts are reported by Ohm, Yuan, and Kro.

(Extract 4.43)

1. Ohm: I don't understand passengers when they ask me in English
2. and they speak very fast at the same time.

(Extract 4.44)

1. Yuan: I think it makes me confused when passengers come to my
2. counter and speak very fast in English.

(Extract 4.45)

1. Kro: I also have problems when passengers speak too fast. I think
2. they thought that I was fluent in English. In fact, I'm not. I
3. don't know when they misunderstand something. But I think
4. when they speak English with me and I can reply back, they
5. tend to jump to the conclusion that I'm good at English. After
6. that they speak very fast.

In addition, the English language difficulties are summarised in a form of table to illustrate the overall frequency of the difficulties reported by group of participants.

<b>English language difficulties</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
English grammar	3	1	2	6	50
Vocabulary size	2	2	1	5	41.7
English pronunciation	1	1	1	3	25
Different English accents	3	1	0	4	33.3
Rapid speech	4	4	4	12	100

Table 4.4: Participants' English language difficulties

Table 4.4 reveals that *rapid speech* is the most frequently reported problem which is mentioned by all participants (100%). This is followed by *English grammar* which is reported by six participants (50%). There are three participants from the low group, two participants from the high group, and one participant from the medium group. *Vocabulary size* is reported by five participants (41.7%). There are two participants each from the medium and low group and one participant from the high group. The difficulty regarding *different English accents* is reported by four participants (33.3%). There are three participants from the low group, one participant from the medium group, and none from the high group. Finally, *English pronunciation* is the least frequently reported by three participants (25%), one participant each from the high, medium, and low group. See Appendix K (Table K.1) for Participants' English language difficulties by individual.

#### **4.4.2.2 Non-linguistic cultural issues**

Non-linguistic cultural issues refer to challenges regarding various beliefs, behaviors, practices and expressions the participants reported that they encountered when communicating with foreign passengers and colleagues. These include *sexual orientation-based harassment, religious harassment, gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, racism, and linguisticism*.

## 1) Sexual orientation-based harassment

Sexual orientation-based harassment occurs because other people perceive that someone's sexual orientation is different from his/her gender or actual sexual orientation. In this study, Peter experienced this harassment.

(Extract 4.46)

1. Peter: I'm openly gay and I'm OK with it. But I'm unhappy when
2. I get mocked for being gay. There was a group of Muslim
3. passengers making fun of me by doing girlish gestures to
4. mock me and called me '*Sissy*'.
5. Int: They did? I'm sorry to hear that.
6. Peter: I was really upset. I felt like they're harassing me. It never
7. happened to me before.

Peter reported experiencing this form of harassment for the first time while he was working. He described himself as an openly gay and that some passengers verbally harassed him by calling him '*Sissy*'.

## 2) Religious Harassment

This form of harassment is specifically based on the differences of religions. An individual is treated unfairly or inappropriately by other people they interact with of his/her own religion. Pond reported experiencing this harassment.

(Extract 4.47)

1. Pond: There was a time that I felt I was harassed.
2. Int: Who made you feel that way?
3. Pond: A group of passengers.
4. Int: What happened?
5. Pond: Well, when I was greeting passengers at the gate, a group of
6. passengers made fun of us by acting like they were trying to
7. avoid getting shot by my colleagues and me. When they
8. approached us, one of them said "Please don't shoot us."
9. Another said "Allah, oh Allah". The other laughed. It's not
10. funny. At that moment, I knew exactly what joke they were
11. making.
12. Int: What was that joke?
13. Pond: They mocked us because we are Muslim. They saw us

14. wearing hijab and acted like we were ISIS. My colleague
15. didn't get it but I knew what they meant. I've never
16. experienced this before in my entire life.

This kind of harassment was reported through Pond's view of a Muslim when she was made fun of by a group of passengers. She believed that they harassed her because of the way she dressed and her religion.

### **3) Gender-based discrimination**

Gender-based discrimination is discriminatory perceptions and behaviours towards someone based on his/her actual gender. Those who discriminate feel that their gender is superior to the opposite. Ohm reported that he had the experience with it.

(Extract 4.48)

1. Ohm: A male passenger looked at my trainee card and asked me
2. why I decided to work for airlines.
3. Int: What did you say?
4. Ohm: Well, I told him that I liked this job and I could practise my
5. English. But then he said this job was for female and he
6. laughed.
7. Int: Laughed?
8. Ohm: Yes, he did.

Ohm was discriminated by a passenger saying that his job was only for female employees to perform not for male employees.

### **4) Sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment is unwelcomed, unconsent, and unwanted sexual behaviours, either verbally or non-verbally. It causes someone to feel scared, humiliated, intimidated, or painful. This form of harassment was reported by Fon and Kim.

(Extract 4.49)

1. Fon: I was working on a night shift. It was the first time that I was
2. sexually harassed.
3. Int: What happened?

4. Fon: A male passenger touched my hand when I handed him his
5. tickets and passport.
6. Int: I'm sorry to hear that. Are you OK to talk about this?
7. Fon: Yes, I'm OK. You know what? He even smiled at me. It was
8. awful. I was shocked because it was the first time I
9. experienced this kind of harassment. At that time, I was at
10. the counter by myself. I couldn't ask for my supervisor's
11. help. It's disgusting. He seemed to be pleased because I
12. could see him smile. I was silent but it's hard to forget that
13. my hand was touched.

Fon was sexually harassed when a male passenger touched her hand and smiled while she was working at the check-in counter. She admitted that she was shocked by the incident as she experienced it for the first time.

(Extract 4.50)

1. Kim: There was a foreign passenger trying to flirt with me while I
2. was at the counter. I saw him waiting in the queue.
3. Int: What did he do?
4. Kim: Well, he was smiling at me, even blew kisses at me. I was
5. not flattered by that.
6. Int: How did you feel?
7. Kim: I felt like I was insulted and harassed.

Kim also experienced sexual harassment. She felt that she was insulted and harassed by a male passenger when he was flirting with her and blowing kisses at her.

## 5) Racism

Racism is a form of discrimination which involves the way of expressing negative attitudes towards someone's race. Those who discriminate strongly believe that their races are better than the other. They tend to make other people of different race feel inferior. In this study, two participants experienced racist abuses. It affected these participants and made them feel upset, depressed, and even angry. Joe and Meow reported experiencing with racism.

(Extract 4.51)

1. Joe: I was dealing with an American couple and I was confused

2. with the system at the check-in counter. So, it took me a big
3. while to check them in. Well, I asked my supervisor to help.
4. I know that it upset them because they were waiting to be
5. checked in.
6. Int: How did you know that?
7. Joe: I could tell that they were mad because their faces showed. I
8. apologised to them many times because I know it's my fault.
9. While I was waiting for my supervisor, I heard the husband
10. swore '*Monkey*' and he turned his face away.
11. Int: Monkey? Really?
12. Joe: Really. That's why I was shocked to hear that. I know
13. exactly at that moment I got racist abused.

In Joe's case, he felt that he was subjected to racism when he overheard that a passenger called him '*Monkey*'.

(Extract 4.52)

1. Meow: I'm short-sighted. The other day I forgot to bring my glasses
2. with me. And it's difficult for me to read passengers' name
3. on passports. I struggled reading their names so I took a close
4. look at the passport. You know what happened?
5. Int: What?
6. Meow: The passenger and his friends were showing racist slant-eyes
7. gestures to me and laughed.

Another racism experience was reported by Meow when a group of passengers mocked her by using racist slant-eyes gestures and laughed.

## 6) Linguicism

Linguicism is another form of discrimination based on a speaker's use of a target language and characteristics of speech such as accent. Those who discriminate feel that their language (NS) is superior to the other thereby discriminating against speakers of other languages (NNS). Yuan reported experiencing linguicism.

(Extract 4.53)

1. Yuan: Some passengers made fun of my accents when I was
2. speaking English. They repeated what I spoke to mock me
3. and laughed.

4. Int: How did you feel?
5. Yuan: I found it extremely rude when someone you don't even
6. know mimic the way you speak.

Yuan talked about how she got insults from a group of passengers (NES) on her accent when speaking English with her Thai accent.

In addition, the non-linguistic cultural issues are summarised in a form of table to illustrate the overall frequency of the difficulties reported by group of participants.

Non-linguistic cultural issues	Low	Medium	High	Total	%
Sexual orientation-based harassment	0	0	1	1	8.3
Religious Harassment	0	1	0	1	8.3
Gender-based discrimination	0	0	1	1	8.3
Sexual harassment	1	1	0	2	16.7
Racism	0	0	2	2	16.7
Linguicism	0	0	1	1	8.3

Table 4.5: Participants' non-linguistic cultural issues

Table 4.5 shows that *sexual harassment* and *racism* are the most frequently reported issues (16.7%). *Sexual harassment* is mentioned by two participants, one participant each from the medium and low group. *Racism* is reported by two participants from the high group. *Religious harassment* is reported by one participant from the medium group (8.3%). *Sexual orientation-based harassment* is reported by one participant from the high group (8.3%). *Gender-based discrimination* is reported by one participant from the high group (8.3%). Finally, *linguicism* is also reported by one participant from the high group (8.3%). See Appendix K (Table K.2) for participants' non-linguistic cultural issues by individual.

#### 4.4.2.3 Summary

Overall, these participants reported chances to engage in intercultural communication through English in different situations such as at the check-in counter, at the gate, and at the information centre. The findings have addressed the

second research question which aims to identify the communication challenges experienced by the participants. The findings reveal that there are two major themes of communication challenges, including English language difficulties and non-linguistic cultural issues. It is obvious that the participants had communication challenges regarding English language difficulties more than non-linguistic cultural issues. In English language difficulties, *rapid speech* was frequently reported by the participants, followed by *different English accents*, *vocabulary size*, *English pronunciation*, and *English grammar*. In non-linguistic cultural issues, *sexual harassment* and *racism* were frequently reported by the participants, followed by *gender-based discrimination*, *religious harassment*, *sexual orientation-based harassment*, and *linguicism*.

#### **4.4.3 Associated strategies employed by Thai student trainees**

This section aims to answer the third research question (RQ3): What are the associated strategies employed by Thai student trainees in dealing with communication challenges? In other words, this section will provide the findings regarding communication strategies the participants used in dealing with communication challenges they experienced in the previous section. There are different strategies employed by the participants in dealing with different situations. The strategies are categorised into two main groups based on the communication challenges in the previous section.

##### **4.4.3.1 Associated strategies in dealing with English language difficulties**

English language difficulties presented in the previous section (4.4.2.1) refer to some aspects of difficulties when these participants used English in communication. Five major associated strategies these participants employed emerged from the data. These are *ask for help*, *request clarification*, *don't give up*, *spell out the word*, and *request repetition*.

## 1) Ask for help

Participants asked for help when they faced difficulties using English. They reported that they asked their colleagues or supervisors to jump in and deal with passengers instead of them.

(Extract 4.54) (In response to Extract 4.25, English grammar)

1. Aoy: .... So, when I was lost and I didn't know what to say, I just
2. smiled at the passenger and said I'm sorry. Sometimes, I
3. asked other airline staff members to help.

(Extract 4.55) (In response to Extract 4.26, English grammar)

1. Ekky: .... I asked my colleagues to help me. So, when the situation
2. gets worst like I cannot construct sentences or I get confused,
3. I ask my colleagues to help.

(Extract 4.56) (In response to Extract 4.27, English grammar)

1. Kro: ...So, in the situation like that I usually ask my colleague who
2. work with me to help. But sometimes, the passengers left
3. before I even asked for help from other airline staff
4. members. (laugh)

(Extract 4.57) (In response to Extract 4.31, Vocabulary size)

1. Aoy: .... But if I cannot think of English words, I'll ask my
2. colleague. Or if I don't know what the word means, I'll ask
3. them to clarify again.

(Extract 4.58) (In response to Extract 4.32, Vocabulary size)

1. Ekky: .... Many times, I cannot think of English words, so I cannot
2. answer them instantly. Luckily, my supervisor is always
3. there with me. So, I ask her to help.

## 2) Request clarification

Request clarification was used when the point in communication was unclear. This strategy was reported by Ohm when he dealt with difficulties regarding vocabulary size and Joy when she dealt with English grammar.

(Extract 4.59) (In response to Extract 4.33, Vocabulary size)

1. Ohm: ... And if they said some words that I didn't know the
2. meaning or I was unfamiliar with, I'd ask them to clarify the
3. word to me.

In Ohm's case, he asked the passengers to clarify the meanings of the words they used which he was not familiar with.

(Extract 4.60) (In response to Extract 4.29, English grammar)

1. Int: What did you do?
2. Joy: Well, if I didn't understand what they were asking or the
3. sentences, I would ask them to clarify or give me more
4. details. It actually took time to understand what they wanted.
5. But I'd make sure with them if I understood them correctly
6. to avoid any mistakes.

In Joy's case, she asked for clarification because she found that English sentence structures confused her. She reported that asking for clarification helped her to understand what passengers wanted correctly.

### **3) Don't give up**

Don't give up strategy refers to when a participant keeps trying to explain or working together with their interlocutors to understand what is being said in moments on non-understanding. This strategy is reported by the participants when they deal with difficulties regarding English pronunciation, English grammar and vocabulary size.

(Extract 4.61) (In response to Extract 4.36, English pronunciation)

1. Fon: ...I would describe it to them using similar vocabulary.
2. I tried to talk to them. They tried to work with me until they
3. understood me and had their problems solved.

In dealing with English pronunciation, Fon reported that she did not give up as she tried to use similar vocabulary and kept talking to the passengers until they understood each other.

(Extract 4.62) (In response to Extract 4.28, English grammar)

1. Int: So, what did you do when you communicated with
2. passengers?
3. Meow: I tried to speak. I kept speaking and explaining information
4. to passengers although what I was saying is wrong English
5. grammar. I mixed Thai and English grammar and I felt that
6. eventually passengers would try to understand me. Like we
7. worked together. (laugh)
8. Int: For example.
9. Meow: Like when I talked about something that happened
10. yesterday. I used 'yesterday' as a keyword but I didn't
11. change the verb to past tense. Like "Yesterday, the airline
12. announce that... (blah, blah). Because in Thai language, we
13. don't change verbs, right? Even when I talked to my friends
14. in America like this, they understood me.

Meow kept speaking and explaining to passengers even though she knew that the grammar she used was wrong. However, she felt that the passengers would also try to understand her.

(Extract 4.63) (In response to Extract 4.30, English grammar)

1. Int: So how did you deal with that situation?
2. Peter: Sometimes, I smiled and acted like I understood them. I
3. didn't want them to feel bad. But I always try my best to
4. make passengers understand me. I never walk away from my
5. passengers or ask someone to help me. If I cannot construct
6. a sentence at that moment, I just say word-by-word which is
7. relating to the topic we're talking about. I said like "You-go-
8. gate-number-two", "System-broken-no-check-in", or "Staff-
9. go-toilet". (laugh) I feel that they tried to understand me.

In Peter's case, when he was unable to construct an effective English sentence due to the difficulty he reported experiencing with English grammar, he tried to say it by word-by-word.

(Extract 4.64) (In response to Extract 4.34, Vocabulary size)

1. Int: I see. But what did you do when you have to communicate
2. with passengers?
3. Peter: I tried to use similar words and explained to the passenger.
4. Like when I talked to a foreign couple, I could not think of
5. the word 'available'.

6. Int: Available?
7. Peter: Yes. That word. They asked me if it was okay to use the
8. praying room. At that moment, I wanted to say it's not
9. 'available' but I couldn't think of the word 'available'. So, I
10. paused and I said it's not free. Then, they asked me how
11. much they needed to pay. (laugh) I told them they didn't
12. have to pay. I tried to explained to them and they also tried
13. to listen to me. It took us a while before I finally came up
14. with the word 'ready'. So, I said the room was not ready to
15. use. Then, they understood and waited for big while before
16. they could use the room.

In dealing with challenges regarding vocabulary size, Peter also employed this strategy. He tried to use a similar word in explaining to the passengers. He used the word 'free' in referring to 'available'. Although that word did not fit well in the context, both of them tried to work together to finally reach the mutual understanding.

(Extract 4.65) (In response to Extract 4.35, Vocabulary size)

1. Int: Can you tell me more?
2. Pond: Like it happened when I was talking to a foreign passenger.
3. When I worked at the information counter a passenger asked
4. me where the jetway was but I didn't know what it meant. I
5. paused and took a little while to think about the word before
6. I continued to talk with him. I saw that the passenger
7. patiently waited for me. I don't know if it was another
8. passenger, I might get a complaint because I was wasting
9. their time.
10. Int: What happened next?
11. Pond: So, I asked him if it was the name of an airline or if he
12. meant gateway. Well, he was kind because he saw me
13. struggling. So, he explained it to me. Then, I got it. You
14. know. I tried my best to help him. To my knowledge, it is
15. called a passenger bridge. Finally, I could guide him to the
16. jetway successfully. He thanked me, and I thanked him.

Pond also tried her best to help the passenger to get to the jetway. Pond did not know what jetway meant. Although it has the same meaning as a passenger bridge which she knows the meaning, the passenger used the word jetway which she was not familiar with. So, she kept asking the passenger. The passenger worked with Pond in dealing with the non-understanding point by explaining it to her.

(Extract 4.66) (In response to Extract 4.33, Vocabulary size)

1. Int: So, what did you do?
2. Ohm: I tried to explain to them using the English words I know,
3. simple words. And if they said some words that I didn't
4. know the meaning or I was unfamiliar with, I'd ask them to
5. clarify the word to me. I think the passengers incorporated
6. very well.

In Ohm's case, he employed more than one strategy, namely *don't give up* and *request clarification*. He first tried to explain to the passengers using the words he knew even the simple ones. But when he did not understand them, he asked them to clarify.

#### 4) Spell out the word

Spell out the word strategy was reported by participants when they dealt with the difficulty regarding English pronunciation.

(Extract 4.67) (In response to Extract 4.36, English pronunciation)

1. Fon: In case that passengers didn't understand the word I said, I
2. would spell out the word for them. I found that spelling the
3. words is helpful for me because passengers understood
4. what that word was. And if I didn't know how to spell the
5. word, I would describe it to them using similar vocabulary.
6. I tried to talk to them. They tried to work with me until they
7. understood me and had their problems solved.

Fon also reported she used this strategy in dealing with difficulty of English pronunciation. However, she showed that she employed more than one strategy, in this case *spell out the word* and *don't give up*.

(Extract 4.68) (In response to Extract 4.37, English pronunciation)

1. Int: So, how did you deal with it?
2. Kro: Well, if I was not sure about the effective pronunciation,
3. I spelled the words out for them. Like the word 'belonging',
4. in the first place I said be-long-ging. The passenger was quite
5. confused. She didn't get it. So, I spell that word to her. Then
6. she said "Oh, be-long-ning". I just knew it that I

7. mispronounced that word. (laugh) Finally, she allowed the
8. security guard to check her belonging.

Kro said that when she was not sure whether her English pronunciation was effective or not, she spelled out that word to the passenger. In this extract, she mentioned the word 'belonging'.

### 5) Request repetition

Request repetition was reported by all participants as a useful strategy in coping with different English language difficulties. Aoy, Kro, Fon, and Kim used this strategy when they dealt with difficulties of different English accents to reach the understandings between them and passengers.

(Extract 4.69) (In response to Extract 4.39, Different English accents)

1. Int: But how did you deal with it?
2. Aoy: I asked them to say it again. Sometimes, it took a while for
3. me and them to understand each other.

(Extract 4.70) (In response to Extract 4.40, Different English accents)

1. Kro: But if I didn't understand passengers because of their
2. accents, I asked them to repeat the words or sentences
3. because I wanted to understand them so that I could help
4. them.

(Extract 4.71) (In response to Extract 4.41, Different English accents)

1. Int: How did you handle the situation when you didn't
2. understand them?
3. Fon: So, If I didn't understand them, I asked them to say it again
4. and speak slowly. Sometimes, I asked them to repeat it more
5. than two times. I did it to avoid any mistakes in
6. communication.

(Extract 4.72) (In response to Extract 4.42, Different English accents)

1. Int: How did you deal with them then?
2. Kim: I don't know about other friends. But for me, I asked them
3. to repeat the words or sentences again slowly. I want to make

4. sure that I got the correct message from them so that I don't
5. get any complaints. (laugh)

In dealing with difficult English pronunciation, Joe requested repetition from passengers as well.

(Extract 4.73) (In response to Extract 4.38, English pronunciation)

1. Int: How did you deal with this obstacle?
2. Joe: So, when I didn't understand passengers' pronunciation of
3. some words, I asked them to say that word again. I know that
4. it's quite difficult for me and many people whose English is
5. not the first language to deal with it. So, I have to ask them
6. to repeat the words again for two or three times.

Finally, in dealing with rapid speech, all participants requested repetition from their passengers. Selected extracts below are from Ohm, Yuan, and Kro.

(Extract 4.74) (In response to Extract 4.43, Rapid speech)

1. Ohm: .... I told them to speak slowly and repeat their questions for
2. me so I could understand them correctly.

(Extract 4.75) (In response to Extract 4.44, Rapid speech)

1. Yuan: I think it makes me confused when passengers come to my
2. counter and speak very fast in English. I smiled at them and
3. politely asked them to repeat it again.

(Extract 4.76) (In response to Extract 4.45, Rapid speech)

1. Kro: .... In the end, I asked them to repeat what they just said
2. because I couldn't understand. I said "Repeat it again,
3. please" many times. (laugh)

In addition, the associated strategies employed to deal with English language difficulties are summarised in a form of table to illustrate the overall frequency of the strategies reported by group of participants.

Associated strategies	Low	Medium	High	Total	%
Ask for help	3	0	0	3	25
Request clarification	0	2	0	2	16.7
Don't give up	0	3	2	5	41.7
Spell out the word	1	1	0	2	16.7
Request repetition	4	4	4	12	100

Table 4.6: Associated strategies in dealing with English language difficulties

Table 4.6 shows the frequency of the strategies employed by the participants in dealing with communication challenges in the aspect of English language difficulties. Since some participants reported they employed more than one strategy in dealing with one problem, this explains why the frequency of the participants are greater than the reported challenges in Table 4.4. For example, in extract 4.67, Fon employs more than one strategy, namely *spell out the word* and *don't give up*, when she deals with English pronunciation. In this table, it obviously shows that *request repetition* is the most frequently employed by all participants (100%). This is followed by *don't give up* which is reported by five participants (41.7%). There are two participants from the high group and three participants from the medium group. *Ask for help* is employed by three participants from the low group only (25%). *Request clarification* is reported by two participants from the medium group (16.7%). Finally, *spell out the word* is reported by two participants (16.7%), one participant each from the medium and low group. See Appendix K (Table K.3) for participants' associated strategies in dealing with English language difficulties by individual.

#### 4.4.3.2 Associated strategies in dealing with non-linguistic cultural issues

In dealing with the challenges regarding non-linguistic cultural issues mentioned in the previous section, there are two main associated strategies employed by the participants, including *control emotions* and *forgive*.

## 1) Control emotions

*Control emotions* refers to the ability to manage one's emotion to deal with unpleasant situations. Many participants report that they try to control their emotions and remain calm when they experience cultural challenges or culture shock.

(Extract 4.77) (In response to Extract 4.46, Sexual orientation-based harassment)

1. Peter: I dealt with my emotion and tried to be calm. I know that
2. they're my passengers and it's not good to fight with them...

Peter reported that he controlled his emotion since he was aware that it was not appropriate to argue with the passengers.

(Extract 4.78) (In response to Extract 4.47, Religious harassment)

1. Int: What did you do at that moment?
2. Pond: What I could do at that moment was keeping my emotion at
3. bay and '*Nam-khoon-wai-nai, Nam-sai-wai-nok*' [meaning
4. biting one's tongue].

Pond admitted that she was not happy with what she experienced but she decided to keep calm and deal with her anger. She mentioned a Thai proverb '*Nam-khoon-wai-nai, Nam-sai-wai-nok*' literally meaning of keeping the dirty water inside and the clear water outside.

(Extract 4.79) (In response to Extract 4.48, Gender-based discrimination)

1. Int: So, what did you do?
2. Ohm: At that moment, I smiled at him and tried to act naturally and
3. kept calm. And if I said something aggressive back to him,
4. he might get angry. I didn't want to be disrespectful to the
5. client...

In dealing with gender-based discrimination, Ohm also tried to remain calm. He added that he did not want to be disrespectful to the passenger.

(Extract 4.80) (In response to Extract 4.49, Sexual harassment)

1. Fon: ...Well, at that time, I acted like nothing happened. I tried to
2. keep calm. I couldn't leave the counter even though I felt I
3. wanted to run away from him...

(Extract 4.81) (In response to Extract 4.50, Sexual harassment)

1. Kim: I felt like I was insulted and harassed. So, I quickly left the
2. counter. I think what he did was inappropriate. I tried really
3. hard to control my emotion and keep calm...

Similar to Pond, Fon and Kim managed to control their emotions and remain calm even though they were really angry and uncomfortable with the situations they were experiencing.

(Extract 4.81) (In response to Extract 4.51, Racism)

1. Joe: .... In fact, I could hear him quite clear and I think the other
2. airline staff and passengers could hear it too. I was offended
3. but at that moment I acted like nothing happened. I tried to
4. remain calm.

(Extract 4.82) (In response to Extract 4.52, Racism)

1. Meow: I smiled at them while I was trying to remain calm. I was on
2. duty. So, my responsibilities as a student trainee was to
3. provide good service to them.

(Extract 4.83) (In response to Extract 4.53, Linguicism)

1. Yuan: I tried to remain calm. I dealt with my emotion and tried to
2. control it.

In dealing with racist abuse and linguicism, Joe, Meow, and Yuan reported that they managed to control their emotions and keep calm.

## **2) Forgive**

*Forgive* seems to be the most complex strategy since participants engage another strategy, *control emotions*, before they reach the ability to forgive. However, this

needs to be further analysed and discussed in the next chapter. The extracts show that participants attempted to eliminate their negative thoughts and emotions. Some participants reported that they forgave even though they felt that they were harassed and upset.

(Extract 4.84) (In response to Extract 4.49, Sexual harassment)

1. Fon: .... And I chose to forgive him too.
2. Int: Why?
3. Fon: I think people are different. What he did was wrong but it
4. doesn't mean other '*Farang*' would do like him...

Fon moved from *control emotions* to *forgive* as she realised that people can be different, in this case '*Farang*' (a word Thai people use to call Westerners).

(Extract 4.85) (In response to Extract 4.46, Sexual orientation-based harassment)

1. Peter: As I said I tried to keep calm. Then, I smiled at them and
2. forgave them for what they did. I forgave them because I
3. knew that people are different...

(Extract 4.86) (In response to Extract 4.52, Racism)

1. Meow: ... And I forgave them for their disrespectful behaviours
2. because I understand that people are different. They were
3. just another example of ignorant people...

Similar to Fon, Peter and Meow forgave those passengers who harassed them because they understood that people can be different as well.

(Extract 4.87) (In response to Extract 4.53, Linguicism)

1. Yuan: ... I forgave them for their ignorance. It's just like what Wor
2. Wachira Metee (A Buddhist monk) said "to forgive is to end
3. all hatred and prevent seeking revenge"....

Yuan also forgave those passengers who racially harassed her. She followed the guidance of Wor Wachira Metee (a Buddhist monk) as she used it to find the way to forgive.

In addition, the associated strategies employed to deal with non-linguistic cultural issues are summarised in a form of table to illustrate the overall frequency of the strategies reported by group of participants.

Associated strategies	Low	Medium	High	Total	%
Control emotions	1	3	4	8	66.67
Forgive	0	1	3	4	33.33

Table 4.7: Associated strategies in dealing with non-linguistic cultural issues

Table 4.7 shows the frequency of associated strategies regarding non-linguistic cultural issues experienced by the participants. Since some participants reported they employed more than one strategy in dealing with one problem, this explains why the frequency of the participants are greater than the reported problems in Table 4.5. For example, in extract 4.84, Fon employs more than one strategy, namely *control emotions* and *forgive*, when she deals with sexual harassment. From the table, it reveals that *control emotions* is the most employed strategy which is reported by eight participants (66.67%). There are four participants from the high group, three participants from the medium group, and one participant from the low group. This is followed by *forgive* which is reported by four participants (33.3%). There are three participants from the high group, one from the medium group, and none from the low group. See Appendix K (Table K.4) for participants' associated strategies in dealing with non-linguistic cultural issues by individual.

#### 4.4.3.3 Summary

Overall, there is a clear line that these participants employed different strategies in dealing English language difficulties and non-linguistic cultural issues since there is no evidence of overlapped strategies found in their reports. The findings have addressed the third research question which aims to identify the associated strategies employed by the participants in dealing with communication challenges mentioned earlier. In dealing with English language difficulties, *request repetition* is frequently reported by the participants, followed by *don't give up*, *ask for help*, *request clarification*, and *spell out the word*. In dealing with non-linguistic cultural

issues, *control emotions* is frequently reported by the participants, followed by *forgive*.

#### **4.4 Summary and conclusion**

Based on the findings presented in this chapter, they offered answers to the main research questions of this study.

1. To what extent are these Thai student trainees interculturally aware in intercultural communication?
2. What are the communication challenges experienced by these Thai student trainees in intercultural communication?
3. What are the associated strategies employed by these Thai student trainees in dealing with those challenges?

In relation to RQ 1, the findings showed that the extent of intercultural awareness that these participants were aware to ranged from basic cultural awareness to intercultural awareness. However, not all the ICA features were demonstrated by all participants since different participants engage different ICA components. Some participants from the high and medium groups were able to engage components from all the levels of ICA while participants from low group reach only level 2, advanced cultural awareness.

In relation to RQ2, the findings showed that participants experience various communication challenges. There were two main challenges that can be identified which are English language difficulties and non-linguistic cultural issues. English language difficulties include *English grammar, vocabulary size, English pronunciation, different English accents, and rapid speech*. Challenges regarding non-linguistic cultural issues experienced by the participants include *sexual*

*orientation-based harassment, religious harassment, gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, racism, and linguicism.*

In relation to RQ 3, to deal with those communication challenges, these participants employed different strategies. There were two main employed communication strategies which are based on the communication challenges they experienced. First, associated strategies in dealing with English language difficulties include *ask for help, request clarification, don't give up, spell out the word, and request repetition.* Second, associated strategies in dealing with cultural differences include *control emotions, and forgive.*

Although the findings have helped answer the research questions of this study, the overall aim of this study should not be neglected. The overall aim of this study was to investigate the role of intercultural awareness through Thai student trainees' communication challenges and associated strategies in intercultural communication using English language. Based on the research philosophy of this study which was discussed in the previous chapter, the role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication of these participants could be investigated and understood through the relationship of three different perspectives, including ICA, communication challenges, and associated strategies. Due to the analysis, the data suggested that the intercultural awareness was relevant to those challenges and strategies in non-linguistic cultural issues while the own-performance and other-performance problems (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997) were more relevant to those challenges and strategies in English language difficulties. Many participants reported that the challenges they experienced in their intercultural communication using English were caused by both the deficiencies of their own English skills and the difficulties associated with passengers' English performance as perceived by them. The associated strategies they employed, which were similar to those proposed by Dörnyei (1995), Nakatani (2006), and Kirkpatrick (2007), were to realise a language production goal and overcome those English language difficulties which occurred real-time during their interactions. In other words, the relationship between English language difficulties and associated strategies and intercultural

awareness was not obviously shown. On the other hand, the relationship between non-linguistic cultural issues and associated strategies and ICA could be seen. There were pieces of evidence reported by participants which related to ICA components. Therefore, the discussion about this relationship and further analysis will be presented in the next chapter in order to unfold the role of intercultural awareness.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The previous chapter presented the findings of the fieldwork: this chapter subjects them to discussion. Responses to research question one, two and three were already offered. However, the evidence concerning the role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication of these Thai student trainees still need to be fully addressed. To achieve this, a more detailed analysis and discussion of the key research findings will be presented based on both the earlier theoretical discussion and the data gathered from the in-depth interviews.

In the following sections, the findings of this present study are discussed, with references to the relevant literature. The first section discusses how ICA, communication challenges, and strategies connect. This will be followed by the second section with the analysis of how ICA components play a role in intercultural communication through communication challenges and strategies in cultural aspects. In the last section, the abilities contributed by ICA components (Practice Orientated ICA) that the participants employed in their intercultural communication will be presented.

#### **5.1 Relationship between ICA and communication challenges and associated strategies**

This section attempts to present how ICA is related to communication challenges and associated strategies. It also discusses the complexities of culture based on the analysis of individual participants' information combined with in-depth interviews. The data gathered in this study also gives insights into the manner of how ICA components are employed by participants. The characteristics of each ICA component will also be presented along with the discussion. Twelve components include Component 1 (*own culture*), Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*),

Component 3 (*articulation of own cultural perspectives*), Component 4 (*comparison between own and other cultures*), Component 5 (*relative cultural norms*), Component 6 (*revision of cultural understanding*), Component 7 (*multiple perspectives within a cultural grouping*), Component 8 (*members of many social groupings*), Component 9 (*common ground/miscommunication between specific cultures*), Component 10 (*hybrid cultural understanding and/or practices*), Component 11 (*stereotypes/generalisations*), and Component 12 (*negotiation/mediation*).

As already presented in Chapter 4 (Table 4.8), different participants made different engagement of the components of ICA. The findings show that participants in high group were able to engage more components ranging from basic cultural awareness to intercultural awareness, while participants from low group seemed able to engage ICA in contexts of intercultural communication less. Their understanding of culture in intercultural communication seemed to remain in the first two levels of ICA which are basic cultural awareness and advanced cultural awareness. However, the findings suggest that the ability to engage ICA components of each participant emerging as complex was constituted by various salient factors which participants brought with them to their intercultural communication through English. These include participants' attitudes, intercultural experiences, and own cultural background.

### **1) Attitudes**

Based on the findings, participants' attitude is revealed to be one of the factors playing a role in intercultural communication. Allport (1935) stated that attitude is organised through an individual's experience, and influenced by personal responses to all related objects and situations. Eagly and Chaiken (1998) added that attitude is expressed through an evaluation on a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour, approval or disapproval. Similarly, Crano and Prislin (2006, p. 347) defined that "attitudes are the evaluative judgments that integrate and summarize .... cognitive/affective reactions". Therefore, it can be said that different attitudes,

negative or positive, have different judgments, such as good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, and impacts in participants' intercultural communication. Based on intercultural situations reported by participants, it shows that the negative attitudes lead to their negative perceptions towards passengers which result in the participants being less motivated to communicate with passengers and stereotyping them. There are several pieces of evidence from participants, for example:

(Extract 5.1)

1. Aoy: I don't like Chinese passengers. They are noisy. I mean all
2. of them. I always try to avoid them. Being noisy is bad
3. manners. Unlike Thai people, we are less noisy and more
4. decent.

(Extract 5.2)

1. Kim: Indian people are difficult to deal with especially when they
2. act or when they speak English. I don't understand them.
3. When I see them approaching my counter, I walk away to
4. avoid them because I'm not happy to deal with them.

(Extract 5.3)

1. Kro: I feel awkward when I see foreign passengers kissing in
2. public. Mostly they are Western. I don't want to see it. They
3. do it all the time in their countries but this is Thailand. It's
4. bad and obscene. They should be more careful about their
5. behaviour.

(Extract 5.4)

1. Ekky: Chinese people like to spit on the floor. They're disgusting.
2. I saw them spit many times in the lounge. When I see
3. Chinese passengers, I don't want to get near them. I'm afraid
4. that they might spit on me. (laugh)

These examples from Aoy, Kim, Kro, and Ekky show that they have negative attitudes towards passengers from different cultural background by saying "*I don't like*", "*I'm not happy to deal with*", "*I feel awkward*", and "*They're disgusting*". These negative attitudes, then, demotivate them to engage further communication with passengers. All of them reported that they avoided communication with those

mentioned passengers. To this issue, Krosnick et al. (2005) state that when people's attitudes towards their interlocutors are negative, they are demotivated to interact with them. They added that people prefer to interact with ones they prefer. Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) stated that attitudes impact the favorability of intergroup relations. Therefore, individuals may feel awkward and anxious when interacting with people from different cultures (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Moreover, it shows a connection between negative attitude and stereotype which persists in one's own perception towards a particular group of people or culture (Barna, 1997). For example, in Extract 5.1, Aoy reports that she does not like Chinese passengers because she feels that they are noisy. She, then, stereotypes that all Chinese people are noisy. In Extract 5.2, Kim reports that she had a difficulty in communication with Indian passengers. Then, she thinks that all Indian people have the similar speaking performance when they speak English. In Extract 5.3, Kro reports seeing foreign passengers from western countries kissing in a public area. She claims that all Westerners frequently kiss in public and it is acceptable in their countries. And in Extract 5.4, Ekky reports that he saw Chinese passenger spitting on the floor. He, then, stereotypes that all Chinese people like to spit on the floor. These participants stereotyped passengers based on their behaviours and nationalities. Consequently, the influence of stereotypes on peoples' behaviours in intercultural communication leads to miscommunication and/or communication breakdown (Zhang and Deng, 2009).

These examples also show that attitudes relate to ICA as it suggests some ICA components were engaged by these participants. There are two main components employed by the participants which are Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) and Component 4 (*comparison between own and other cultures*). Component 2 was engaged by Aoy and Kro in interpretation of meaning based on their cultural perspectives. Aoy interpreted that being noisy was bad manners while Kro interpreted kissing in public as bad and obscene. Both of them also engaged Component 4 when they compared those behaviours to their own. It also shows that they tended to negatively judge those behaviours. Then, they were demotivated to communicate with those passengers and decided to avoid them.

Stereotype seems to frequently occur in this study during the interviews such as the above evidence from Aoy, Kim, Kro, and Ekky. This is one of the concerns of this study why intercultural awareness is important and should be promoted. From these extracts, the pitfall of stereotype based on negative attitudes leads to avoidance or zero communication. In fact, passengers/clients should not be avoided or ignored. In offering service to clients, the level of service offered by the staff influences the client's perception of the service quality itself and also influences the client's perception of the service quality of the entire organisation (Bolton and Drew, 1991; McKnight, 2009).

On the contrary, participants with positive attitudes are motivated to approach passengers even in unpleasant situations. It also shows that they were able to engage a higher level of ICA and move beyond stereotypes. For example,

(Extract 5.5)

1. Meow: I think it's true that Chinese passengers are quite difficult to
2. deal with. (laugh). Well, my friends complain a lot when
3. they had to deal with Chinese passengers. They hated that
4. Chinese passengers were loud and noisy. They told me they
5. even walked away. But I think it's not right. For me, I'm
6. happy to help all passengers because it's my responsibility
7. as a trainee and I can practise my English as well. I know
8. Chinese people are quite loud. Although Thai people prefer
9. being quiet and composed, I'll not say that being loud is bad.
10. Not all Chinese passengers or Chinese people are like that. I
11. met many nice and friendly Chinese passengers. So when I
12. heard that my friends jumped to conclusion that all Chinese
13. passengers are the same, I feel that it's unfair. So, I told them
14. to think carefully before they make any judgement.

(Extract 5.6)

1. Joy: I saw some passengers doing some behaviours that I don't
2. like such as kissing in public. But I won't say it's right or
3. wrong. I don't want to judge them. Whether they are kissing
4. in public, whether they are Chinese, Muslim, Black or white,
5. they all are the passengers of my airline. I'm always ready to
6. help them. I'm working for the airline you know. That's what
7. I signed up for although some passengers are quite difficult
8. to deal with. (laugh)

These examples from Meow and Joy are counterpoints to what Aoy and Kro reported earlier (see Extract 5.1 and 5.3). As these participants, with positive attitudes, were able to suspend judgement, in relation to ICA component, they engaged Component 5 (*relative cultural norms*). This awareness deals with the relative nature of different cultural norms and engages the awareness of not judging a culture to one's own standards of what is right or wrong, better or worse. Meow and Joy did not judge whether theirs or others' cultures are better or worse, right or wrong. It seems like those participants who avoided passengers did not engage this component. Therefore, they were not able to suspend the judgement on others' cultures and ended up stereotyping them. Another component engaged by these participants is Component 8 (*members of many social groupings*). Joy and Meow are aware of their own identity as a student trainee and those Chinese, Indian, Western they mentioned as their clients. In Meow's case, she moved from suspending judgement to moving beyond stereotype. She managed to negotiate what she heard from her friends about Chinese people. And she found that it was not right to claim that Chinese people represent that character, in this case being loud and noisy. She also acted as a mediator when she tried to convince her friends not to judge. This shows that she engaged Component 11 (*stereotypes/generalisations*) and Component 12 (*negotiation/mediation*). This also suggests that individual attitudes relate to the employment and development of ICA components. In this case, they moved from advanced intercultural awareness to intercultural awareness.

Many examples show participants' reporting changes in their attitudes from negative to positive. Even in unpleasant situations, participants whose responses suggest positive attitudes handle the situations well and motivate themselves to engage in those situations. The first example is from Peter.

(Extract 5.7)

1. Peter: A group of Chinese passengers were yelling at the check-in
2. counter because of the delayed flight. Coming from
3. nowhere, one of them approached me. To be honest, I don't
4. like the way he talked to me. He raised his voice at me as if

5. I was the one who delayed their flight. Well, I don't have any
6. problem with Chinese passengers although my friends and
7. other airline staff complaint a lot about their behaviours. But
8. at that time, I said "We apologise for the inconvenience" to
9. him because I just wanted to stay away from him. But then
10. his wife approached me asking about what the airline could
11. do to assist her and her husband. This time, it's different. She
12. was polite. She talked to me nicely unlike her husband. It
13. made me feel better and happy to help her. So, I started to
14. check with my supervisor and explained to her about the next
15. flight. Happy ending!

Next, in Joe's case, he reported that he had bad attitudes towards the passenger who racially called him '*Monkey*'. However, he changed his attitudes based on the positive interpretation of monkey and continued providing service to that passenger. He said

(Extract 5.8)

1. Joe: ...in Ramayana, monkeys represent goodness and they are
2. heroes. I felt a lot better. That's why I just remained calm.
3. After the system was fixed, I did try my best to give the best
4. service to that passenger and his wife.

Similar evidence is reported by Yuan who, in the first place, showed negative attitudes towards passengers saying that she was not happy with what they did to her when she was abused for her Thai accent while she was speaking English with passengers. However, she managed to deal with her negative attitudes following a Buddhist monk's guidance and changed her attitudes saying

(Extract 5.9)

1. Yuan: .... It made me feel better. So, I forgave them quickly and
2. continued to provide the service to them.

In sum, participants' attitude plays a role in motivation to engage in intercultural communication and relates to the employment of ICA components. When considering the interviews in detail, participants in low group yield more evidence of negative attitudes than participants in medium and high group (see Appendix L).

Through the discussion, while negative attitudes can lead to stereotype, positive attitudes can lead to the ability to move beyond it. Therefore, different attitudes that each individual participant brought into intercultural communication relate to ICA, perception to intercultural challenges, and associated strategies.

## **2) Intercultural experience**

Intercultural experience is also an important factor which plays a role in participants' engagement of ICA components in their intercultural communication, especially in a comparison between their own and others' cultures. In the comparison between those who have intercultural experiences in other countries and no experience, the findings show that participants are able to move beyond stereotype based on their intercultural experiences and knowledge about cultures that they had in the past. That is to say, the exposure to diverse cultures has an impact on their cultural comparison, their initial interactions in intercultural encounter which may be based on cultural stereotypes, and their ability to move beyond these. This is similar to Jaspers et al. (2008) who stated that intercultural experiences provide more opportunities to learners to be exposed to diverse opinions and activities to learn more about diverse races and cultures.

In the previous examples reported by Aoy, Ekky, Kro, and Kim who have never been to other countries, they show evidence of stereotyping passengers based on their nationalities and behaviours. Moreover, in dealing with passengers in their intercultural communication, they engaged only the ICA components in the primary level, basic cultural awareness. On the contrary, those with intercultural experiences went beyond stereotypes (see Appendix M, Table M.1). For example, in Meow's case, she reported that a group of passengers mocked her by using racist slant-eyes gestures and laughed when she was providing service to them. However, she was able to suspend judgment and move beyond stereotype as she compared this situation to her experience in America.

(Extract 5.10)

1. Meow: ....I know that my eyes are not as big as theirs. They are
2. white. That's who they are, with bigger eyes but narrow
3. hearts. (laugh) But I won't say that all white people are
4. narrow minded or enjoy making fun of Asian people. In fact,
5. many of them respect other people with different colour
6. skins. I can tell from my experiences when I was in America.
7. My American friends were nice to me. They're white but
8. they never had any problem with me eye size. When I
9. thought of that experience, it made me feel a lot better. And
10. I continued to finish the service for them. Well, I'm proud to
11. be who I am. I'm half Thai- Chinese. That's who I am.

Meow was unhappy to get mocked. However, she still did not make any judgement or stereotype. She perceived it as individual behaviour. Based on her experiences in America, Meow compared those white passengers to her white American friends stating that not all white people behave the way those passengers did to her and not all white people are narrowed minded or enjoy making fun of Asian people. These also show that she engaged different ICA components, from basic cultural awareness to intercultural awareness, such as Component 4 (*comparison between own and other cultures*), Component 11 (*stereotypes/generalisations*), and Component 12 (*negotiation/mediation*).

There are also several pieces of evidence regarding the ability to move beyond stereotype reported by participants who have intercultural experiences in other countries. For example,

(Extract 5.11)

1. Peter: I've heard a lot of negative things about black people like
2. they are impolite. They always use bad language and swear
3. words. They can be a bad influence on my life. Before I went
4. to America, many people told me to stay away from black
5. people. Well, I admit I used to think like that. I felt insecure
6. being around black people. But when I worked with black
7. people at the fun park, I don't think it's true. We worked
8. together very well and they were very helpful and didn't use
9. any swear words with me at all. I can tell you that I no longer
10. feel insecure with black people. I mean there are some bad
11. black people out there but being black doesn't make them

12. bad people. I think this experience taught me a lot. I've never
13. been insecure communicating with black people since.
14. When I work here, many passengers of my airline are black
15. and I'm happy to deal with them. It's like I try to approach
16. them. (laugh)

(Extract 5.12)

1. Joy: When I worked at the information counter, I saw a passenger
2. writing in the form that he is atheist. My first reaction was
3. that I was uncomfortable. You know as a Buddhist, I used to
4. think people without religion were bad. They wouldn't be
5. afraid of sins. What if they tried to do something immorally
6. wrong to me? But I guess I was wrong. He reminded me of
7. someone I know. I have atheist classmates and they are really
8. nice to me. They enjoy their lives. Although they don't
9. believe in any gods, they don't disrespect other religions.
10. They never do anything bad to me. So, I'm not going to say
11. that people without religion are bad. I'm not going to jump
12. to the conclusion anymore. I did enjoy having them around
13. when I was in Australia. We still keep in touch. So, I feel bad
14. for judging the passenger. Then I tried my best to give him
15. the best service. I even completed a form for him. (laugh)

The examples from Peter and Joy not only show that they moved beyond stereotypes but they also suggest the relation between intercultural experience and attitudes, in this case changing attitudes. Peter went from “*I felt insecure being around black people*” to “*I'm happy to deal with them*” while Joy moved from “*I used to think that people without religion were bad*” to “*I did enjoy having them around*”. Even in real-time situation, referring back to their previous intercultural experience has helped them change their attitudes towards people and culture, in this case Meow (Extract 5.10) and Joy (Extract 5.12). Moreover, in Peter's case (Extract 5.11), there is evidence representing a change of attitude in a permanent way when he said that “*I've never been insecure communicating with black people since*” which has resulted in a permanent change of his response/reaction towards black people.

On the contrary, for participants without intercultural experiences in other countries, they were not able to move beyond stereotype. Moreover, they tended to

make judgments when they perceived that passengers' behaviours were different from theirs. For example, Aoy (Extract 5.1) felt that noisy or loud passengers are perceived as rude or bad since she compared it with Thai norms. Based on the noisy and loud characters of Chinese passengers she saw, she then claimed that all Chinese people would behave the same way. Compared to Thai culture, when Kro saw Western passengers kissing in public (Extract 5.3), she felt that it was rude. She claimed that Western people would do the same way as she said "*They do it all the time in their countries*". This also suggests that participants without intercultural experiences in other countries are able to compare what they experienced in intercultural communication with only their own cultures and they ended up with making a judgement claiming that their cultures are right or better.

However, Ohm and Pond have never been to other countries but reported that they were able to move beyond stereotype.

(Extract 5.13)

1. Ohm: But I didn't mean that old people or American people would
2. do like him. I mean when I was in Songkhla I worked for an
3. American couple. They are missionaries and they're old.
4. They never judged me when I told them that I'd work for the
5. airline.

(Extract 5.14)

1. Pond: I think passengers are different. There are good and bad
2. passengers. Not all white passengers are like them. I've met
3. many nice and polite passengers. In the past, I joined many
4. voluntary camps. I met many people from around the world.
5. They were really nice to me.

What they have in common is the regularity of using English in intercultural communication within Thailand (see Appendix M, Table M.2). Ohm worked for an American couple for three years as a translator between them and the locals while Pond joined many voluntary activities with international students and volunteers. It seems like intercultural experiences in other countries and engagement in intercultural communication on a regular basis, even in Thailand, entail the

development of ICA of the participants in this study. This study does not provide any evidence about any participants who had intercultural experiences but was unable to move beyond stereotype yet it is suggestive that all participants, in this study, who had intercultural experiences in other countries reported that they were able to move beyond stereotype. This is similar to Bowman and Denson (2012) who conducted a study about the contributing factors to attitudes and beliefs about diversity. They noted that when college students had more intercultural interactions, they had more understandings about cultures and higher feelings of satisfaction.

In addition, participants' experiences in intercultural communication seem to be the significant factor related to communication challenges in English language difficulties. Participants with less intercultural experiences report more challenges in intercultural encounter with passengers when they use English (see Appendix K, Table K.1). This may suggest that intercultural experiences and regularity of English use provide more opportunities for them to sharpen their English skills. Some participants attributed their enhanced English skills to their intercultural experiences. For example,

(Extract 5.15)

1. Pong: I used to be shy to speak English in front of the class. But
2. after I joined many voluntary camps. I have a lot of chances
3. to practise my English. So, when I had to do a presentation
4. in front of the class, I feel more confident. My teacher and
5. my friends told me that my English has improved. They said
6. I was more fluent and confident.

(Extract 5.16)

1. Peter: What I've really got from Work and Travel experience was
2. the improvement of my English skills. I mean I can
3. understand English more. I read subtitles less when I watch
4. American series. My listening skill has improved a lot.

In sum, participants' intercultural experiences, whether in Thailand or abroad, play a role in their employment of ICA, mainly in cultural comparison and moving beyond stereotype. With their intercultural experiences, including their knowledge

about cultures, participants were able to engage the related ICA components and put them into various abilities to deal with their cultural challenges. That is to say, individual intercultural experiences relate to ICA, perception to communication challenges, and associated strategies in their intercultural communication.

### 3) Cultural background

Participant's own cultural background is the important factor playing role in the relationship between ICA and communication challenge and associated strategies. As presented in the findings chapter, culture is one of the most frequent topics that participants talked about during the interviews. They talked about their own cultural backgrounds and knowledge and expressed their cultural perspectives on various intercultural situations. Based on the findings, cultural background plays roles in participants' interpretation of meanings, and the articulation of their own cultural perspectives on their practical ability to negotiate real-time intercultural encounters.

In terms of interpretation of meaning, the findings present the complexity of interpretations of interactions in which different cultural backgrounds can result in different understandings. In this study, individual participants' culturally based frames of reference for interpreting interactions enabled them to compare their own culture with others'. There is obvious evidence showing that participants interpreted the meanings of what they initially experienced in intercultural interactions relying on their own cultural backgrounds. For example,

(Extract 5.17)

1. Aoy: When I saw passengers kissing in public, I felt awkward. If
2. you want to kiss each other, do it privately. It's so wrong on
3. many levels in Thai culture. It's a sin called '*Ka-Me*' in
4. Buddhism. I guess it's not in the instructions of their
5. religions. I think Buddhism is better.

(Extract 5.18)

1. Pond: Some passengers dress inappropriately. It's too revealing. I
2. think it's a bad thing for women to show their skin too much.
3. That's why I always wear hijab and long sleeve shirts.

(Extract 5.19)

1. Peter: I think some behaviours are acceptable to do in some
2. countries while some behaviours are not allowed in some
3. countries. Like when I saw some foreign passengers put their
4. feet on the headrest of the chair and other passengers were
5. sitting, I was a bit uncomfortable because in Thai culture it
6. is disrespectful as head is considered a sacred part of body.

(Extract 5.20)

1. Joe: I know that ‘*Monkey*’ is a racist word for people in some
2. countries such as America and they use that word to insult
3. Black people or Asian people like Chinese, Japanese, and
4. Thai as they are as stupid and uncivilised as apes....
5. Well, normally monkeys are one of the smartest animals in
6. the world and in Thailand they represent swiftness.
7. Moreover, in Ramayana, monkeys represent goodness and
8. they are heroes.

Aoy interpreted that kissing in public is wrong as she relied on her cultural background of religion, in her case Buddhism, expressing that it is a kind of sin. Cultural background regarding religion, in this case Islam, also plays role in Pond’s interpretation of meanings as she felt that dressing which shows skin too much is a bad thing. It also shows that Pond felt that the way she dressed is more appropriate and better than those passengers when she said “*that’s why I always wear hijab and long sleeve shirts*”. Based on cultural background regarding Thai belief about one’s head as it is believed to be a sacred part of the body, Peter felt that it’s disrespectful when he saw passengers putting their feet on the headrest of the chairs while other passengers were sitting. He expressed his cultural perspective claiming that “*in Thai culture it is disrespectful as head is considered a sacred part of body*”. Another example from Joe shows that he interpreted the meaning of ‘*Monkey*’ as it represents goodness and hero based on Thai beliefs.

These examples also show how cultural background relates to the employment of ICA components as Component 1 (*own culture*), Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*), and Component 3 (*articulation of own cultural perspectives*) are apparent influencing their interpretation/value judgment of behaviours. Not only

does cultural background play a role in the articulation of their cultural perspectives and interpretation of meaning in these examples, but they also show that participants compared their behaviours, values and beliefs with others' in their intercultural communication based on their cultural background. However, it depends on individual ability to employ ICA components to move beyond stereotype or remain at the same level. For those with lower ICA, they were only able to compare at a general level and were unable to move beyond stereotype. It ended up with these participants judging that people from the same country would behave the same way. In many cases, they felt that their cultures are better than other (e.g. Extract 5.17 and 5.18). This emphasises that the development of ICA is needed in intercultural communication in order to avoid making judgements and stereotyping.

Relying on their cultural backgrounds, participants were able to put them into practice to deal with communication challenges. That is to say cultural background played a role in individuals' employment of ICA which contributed to associated strategies they used during their intercultural encounters. For example, some participants of this study relied on their own cultural background, in this case Buddhism, and put that awareness into the ability to forgive.

(Extract 5.21)

1. Yuan: And I think people in their country might have different
2. accents as well. That's why I forgave them for their
3. ignorance. And because I'm a Buddhist. It's just like what
4. Wor Wachira Metee (A Buddhist monk) said "to forgive is
5. to end all hatred and prevent seeking revenge". You know
6. what? If at that moment I didn't forgive them for making fun
7. of my accent, I'd feel bad. It's like I was holding a hot coal
8. in my hands. And I was the person who gets burnt. So, I
9. forgave them quickly." (Yuan)

(Extract 5.22)

1. Peter: For me, I found peace when I forgave them. I forgave
2. because I believe in Karma. '*Sat-lok-yom-pen-pai-tarm-*
3. *kam*' [meaning all beings are directed by karma]. I think
4. they're quite lucky because not all Thai people can find
5. peace in themselves. (laugh)

In sum, participants' cultural backgrounds impact their intercultural communication since cultural backgrounds affect the inferences and interpretations that participants make throughout their intercultural interactions. Participants achieve their communicative goals in real-life situations, by focusing on the process of meaning-making that entail the negotiation of interpretations (Gumperz, 2003). This cultural background is often contained in schemata or frames of reference which influence our assessment and interpretation of a communicative situation (Gumperz, 2003). Therefore, the complexity of different cultural backgrounds in interpretations of interactions can result in different understandings and reactions. In other words, the individual participant's culturally based frames of reference for interpreting interactions enables them to use a different approach/strategy to communicative challenges.

The foregoing discussion enables me to demonstrate the complexity of how ICA components are engaged and how they contribute to communication challenges and associated strategies. That is to say, while a participant is participating in their intercultural communication, the ICA and the communication challenges and associated strategies interlink. Their cultural realities based on their attitudes, intercultural experiences, and own cultural background, which they brought into the communication, influence the development and the engagement of ICA and impact the communication challenges and associated strategies. See Figure 5.1.

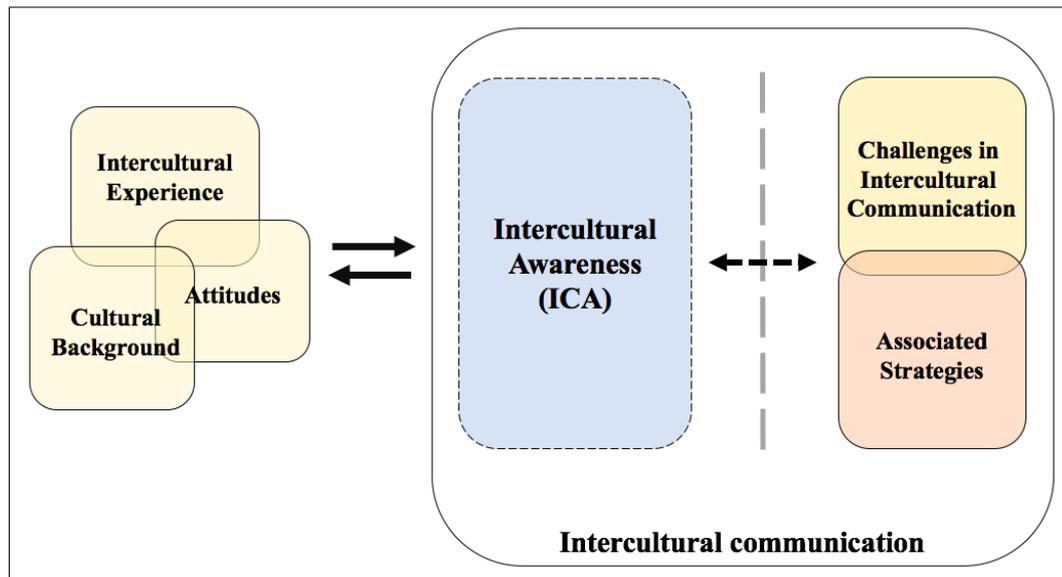


Figure 5.1: Relationship between ICA and communication challenges and associated strategies

Figure 5.1 attempts to provide a graphical representation of the factors and processes involved in the development and application of ICA components in successful intercultural communication. It illustrates the complex relationship between ICA and communication challenges and associated strategies and how ICA plays role in intercultural communication. Once each participant brings his/her cultural realities, including attitudes, intercultural experiences, and cultural background (represented by the upper arrow moving from left to right) into their intercultural communication as a small culture (represented by the big box), different ICA components start to interrelate as they are engaged by participants. The dashed lines around ICA represent the porous nature of ICA where the different components feed and develop into another. Engaged by participants, ICA components impact on communication challenges and later play a role in participant's employment of associated strategies. Finally, ICA components contribute to practice orientated intercultural awareness or the ability to perform and/or deal with intercultural encounters. The dashed line between ICA and challenges in intercultural communication and associated strategies presents the fluid attribute of how these three areas interrelate. The double-headed arrow refers to the cultural negotiation process. During the cultural negotiation process, they

return to and rely on their cultural realities whether the negotiation is agreed, open for revision, or rejected (represented by the lower arrow moving from right to left). The overlapping areas between the communication challenges and associated strategies (on the right-hand side) shows that one strategy can be employed to deal with different challenges. In other words, it shows the fluid and emergent nature of how the strategies are employed to deal with those challenges.

### **5.1.1 Summary**

The role of ICA that I investigated in this study impacts on communication challenges and associated strategies from the beginning to the end of intercultural communication. Therefore, I was able to understand the role of ICA from an initial point of time (when participants' awareness started to emerge in intercultural communication) to an ending (when participants' awareness was put into practice). There appears to be a complex correlation between participants' attitudes combined with experience of intercultural communication and cultural background, and the engagement of ICA and communication challenges and associated strategies. To be precise: (a) attitudes are involved in participants' motivation to engage in intercultural communication using English; (b) intercultural experiences have an effect on participants' cultural comparison and ability to move beyond stereotype; and (c) participants' cultural backgrounds were articulated and negotiated in various areas of their intercultural communication.

Based on the earlier discussion combined with the discussion and comparison of different scholars' understandings of culture, the discussion/findings are consistent with a view towards culture which is non-essentialist. This cultural view foregrounds the complex and fluid attributes in culture (Holliday, 1999; Kramsch, 2013; Nathan, 2015) as culture emerges through individual interactions, interpretations, and negotiations within a site rather than being prescribed by some pre-determined characteristics (e.g. ethnicity or nationality) and it consists of individual's subjectivity which can be emergent and hybrid. The findings of this study have provided support for the non-essentialist argument that culture is always

developing, fluid and uncertain (Holiday, 2011) and confirmed the porous nature of ICA components (Baker, 2015).

## **5.2 The role of ICA in intercultural communication**

This section aims to present what components are engaged and play a role in contributing to communication challenges and associated strategies in participants' intercultural communication. It will provide a better understanding of how ICA components relate to communication challenges and associated strategies and identify the components which contribute to practical abilities (practice orientated intercultural awareness).

In the findings chapter, challenges in intercultural communication were divided into two main challenges which are English language difficulties and non-linguistic cultural issues. However, when considered in detail, there is no significant evidence that ICA is relevant to English language difficulties and associated strategies participants employed to deal with those difficulties. In fact, the own-performance and other-performance problems were obviously relevant to their challenges and strategies in English language difficulties. Therefore, this section maintains the focus on the non-linguistic cultural issues which the roles of ICA components are apparent and relevant.

The following extracts were reported by all participants who experienced non-linguistic cultural issues, including *sexual orientation-based harassment, religious harassment, gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, racism, and linguisticism*. Although the following extracts were partially presented in the previous chapter as the key research findings, in this section, they will be fully analysed in order to understand how ICA components play role and how they are engaged.

## 1) Sexual orientation-based harassment (Peter's case)

(Extract 5.23)

1. Peter: I'm openly gay and I'm OK with it. But I'm unhappy when
2. I get mocked for being gay. There was a group of Muslim
3. passengers making fun of me by doing girlish gestures to
4. mock me and called me 'Sissy'.
5. Int: They did? I'm sorry to hear that.
6. Peter: I was really upset. I felt like they're harassing me. It never
7. happened to me before. I know that in Islamic countries,
8. being gay is a bad thing and it's a sin. That's why they did
9. that to insult me. In Buddhism, being gay is a sin too but we
10. don't just humiliate LGBT people like what they did to me.
11. They were the worst. I was humiliated and embarrassed. I
12. was losing face in front of many passengers. As they might
13. think that I was a clown. You may know that Thai people
14. can lose everything but their face. That's why I was
15. offended and humiliated.
16. Int: I understand. So, how did you handle that situation?
17. Peter: I dealt with my emotion and tried to be calm. I know that
18. they're my passengers and it's not good to fight with them,
19. even though it popped into my mind. I didn't want to be on
20. the first page of newspaper headlining that a Thai student
21. trainee punched passengers in the face. How can I live in
22. Thai society? (laugh)
23. Int: (laugh) No, I don't want it either.
24. Peter: I know. It's not good to be known like that. It's not good for
25. me as a student trainee and as a Thai person. It's true that I
26. was not happy with them calling me sissy. I'm gay and I'm
27. happy with that. But mocking me for being who I am is really
28. mean.
29. Int: So, what did you do at that moment?
30. Peter: As I said I tried to keep calm. Then, I smiled at them and
31. forgave them for what they did. I forgave them because I
32. knew that people are different. We were born differently. We
33. live in different cultures. What we think is right may be
34. wrong in some cultures. I have both straight and gay friends.
35. I never based my friendships on a person's sexual
36. orientation. Even my Muslim friends never call me sissy. So,
37. I think there are different types of Muslims. For me, I found
38. peace when I forgave them. I forgave because I believe in
39. Karma. *Sat-lok-yom-pen-pai-tarm-kam* ['the world is
40. directed by karma']. I think they're quite lucky because not
41. all Thai people can find peace in themselves. (laugh)
42. Int: (laugh) I see.

Peter reported that he was harassed by a group of Muslim passengers because of his sexual orientation as gay. It was his first time experiencing this harassment. They called him 'Sissy' and mocked him by doing girlish gestures. He was provoked by those behaviours as he felt that they were disrespectful. Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) played role in his interpretation of meaning of those words and gesture as a form of humiliation. Then, there was evidence showing that he employed Component 4 (*comparison between own and other cultures*) when he compared being gay in Islamic countries to Thailand (line 7 - 11). The comparison ended up with him judging that Thai people are 'better' than those in Islamic countries by saying "*they are the worst*". Another component engaged was Component 1 (*own culture*) when he mentioned 'face' in line 11-14 (cf. Goffman, 1967). In his perspective, face is very sensitive in Thai culture as he said "*Thai people can lose everything but their faces*". Therefore, when his face was humiliated in public by those passengers, he felt offended and embarrassed. Based on his own perspective regarding face (Component 1), interpretation of meaning about passengers' behaviours which is considered bad (Component 2), and the comparison between cultures (Component 4), these components play a role in Peter's perception towards this incident as harassment.

However, in dealing with this harassment, he managed to keep calm and chose to forgive. To be able to keep calm while he was upset and tended to fight with those passengers, he showed that he was clearly concerned about face-saving (line 19-22). He said he did not want to be on the headlines of newspaper. This suggests that Component 1 (*own culture*) combined with Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) played role again at this stage since he interpreted that being known as 'a Thai student trainee who acts violently and disrespectfully' is not acceptable in the Thai society. Then he moved to engage Component 8 (*members of many social groupings*) when he reported that he was aware of his role as a student trainee and a Thai person (line 24-25). The interpretation of meaning and the awareness of himself and others as members of many social groupings playing different roles, he was finally able to put the awareness into the ability to control emotions. He also moved beyond remaining calm as he finally managed to forgive. Although his

initial perception towards the harassment was negative and he stereotyped in the first place, he was able to move beyond stereotype as he engaged Component 11 (*stereotypes/generalisations*) and Component 12 (*negotiation/mediation*) which his awareness was based on frame of references and understanding of cultures that people were different and Muslims were not behaving the same way as those passengers did to him. This shows the development of ICA he engaged in this situation as he was able to move beyond stereotype and mediate based on his understanding of cultures and frame of references. In forgiving, based on his beliefs, he mentioned a Buddhist quote ‘*Sat-lok-yom-pen-pai-tarm-kam*’ which literally means all creatures are bound by karma (line 38 - 40). This also shows that Component 1 (*own culture*), which is the primary awareness, was employed to the higher level. Finally, with the engagement of those ICA components, he was able to put the awareness into the ability to forgive.

## 2) Religious harassment (Pond’s case)

(Extract 5.24)

1. Pond: There was a time that I felt I was harassed.
2. Int: Who made you feel that way?
3. Pond: A group of passengers.
4. Int: What happened?
5. Pond: Well, when I was greeting passengers at the gate, a group of
6. passengers made fun of us by acting like they were trying to
7. avoid getting shot by my colleagues and me. When they
8. approached us, one of them said “Please don’t shoot us.”
9. Another said “Allah, oh Allah”. The other laughed. It’s not
10. funny. At that moment, I knew exactly what joke they were
11. making.
12. Int: What was that joke?
13. Pond: They mocked us because we are Muslim. They saw us
14. wearing hijab and acted like we were ISIS. My colleague
15. didn’t get it but I knew what they meant. I’ve never
16. experienced this before in my entire life.
17. Int: I’m sorry to hear that. How did you feel at that moment?
18. Pond: I admit that I was really angry since it’s really inappropriate.
19. It’s disrespectful to me as a Muslim and as a person. Not all
20. Muslims are terrorists and wearing hijab doesn’t make
21. people a terrorist. What they did is disgusting and insulting.
22. We say ‘*Assalamualaikum*’ [meaning may the peace be upon
23. you] when we meet each other, even when we meet people

24. from different religions. So, what they behaved and said  
 25. when they saw us was not peace. It's '*Saiton*'. [meaning an  
 26. evil in Islam]  
 27. Int: What did you do at that moment?  
 28. Pond: What I could do at that moment was keeping my emotion at  
 29. bay and '*Nam-khoon-wai-nai, Nam-sai-wai-nok*' [meaning  
 30. biting one's tongue].  
 31. Int: Good for you.  
 32. Pond: This is just because they were passengers. They paid to fly  
 33. with us. Still, I hate to be treated like that but I had to smile  
 34. at them and acted like it's nothing. I think passengers are  
 35. different. There are good and bad passengers. Not all white  
 36. passengers are like them. I've met many nice and polite  
 37. passengers. In the past, I joined many voluntary camps. I met  
 38. many people from around the world. They were really nice  
 39. to me. And I was wearing hijab at that time too. This group  
 40. was just a minority, a bad one. I hope that they will learn a  
 41. lesson someday soon.

Pond is the only Muslim participant of this study. She realised that she was being harassed for being Muslim because of those gestures and words that the passengers used with her. She compared the way Muslims greeted when they met each other to the way those passengers behaved when they met her. Based on her religious background, Islam, she interpreted that behaviours as evil (line 25 - 26). This shows that Component 1 (*own culture*) combined with Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) played role in Pond's interpretation of those passengers behaviours as disgusting and insulting.

In dealing with this religious harassment, even though Pond admitted that she was angry, she decided to keep calm and deal with her anger since she was aware that they were passengers of the airline she worked for (line 32 - 33). It seems like power relations were involved here, in this case client-service provider relations (cf. Shiffman, 2015). Therefore, this shows that Component 8 (*members of many social groupings*) played its role leading Pond to put this awareness into the ability to control emotions even when she was in the unpleasant situation. Finally, Pond was able to move beyond stereotype as she said "*Not all white passengers are like them*" (line 35-36) although she perceived those white passengers were disrespectful in

the first place. This shows that the ICA components she engaged were Component 11 (*stereotypes/generalisations*) and Component 12 (*negotiation/mediation*).

### 3) Gender-based discrimination (Ohm's case)

(Extract 5.25)

1. Ohm: A male passenger looked at my trainee card and asked me
2. why I decided to work for airlines.
3. Int: What did you say?
4. Ohm: Well, I told him that I liked this job and I could practise my
5. English. But then he said this job was for female and he
6. laughed.
7. Int: Laughed?
8. Ohm: Yes, he did.
9. Int: How did you feel when you heard he said that this job was
10. for female?
11. Ohm: I was offended and mad. I'm not weak. It's like he was
12. saying that I was '*Ka-toey*' [meaning a lady boy] because
13. this kind of job is not manly. It's insulting. I'm not weird.
14. I'm straight. You know '*Ka-toey*' is a sinner in Buddhism. I
15. don't want to be a sinner.
16. Int: So, what did you do?
17. Ohm: At that moment, I smiled at him and tried to act naturally and
18. kept calm. And if I said something aggressive back to him,
19. he might get angry. I didn't want to be disrespectful to the
20. client and the elder because I'm a trainee and I'm younger
21. than him. In Thai culture, younger people should respect
22. older people. In western countries, they don't care about
23. seniority. It's not wrong but I think respect older people
24. doesn't hurt. Although I was not happy, I continued doing
25. my job at the information centre until he left the counter.
26. Int: Do you remember where he's from?
27. Ohm: I do. He's from America. He's quite old. But I didn't mean
28. that old people or American people would do like him. I
29. mean when I was in Songkhla I worked for an American
30. couple. They are missionary and they're old. They never
31. judged me when I told them that I'd work for the airline.
32. Int: What was your responsibility when you worked for them?
33. Ohm: I helped them communicate with the locals. I'd been doing
34. it for 3 years. Many times, their foreign friends joined us.
35. Most of them are quite old. But no one said airline job is only
36. for women. See, that's why I never judge old people that they
37. would think the same way. (laugh)

Ohm reported experiencing gender-based discrimination. Once he heard that the passenger said that the airline job was only for females, he was offended. This was because he interpreted the meaning of the word 'female' as 'weakness' when he said "*I'm not weak*" (line 11). This suggests that Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) played its role when Ohm interpreted the meaning of the word spoken by the passenger. This implies that Ohm's perceptions towards characteristics of 'female' is negative. Component 2 also played a further role in Ohm's interpretation of '*Ka-toey*' or a lady boy. Based on his religious background, Ohm interpreted that '*Ka-toey*' was 'weird' and 'sinful'. Therefore, he was angry and felt like he was insulted. This also shows that Ohm engaged Component 1 (*own culture*) when he talked about his religious belief about '*Ka-toey*' in Buddhism as a sinner (line 14).

Although he was offended by what he heard, like Peter and Pond in Extract 5.23 and 5.24, he managed to keep calm. He felt that if he responded to the passenger, it might be disrespectful since he was a client and he was older. It also shows that Component 8 (*members of many social groupings*) played role since Ohm was aware of his role as a student trainee and as a younger person. This component engages a speaker's ability to be aware of oneself as members of many social groupings, including cultural ones as a speaker plays different roles and deals with different identity. At the same time, he engaged Component 4 (*comparison between own and other cultures*) which he compared Thai cultural norm to Western's culture on seniority (line 21 - 23). Although Ohm perceived that seniority systems in Thai culture and Western culture are different, he did not make any judgement of which one was better (line 23 - 24). This suggests that Component 5 (*relative cultural norms*) played its role. Therefore, these ICA components were employed by Ohm and put into the ability to control emotions since he insisted in respecting the passenger who was older than him even though he was angry at him for what he said about his job. Interestingly, this extract shows that an individual's ability to move beyond stereotype cannot be applied to all topics or situations he/she encounters. In Ohm's case, he did not move beyond stereotype when it comes to femininity and diversity of genders as he associates female with weak and gay with weird.

#### 4) Sexual harassment (Fon's case)

(Extract 5.26)

1. Fon: I was working on a night shift. It was the first time that I was
2. sexually harassed.
3. Int: What happened?
4. Fon: A male passenger touched my hand when I handed him his
5. tickets and passport.
6. Int: I'm sorry to hear that. Are you OK to talk about this?
7. Fon: Yes, I'm OK. You know what? He even smiled at me. It was
8. awful. I was shocked because it was the first time I
9. experienced this kind of harassment. At that time, I was at
10. the counter by myself. I couldn't ask for my supervisor's
11. help. It's disgusting. He seemed to be pleased because I
12. could see him smile. I was silent but it's hard to forget that
13. my hand was touched.
14. Int: Well, if you're not comfortable, we can stop now.
15. Fon: I'm good. Don't worry.
16. Int: OK.
17. Fon: Can I continue?
18. Int: Of course, you can.
19. Fon: I felt that it's really inappropriate. Men should be gentlemen
20. and they should respect women. In Thai culture men and
21. women are not allowed to touch each other, especially in an
22. inappropriate way, until they get married. That's why we
23. have to '*Rak-Nuan-Sa-Nguan-Tua*' [meaning reserve
24. oneself especially for women]. So what he did was totally
25. wrong. At that moment, I had many questions coming in my
26. mind. What should I do? Should I scream for help? Should I
27. slap him in the face? But I ended up finishing my job and
28. had him checked-in.
29. Int: So, what did you do?
30. Fon: Well, at that time, I acted like nothing happened. I tried to
31. keep calm. I couldn't leave the counter even though I felt I
32. wanted to run away from him. But It's my job. I had to
33. complete it. As he's a client of the airline, I felt that it's not
34. good to humiliate him in public. And he might refuse that he
35. touched me. I'm just a student trainee. And I chose to forgive
36. him too.
37. Int: Why?
38. Fon: I think people are different. What he did was wrong but it
39. doesn't mean other '*Farang*' would do like him. I forgave
40. him because I chose to have inner peace. At that time, I
41. didn't want to attach to anger or hatred. There are good and
42. bad people out there. Although he wears good clothes, it
43. doesn't mean that he wouldn't harass you. I think people
44. really cannot judge a book by its cover.

45. Int: Good for you. Did you tell your supervisor about this?  
46. Fon: I did. She told me that she would inform this incident to the  
47. management.  
48. Int: Again. I'm sorry to hear that.

Fon reported that she was sexually harassed by a male passenger. When touched, Fon felt that it was disgusting and it was wrong for him to do that to her. Based on the values of her own cultural background regarding being a woman which she must reserve herself (line 20 - 24), Fon, therefore, interpreted this behaviour that it was inappropriate. This shows that Component 1 (*own culture*) and Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) were engaged in interpreting meanings.

However, Fon managed to keep calm. She admitted that she wanted to remove herself from that unpleasant situation but she could not because she was aware that it was her role to provide service to the passenger even though she did not want to (line 30 - 33). Clearly, Component 8 (*members of many social groupings*) played its role. Fon later moved from *control emotions* to *forgive*. To be able to forgive, it shows that she engaged more ICA components, in a higher level. She was able to move beyond stereotype and showed the capacity to negotiate and mediate between the incident that just occurred and her frames of references about people and culture. She said that not all 'Farang' would do like him (line 38 - 39). This shows that Component 11 (*stereotypes/generalisations*) and Component 12 (*negotiation/mediation*) were engaged here. It can be said that, based on the engagement of component 11 and 12, she was able to put these ICA components into the ability to forgive.

## 5) Sexual harassment (Kim's case)

(Extract 5.27)

1. Kim: There was a foreign passenger trying to flirt with me while I  
2. was at the counter. I saw him waiting in the queue.  
3. Int: What did he do?  
4. Kim: Well, he was smiling at me, even blew kisses at me. I was  
5. not flattered by that.  
6. Int: How did you feel?

7. Kim: I felt like I was insulted and harassed. So, I quickly left the  
8. counter. I think what he did was inappropriate. I tried really  
9. hard to control my emotion and keep calm. At that moment,  
10. I wished I could slap him for disrespectful behaviours. If I  
11. was not a student trainee and he was not a client, he would  
12. get slapped for sure.
13. Int: I'm glad that it didn't happen. What about your counter?  
14. Was someone there?
15. Kim: I put 'Counter Closed' sign and never returned.
16. Int: I see.
17. Kim: On second thought, I should have slapped him. (laugh) I used  
18. to scold at several guys at university when they catcalled me.  
19. I even started to fight with some of them. Luckily, they said  
20. sorry. I don't mind paying 500 bath for the fine for slapping  
21. someone's face.

Kim reported that she experienced sexual harassment. She interpreted the way the passenger flirted with her as harassment since she felt insulted and harassed (line 4 - 7). Similar to Fon (Extract 5.26), Kim engaged Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) in interpreting the meaning of the passenger's behaviour. Kim immediately left the counter and tried to control her emotion. Kim admitted that she wanted to slap the passenger for his insulting behaviour to her (line 9 - 10). Before she could do it, the Component 8 (*members of many social groupings*) then played its role as she was aware of her role as a student trainee (line 10 - 12). Clearly, Kim put this awareness into the ability to control emotions. However, there is evidence that this situation might have ended with violence if this happened when Kim was not on duty. Kim also reported that she was about to fight with the guys at her university who catcalled her (line 17 - 20).

## 6) Racism (Joe's case)

(Extract 5.28)

1. Joe: I was dealing with an American couple and I was confused  
2. with the system at the check-in counter. So, it took me a big  
3. while to check them in. Well, I asked my supervisor to help.  
4. I know that it upset them because they were waiting to be  
5. checked in.
6. Int: How did you know that?
7. Joe: I could tell that they were mad because their faces showed. I

8.                   apologised to them many times because I know it's my fault.  
9.                   While I was waiting for my supervisor, I heard the husband  
10.                   swore '*Monkey*' and he turned his face away.  
11.           Int:       Monkey? Really?  
12.           Joe:       Really. That's why I was shocked to hear that. I know  
13.                   exactly at that moment I got racist abused. I know that  
14.                   monkey is a racist word for people in some countries such as  
15.                   America and they use that word to insult Black people or  
16.                   Asian people like Chinese, Japanese, and Thai as they are as  
17.                   stupid and uncivilised as apes.  
18.           Int:       What did you do?  
19.           Joe:       I just let that comment go with the wind. In fact, I could hear  
20.                   him quite clear and I think the other airline staff and  
21.                   passengers could hear it too. I was offended but at that  
22.                   moment I acted like nothing happened. I tried to remain  
23.                   calm. I'm just a trainee. I don't want to take it personal and  
24.                   I don't want to make him lose face in front of other  
25.                   passengers if I approached him and told him that I heard  
26.                   what he called me. And I didn't want to get recorded. You  
27.                   know there are Twitter, Facebook. The video clip might be  
28.                   posted and shared. Some might think what I did was right  
29.                   because he deserved it. But some might think I was rude  
30.                   which is not good for my image.  
31.           Int:       I see. It could go viral.  
32.           Joe:       And I didn't want to feel upset just because I was called  
33.                   monkey. Well, normally monkeys are one of the smartest  
34.                   animals in the world. Although in some cultures monkeys  
35.                   mean something negative, in Thai cultures they represent  
36.                   swiftness. Moreover, in Ramayana, monkeys represent  
37.                   goodness and they are heroes. I felt a lot better. That's why  
38.                   I just remained calm. After the system was fixed, I did try  
39.                   my best to give the best service to that passenger and his  
40.                   wife.

Joe reported that he was verbally racially abused by a male passenger who called him '*Monkey*'. His interpretation of monkey based on his knowledge, the word '*Monkey*' sworn by the passenger is an ethnic slur meaning stupid and uncivilized (line 13 - 17). It suggests that Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) played role as it evoked Joe's interpretation of meaning based on his frames of references.

However, although he was offended, he tried to remain calm since he was aware of his role as a student trainee (line 21 - 23). This shows that Component 8 (*members of many social groupings*) was engaged. He was also concerned about his action

and managed to save both his and passenger's faces in this situation as he was aware that there were different opinions of people towards his action (line 28 - 29). This suggests that Component 7 (*multiple perspectives within a cultural grouping*) played its role as this component deals with multiple voices or perspectives of people within a cultural group of a speaker. Finally, Joe compared his interpretation of meaning of 'Monkey' to other cultures (line 33 - 37). Based on his own cultural beliefs about monkeys in Ramayana, it represents goodness. In this process, Component 1 (*own culture*) combined with Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) and Component 4 (comparison between own and other cultures) were engaged. From Joe's experience of racism, it shows that various ICA components, including Component 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8 were employed and put into the ability to control emotions.

## 7) Racism (Meow's case)

(Extract 5.29)

1. Meow: I'm short-sighted. The other day I forgot to bring my glasses
2. with me. And it's difficult for me to read passengers' name
3. on passports. I struggled reading their names so I took a close
4. look at the passport. You know what happened?
5. Int: What?
6. Meow: The passenger and his friends were showing racist slant-eyes
7. gestures to me and laughed.
8. Int: Oh! I'm sorry to hear that. Where're they from?
9. Meow: They're from America. I admit that I was mad and I felt
10. really upset about their racist action. I heard about racist but
11. I've never thought that it would happen to me. I think it's
12. disrespectful.
13. Int: It is. How did you feel?
14. Meow: I'm not happy that they were disrespectful. It's the first time
15. I got mocked like that. It's like they were insulting me
16. because I'm Asian and they acted like they were superior to
17. me, like white supremacists.
18. Int: What did you do at that moment?
19. Meow: I smiled at them while I was trying to remain calm. I was on
20. duty. So, my responsibilities as a student trainee was to
21. provide good service to them. And I forgave them for their
22. disrespectful behaviours because I understand that people
23. are different. They were just another example of ignorant
24. people. I know that my eyes are not as big as theirs. They are

25. white. That's who they are, with bigger eyes but narrow  
26. hearts. (laugh) But I won't say that all white people are  
27. narrowed minded or enjoy making fun of Asian people. In  
28. fact, many of them respect other people with different colour  
29. skins. I can tell from my experiences when I was in America.  
30. My American friends were nice to me. They're white but  
31. they never had any problem with me eye size. When I  
32. thought of that experience, it made me feel a lot better. And  
33. I continued to finish the service for them. Well, I'm proud to  
34. be who I am. I'm half Thai half Chinese. That's who I am.  
35. Many Thai people think that having single eyelid (so-called  
36. *monolid*) is a bad physiognomy but some think it's exotic,  
37. especially in a model industry. This is how I was born. I was  
38. born this way. (Singing) "I'm beautiful in my way, 'Cause  
39. God makes no mistakes. I'm on the right track, baby I was  
40. born this way." (laugh)

41. Int: (laugh) You've got a very good voice.

42. Meow: Thank you. Well, as I told you about my American friends  
43. that they were nice to me, unlike this group of passenger, it's  
44. just like the fact that in the past black people were treated as  
45. slaves or servants in some countries but it doesn't mean that  
46. they are slaves in the present day. We cannot stereotype  
47. people.

48. Int: Good example!

49. Meow: I like Michael Jackson's song, "Black or White". (Singing)  
50. "Being my brother It don't matter if you're black or white."  
51. (laugh)

52. Int: (laugh) You should go to The Voice audition. You really can  
53. sing.

54. Meow: (laugh) Thank you. I'm thinking about it.

55. Int: But why do you like this song?

56. Meow: Well, I think it's true. We are equal. We should accept the  
57. difference of each other. So, I think that's the reason why I  
58. forgave them for what they did. I think when you see things  
59. with your fair heart, you would be able to forgive. The great  
60. giving is forgiving. Amen.

61. Int: Well, are you Christian?

62. Meow: No, I'm not. I'm Buddhist but I used to study in a Christian  
63. school.

64. Int: I see.

Meow reported experiencing racism when she saw that a group of passengers mocked her by doing racist slant-eyes gestures to her and laughed. Combined with her knowledge about white supremacy, she interpreted this behaviour as disrespectful and insulting (line 14 - 17). At this process of interpretation of

meaning based on her awareness of her own cultural perspective towards this behaviour (Component 1), Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) played its role.

Even though Meow was not happy with the incident, she smiled at them and tried to remain calm as she was aware of her own responsibility and her identity as a student trainee (line 19 - 21). This shows that Component 8 (*members of many social groupings*) played role. She was able to put this awareness into practice, to control emotions. In her understanding of cultures, it also shows that Component 7 (*multiple perspectives within a cultural grouping*) played role as she was aware that there are different perspectives towards 'single eyelid' in Thai society (line 35 - 37). To deal with this racist abuse, she was also able to forgive them because she was aware that people are different (line 21 - 23). Meow gave many examples showing that she was aware of cultural diversity. For example, based on her experience in America, she found that not all white people were narrowed minded or liked to make fun of Asian people. She said many of them respected other people with different colour skins (line 26 - 29). She also moved beyond stereotype when she talked about black people in the past (line 43 - 47). This is obvious that she was able to move beyond stereotype and showed the capacity to negotiate and mediate between the incident that was just occurred and her frames of references about people and culture. Clearly, Component 11 (*stereotypes/generalisations*) and Component 12 (*negotiation/mediation*) played their roles in Meow's encounter with cultural challenge. Not only Component 11 and 12 were put into ability to forgive, it also suggests that she engaged Component 1 (*own culture*) as well. In line 56 - 60, her ability to forgive is influenced by Christianity as she used to study in a Christian school and instead of saying 'Sadhu', a word used to end a prayer in Buddhism, she said 'Amen' which is a word used to end a prayer in Christianity. This shows that frames of references of an individual's lived experience is fluid and hybrid.

## 8) Linguicism (Yuan's case)

(Extract 5.30)

1. Yuan: Some passengers made fun of my accent when I was
2. speaking English. They repeated what I spoke to mock me
3. and laughed.
4. Int: How did you feel?
5. Yuan: I found it extremely rude when someone you don't even
6. know mimic the way you speak. They should have known
7. that it's not nice making fun of someone for speaking in an
8. accent when it's a foreign language to them. If they didn't
9. understand me, they should ask me for clarification instead
10. of mocking me. I think mocking people's accents may be
11. acceptable in their culture as they may think that it's fun and
12. friendly. But it's not the same in Thai culture. It's rude,
13. racist, and discriminating. I was not happy with what they
14. did to me because it's rude. Still, I managed to provide the
15. service to them.
16. Int: So, what did you do at that moment?
17. Yuan: I tried to remain calm. I dealt with my emotion and tried to
18. control it. And I began to think that in our society, there are
19. different types of people. There are different cultures in the
20. world. Some are nice while some are rude. Like in our
21. country, there are four main regions and people in each
22. region speak with their own dialect accents. They are
23. different from each other. So, I don't expect that people will
24. have the same accent when they speak English like Indian,
25. Japanese, and Singaporean. And I think people in their
26. country might have different accents as well. That's why I
27. forgave them for their ignorance. And because I'm a
28. Buddhist. It's just like what Wor Wachira Metee (A
29. Buddhist monk) said "to forgive is to end all hatred and
30. prevent seeking revenge". You know what? If at that
31. moment I didn't forgive them for making fun of my accent,
32. I'd feel bad. It's like I was holding a hot coal in my hands.
33. And I was the person who gets burnt. It made me feel better.
34. So, I forgave them quickly and continued to provide the
35. service to them.

The last participant who reported that she experienced linguicism is Yuan. She reported feeling abused when passengers mimicked her Thai accent when she spoke English to them. Based on her awareness of her own cultural perspective (Component 1), the Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) then played role in her interpretation of the meaning of the behaviour as it was rude. Yuan then

developed this to cultural comparison. There is evidence of her engagement of Component 4 (*comparison between own and other cultures*) in comparison of mocking accent between passenger's cultures and her culture, Thai (line 10 - 13). However, once compared, she did not go beyond to suspend judgment because, based on Thai culture, she judged that mocking people's accent was rude. This suggests that Component 1, 2 and 4 played their roles which lead to Yuan's perception towards that behaviour as it was rude, racist, and discriminating.

However, Yuan managed to control her emotions and remain calm. Yuan showed that she engaged Component 11 (*stereotypes/generalisations*) and Component 12 (*negotiation/mediation*) based on her cultural frame of references and everyday lived experiences. She made it clear by saying that there were different types of people, different cultures in the world. Some people were nice while some were rude (line 18 - 20). And when she talked about a variety of English accents, she also compared accent to her own country, Thailand, where she found that people from different regions had different dialect accents as well. She moved to negotiate a wider context when she said that she did not expect that Indian, Japanese, and Singaporean people would speak with the same English accent since she was aware of a variety of English accents (line 23 - 26). Based on her understanding about diversity of language and culture, she finally forgave those who mocked her for her Thai accent when she spoke English. She mentioned the guidance of Wor Wachira Metee (A Buddhist monk) as she used it to find the way to forgive those passengers. This also shows that Component 1 (*own culture*) played its role. In sum, Yuan engaged Component 1, 11, and 12 and integrated them into the ability to control her emotion and forgive.

### **5.2.1 Summary**

The extracts from participants who experienced cultural challenges analysed here highlight the roles and the importance of each ICA component in intercultural communication. That is to say while some ICA components play role in leading to perception towards cultural challenges, some contribute to practical skills/abilities

to deal with those challenges. This shows the interrelated nature of the ICA components and the difficulty of distinguishing one element above others. It also addresses how an individual participant employed ICA components based on their culturally based behaviour, values, beliefs, frame of references and everyday lived experiences which are complex, fluid, and hybrid since it is obvious that, in every extract, participants articulated and negotiated their own cultural perspectives during their intercultural encounters.

As can be seen from the extracts that ICA components are engaged differently based on each individual participant's cultural frames of references, it seems like their perceptions towards what they saw or heard in their intercultural encounters are impacted by two main components which are Component 2 (*interpretation of meaning*) and Component 4 (*comparison between own and other cultures*). Culture is seen as a shared knowledge structure or construct of ideas, values and beliefs and is triggered or activated in response to a stimulus (Hong et al., 2003). That is to say Component 2 plays the role of trigger, as it is engaged to interpret the meaning of the emergent communication modes such as words they heard and behaviours they saw, before it moves to Component 4 to cultural comparison. Once the different cultural modes that they experienced are compared to their own cultures and interpreted in a negative way, they perceived that those communication modes offended them and it led to conflicts in intercultural communication between them and the passengers. That is to say, cultural references have a major impact on the participants' perceptions towards different cultural modes and this influences their ability as mediators of meaning in comparing values between cultures. This is supported by a Hong and her colleagues who conclude that "culture is internalized in smaller pieces, in the knowledge structures or mental constructs that social perceivers use to interpret ambiguous stimuli" (Hong et al., 2003, p. 454). They add that an individual "can hold more than one cultural meaning system and shift between these systems in response to cultural clues in the environment" (Hong & Mallorie, 2004, p. 63). This supports Spencer-Oatey (2008) who points out that culture influences (but does not determine) each member's behaviour and their interpretation of the meaning of other people's behaviours. This is apparent in

Pond's extract that the interpretation of meaning is relevant to individual cultural frame of reference. In this case, she said that her Muslim colleague did not realise that they were harassed. This shows that she might probably have differently interpreted those behaviours from Pond (Extract 5.24, line 14 - 15). This is similar to Hong and Chiu's study (2001) which state that a given cultural meaning system can have profound influences on one's judgements or behaviour when the relevant frames of references are applicable in the situation. Therefore, this implies that other participants, besides these eight participants, may have experienced forms of cultural challenges but they did not interpret those challenges as discrimination or harassment.

ICA components also play roles in the engagement of associated strategies used to handle participants' cultural challenges. The extracts clearly show that the associated strategies are proved to be crucial since they smoothed the communication between participants and passengers during their intercultural encounters. In dealing with those challenges, there are two main associated strategies employed by the participants which are *control emotions* and *forgive*. The ability to *control emotions* is similar to tolerance which combines goodness, awareness, and conciliation with discomfort, judgement and aversion (Brown, 2006). It is positioned as a strategy for coping with unpleasant situations as it seems to promote relations of mutuality (Galeotti, 2002). In this study, tolerance emerges in circumstances that elicit disapproval or dislike.

Tolerance as a social ideal figures a citizenry necessarily leashed against the pull of its own instincts; it embodies a fear of citizen sentiments and energies, which it implicitly casts as inherently xenophobic, racist, or otherwise socially hostile and in need of restraint. In its bid to keep us from acting out our dislikes and diffidence, the ubiquitous call for tolerance today casts ... difference rather than sameness [as] the source and site of our enmity (Brown, 2006, p. 88).

To control emotions, Component 8 (*members of many social groupings*) is apparent in playing role. Generally speaking, this awareness embodies the answer to "Who am I?" as a member of a social grouping. This includes elements such as job position, gender roles, sexuality, and racial identity. In this study, most participants

are aware of their identity as student trainees. They think that it is not good to argue with passengers. This shows power relations between them and those passengers. Bradbury-Jones et al. (2008) stated that all human relationships thus incorporate power relations in different contexts. There are different aspects of power involved in the relationship between people such as managers and employees, clients and service providers, teachers and students, and even elders and younger (Shiffman, 2015; Florczak, 2016). Also, there is evidence showing the notion of 'face'. Face refers to the positive social value individuals effectively claim for themselves or identity that they present to others (Goffman, 1967; Domenici & Littlejohn, 2006). Some participants such as Peter (Extract 5.23, line 11 - 14 and line 19 - 22) and Joe (Extract 5.28, line 26 - 30) reported that they were concerned about how they see themselves and how other people see them which contribute to their social contexts. Therefore, based on their awareness of their roles as student trainees, they put this awareness into the ability to control emotions.

Another associated strategy is *forgive*. To forgive, various components were engaged. Based on the findings, Component 11 (*stereotypes/generalisations*) and Component 12 (*negotiation/mediation*) significantly related to this ability since participants engaged these components before they put them into the ability to forgive. Paz et al. (2008) stated that forgiveness is an intrapersonal process with the aim of release from negative feelings and the development of the forgiver's sense of inner peace. This is obvious in the extracts reported by Peter, when he said "*For me, I found peace when I forgave them.*", and Fon, when she clearly stated that "*I forgave him because I chose to have inner peace. At that time, I didn't want to attach to anger or hatred*". There is evidence that participants, such as Yuan and Peter, relied on their religious background, in this case Buddhism, to forgive. This is supported by Lamb (2002) who stated in his study about abuse and forgiveness that a factor, such as religion, also has a role in employment of forgiveness when one deals with sexist and racist abuse.

However, the discussion of the findings suggests cultural understandings about forgiveness only in Thai context through Thai participants' perspectives which

incorporate culturally specific perspectives. Therefore, forgiveness might be considered 'problematic' in dealing with non-linguistic cultural issues, such as sexual harassment and racism, in other contexts due to different factors such as social actors, frame of references, cultural values' orientations, and social constructs such as collectivistic and individualistic (Paz et al., 2008; Suwartono et al., 2007). For example, a study from Karremans et al. (2011) on the cross-cultural forgiveness shows that once conflicts do arise, participants from collectivistic countries (Japan and China) grant forgiveness based on their cultural norms (i.e. the norm of social harmony, face-saving, seniority) while participants from individualistic countries (Italy, the Netherlands, and the US) depend on the level of closeness between the offender and the victim to forgive (i.e. post-offense level of closeness, satisfaction with the offender). This suggests that the employment of this ability might be shaped by different worldviews.

Although participants were able to put ICA components into practical abilities, it does not mean that they were able to maintain those abilities in all situations. For example, the findings show that the ability to move beyond stereotype cannot be applied to all topics or situations. In Ohm's case, he did not move beyond stereotype when it comes to femininity and diversity of genders as he perceived that female is weak and gay is weird. The findings also suggest some evidence to disprove the over-claimed religious influence of Buddhism over the Thais' ability to forgive. In Peter's case (Extract 5.23), he said "*I think they're quite lucky because not all Thai people can find peace in themselves*". Although he relied on Buddhism guidance, he also shows that there are multiple perspectives in Thai society, as Buddhism cannot be claimed to represent the influence of Thai people's behaviours or the way of thinking. In Meow's case (Extract 5.29), she rather relied on her frames of references, in this case Christianity, than her own religion, in this case Buddhism, to forgive. This again confirms that culture is not solid to a single entity but fluid.

In sum, based on the findings, the foregoing discussion shows how ICA components relate to communication challenges and associated communication strategies. They also present the cruelty of cultural challenges, including

harassments, discrimination, and racism in intercultural communication. There is significant evidence that emphasises the importance of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication which can be put into abilities to deal with cultural issues well, in this case the ability to control emotions and forgive. However, it requires the engagement of higher level of ICA components. The findings also highlight the dynamic process of cultures and addresses the question of when and how culture influences human thinking and behaviour in intercultural communication.

### **5.3 Practice orientated intercultural awareness**

This section presents the practice orientated intercultural awareness to which ICA components contribute. While ICA components involve the attitudes towards cultures, cultural backgrounds, cultural understandings, and knowledge of cultures which are required for successful engagement in intercultural communication, Practice Orientated ICA, which is contributed by ICA components, incorporates the application of those attitudes, understandings, and knowledge in real-time intercultural situations as practical skills and abilities.

Table 5.1 summarises the abilities (Practice Orientated ICA) that the participants employed in their intercultural communication. The presentation of abilities is based on the development of the engagement of ICA components ranging from the basic cultural awareness to intercultural awareness. As presented in Table 5.1, while there are five abilities similar to those presented by Baker's (2009) study, two new abilities emerge in this study, namely, the ability to control emotions in encountering different/unpleasant emergent cultural communication modes and the ability to forgive.

<b>Practice orientated intercultural awareness</b>	<b>Baker (2015)</b>	<b>This present study</b>
1. The ability to articulate our own cultural perspective	✓	Similar
2. The ability to compare cultures at a general level	✓	Similar
3. The ability to control emotions in encountering different/unpleasant emergent cultural communication modes	-	New category
4. The ability to compare and mediate between cultures at a specific level, and an awareness of possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between specific cultures	✓	Similar
5. The ability to move beyond the cultural generalisations and stereotypes that may be a feature of initial interaction in intercultural communication	✓	Similar
6. An ability to negotiate and mediate between different emergent culturally and contextually grounded communication practices and frames of reference based on the above understanding of culture in intercultural communication	✓	Similar
7. The ability to forgive	-	New category

Table 5.1: Practice orientated intercultural awareness of Thai student trainees

In addition, this section presents the selected extracts which offer typical and/or particularly show examples representing the abilities. Although some selected extracts are repeated, I feel that it is essential to present them again in this section for clear understandings as they represent the feature of each ability which was employed in various intercultural situations by different participants throughout this study.

### **1) The ability to articulate our own cultural perspective**

This ability involves the awareness of speaker's own culturally based behaviour, values and beliefs. Although this awareness is based on a speaker's own culture identity and practices, it gets more pronounced since the speaker is able to verbally express his/her cultural perspectives based on his/her own culturally based perspectives to various intercultural situations or wider contexts.

(Extract 5.31)

1. Peter: '*Mai pen rai*' is a word that Thai people use a lot.
2. Int: What makes you think that?
3. Peter: Well, I think we always say it to make ourselves and other
4. people feel better and to make a situation less serious. It
5. translates to "no worries" in English and it is used in many
6. situations.
7. Int: Like what situation?
8. Peter: Like when my Malaysian colleague spilled the tea on my
9. bag, I said '*Mai pen rai*'. I told her it means no worries. Then
10. I said "Thai people know that getting angry or upset about
11. something won't probably change matters. That's who we
12. are. So, why waste your time and energy and distress
13. unnecessarily?

In the selected example from Peter, he expressed his cultural perspective regarding the concept of '*Mai pen rai*' to his Malaysian colleague. He claimed that it is the concept that Thai people hold on to in dealing with various situations.

(Extract 5.32)

1. Joe: ...He's from Australia. I was wondering why he did that. So,
2. I decided to talk to him about this. I told him not to touch
3. other people's heads. So he asked me why. I told him it's
4. because Thai people treated the head as the sacred part of the
5. body. It's inappropriate to touch other people's heads. It
6. shows disrespect.

Another example is from Joe. He verbally expressed his cultural perspectives and belief regarding head-touching to his Australian friend.

## **2) The ability to compare cultures at a general level**

This ability moves from the articulation of their own culturally based perspectives to comparisons with other cultures at a general level. This ability is frequently seen in previous extracts. The selected extract is from Joy. It is about the value that she and the passenger placed on time. She explained how '*Farang*' people, in general, value time and then extended this to comparisons with her own culturally based perspectives. She also compared the characteristics between '*Farang*' and Thai people.

(Extract 5.33)

1. Joy: I know that '*Farang*' people are very strict about time and
2. punctuality. They're concerned about their time and plans.
3. They tend to be strict to time such as work shift or meetings.
4. That's why the passenger was mad at me the other day.
5. Int: What happened?
6. Joy: I took him to the wrong place. I was quite new to the airport.
7. Int: Did he say or do anything to you?
8. Joy: He told me that his friend was waiting for him. So, he was
9. furious and he yelled at me. I apologised to him many times.
10. Well, you know Thai people are not that strict. Ten or fifteen
11. minutes late is okay. But if I were him, I would do the same.
12. Int: Why?
13. Joy: Because I know that '*Farang*' people are punctual, confident
14. and they speak up, even yell at people. Just like what he did
15. to me. (laugh)
16. Int: So, if this happens to you, what would you do?
17. Joy: I wouldn't yell at people. I think because I'm Thai. I think
18. mostly Thai people are quite shy. We tend to keep emotions
19. although we get mad.

For more examples, see Extract 4.9 and 4.11 in Chapter 4.

### **3) The ability to control emotions in encountering different/unpleasant emergent cultural communication modes**

This ability engages the awareness of individuals as members of many social groupings, including cultural ones. The interpretation of meaning, cultural beliefs regarding seniority, power relations, and 'face' are engaged to put those awareness into this ability in order to deal with unpleasant situations based on cultures. Many participants who were able to control their emotion and keep calm reported that they are concerned about the consequences of their actions. The selected extract is from Peter. He controlled his emotion and kept calm when he was harassed by a group of passengers who called him '*Sissy*'.

(Extract 5.34)

1. Peter: I dealt with my emotion and tried to be calm. I know that
2. they're our passengers and it's not good to fight with them,
3. even though it popped into my mind. I didn't want to be on

4. the first page of newspaper headlining that a Thai student
5. trainee punched passengers in the faces. (laugh)
6. Int: (laugh) No. I don't want it either.
7. Peter: I know. It's not good to be known like that. It's not good for
8. me as a student trainee and as a Thai person. It's true that I
9. was not happy with them calling me sissy. I'm gay and I'm
10. happy with that. But mocking me for being who I am is really
11. mean.

For more examples, see Extract 5.24 and 5.27.

**4) The ability to compare and mediate between cultures at a specific level, and an awareness of possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between specific cultures**

Although the ability to compare between cultures is mentioned earlier, this ability is more complex since it deals with the detailed awareness of common ground between specific cultures and engages the ability to make particular comparisons between specific cultures as well as the awareness that the differences between culturally based practices may lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

(Extract 5.35)

1. Pond: There was an uncomfortable moment when I had to greet
2. VIP passengers by shaking hands.
3. Int: Why did you have to do that? Where were you?
4. Pond: I was working at the lounge. Normally, I just said "Hello,
5. welcome to the lounge. Please make yourself at home. If you
6. need anything, please let me know". But this time was
7. different because my supervisor came with VIP passengers.
8. She introduced the passengers to me and my friend. They are
9. American. They've been the airline's clients for over 10
10. years. I said "Welcome to Thailand". Then, my friends who
11. worked with me at that time shook hands with them. I was a
12. bit uncomfortable. You know I'm Muslim. It's inappropriate
13. to touch a person of the opposite sex.
14. Int: I see. But what did you do?
15. Pond: I did shake hands with them too. (laugh) I feel that if I didn't
16. do it, they might feel offended. And it might be rude to them.
17. At that time, I also think that it's just a greeting gesture.
18. There're different ways of greeting between Islamic and
19. American cultures. It's like when in Rome, do as Romans

20. do.
21. Int: But you shook hands with a person of the opposite sex.
22. Pond: I know. Like I said I didn't want them to think that I was
23. rude. It's inappropriate in my culture but it's not a bad thing.
24. In American culture, they shake hands, they kiss in the
25. cheeks, and they hug when they meet. However, it doesn't
26. mean that I will do the same. I decide what's good for me to
27. do. And I think handshaking is okay and it's a universal
28. gesture for greeting.

This example from Pond shows that she was aware that miscommunication would occur if she did not shake hands with those passengers. For another example, see Extract 4.19 in Chapter 4.

### **5) The ability to move beyond the cultural generalisations and stereotypes that may be a feature of initial interaction in intercultural communication**

This component mainly focuses on cultural stereotypes or generalisations which are widely held, generalised and simplified conceptions or images of a specific group of people. Whether harmful or helpful to the image of those being categorised, stereotypes may be fundamental to the way a speaker processes information and make sense of their experience. Therefore, this component engages a speaker's awareness based on cultural stereotypes or generalisations during the initial stages of intercultural communication and the ability to move beyond these.

Although several examples regarding this ability are presented earlier, this extract from Yuan is also a clear example to represent the ability.

(Extract 5.36)

1. Yuan: I've just discovered something new about people from the
2. Middle East.
3. Int: Interesting. What is that?
4. Yuan: Well, I was working at the lounge. There was a couple asking
5. for some drink. So, I walked to them and I said "What would
6. you like to drink? We have orange juice, tomato juice, and
7. lychee juice". But they asked me "Do you have red wine?"
8. Int: And what did you say?
9. Yuan: Well, I said "We do". Then they asked for two glasses of red

10. wine. I was quite surprised. I saw that they're Muslim. I  
 11. thought they didn't drink any alcohol. That's why I  
 12. recommended juice to them in the first place.
13. Int: How did you feel at that moment?
14. Yuan: Surprised. Shocked. When I was preparing the drink, I took  
 15. a look around and I saw some Muslim passengers drinking  
 16. beer. So, I thought to myself whether what they did was  
 17. sinful or not. But it's not my right to judge them. Maybe,  
 18. there's some in-depth details that I don't know about Islam.  
 19. So, at that time I felt it's not good to jump to the conclusion  
 20. about people.
21. Int: What do you mean about jumping to conclusion?
22. Yuan: I mean at that time I felt like I couldn't judge people from  
 23. their clothes or religions. I mean although they are from the  
 24. same country, it doesn't mean that they will behave the same  
 25. as the rest of their country. Just like my case, although they  
 26. are from the Middle East, it doesn't mean that they say no to  
 27. alcohol. And I think I was lucky not to say anything to them.
28. Int: Like what?
29. Yuan: What if I said "You're Muslim. Why do you drink red  
 30. wine?" I think I might get slapped by him. (laugh)
31. Int: (laugh)

For more examples, see Extract 4.21 and 4.22 in Chapter 4.

## **6. An ability to negotiate and mediate between different emergent culturally and contextually grounded communication practices and frames of reference based on the above understanding of culture in intercultural communication**

This ability involves negotiation and mediation in intercultural communication. Many participants in this study show that they were able to negotiate and mediate between cultures. The selected extract is from Peter offering a clear example of this ability.

(Extract 5.37)

1. Peter: There was an awkward moment between me and a  
 2. passenger. She's Muslim and she's from Malaysia. I was  
 3. asked to assist her because it was her first time visiting  
 4. Thailand.
5. Int: Was she here for studying?
6. Peter: No, she was visiting her Thai relatives in Songkhla. I'm

7. familiar with Songkhla. So, I told her a lot about food,  
8. places, and people. But all of a sudden she asked me why I  
9. wore earrings. I told her that I love fashion and I enjoyed  
10. wearing accessories.  
11. Int: I can tell. And what happened next?  
12. Peter: Well, she said that men shouldn't wear earrings. She even  
13. said it's weird. I was quite shocked but I tried not to show  
14. her that I was offended.  
15. Int: What did you do?  
16. Peter: I told her that it's my preference and I liked it. Then, she  
17. asked me whether this was against Thai culture or not. I  
18. answered that it's against the old Thai culture which men  
19. should behave like men and women should behave like  
20. women including the way they act or the way they dress. I  
21. think It's about the generation. Old people might think that  
22. it's weird and unacceptable. But not all people from the old  
23. generation think like that. My parents still think that it's  
24. fashionable. Nowadays, it's globalisation and full of  
25. diversity.  
26. Int: Keep going.  
27. Peter: I think she's not wrong if she felt that men shouldn't wear  
28. earrings. It might be because of her religion and her  
29. background.  
30. Int: What do you mean?  
31. Peter: I mean we were born and raised differently. We have  
32. different backgrounds of our lives.  
33. Int: I see.  
34. Peter: Then I told her that for me I think men and women should  
35. wear what they want to wear. Women don't wear only skirts  
36. nowadays. They wear shorts, jeans, and trousers. The fun  
37. part was while we were talking she's wearing jeans. (laugh)  
38. Int: (laugh) Did you two talk about this.?  
39. Peter: Well, I looked at her jeans and I said "I hope you don't mind  
40. if I'm wearing earrings".  
41. Int: What did she say?  
42. Peter: We laughed. So, I told her that it's time to embrace the  
43. diversity. I meant not only the way of dressing but also  
44. genders. They don't have to be gay to wear earrings or  
45. rainbow shirts. But then, she said if I were Muslim I would  
46. be punished or stoned to death for being gay.  
47. Int: I've heard about that.  
48. Peter: Really? It was the first time I heard of it. I was shocked. It's  
49. sad, isn't it? Then, I told her that it's different from  
50. Buddhism because it's about forgiveness and killing is a sin.  
51. I said "Just like I forgave you for asking me with that kind  
52. of question. I was offended. I could have get mad at you but  
53. I decided to forgive you because anger cause me suffering".  
54. But I also told her that there's no right or wrong for being

55. Muslim or Buddhist or which one was better. Just do  
 56. whatever we believe and have faith in.  
 57. Int: What did she say?  
 58. Peter: She nodded. At the end of the day, we are still friends. Still,  
 59. I feel like religious issue is sensitive to talk about.  
 60. Int: What's your meaning of 'we'? Do you still keep in touch  
 61. with her?  
 62. Peter: No I don't. I mean Buddhists and Muslims can be friends.  
 63. Int: I see.

In his intercultural encounter with a Malaysian passenger from a different cultural background, Peter negotiated the agreement on the way he dressed, genders, and generations based on his cultural frames of references with her. Peter finally acted as a mediator between two religions as he believed that there was no right or wrong for being Muslim or Buddhist. For more examples, see Extract 5.23 and 5.29.

## 7. The ability to forgive

This is probably the most complex ability since participants engaged various components and abilities before they were able to put those components and abilities into the ability to forgive.

(Extract 5.38)

1. Yuan: I tried to remain calm. I dealt with my emotion and tried to  
 2. control it. And I began to think that in our society, there are  
 3. different types of people. There are different cultures in the  
 4. world. Some are nice while some are rude. Like in our  
 5. country, there are four main regions and people in each  
 6. region speak with their own dialect accents. They are  
 7. different from each other. So, I don't expect that people will  
 8. have the same accent when they speak English like Indian,  
 9. Japanese, and Singaporean. And I think people in their  
 10. country might have different accents as well. That's why I  
 11. forgave them for their ignorance. It's just like what Wor  
 12. Wachira Metee (A Buddhist monk) said "to forgive is to end  
 13. all hatred and prevent seeking revenge". You know what? If  
 14. at that moment I didn't forgive them for making fun of my  
 15. accent, I'd feel bad. It's like I was holding a hot coal in my  
 16. hands. And I was the person who gets burnt. So, I forgave  
 17. them quickly.

In Yuan's case, it shows that Yuan combined and developed various abilities, including moving beyond stereotype, mediating, and negotiating, before she was finally able to forgive. For more examples, see Extract 5.23 and 5.26.

### **5.3.1 Summary**

This discussion of findings shows that participants in this study were able to put their awareness into practical skills/abilities as presented in Table 5.1. The presentation of the selected extracts not only shows that they employed different abilities in dealing with challenges regarding non-linguistic cultural issues, but they also employed similar abilities in their normal intercultural situations (e.g. Extract 5.31, 5.33, 5.35, and 5.36). Different ICA components were engaged in their intercultural communication ranging from basic cultural awareness to intercultural awareness. Consequently, the engagement of different ICA components contributed to different abilities such as moving from comparing between cultures to going beyond stereotypes or moving from controlling their emotions to forgive. This suggests that the engagement of higher level of ICA components is found to be crucial since the findings show that the participants who engaged the heightened ICA components were able to put them into the more effective ability to deal with intercultural situations. It can be said that the higher ICA level component they engaged, the more effective intercultural speakers they became.

### **5.4 Summary and conclusion**

This chapter discussed the role of ICA in intercultural communication through English. It revealed the complexities of culture through the presentation of relationship between ICA and communication challenges and associated strategies which incorporates the relationships between the various factors, different levels of development of cultural and intercultural awareness, and contributions of ICA employed to put such awareness into practice in dealing with communication challenges. It also suggested that various factors, including positive attitudes,

individual references, including intercultural experiences and cultural backgrounds were relevant to successful intercultural communication since they played role in the interpretation of meanings and the employment of ICA components. This pointed out that an individual participant's employment of ICA did not present culture as a solid entity, but instead, emphasised its fluid and emergent attributes.

This was followed by a focus on the ICA components which impacted on communication challenges and associated strategies. It showed that some awareness played roles in interpretation of meanings which led to communication challenges, negative perception, and stereotype. At the same time, some awareness could be employed to deal with those challenges as practice orientated intercultural awareness. However, it took individual cultural realities for one to interpret meanings of the emergent communication modes and to be able to develop ICA and put it into practical abilities.

Finally, practice orientated intercultural awareness was presented as it was considered as practical skills or abilities which were important to be equipped in dealing with challenges in intercultural communication. My analysis suggested that with the engagement of higher ICA component, participants tended to be able to handle the cultural challenges of intercultural communication well. The findings showed that there were new abilities which emerged from this study which were *the ability to control emotions* and *the ability to forgive*.

In the next chapter, the conclusion of this study, including the contributions, implications, limitations, and recommendations for further research will be presented.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

This final chapter presents the conclusion of this study. It begins by revisiting research objectives, research questions, and research methodology. Then, it moves to the summary of key findings. This will be followed by theoretical contributions and practical implications. A reflection on the process of conducting this study is presented through limitations and further research section. Finally, this chapter ends with a summary and concluding remarks.

#### **6.1 Research objectives, research questions, and research methodology**

When intercultural communication takes place, culture and language interact. Because of the diversity of contexts and users of English, we can never expect to have detailed knowledge and awareness of the cultural backgrounds of all the possible interlocutors we might communicate with. That is to say, in communication between people with different cultural backgrounds, different communicative challenges occur and associated strategies are employed. In an ELF context like Thailand, not only English language is required, but also the awareness of cultural differences plays an important role leading to successful intercultural communication. English language teaching in many Thai classrooms focuses mainly on grammar (Punthumasen, 2007; Wongsothorn et al., 2003), while the notion of intercultural awareness is usually ignored. Moreover, Phothongsunan (2006) claims that despite having studied English for many years, the results from various English tests of Thai students' English proficiency are considered low. Although several more communicatively-oriented English language courses, especially at higher education level, have been set up, those courses usually focus on American and British cultures from a monolithic, national perspective (Khamkhen, 2010; Wongsothorn et al., 2003). This neglects the complexity of cultures thereby making students unaware of the role of culture in intercultural

communication where English is not used by only stereotypes of Americans and the British.

The Thai government was aware of the problems of English language education and has launched many strategies and policies to help Thai students and learners to master English skills (Punthumasen, 2007). Many schools have set up English programmes. Many universities have adopted several approaches and programmes, such as communicative language teaching (CLT) or student-centredness and cooperative education (Kongkerd, 2013). However, in reality, English language education in the Thailand lacks the integration of cultural content into their curricula. Students, to some extent, are not able to use English appropriately and effectively when communicating with others from different cultural backgrounds. From my direct experiences with student trainees when I was supervising them during their job training in airlines at the airports, they not only reported that they had difficulties with English language use but also cultural challenges leading them to negative attitudes towards particular groups of passengers and stereotyping. I felt that the issues regarding cultural challenges should not be neglected since it reminded me that intercultural awareness has not been promoted enough in English language education in Thailand. Although a previous study from Baker (2009) shed light on intercultural awareness of Thai students in higher education, he suggested that more research on the model of intercultural awareness (ICA) in a variety of contexts should be conducted.

Therefore, the role of intercultural awareness was raised for further investigation of the role it plays in intercultural communication. This study investigated the role of intercultural awareness through Thai student trainees' communication challenges and associated strategies in intercultural communication using English. To conduct this investigation, three main research questions were addressed.

1. To what extent are these Thai student trainees interculturally aware in intercultural communication?

2. What are the communication challenges experienced by these Thai student trainees in intercultural communication?
3. What are the associated strategies employed by these Thai student trainees in dealing with those challenges?

This research adopted a qualitative approach. The in-depth semi-structured interviews were mainly used to collect data from twelve Thai student trainees in airlines. The data from the interviews was later translated from Thai into English and analysed using interpretive analysis and thematic analysis.

## **6.2 Summary of key findings**

The key findings for the three research questions were summarised as follows:

**Research question 1:** To what extent are these Thai student trainees interculturally aware in intercultural communication?

Based on Baker's (2015) ICA model, there are three levels of cultural awareness which include basic cultural awareness, advanced cultural awareness, and intercultural awareness. Each level consists of different components. The collected data from the interviews show that different participants made different engagement of ICA components. The findings show that participants were able to engage in basic cultural awareness the most and in intercultural awareness the least. While all participants from the low group engaged only components in the first two ICA levels, basic cultural awareness and advanced cultural awareness, some participants from the medium and high group were able to engage all levels of ICA. The most common and frequent components were about interpretation of meaning and articulating their own cultural perspectives and beliefs to a higher level of awareness. Cultural comparisons were also a frequent feature highlighting their awareness of other cultural perspectives and the importance of comparing their own

perspectives with others which might or might not be developed to a higher level of awareness. Multiple voices or perspectives within cultural groupings and individuals as members of many social groupings, including cultural ones were reported by many participants and they were well aware of them. This is evidence that participants were aware of culturally based stereotypes and able to move beyond it through their capacities to negotiate and mediate between different emergent culturally and contextually grounded communication modes and frames of reference based on the above understanding of culture in intercultural communication.

**Research question 2:** What are the communication challenges experienced by these Thai student trainees in intercultural communication?

Participants reported that they experienced various challenges during their job trainings as they were assigned to work at different locations with different job responsibilities. Informed by thematic analysis, the findings revealed that there were two main themes of communication challenges, namely English language difficulties and non-linguistic cultural issues. English language difficulties include *English grammar, vocabulary size, English pronunciation, different English accents, and rapid speech*. Non-linguistic cultural issues include *sexual orientation-based harassment, religious harassment, gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, racism, and linguicism*. Between these two challenges, participants had challenges regarding English language difficulties more than non-linguistic cultural issues.

**Research question 3:** What are the associated strategies employed by these Thai student trainees in dealing with those challenges?

In dealing with those communication challenges, participants employed different strategies. In dealing with English language difficulties, associated strategies include *ask for help, request clarification, don't give up, spell out the word, and request repetition*. In dealing with non-linguistic cultural issues, associated

strategies include *control emotions* and *forgive*. The findings also show that a single strategy could be used in dealing with more than one challenges. However, there was no evidence of the overlapped use of strategies between these two challenges.

My analysis of the data suggests that intercultural awareness is relevant to those challenges and strategies in non-linguistic cultural issues while the relationship between English language difficulties and intercultural awareness is not obviously shown. There is a complex correlation between participants' attitudes combined with experience of intercultural communication and cultural background, and the engagement of ICA and communication challenges and associated strategies. This relationship is complex because individual participant brought different cultural realities (attitudes, intercultural experiences, and cultural background) into their cultural negotiation process during their intercultural communication. This shows that culture is fluid and dynamic. It also highlights the roles and the importance of each ICA component in intercultural communication and confirms the porous nature of ICA components. That is to say, while some ICA components play role in leading to negative perception towards cultural challenges, some are employed and put into practical skills to deal with those challenges as practice orientated intercultural awareness. The same component could play both roles. The cultural challenges based on negative perceptions include *sexual orientation-based harassment*, *religious harassment*, *gender-based discrimination*, *sexual harassment*, *racism*, and *linguicism*. Based on the employment of ICA, the practical abilities are (1) the ability to articulate our own cultural perspective, (2) the ability to compare cultures at a general level, (3) the ability to control emotion in encountering different/unpleasant emergent cultural communication modes, (4) the ability to compare and mediate between cultures at a specific level, and an awareness of possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between specific cultures, (5) the ability to move beyond the cultural generalisations and stereotypes that may be a feature of initial interaction in intercultural communication, (6) the ability to negotiate and mediate between different emergent culturally and contextually grounded communication practices and frames of reference based on the above understanding of culture in intercultural communication, and (7) the

ability to forgive. The findings of this study show that these abilities are proved to be crucial for intercultural communication since they can resolve the cultural misunderstandings and prevent the violence caused by them.

### **6.3 Theoretical contributions**

The theoretical contributions of this study can be discussed from two aspects.

1) The findings of this study enrich the understanding of the non-essentialist cultural view. In this study, the findings regarding the role of ICA and how participants employed ICA components based on their interpretation of cultural realities reflect the argument that culture is complex and fluid (Holliday, 1999). Through the discussion on the relationship between ICA and communication challenges and associated strategies, I demonstrate the uncertain and fluid attributes of culture. I also further deepen the understanding of these attributes by associating them with the engagement of intercultural awareness based on cultural realities in each individual participant during their cultural negotiation processes when they encounter cultural challenges. Situated in the context of intercultural communication of Thai student trainees, the findings demonstrate the nature of culture that it is constantly changing. Therefore, the relationship between culture and individual in this study differs from the relationship between culture and individual discussed in the essentialist view.

2) I have discussed the existing model of intercultural awareness by Baker (2015). The ICA model combined with the empirical data gathered in this research contributes to an expanded understanding of intercultural communication through English. That is to say different components of ICA are not only entailed in the development of ICA at different levels but they are also employed in successful intercultural communication. It also offers an explanation of the different skills and knowledge beyond linguistic proficiency equipped by participants in intercultural communication, in this case intercultural awareness. Although prior studies

adopting ICA (e.g. Baker, 2009, 2015) have yielded evidence for practice orientated intercultural awareness, the empirical findings of this study provide emerging evidence, for the first time, that ICA contributes to new practice orientated intercultural awareness. These include ‘the ability to control emotions in encountering different/unpleasant emergent cultural communication modes’ and ‘the ability to forgive’. It can be argued that these social-affective abilities, controlling emotions and forgiving, which had not previously been considered in existing literature could be helpful for increasing the success of intercultural communication through English in ELF and other similar contexts. Nonetheless, it should be made clear that this model is not only proposed to expand the existing concept, literature, and findings but it is also open to challenge.

#### **6.4 Practical implications**

This study has significant practical implications in two main aspects.

1) This study might provide educational practitioners with a better understanding regarding the role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication outside the classroom. Educational practitioners should not disregard the importance of the intercultural awareness competence of students since most of the latter eventually have to engage in intercultural communication. The findings from the study also suggest that each student draws on his/her own cultural realities in intercultural encounters. This competence needs to be recognised and foregrounded. Paying attention to students’ intercultural awareness competence might provide educational practitioners with an opportunity to learn how students’ intercultural awareness competencies develop, which is related to the personal development of each student. This correlates with the results from this study’s questionnaire regarding intercultural competence which show that participants with higher ICC score are able to engage more ICA components and handle the communication challenges well.

Moreover, the findings also indicate possible routes of students' development in ICA (e.g. the exposure to English and intercultural environments), which it may be possible to translate into pedagogic practice and courses for intercultural education which involves "any processes of formal and informal education affecting the formation of principles of and attitudes towards open interactions among representatives of various cultures and, consequently, learning to solve conflicts through a dialogue and making peaceful coexistence a reality" (Nikitorowicz, 2009, p. 502). The essence of intercultural education is to make an individual student who is involved in an intercultural environment understand and accept the different aspects of values, beliefs, and behaviours of people from different cultural backgrounds and transform their understanding into common ideals (Surma, 2010). With intercultural education, it involves a widening of communicative competence which includes a more intercultural dimension (Baker, 2015). That is why, in educational activities, it is important to focus on students' experience and understanding about different cultural realities of oneself and others and the coexistence in a culturally diverse society and being aware of both cultures. English language teachers also can play an important role in raising students' awareness of intercultural awareness and understanding to deal with intercultural communication challenges and use appropriate teaching materials and approaches relevant for the needs of that environment. This would benefit students in higher education for their job training to deal appropriately in intercultural situations. Therefore, ICA should be promoted and incorporated into curriculums of pedagogy studies to support students to be intercultural speakers as the Office of the Higher Education Commission (2009) aimed to.

2) This study documents the communication challenges in intercultural communication the Thai student trainees experienced during their job training at the airport where airline staff have to interact with passengers from different cultural backgrounds. It is hoped that the depth of the data will provide other researchers with information or perspectives that may be relevant to their contexts. Therefore, this should be taken into consideration by training course designers from not only airlines but those in tourism and hospitality to improve intercultural

awareness of their employees. It is important to seriously focus on the exact and existing problems of the speakers regarding non-linguistic cultural issues so that the training course can be customised and matched with the speakers' challenges the most. Therefore, the intercultural awareness of those who work in tourism and hospitality should be developed so that they can be able to handle intercultural challenges effectively and appropriately and upgrade the quality of the service they provide. Based on the findings in this study, it might be beneficial to introduce the ability to control emotions and the ability to forgive in training courses.

### **6.5 Limitations and further research**

This research also has limitations in three aspects.

1) This study focused on university students majoring in English in a public university who worked as student trainees in airlines at a Thai airport. Obviously, the small number of participants and a single research context make generalisations difficult. However, it is hoped that the collected data will be useful and relevant to wider contexts. Therefore, the notion of transferability may be more appropriate for this study than generalisation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Trochim, 2000); see Chapter 3, section 3.3 Research quality. Further studies replicating a similar research design in different contexts could be of great value.

2) My role as the participants' former teacher may also have influenced responses given in the interviews. This could have resulted in social desirability bias that the participants trying to please me or being reluctant to offer negative views. Although measures such as ensuring them of data confidentiality and making them feel comfortable to genuinely share with me, were adopted to minimise the potential effects from this influence, it was still impossible to remove them completely. Moreover, as an insider who were familiar with the context under the investigation, there might have been other cultural assumptions or influences that I have overlooked or have not dug deep because of my familiarity with it. However,

participants were able to engage with the subjects in depth and articulate not only positive attitudes, viewpoints, and beliefs but also negative aspects even the sensitive topics such as personal relationships and religion.

3) Although the participants in this study naturally engaged in intercultural communication at the airport, the frequency of exposure to intercultural encounters with passengers and colleagues was still limited since the student trainees were assigned by their supervisors with different tasks and shifts for example, jobs at check-in counter, passenger lounge, baggage claim or the gate, and day shift, afternoon shift, or late night shift. Although they were rotated to perform their duties, it is still considered a limitation of this study as different challenges and associated strategies might be reported.

In addition, for further research, it needs to be recognised that more extensive study in different group of participants and field sites may give rise to different results. That is to say the employment of each ICA, the perception of communication challenges and associated strategies could be different and emergent in different group of participants since an individual could have engaged different ICA components based on the individual's cultural realities brought into their intercultural communication.

## **6.6 Summary and conclusion**

In summary and conclusion of this final chapter, this study has fulfilled its objective to investigate the role of intercultural awareness through Thai student trainees' communication challenges and associated strategies in intercultural communication using English language.

The extent of student trainees' ICA was found to vary, ranging from basic cultural awareness to intercultural awareness. Student trainees with higher level of ICC, from the medium and high groups, were able to engage more ICA components,

while student trainees with low ICC were able to engage only components in basic cultural awareness and advanced cultural awareness. Two main communication challenges reported by these student trainees included English language difficulties (*English grammar, vocabulary size, English pronunciation, different English accents, and rapid speech*) and non-linguistic cultural issues (*sexual orientation-based harassment, religious harassment, gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, racism, and linguicism*). Associated strategies they employed to deal with English language difficulties included *ask for help, request clarification, don't give up, spell out the word, and request repetition* while *control emotions* and *forgive* were employed to deal with non-linguistic cultural issues. The data suggested that ICA was relevant to students' communication challenges with cultures and their associated strategies employed to deal with those challenges while the relationship between ICA and English language difficulties and associated strategies was not obviously shown. The investigation through the relationship between ICA, and communication challenges and associated strategies revealed that while some ICA components played role in leading to perception towards cultural challenges, some were employed and put into abilities to deal with those challenges as practice oriented intercultural awareness.

The ability to 'control emotions' and the ability to 'forgive' were new categories emerging from this study which has expanded practice orientated intercultural awareness in Baker's (2015) ICA model. This represents the original contribution of this research. These abilities have been suggested as helpful abilities for handling unpleasant intercultural situations. The cruelty of stereotyping, harassment, and racism presented in this study emphasises the needs of intercultural awareness and practical skills for intercultural communication. The educational practitioners should not disregard the importance of intercultural awareness competence of students since they eventually have to engage in intercultural communication. This would benefit students in higher education for their job training to deal appropriately in intercultural situations. This also sheds light on the need for the selection and integration of contents and tasks deemed importantt for intercultural education.

In conclusion, this study has made an original contribution towards understanding the implications of ICA in a context such as ELF which highlights the fluid nature of culture as culture emerged through individual interactions, interpretations, and negotiations within a site rather than being prescribed by some pre-determined characteristics such as nationality, religion, or ethnicity. It is also hoped that the discussion of the concepts and findings of this study, in a nuanced and contextualised way, will contribute to relevant contexts regarding English language teaching and learning, both in educational and occupational, to reflect the importance and the needs of ICA for users of English.

### **6.7 Concluding remarks**

Becoming a researcher and a teacher venturing into intercultural awareness research enhanced my own professional development. My theoretical and practical knowledge of intercultural awareness was expanded. When analysing the data reported by the participants, I gained a better understanding of how ICA plays role in intercultural communication. Also, learning about their experiences of communication challenges and associated strategies has heightened my awareness of the importance of ICA in intercultural communication. Introducing intercultural awareness into educational and occupational programmes was challenging to me. However, investigating the role of ICA and discovering helpful abilities used for coping with cultural challenges in this research context are feasible and rewarding.

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## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire of Intercultural Competence

Thank you for your kind cooperation in this questionnaire. Please make sure you have completed all of the following questions. This questionnaire aims to investigate the levels of intercultural competence of Thai university students majoring in English. This questionnaire is divided into 2 main parts.

Part 1: Respondent Information

Part 2: Intercultural Competence (20 items)

Section A: Knowledge (5 items)

Section B: Attitude (5 items)

Section C: Skills (5 items)

Section D: Awareness (5 items)

Please complete and give comments on the questionnaire and any necessary changes made in relation to wording or otherwise confusing questions.

#### **Instruction for Part 1**

Please fill in the blanks or mark “X” in the box you selected.

#### **Part 1: Respondent Information**

1) Name – Surname \_\_\_\_\_

2) Gender  Male  Female 3) Age \_\_\_\_ 4) Contact Number  
\_\_\_\_\_

5) When did you first start studying English?

Kindergarten  Primary School  Secondary School  High School

6) Have you ever visited, studied, or lived abroad?

Yes (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)  No

7) Have you been accepted by an airline to work as a student trainee?

Yes  No

## **Instruction for Part 2**

Please respond to the questions in each of the four sections below to indicate level of your abilities, using the scale from 1 (Extremely Low) to 5 (Extremely High).

There are no right or wrong answers since many people have different opinions and abilities. Give your immediate feeling after reading each item. Please do not be careless, as it is important that we obtain your true answers.

### **Part 2: Intercultural Competence**

<b>Section A: Knowledge</b>	Extremely Low	Low	Medium	High	Extremely High
From my intercultural experiences using English,					
1. I know the essential norms and taboos of the different cultures (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviours, etc.)					
2. I know some techniques to aid my learning of the different language and culture.					
3. I could cite important historical and socio-political factors that shape my own culture and the different cultures.					
4. I could describe interactional behaviours common among people from different cultures in social and professional areas (e.g., family roles, team work, problem solving, etc.).					
5. I could discuss and contrast various behavioural patterns in my own culture with those from different cultures.					

### **Additional comment**

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<b>Section B: Attitude</b>	Extremely Low	Low	Medium	High	Extremely High
From my intercultural experiences using English, I demonstrated willingness to					
6. interact with my interlocutor(s) (I didn't avoid them or primarily seek out my compatriots).					
7. learn from my interlocutor(s), their language, and their culture.					

8. try to communicate in English and behave in appropriate ways, as judged by my interlocutor(s)					
9. show interest in new cultural aspects (e.g., to understand the values, history, traditions, etc.)					
10. adapt my behaviour to communicate appropriately in intercultural communication (e.g., in non-verbal and other behavioural areas, as needed for different situations					

**Additional comment**

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<b>Section C: Skills</b>	Extremely Low	Low	Medium	High	Extremely High
From my intercultural experiences using English,					
11. I adjusted my behaviour, dress, etc., as appropriate, to avoid offending others from different cultures.					
12. I used strategies for learning the language and culture from my interlocutor(s).					
13. I demonstrated a capacity to interact appropriately in a variety of different social situations.					
14. I monitored my behaviour and its impact on my learning, my growth, and especially on my interlocutor(s).					
15. I helped to resolve cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings when they arose.					

**Additional comment**

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<b>Section D: Awareness</b>	Extremely Low	Low	Medium	High	Extremely High
From my intercultural experiences using English, I realise the importance of					
16. differences and similarities across my own and those of different language and culture.					

17. dangers of generalising individual behaviours as representative of the whole culture.					
18. how varied situations in the intercultural communication required modifying my interactions with others.					
19. diversity in the culture (such as differences in race, class, gender, age, ability, etc.)					
20. varying cultural styles and language use, and their effect in situations.					

**Additional comment**

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- End of the Questionnaire -

Please check that you have answered all the questions.

The questionnaire cannot be used if all the parts are not completed. Thank you.

## APPENDIX B

### Questionnaire of Intercultural Competence (Thai Version)

#### แบบสอบถามเรื่องสมรรถนะระหว่างวัฒนธรรม

ขอขอบคุณสำหรับความร่วมมือในการตอบแบบสอบถามฉบับนี้ กรุณาตรวจสอบให้แน่ใจว่าได้ตอบคำถามครบทุกข้อแบบสอบถามฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจระดับสมรรถนะระหว่างวัฒนธรรมของนักศึกษาไทยระดับอุดมศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ แบบสอบถามฉบับนี้ประกอบด้วย 2 ส่วนหลัก ดังนี้

ส่วนที่ 1: ข้อมูลผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

ส่วนที่ 2: สมรรถนะระหว่างวัฒนธรรม (20 ข้อ)

หัวข้อ A: ความรู้ (5 ข้อ)

หัวข้อ B: ทักษะ (5 ข้อ)

หัวข้อ C: ทักษะ (5 ข้อ)

หัวข้อ D: การตระหนักรู้ (5 ข้อ)

กรุณาตอบแบบสอบถามให้ครบถ้วน และสามารถให้คำแนะนำเพิ่มเติมหากพบว่าแบบสอบถามฉบับนี้มีส่วนที่ควรปรับปรุง หรือคำถามที่ใช้ยังมีความคลุมเครือ

#### คำแนะนำสำหรับส่วนที่ 1

กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย “X” ในช่องที่ท่านเลือก

ส่วนที่ 1: ข้อมูลผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

1) ชื่อ – นามสกุล \_\_\_\_\_

2) เพศ  ชาย  หญิง 3) อายุ \_\_\_\_\_ 4) หมายเลขโทรศัพท์ \_\_\_\_\_

5) คุณเริ่มเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเมื่อใด

อนุบาล  ประถมศึกษา  มัธยมศึกษาตอนต้น  มัธยมศึกษาตอนปลาย

6) คุณเคยไปเที่ยว ศึกษา หรือ ใช้ชีวิตอยู่ต่างประเทศหรือไม่

เคย (โปรดระบุประเทศ \_\_\_\_\_)

ไม่เคย

7) คุณได้รับการตอบรับเข้าร่วมการฝึกงานจากสายการบินแล้วหรือยัง

ได้รับแล้ว  ยังไม่ได้รับ

## คำแนะนำสำหรับส่วนที่ 2

กรุณาตอบคำถามให้ครบทั้ง 4 หัวข้อ โดยระบุระดับสมรรถนะของคุณตามความเป็นจริง จาก 1 (น้อยที่สุด) ไปยัง 5 (มากที่สุด)

ทุกคำตอบของคุณไม่มีถูกหรือผิดเพราะบุคคลมีความคิดเห็นและความสามารถที่แตกต่างกันออกไป หลังจากอ่านคำถามแต่ละข้อเสร็จให้คุณเลือกคำตอบตามความรู้สึกแรกของคุณทันที กรุณาตอบคำถามด้วยความรอบคอบ เนื่องจากคำตอบของคุณมีความสำคัญต่องานวิจัย

### ส่วนที่ 2: สมรรถนะระหว่างวัฒนธรรม

หัวข้อ A: ความรู้	น้อยที่สุด	น้อย	ปานกลาง	มาก	มากที่สุด
จากประสบการณ์ระหว่างวัฒนธรรม โดยใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการสื่อสาร					
1. ฉันทราบบรรทัดฐานและข้อห้ามของต่างวัฒนธรรม เช่น การทักทายการแต่งกาย, ความประพฤติ เป็นต้น ,					
2. ฉันทราบวิธีที่ช่วยในการเรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับภาษาและวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่าง					
3. ฉันสามารถเข้าถึงความสำคัญของปัจจัยทางประวัติศาสตร์ สังคม และการเมือง ที่มีต่อวัฒนธรรมของตนเองและต่างวัฒนธรรมได้					
4. ฉันสามารถอธิบายปฏิสัมพันธ์ที่คล้ายคลึงกันของผู้คนจากต่างวัฒนธรรมในสังคมโดยทั่วไปและการทำงาน เช่น บทบาทในครอบครัว, การทำงานเป็นทีม, การแก้ปัญหา เป็นต้น					
5. ฉันสามารถโต้แย้งและเปรียบเทียบรูปแบบพฤติกรรมที่มีในวัฒนธรรมของตนเองกับวัฒนธรรมที่ต่างกันออกไป					

### คำแนะนำเพิ่มเติม

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หัวข้อ B: ทักษะ	น้อยที่สุด	น้อย	ปานกลาง	มาก	มากที่สุด
จากประสบการณ์ระหว่างวัฒนธรรม โดยใช้ภาษา อังกฤษในการสื่อสาร ฉันเต็มใจที่จะ					
6. สื่อสารกับคู่สนทนาด้วยตนเอง (ฉันไม่ได้หลีกเลี่ยงการสนทนาหรือให้เพื่อนคนไทยมาช่วย)					
7. เรียนรู้จากคู่สนทนาของฉันเกี่ยวกับภาษาและวัฒนธรรมของเขา					
8. พยายามสื่อสารและวางตัวให้เหมาะสมตามแบบวิถีของคู่สนทนา					

9. แสดงความสนใจในมุมมองของวัฒนธรรมใหม่ ๆ (เช่น การ เข้าใจในค่านิยม, ประวัติศาสตร์, ประเพณี เป็นต้น)					
10. ปรับพฤติกรรมของตนเองเพื่อให้สื่อสารอย่างเหมาะสม (เช่น อัจฉริยะ และ การแสดงออกอื่น ๆ ที่จำเป็นใน สถานการณ์ที่แตกต่างกันออกไป)					

**คำแนะนำเพิ่มเติม**

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หัวข้อ C: ทักษะ	น้อยที่สุด	น้อย	ปานกลาง	มาก	มากที่สุด
จากประสบการณ์ระหว่างวัฒนธรรม โดยใช้ภาษา อังกฤษใน การสื่อสาร					
11. ฉันปรับเปลี่ยนพฤติกรรม การแต่งกาย และอื่น ๆ ตามความ เหมาะสม เพื่อหลีกเลี่ยงความป่วนเคืองใจของผู้คนจากต่าง วัฒนธรรม					
12. ฉันใช้กลยุทธ์ต่าง ๆ ในการเรียนรู้ทั้งภาษาและวัฒนธรรม จากคู่สนทนาของฉัน					
13. ฉันสามารถสื่อสารได้อย่างเหมาะสม ในสถานการณ์ทาง สังคมที่แตกต่างกันออกไป					
14. ฉันสังเกตพฤติกรรมของตนเองและผลจากพฤติกรรมที่มี ต่อการเรียนรู้ การเติบโต และ โดยเฉพาะคู่สนทนาของฉัน					
15. ฉันช่วยแก้ปัญหาที่เกิดจากความขัดแย้งและความเข้าใจผิด ทางวัฒนธรรมที่เกิดขึ้นได้					

**คำแนะนำเพิ่มเติม**

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หัวข้อ D: การตระหนักรู้	น้อยที่สุด	น้อย	ปานกลาง	มาก	มากที่สุด
จากประสบการณ์ระหว่างวัฒนธรรม โดยใช้ภาษา อังกฤษใน การสื่อสาร ฉันตระหนักถึงความสำคัญของ					
16. ความแตกต่างและความคล้ายคลึงกันของวัฒนธรรมของตน และของผู้อื่น					
17. ข้อเสียของการเหมารวมพฤติกรรมส่วนบุคคลว่าทั้งสังคม และวัฒนธรรมนั้นต้องมีลักษณะแบบเดียวกัน					

18. ความหลากหลายในสถานการณ์ต่างๆ ที่ทำให้ฉันต้องปรับพฤติกรรมสื่อสารของตนเองกับผู้อื่น					
19. ความหลากหลายของวัฒนธรรม เช่น ความแตกต่างด้าน) (เชื้อชาติ, สถานะทางสังคม, เพศ, อายุ, ความสามารถ เป็นต้น					
20. การปรับเปลี่ยนรูปแบบวัฒนธรรมและการใช้ภาษาที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อสถานการณ์นั้น ๆ					

คำแนะนำเพิ่มเติม

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- จบแบบสอบถาม -

กรุณาตรวจทานคำตอบของคุณให้ครบถ้วน  
แบบสอบถามจะไม่สามารถนำไปใช้ประกอบการงานวิจัยได้หากคุณกรอกข้อมูลและตอบคำถามไม่ครบถ้วน

ขอขอบคุณ

## APPENDIX C

### Interviews Questions (English and Thai version)

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Interview Questions:

##### English version

1. What do you think about English language?
2. What is your opinion about studying English with non-native English teachers and native English speaking teachers?
3. How do you feel about communication nowadays where people from different cultures and different countries have more chances to meet and communicate with each other?
4. As an English major student, if you have a chance to study or work abroad after graduate, would you like to take the chance?

##### Thai version

1. คุณมีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับภาษาอังกฤษ
2. คุณมีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษกับอาจารย์ที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษาและอาจารย์ที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษา
3. คุณรู้สึกอย่างไรกับการติดต่อสื่อสารในปัจจุบัน ที่ผู้คนจากต่างวัฒนธรรม และจากต่างประเทศมีโอกาสได้พบปะและสื่อสารกันมากขึ้น
4. ในฐานะที่คุณเป็นนักศึกษาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ หาก你有โอกาสได้ไปศึกษาต่อหรือทำงานต่างประเทศหลังจบการศึกษา คุณจะไปหรือไม่

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Interview Questions:

##### English version

1. Can you tell me about your experiences in your job training?
  - 1.1 What are your job responsibilities?
  - 1.2 Do you enjoy the job training?
  - 1.3 Do you have anything else to share with me?

##### Thai version

1. คุณช่วยเล่าประสบการณ์การฝึกงานของคุณให้ฟังหน่อย
  - 1.1 หน้าที่รับผิดชอบของคุณมีอะไรบ้าง
  - 1.2 คุณสนุกกับการฝึกงานหรือเปล่า
  - 1.3 คุณมีอะไรเพิ่มเติมที่อยากจะเล่าให้ฟังไหม

**APPENDIX D**  
**Research Ethics Approval Letter**



Theethat Phithakphongphan  
School of Languages and Linguistics

5 May 2017

Dear Theethat,

I am pleased to inform you that your project "The role of intercultural awareness in intercultural communication: A case study of Thai student trainees" has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee for Education, Humanities, Religion and Philosophy and Language and Linguistics.

The approval code is REC1100006.

You may now proceed with the project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Hall".

Prof Christopher J Hall, Chair

**York St John University | School of Languages and Linguistics**  
Lord Mayor's Walk | York YO31 7EX | United Kingdom | +44 (0)1904 876876  
c.hall@yorksja.ac.uk | www.yorksja.ac.uk/c.hall

**APPENDIX E**  
**Letter of Permission**

Theethat Phithakphongphan  
PhD Student  
School of Languages and Linguistics  
York St John University  
Lord Mayor's Walk, York, YO31 7EX, UK

May 1, 2017

Dear Head of Cooperative Education Programme,

I am a full-time research student undertaking a PhD study in Languages and Linguistics under the School of Languages and Linguistics at York St John University, UK. As part of my study, I am undertaking a research entitled "The Role of Intercultural Awareness in Intercultural Communication: A Case Study of Thai Student Trainees" with the purpose to investigate the role of intercultural awareness through Thai student trainees' communication challenges and associated strategies in intercultural communication using English language.

Prior to undertaking the study, I need your permission to approach 50 4<sup>th</sup> year English major students to take parts in the study. Students will be asked to complete questionnaires. The data gained from the questionnaires will be later used in participant selection. Twelve students will be selected as participants of the study. I also attach the information sheet to this letter. The sheet includes information about my research.

I can assure you that I will make every effort to ensure the study does not disrupt the working environment or student lectures in any way, and any data collected will remain anonymised and confidential.

My research is supervised by two supervisors. As follows are their information and contacts.

- Main Supervisor  
Professor Christopher J Hall  
Chair of the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee  
School of Languages and Linguistics, York St John University  
Lord Mayor's Walk, York, YO31 7EX, UK  
Email: [c.hall@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:c.hall@yorks.ac.uk)

- Co-Supervisor  
Dr Rachel Wicaksono  
Head of the School of Languages and Linguistics  
School of Languages and Linguistics, York St John University  
Lord Mayor's Walk, York, YO31 7EX, UK  
Email: [r.wicaksono@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:r.wicaksono@yorks.ac.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Theethat Phithakphongphan  
PhD Student  
[Theethat.phithakph@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:Theethat.phithakph@yorks.ac.uk)

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Information Sheet**

#### **The Role of Intercultural Awareness in Intercultural Communication: A Case Study of English Student Trainees at a Thai Airport**

##### **Researcher's Information**

My name is Theethat Phithakphongphan. Currently, I am a PhD student at York St John University in the School of Languages and Linguistics, UK. For my PhD study, I am a scholar sponsored by the Office of the Higher Education Commission under the Royal Thai Government.

##### **Research Purpose**

This research project aims to offer the evidence concerning relationships between language and culture in intercultural communication through English language learning and use of Thai student trainees. Moreover, it aims to investigate the role of intercultural awareness in communication which plays in intercultural contexts.

##### **Timeline**

Data collection process of this project will start in February 2018 and end in June 2018.

##### **Research Participants**

Twelve participants will be working as student trainees for airline companies based in Suvarnabhumi Airport, Thailand. They are 4<sup>th</sup> year English major students from Thaksin University. They all must have enrolled in courses of Oral Communication 1 – 3 and English and American Cultural Background.

##### **Data Collection Procedure**

The participants will be asked to follow three steps of the data collection procedure.

First, 50 students will be asked to complete the questionnaire. Twelve students will be selected as participants based on scores from questionnaire.

Second, the participants will be asked to attend two individual interviews which will be conducted in Thai. All these interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed later. The researcher will schedule the interviews following participants' convenience. Each participant is expected to take one hour interview for each interview. The first interview will be about languages and cultures.

Third, the second individual interview about participants' job training experiences, including communication problems and communication strategies will be scheduled.

### **Offers of Anonymity**

As the researcher, I will anonymise the participants' data during the transcription and analysis stages. When discussing the data analysis with the researcher's supervisors, they will only see anonymised excerpts of data. During the reporting and dissemination of the findings, great care will be taken to ensure that the names of the participants and their sites are completely anonymised, and that their assigned aliases and any quotes or excerpts from the collected data will not be able to be attributed to any of them. In addition, the data will not be shared with either Thaksin University or the airline companies.

### **Offers of Confidentiality**

As the researcher, I will promote the confidentiality by following three methods. First, I will conduct thorough anonymisation of the data during the data collection and data analysis stages and ensure that any reports or disseminations generated from the project will not be able to be attributed to the participants and their sites. Second, all electronic data as well as original recordings will be kept secure in researcher's personal PC and external storage devices with password protection only accessible by the researcher. Third, hand-written materials will be kept secure in a locked cabinet on campus only accessible by the researcher.

### **Rights as Research Participants**

As the research participants, they have the rights on the four issues: the right to their own safety, the right as voluntary research participants to withdraw from the study at any time prior to analysis without proving a reason, the right to seek independent advice and guidance should any problems arise throughout the research process, and the right to complain if they have any concerns about the research process.

### **Uses of the Research Project's Results**

The findings of this project will be reported in the researcher's thesis. They may also be presented in academic journals or at conferences.

### **Any Complaints on the Research Project**

If the participants have any questions or complaints about the project, please contact either of these persons.

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Chair of the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee  
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**Thank you for reading this information**

**APPENDIX G**  
**Consent Form**

**The Role of Intercultural Awareness in Intercultural Communication:**  
**A Case Study of Thai Student Trainees**

I confirm that I have read the information sheet, had the opportunity to consider the information and asked questions on what I did not understand. I also confirm that I understood the information sheet. My understanding includes the following issues.

- I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal and / or written form by the researcher.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, so I can withdraw from the study at any time prior to analysis without proving a reason.
- I understand that I am asked to take part in three steps of data collection process: questionnaire, 1<sup>st</sup> interview, and 2<sup>nd</sup> interview.
- I understand that any audiotape material of me will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of your research.
- I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study and it will not be shared with either Thaksin University or the airline company.
- I understand that you will be discussing the progress of your research with supervisors at York St John University.
- I understand that the findings of this project will be reported in the researcher's thesis and published in journals or presented at conferences with preservation of anonymity.

**Therefore, I freely give my consent to participate in this research study.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## APPENDIX H

### Respondents' Intercultural Competence Scores from the Questionnaire

**Keys:**

GEN = Gender, AGE = Respondent's age, ENG = Respondent's first time studying English, EXP = Respondent's experiences in foreign countries, ACC = Being accepted by an airline, KN = Knowledge, ATT = Attitudes, SKI = Skills, M = Male, F = Female, AWA = Awareness, KIN = Kindergarten, PRI = Primary school, Y = Yes, and N = No

No	GEN	AGE	ENG	EXP	ACC	KN	ATT	SKI	AWA	ICC
1	M	20	KIN	Y	Y	4.20	4.40	4.40	4.20	4.30
2	F	20	KIN	Y	Y	4.40	4.60	4.60	4.40	4.50
<b>3 Kim</b>	F	21	PRI	N	Y	2.40	2.20	2.40	2.20	2.30
<b>4 Fon</b>	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	3.60	3.80	3.40	3.60	3.60
5	M	20	KIN	Y	Y	3.60	3.80	3.60	3.80	3.70
6	M	21	KIN	Y	Y	2.60	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.75
7	F	21	KIN	N	Y	3.80	4.00	4.20	3.80	3.95
8	F	20	KIN	Y	Y	4.00	4.20	4.40	4.00	4.15
9	F	22	KIN	Y	Y	4.60	4.60	4.60	3.80	4.40
10	M	20	KIN	Y	Y	3.80	3.80	3.60	3.80	3.75
11	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	3.60	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.85
<b>12 Peter</b>	M	20	PRI	Y	Y	4.80	4.60	4.80	4.60	4.70
13	F	20	KIN	Y	Y	3.40	3.60	3.20	3.00	3.30
14	F	20	KIN	Y	Y	4.20	4.40	4.00	3.40	4.00
<b>15 Meow</b>	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.60	4.80	4.80	4.80	4.75
<b>16 Kro</b>	F	21	PRI	N	Y	2.40	2.20	2.40	2.20	2.30
<b>17 Ohm</b>	M	21	KIN	Y	Y	3.40	3.60	3.60	3.60	3.55
18	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.40	4.40	4.40	3.80	4.25
19	M	20	KIN	Y	Y	4.40	4.40	4.20	4.20	4.30
20	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.00	4.60	4.20	3.80	4.15
21	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	3.80	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.90
<b>22 Ekky</b>	M	20	KIN	Y	Y	2.20	2.40	2.20	2.40	2.30
23	M	20	PRI	N	Y	4.60	4.60	4.40	4.00	4.40
24	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	3.80	3.20	3.60	3.60	3.55
<b>25 Joy</b>	F	20	KIN	Y	Y	3.40	3.80	3.60	3.80	3.65
26	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	2.60	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.45
27	M	20	KIN	N	Y	2.20	2.20	2.40	2.00	2.20
28	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.00	4.40	4.00	3.60	4.00
<b>29 Joe</b>	M	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.80	4.60	4.60	4.80	4.70

30	F	21	PRI	Y	Y	4.20	4.40	4.40	4.20	4.30
31	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.80	4.40	4.80	4.80	4.70
32	M	21	KIN	N	Y	4.40	4.40	4.20	3.80	4.20
33	M	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.20	4.40	4.20	3.60	4.10
34	M	21	PRI	Y	Y	3.60	3.80	3.80	3.60	3.70
35	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.40	4.60	4.60	4.40	4.50
36	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.00	4.20	4.00	3.80	4.00
37	F	20	KIN	Y	Y	2.80	3.00	2.80	2.80	2.85
38	M	21	KIN	N	Y	4.40	4.40	4.60	4.60	4.50
<b>39 Yuan</b>	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.80	4.60	4.80	4.60	4.70
<b>40 Pond</b>	F	21	PRI	Y	Y	3.20	3.80	3.40	4.00	3.60
41	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	2.40	2.60	2.60	2.80	2.60
42	M	21	KIN	Y	Y	2.60	2.60	2.40	2.20	2.45
43	F	21	PRI	Y	Y	4.60	4.60	4.40	4.00	4.40
44	F	20	KIN	Y	Y	3.80	4.00	3.60	3.40	3.70
<b>45 Aoy</b>	F	20	KIN	N	Y	2.20	2.40	2.40	2.00	2.25
46	F	21	KIN	Y	Y	4.40	4.40	4.60	4.20	4.40
47	M	21	KIN	Y	Y	3.40	3.40	3.20	2.80	3.20
48	F	21	PRI	Y	Y	3.40	3.20	3.20	3.20	3.25
49	F	20	KIN	Y	Y	3.40	3.60	3.40	3.60	3.50
50	M	21	PRI	Y	Y	4.20	4.20	4.40	4.20	4.25
<b>Mean</b>						<b>4.18</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>4.04</b>
<b>SD</b>						<b>0.58</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.54</b>

\* The internal-consistency reliability was 0.85, thus meaning a good level.

## APPENDIX I

### 1<sup>st</sup> Interview Examples

#### Note:

The 1<sup>st</sup> interview was about participants' attitudes and perspectives towards the English language, participants' own culture, as well as other cultures. The selected examples are from Kro, Meow, and Peter.

#### Example 1: Kro

1. Int: Well, Kro, what do you think about the English language?
2. Kro: I think English is a foreign language to me. It's true that nowadays
3. English is used in many countries. Personally, I used to hate
4. English. I think English was difficult to learn. I ended up studying
5. English major because I like listening to English songs and
6. watching series. Moreover, my parents told me that English was
7. important and If I could use English well, I would get a better job
8. with high salary. They didn't force to choose English major but I
9. was convinced by the fact about money. (laugh)
10. Int: So, it seems like you've obeyed your parents.
11. Kro: I think parents have a huge influence on their children in Thai
12. society. Even if it means abandoning the future career they really
13. want, if their parents think they should study Law in university and
14. be a lawyer, they will do so.
15. Int: What about your parents?
16. Kro: Luckily, my parents don't force me to study what I don't like. I
17. understand why many children obey their parents. This is because
18. parents are believed to be the house gods.
19. Int: I see. Do you feel the same way?
20. Kro: I do. I'm a Buddhist. I always pray for them.
21. Int: What a good daughter. Well, talking about English, do you think
22. it's important?
23. Kro: Yes, I do. It's important for education and work. I think English
24. language is used for communication with people both inside and
25. outside the country. I mean although the communication is
26. between Thai people, English is still used in some context such as
27. work, education, or travel. So, it's not only used between Thai and
28. foreigners. In some organisations or government offices, they
29. mostly use English in communication.
30. Int: So, English is around us?
31. Kro: Yes, it is. I think it's in everywhere. I mean everywhereeeee. (laugh)

#### Thai transcriptions

1. Int: อืม หนูคิดยังไงบ้างกับภาษาอังกฤษ

2. Kro: คือหนูคิดว่าภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศสำหรับหนูนะคะ คือจริง ๆ แล้วเนี่ยมันก็  
3. จริงนะคะอาจารย์ที่หลาย ๆ ประเทศเค้าใช้ภาษาอังกฤษกัน แต่โดยส่วนตัวเนี่ย หนูเคย  
4. เกลียคภาษาอังกฤษนะ หนูว่ามันยากอะ แต่ที่หนูมาเรียนเอกอังกฤษได้ก็เพราะหนูชอบ  
5. ฟังเพลงสากลแล้วก็ชอบดูซีรีส์ฝรั่ง แล้วพ่อกับแม่หนูอะก็เคยพูดกับหนูว่าภาษาอังกฤษ  
6. สำคัญ ถ้าหนูเก่งภาษาอังกฤษเนี่ย หนูจะได้งานดี ๆ เงินเดือนสูง แต่แกก็ไม่ได้บังคับหนู  
7. ให้เลือกเอกละคะ หนูเลือกเพราะเรื่องเงินเดือน (หัวเราะ)
8. Int: จริง ๆ แล้วก็เหมือนว่าหนูเชื่อฟังคุณพ่อคุณแม่อยู่เหมือนกันนะ
9. Kro: อะ คือหนูคิดว่าในสังคมไทยเนี่ย พ่อแม่มีอิทธิพลกับลูก ๆ มาก คือบางทีลูก ๆ เนี่ยก็ยอม  
10. ทำงานที่ตัวเองอยากทำในอนาคตได้เลย ถ้าพ่อแม่เห็นว่าลูกควรเรียนนิติเพราะจะได้เป็น  
11. ทนายความ ลูก ๆ ก็จะทำตามพ่อแม่
12. Int: แล้วคุณพ่อคุณแม่หนูล่ะ
13. Kro: หนูโชคดีที่พ่อแม่หนูเค้าไม่บังคับให้หนูเรียนอะไรที่หนูไม่ชอบ คือหนูเข้าใจนะคะว่า  
14. ทำไมลูก ๆ คนไทยเชื่อฟังพ่อแม่ เพราะพ่อแม่เปรียบเหมือนเทพประจำบ้านของลูก ๆ อะ
15. Int: โอเค แล้วหนูเองรู้สึกแบบนั้นมั๊ย
16. Kro: อะอาจารย์ หนูเป็นคนพุทธ หนูก็สวดมนต์ให้พ่อแม่ตลอด
17. Int: หนูเป็นลูกสาวที่คืนะเนี่ย อะ มาพูดเรื่องภาษาอังกฤษต่อ หนูคิดว่าภาษาอังกฤษสำคัญมั๊ย
18. Kro: หนูว่ามันสำคัญอะ สำคัญกับทั้งเรื่องการเรียนรู้และการทำงานเลย คือหนูคิดว่า  
19. ภาษาอังกฤษเนี่ยมันใช้สื่อสารกับคนในประเทศแล้วก็คนในต่างประเทศ คือประมาณว่า  
20. เวลาเราคุยกับคนไทยด้วยกันเองเนี่ย เรายังมีการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษอยู่เหมือนกัน อย่างเวลา  
21. ทำงาน เวลาเรียน หรือเวลาไปเที่ยว อย่างที่หนูบอกแหละว่ามันไม่ได้ใช้เฉพาะกับ  
22. ต่างชาติอย่างเดียว ในบางองค์กรหรือพวกหน่วยงานรัฐบาลเนี่ย เค้าก็ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษกัน  
23. เป็นส่วนใหญ่อะ
24. Int: งั้นแปลว่า ภาษาอังกฤษเนี่ยอยู่รอบตัวเราเลยใช่มั๊ย
25. Kro: ใช่เลยคะอาจารย์ หนูว่ามันอยู่ที่นี้ คือทุกที่จริง ๆ ๆ ๆ ๆ (หัวเราะ)

## Example 2: Meow

1. Int: Well, let's talk about the importance of English? Do you think  
2. English is important?  
3. Meow: Veryyyy much! (laugh)  
4. Int: (laugh) How?  
5. Meow: Well, we have been studying since we were young. I think it's  
6. because English is one of compulsory subjects in curricular.  
7. We are forced to study English whether we like it or not. (laugh) But  
8. English language has become more important as I get older. It goes  
9. beyond English in classroom because nowadays English is  
10. everywhere. Like when I was young I didn't think that English was  
11. important. But now I think it is because there're news, sign posts,  
12. medicine labels in English. When I watch TV, there're many English  
13. words used on TV shows. So, if we learn English, it's good for  
14. our daily life. It makes our trips to other countries easier. It's better  
15. for studying in higher levels.

16. Int: So, you mean English is everywhere and we cannot hide from  
 17. English.  
 18. Meow: Yes, yes, yes. Like some vocabularies that we have been using since  
 19. we were young such as motorcycle. We've borrowed this  
 20. vocabulary from English language. So, I'm not sure if we have a  
 21. Thai term for motorcycle. (laugh) Many parts of a motorcycle are  
 22. called in English. I think it might be because motorcycles were  
 23. imported by foreign countries. As I told you many words have been  
 24. merged with Thai context so they've become part of the society.

### Thai transcriptions

1. Int: อะ เรามาพูดถึงเรื่องความสำคัญของภาษาอังกฤษดีกว่า หนูคิดว่าภาษาอังกฤษสำคัญมั้ย  
 2. Meow: สำคัญมากกกกกกคะอาจารย์ (หัวเราะ)  
 3. Int: (หัวเราะ) สำคัญยังไง  
 4. Meow: คือเราเรียนภาษาอังกฤษกันมาตั้งแต่เด็กเลย อาจเพราะมันเป็นวิชาบังคับด้วยคะอาจารย์  
 5. เหมือนที่เราถูกบังคับให้เรียน จะชอบหรือไม่ชอบก็ต้องเรียน (หัวเราะ) แต่พอหนูโตขึ้น  
 6. เนี่ย หนูก็ว่าภาษาอังกฤษยังสำคัญมากขึ้น เพราะเอาจริง ๆ มันไม่ได้อยู่แค่ในห้องเรียน  
 7. แล้ว กลายเป็นว่าปัจจุบันนี้เนี่ยภาษาอังกฤษอยู่ทุกที่เลย อย่างเมื่อตอนเด็ก ๆ หนูก็ไม่เคย  
 8. คิดว่าภาษาอังกฤษสำคัญนะคะ แต่ตอนนี้หนูว่ามันสำคัญเลย คือพวกข่าว ป้ายข้างทาง  
 9. ฉลากยา ก็เป็นภาษาอังกฤษ เวลาดูทีวีเค้าก็ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษกัน ในหลายรายการมาก คือถ้า  
 10. เราเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษไว้เนี่ย มันก็จะเป็นประโยชน์ในชีวิตประจำวันของเราคะ แล้วแบบ  
 11. เวลาไปเที่ยวต่างประเทศก็ง่ายขึ้น จะเรียนต่อก็ง่ายขึ้น  
 12. Int: งั้นก็ประมาณว่า หนูมองว่าภาษาอังกฤษนี้อยู่ทุกที่เลย เราหนีมันไม่ได้ใช่ไหม  
 13. Meow: ใช่ ใช่ ใช่ เลยคะอาจารย์ คือเหมือนศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษบางคำที่เราใช้มาตั้งแต่เด็ก  
 14. อย่างเช่น คำว่า มอเตอร์ไซค์ เนี่ย เรายกยืมคำนี้มาจากภาษาอังกฤษ คือหนูก็ไม่แน่ใจว่าเรา  
 15. เรียกว่าอะไรในภาษาไทย (หัวเราะ) คือพวกส่วนประกอบต่าง ๆ ของมอเตอร์ไซค์ใช้คำ  
 16. ภาษาอังกฤษ อย่างที่หนูบอกจะคะ คำมันผสมผสานรวมกันกับภาษาไทย เลยกลายเป็น  
 17. ส่วนหนึ่งของสังคมไปแล้วเลย

### Example 3: Peter

1. Int: Talking about a variety of English, how do you feel about English  
 2. in ASEAN?  
 3. Peter: I think it's quite difficult for Thailand to compete with other ASEAN  
 4. members. I think Thai people, mostly, are not good at English. I  
 5. think other countries are better than us such as Malaysia, Singapore,  
 6. Philippines. But Thai people in this generation, I mean my  
 7. generation (laugh), are quite good at English. But there are still  
 8. many Thai people who are not good or are not able to use English.  
 9. This is different from Malaysians. Although, they are not English  
 10. major students, they are able to speak English. Malaysian people use  
 11. English in daily life but we don't. My teacher used to tell us that

12. practice makes perfect. If we practise English every day, I believe  
13. we'll be good at English.
14. Int: Anything else you want to add?
15. Peter: I don't want to conclude that Thailand is at the bottom because I  
16. don't know about Vietnam, Brunei, Laos. They might be bad at  
17. English. But what I know is Thai people need to practise more.  
18. Malaysians or Filipinos are not native English speakers but they use  
19. English fluently. Many Filipinos are teaching English in Thailand
20. Int: I see. So, let's talk about studying English then. What's your  
21. experience about studying English with native English speakers and  
22. non-native English speakers?
23. Peter: Native and non-native?
24. Int: Yes. How do you feel about that?
25. Peter: Well, I think there are two points. I feel that when I studied with  
26. native and non-native English teachers who are not Thai, I felt more  
27. confident. I think they always encourage us to speak English, to use  
28. English. But when I studied with Thai teachers, I didn't enjoy  
29. the class much. I mean some classes. I think Thai teachers are quite  
30. strict with grammar. And if I did any mistakes, they weren't  
31. satisfied. I mean I felt that I was judged by them. And it's true that  
32. Thai people with good English look down on those with poor  
33. English. That's why I think I enjoyed studying with non-Thai  
34. English teachers more. (laugh)
35. Int: You felt more relaxed.
36. Peter: Yes. Non-Thai English teachers always say "Don't be serious",  
37. "That's OK!", "You're doing great!" while some Thai teachers don't  
38. always do that. It's like many Thai people value Thais who can  
39. speak English well. They focus on grammar. They think if you use  
40. appropriate grammar, you are well-educated. I don't speak English  
41. with good grammar but it doesn't mean that I'm not well-educated.  
42. (laugh)
43. Int: (laugh) So you think it's the Thai way to think like that.
44. Peter: Yes, I do. Thai people mostly respect people with high education,  
45. wealth, good-looking appearance. To be honest, I don't like that  
46. kind of thought. And if you can speak more than two languages, to  
47. some Thai people you may be God. (laugh)
48. Int: (laugh) So you think that the role of teachers is important in English  
49. learning?
50. Peter: Yes, I do. Non-Thai teachers usually have stories about their  
51. countries to share with students. It's fun to listen to. You know my  
52. Filipino teacher even made fun of herself in the class. She told us  
53. that many Filipinos pronounce the word "Syllabus" different from  
54. the standard English. They pronounce Sin-la-boots. (laugh) She  
55. admitted that it's quite difficult to change but it's acceptable in her  
56. country. And we got used to it when she said that word.
57. Int: So do you think when you speak English with foreigners they will  
58. know that you're from Thailand from your accent from the way you  
59. speak?

60. Peter: Somehow. I'm not sure. Well, I think our identity, our Thainess can  
61. be represented through language, dress, manner, even our looks.  
62. (laugh) I think people judge you from your appearance first like your  
63. hair colour or your skin colour.

64. Int: I see. Can you tell me more about studying English?

65. Peter: I feel like Thailand is still missing English environments. I mean we  
66. do have English classes at school or university but we don't have it  
67. outside the classroom. My friends told me that if I want to be good  
68. at English, date foreign guy. I think it's true because I will have to  
69. use English with him all the time. I don't want to be rude but as we  
70. know many streetwalkers in Bangkok or Pattaya have good English  
71. because they use English for their job every day. Their clients are  
72. mostly foreigners. They know how to communicate with them.

73. Int: So you think that we speak English even with Thai friends, our  
74. English can be improved?

75. Peter: Yes. And it comes with experiences and practice. Teacher, when I  
76. talked about streetwalkers, I don't look down on them but I just want  
77. to give you the clear example. And it's the fact, right?

78. Int: I understand. It's a career.

79. Peter: It is. Thai people still think it's bad. It's like they think all  
80. streetwalkers are bad. All LGBT are bad.

81. Int: Oh! What makes you think like that?

82. Peter: I think many Thai people cannot deal with the diversity. They are  
83. strict to the old thought which they think it is right.

84. Int: In what context? Can you be more specific?

85. Peter: In different context like genders and religions. They are strict to the  
86. mythology that there are only two genders in the world. It's quite  
87. difficult to be gay in Thailand.

88. Int: Why do you think it's difficult?

89. Peter: Because Thailand is a Buddhist country and Buddhists believe that  
90. being gay is a sin. We do have Muslims in Thailand as well. And  
91. being gay is prohibited in Islam. Yes, I am gay and I live in Thailand.  
92. I live among Buddhists and Muslims.

93. Int: So how do you feel?

94. Peter: Well, gay people are not weird and are not sinners. I am a good son  
95. of my parents. I never do drugs. I am a good student. I never cheat  
96. in the exam. Sometimes I feel bad when someone talks about gay  
97. people in negative ways. They judge gay people that they are bad  
98. and all they think about is sex. We are not. Even straight can be bad.  
99. But I try not to listen to bad comments. There are many positive  
100. comments that gay people are creative and beautiful. And Thailand  
101. are well known for its beautiful lady boys shows. We also have Miss  
102. Queen International. And people should be proud of that.

103. Int: You seem to be interested in beauty pageant.

104. Peter: I am. I've watching beauty contests for years. Many of the  
105. contestants have inspired me in many ways like LGBT rights, social  
106. movements, or cyber bullying.

## Thai transcriptions

1. Int: พูดถึงความหลากหลายของภาษาอังกฤษ คุณคิดยังไงกับภาษาอังกฤษในอาเซียน
2. Peter: ผมว่า ไทยจะแข่งกับประเทศอื่น ๆ ในอาเซียนยาก เพราะผมมองว่าคนไทยส่วนใหญ่
3. ไม่เก่งภาษาอังกฤษ ประเทศอื่น ๆ แบบ มาเล สิงคโปร์ ฟิลิปปินส์ เก่งกว่าเราเยอะ แต่ผม
4. ว่าคนไทยในรุ่นผมเนี่ยเก่งภาษาอังกฤษนะ (หัวเราะ) คือจริง ๆ ก็ยังมีคนไทยอีกเยอะ
5. แหะแหละที่ไม่เก่งภาษาอังกฤษ ใช้ไม่เป็น ซึ่งต่างจากคนมาเล คือเค้าไม่จำเป็นต้องเรียนเอก
6. อังกฤษ เค้าก็พูดอังกฤษได้ เค้าใช้ชีวิตประจำวันแต่คนไทยไม่ อาจารย์คนนึงเคยบอก
7. ผมว่า **practice makes perfect** ผมก็เชื่อว่าถ้าเราฝึกภาษาอังกฤษทุกวัน เราก็จะเก่งเอง
8. Int: โอเค คุณมีอะไรจะเพิ่มเติมมั้ย
9. Peter: คือผมไม่ได้อยากสรุปว่าประเทศไทยรั้งท้ายนะครับอาจารย์ เพราะผมไม่รู้ว่าวีียดนาม
10. บรูไน ลาว เป็นยังไง เค้าอาจจะไม่เก่งอังกฤษก็ได้ แต่ที่รู้ตอนนี้คือคนไทยต้องฝึก
11. ภาษาอังกฤษให้มากขึ้น ดูอย่างคนมาเล คนฟิลิปปินส์ เค้าไม่ได้เป็นเจ้าของภาษาแต่ใช้
12. ภาษาอังกฤษได้คล่องมาก มีอาจารย์ฟิลิปปินส์มาสอนภาษาอังกฤษในไทยเยอะมาก
13. Int: ก็จริง น่ะพูดเรื่องการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษกันดีกว่า ประสบการณ์ของคุณเวลาเรียน
14. ภาษาอังกฤษกับอาจารย์ที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษา กับเวลาเรียนกับอาจารย์ที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษา
15. เป็นยังไงบ้าง
16. Peter: เจ้าของกับไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษาใช้มั้ยครับอาจารย์
17. Int: ใช่ครับ คุณรู้สึกยังไงบ้าง
18. Peter: คือ ผมว่ามันแยกเป็นสองประเด็นนะ ผมรู้สึกว่าเวลาผมเรียนภาษาอังกฤษกับเจ้าของ
19. ภาษาและอาจารย์ที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษา แต่ไม่ใช่อาจารย์คนไทยนะ ผมรู้สึกมันใจกว่าอะ
20. คือผมว่าเค้าคอยกระตุ้นให้เราพูด ให้เราใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ แต่พอเรียนกับอาจารย์คนไทย
21. ผมไม่ค่อยสนุกเท่าไร คือเป็นบางคลาสนะครับ ผมคิดว่าอาจารย์ไทยเข้มงวดกับเรื่อง
22. แกรมม่ามาก คือประมาณว่าถ้าผมทำอะไรผิดแกรมม่า เค้าก็จะไม่ค่อยปลื้มเท่าไร ผม
23. เคยรู้สึกว่าเหมือนอาจารย์ตัดสินผมไปแล้ว แล้วมันก็จริงนะอาจารย์ที่คนไทยที่เก่ง
24. ภาษาอังกฤษจะชอบดูถูกคนที่ไม่ค่อยเก่ง ผมเคยรู้สึกว่าผมเรียนกับอาจารย์ต่างชาติสนุก
25. กว่า (หัวเราะ)
26. Int: คือประมาณว่าคุณรู้สึกผ่อนคลายกว่า
27. Peter: ใช่เลยครับอาจารย์ คืออาจารย์ต่างชาติเค้าพูดตลอดว่า “Don’t be serious”,
28. “That’s OK!”, “You’re doing great!” อะไรประมาณนี้ แต่อาจารย์ไทยไม่ค่อยทำ
29. แบบนั้นอะครับ คือเหมือนว่าคนไทยหลาย ๆ คนเนี่ยให้กำกับคนที่พูดภาษาเก่งมากกว่า เค้า
30. โปกัสแต่แกรมม่า เลยแบบใครที่พูดหรือใช้แกรมม่าได้ถูกต้อง จะเป็นพวกมีการศึกษา ถึง
31. ผมเองจะพูดภาษาอังกฤษแบบไม่ถูกแกรมม่าเป๊ะ ๆ แต่ก็ไม่ใช่ว่าผมเป็นคนไม่มีการศึกษา
32. นะอาจารย์ (หัวเราะ)
33. Int: (หัวเราะ) คือคุณจะบอกว่ามันเป็นวิธีคิดแบบไทย ๆ ใช่มั้ย
34. Peter: ใช่ครับอาจารย์ ผมว่าคนไทยส่วนใหญ่นับถือคนที่มีการศึกษาสูง รวย หน้าตาดี เอาจริง ๆ
35. นะครับ ผมไม่ค่อยชอบวิธีคิดแบบนั้นเลย แล้วแบบถ้าเกิดว่าคุณพูดได้มากกว่าสองภาษา
36. คนไทยบางคนจะคิดว่าคุณนี่เป็นพระเจ้าเลยอะ (หัวเราะ)
37. Int: (หัวเราะ) คือคุณมองว่าบทบาทของอาจารย์ผู้สอนมีส่วนสำคัญกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ
38. ใช่มั้ย
39. Peter: ใช่ครับอาจารย์ แล้วอาจารย์ต่างชาติเนี่ยก็ชอบมีเรื่องเกี่ยวกับประเทศของเค้ามาเล่าให้ฟัง
40. แล้วฟังแล้วก็เพลินนะอาจารย์ อาจารย์ผู้มั้ย อาจารย์ฟิลิปปินส์ที่มหาลัยอะก็เคยเล่นมุกกั๊ด

41. ตัวเองนะ แถบบอกว่าคนฟิลิปปินส์ส่วนมากจะออกเสียงคำว่า “Syllabus” ต่างจาก
42. ภาษาอังกฤษแบบมาตรฐานอะครับ แถบออกเสียงว่า Sin-la-boots. (หัวเราะ) แถบบอกเองว่า
43. จะเปลี่ยนก็ยาก แต่ในฟิลิปปินส์ก็เข้ใจกันแล้วเด็กไทยก็ชิน เวลาแกพูดคำนั้น
44. Int: แล้วคุณคิดว่าเวลาคุณพูดภาษาอังกฤษ เค้าจะรู้มัยว่าคุณมาจากประเทศไทย จากสำเนียงที่
45. คุณพูด
46. Peter: ประมานนั้นมั้งครับ ไม่แน่ใจ แต่ผมว่าอัตลักษณ์ของเรา ความเป็นไทยของเราเห็นได้จาก
47. ภาษา การแต่งกาย มารยาท หรือแม้แต่ภาพลักษณ์ของเราะครับ (หัวเราะ) คือผมว่าคน
48. ทั่วไปจะตัดสินจากรูปลักษณ์ก่อนเลย เช่น สีผม สีผิว ประมานนั้น
49. Int: โอเค งั้นไหนลองเล่าเกี่ยวกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษต่ออีกคนนะ
50. Peter: ได้ครับ ผมว่าตอนนี้ไทยกำลังขาดพวกเรื่องสภาพแวดล้อมที่เป็นภาษาอังกฤษ คือ
51. หมายถึงเรามีคลาสเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในโรงเรียนในมหาลัยก็จริงแต่ไม่ค่อยมีนอกชั้น
52. เรียนเลขครับอาจารย์ เพื่อนก็บอกว่ายากเก่งภาษาอังกฤษให้หาแฟนฝรั่ง มันก็ว่ามัน
53. จริงนะอาจารย์ เพราะผมจะได้พูดภาษาอังกฤษกับแฟนตลอดเวลา คือผมไม่ได้จะหยาบ
54. ภายอะไรนะอาจารย์ แต่คืออย่างที่เราเห็น ๆ กัน คนที่ขายตัวอยู่ตามกรุงเทพ พัทยา พุด
55. ภาษาอังกฤษได้โอเคเลย เพราะเค้าใช้ทำงานทุกวัน แยกส่วนใหญ่ก็ต่างชาติ คือเค้าเรียนรู้
56. วิธีสื่อสารกับแขก
57. Int: งั้นคุณคิดมัยว่าถ้าเราพูดภาษาอังกฤษกับเพื่อนที่เป็นคนไทย ภาษาอังกฤษของเราจะดีขึ้น
58. Peter: ไร่ครับอาจารย์ ผมว่ามันขึ้นอยู่กับการฝึกฝนและการฝึกฝนด้วยแหละ อาจารย์ครับ ที่
59. ผมพูดถึงคนขายตัว ผมไม่ได้จะดูถูกอะไรเค้านะ คืออยากยกตัวอย่างให้เห็นชัดครับ แล้ว
60. มันก็เป็นเรื่องจริง จริงมัยอาจารย์
61. Int: อาจารย์เข้าใจ คือมันก็เป็นอาชีพอาชีพหนึ่งนั่นแหละ
62. Peter: ไร่ครับอาจารย์ แต่คนใหญ่ก็ยังมีมองว่าเป็นอาชีพที่เย่อะ เหมือนกับว่าเค้ามองว่าคนขายตัว
63. เป็นคนเลว พวก LGBT เป็นคนเลว
64. Int: แล้วทำไมคุณคิดอย่างงั้นอะ
65. Peter: อาจารย์ ผมว่าคนไทยหลายคนเลยที่ยังยอมรับกับความหลากหลายไม่ได้ ส่วนใหญ่ก็จะ
66. ชิดแนวคิดเดิม ๆ และก็คิดว่าแนวคิดนั้นถูก
67. Int: ในบริบทไหนครับ คุณช่วยระบุให้หน่อย
68. Peter: ในบริบทที่ต่าง ๆ กัน ไปอะอาจารย์ เช่น เรื่องเพศ เรื่องศาสนา คือบางคนก็คิดอยู่กับ
69. แนวคิดเดิมที่ว่าในโลกนี้มีแค่สองเพศเท่านั้น มันเลยยากนิดนึงสำหรับคนที่เป็นเกย์ใน
70. ประเทศนี้
71. Int: ทำไมคุณถึงคิดว่ามันยากละ
72. Peter: คือประเทศไทยเป็นเมืองพุทธไงอาจารย์ แล้วคนนับถือศาสนาพุทธก็เชื่อว่าการเป็นเกย์
73. มันบาป แล้วในประเทศเราก็มีคนมุสลิมเยอะเหมือนกัน เป็นเกย์ก็บาปตามคำสอนของ
74. อิสลาม แล้วคือผมเป็นเกย์ ผมอยู่ในประเทศไทย และผมก็อยู่ร่วมกับคนพุทธและมุสลิม
75. Int: แล้วคุณรู้สึกยังงั้นบ้าง
76. Peter: คือคนเป็นเกย์อะไม่ได้วิปริตหรือเป็นคนบาปเลยนะอาจารย์ ผมก็เป็นลูกที่ดีของพ่อแม่
77. ไม่เคยคิดหา ผมเป็นนักเรียนที่ดี ผมไม่เคยโกงข้อสอบ คือบางทีมันก็รู้สึกแยอะครับที่เวลา
78. ไร๊อินคนพูดแง่ลบเกี่ยวกับเกย์ คือเค้าก็ตัดสินไปแล้วว่าพวกเกย์มันไม่ดี จริง ๆ แล้วไม่ใช่
79. ชายจริงหญิงแท้ก็มีที่ไม่ดี ผมเองก็พยายามไม่ฟังคำพูดแยะ ๆ นะ เพราะผมว่ามันยังมี
80. คอมเมนต์ด้านบวกที่บอกว่าเกย์เนี่ยเป็นพวกที่มีความคิดสร้างสรรค์และสวยเร็ด ประเทศ
81. ไทยเองก็มีชื่อเสียงเรื่องการแสดงโชว์ของสาวประเภทสอง แล้วเรามี Miss Queen

82. International ด้วย จริง ๆ แล้วคนไทยน่าจะภูมิใจนะครับ
- 83: Int: รู้สึกว่าคุณจะสนใจพวกการประกวดนางงามนะ
- 84: Peter: ใช่ครับอาจารย์ ผมดูประกวดมาหลายปีแล้ว จริง ๆ นางงามหลายคนนี่ก็เป็นแรงบันดาลใจของผมนะ เวลาเค้าพูดเรื่องสิทธิของ LGBT เรื่อง social movements แล้วก็พวก cyber bullying
- 85.
- 86.

## APPENDIX J

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Interview Examples

#### Note:

The 2<sup>nd</sup> interview was about participants' experiences, including communication challenges and associated strategies they employed in intercultural communication at the airport during their job trainings. The selected examples are from Joy, Peter, and Pond.

#### Example 1: Joy

1. Int: How's the experiences in training here?
2. Joy: It's great. I've seen many things that I've never seen before. I've
3. done many things that I've never done before. It's a good
4. experience.
5. Int: How?
6. Joy: I've never worked in airline business before, so I think it's
7. challenging. There are a lot of systems that I have to learn and many
8. problems that I have to deal with. But I think it's fun to work here. I
9. get a chance to see many people from different countries. I used to
10. see Thai superstars as well. (laugh)
11. Int: (laugh) Who were they?
12. Joy: Chompoo Araya, on the day she flew to Paris to join Cannes film
13. festival.
14. Int: Oh, I see. So, getting to see superstars is a perk of working here.
15. Anything else?
16. Joy: Making friends with other colleagues and airline staff and learning
17. how to deal with passengers. Some passengers are *'Tam-rhoy'*
18. [meaning being conceited and arrogant]. (laugh)
19. Int: (Laugh)So, you have to deal with passengers by yourself. Do you
20. have any senior staff or supervisor to help?
21. Joy: The senior staff helped me in the first two weeks. After that I've
22. been on my own. (laugh)
23. Int: Good for you. Well, do you have any problems when you have
24. to communicate with foreign passengers. Or anything you want to
25. share?
26. Joy: It's about punctuality.
27. Int: What was it about?
28. Joy: I know that *'Farang'* people are very strict about time and
29. punctuality. They're concerned about their time and plans. They
30. tend to be strict to time such as work shift or meetings. That's why
31. the passenger was mad at me the other day.
32. Int: What happened?
33. Joy: I took him to the wrong place. I was quite new to the airport.

34. Int: Did he say or do anything to you?  
 35. Joy: He told me that his friend was waiting for him. So, he was furious  
 36. and he yelled at me. I apologised to him many times. Well, you know  
 37. Thai people are not that strict. Ten or fifteen minutes late is okay.  
 38. But if I were him, I would do the same.  
 39. Int: Why?  
 40. Joy: Because I know that 'Farang' people are punctual, confident and  
 41. they speak up, even yell at people. Just like what he did to me.  
 42. (laugh)  
 43. Int: So, if this happens to you, what would you do?  
 44. Joy: I wouldn't yell at people. I think because I'm Thai. I think Thai  
 45. people are quite shy. We tend to keep emotions although we get  
 46. mad.

### Thai transcriptions

1. Int: แล้วฝึกงานนี่เป็นยังไงบ้างครับ  
 2. Joy: ก็คืออะอาจารย์ ได้เห็นอะไรหลาย ๆ อย่างที่ไม่เคยเห็น ได้ทำอะไรที่ไม่เคยทำ หนูว่าเป็น  
 3. ประสบการณ์ที่ดีนะคะ  
 4. Int: ดียังไงเอ่ย  
 5. Joy: คือหนูไม่เคยทำงานกับพวกสายการบินแบบนี้มาก่อนเลย หนูคิดว่ามันท้าทายมาก แล้ว  
 6. ก็มันมีอะไรเยอะแยะที่หนูต้องเรียนรู้ พวกปัญหาต่าง ๆ ที่ต้องรับมืออะคะ แต่หนูก็คิด  
 7. ว่าทำงานที่นี้สนุกดีนะคะ หนูได้เห็นคนเยอะที่มาจากต่างประเทศ แล้วหนูก็ได้เจอคารา  
 8. ด้ายนะอาจารย์ (หัวเราะ)  
 9. Int: (หัวเราะ) หนูเจอใครครับ  
 10. Joy: ชมพู อารยาละ วันที่เค้าบิน ไปปารีสที่ไปงานเมืองคานส์  
 11. Int: โอเค คือการได้เจอซูเปอร์ก็เป็นที่ดีของการฝึกงานที่นี้เนอะ มีอะไรอย่างอื่นอีกมั๊ยครับ  
 12. Joy: ก็คือได้เจอเพื่อนร่วมงานใหม่ ๆ ได้รู้จักพี่ ๆ พนักงาน แล้วก็ได้เรียนรู้การรับมือกับ  
 13. ผู้โดยสารค่ะอาจารย์ ผู้โดยสารบางคนก็ทำหยาบๆ  
 14. Int: คือหนูคุยกับผู้โดยสาร คุณและผู้โดยสารเองเลยหรอ มีรุ่นพี่หรือที่ปรึกษามากอยช่วยด้วยมั๊ย  
 15. Joy: จริง ๆ รุ่นพี่เค้าก็มาช่วยในช่วงสองอาทิตย์แรกอะคะ แต่หลังจากนั้นหนูเลยเดี่ยวเลย  
 16. (หัวเราะ)  
 17. Int: ดีเลยครับ แล้วตอนที่ต้องคุยกับผู้โดยสารต่างชาติเนี่ย หนูมีปัญหาอะไรบ้างมั๊ย หรือมี  
 18. อะไรที่อยากแชร์มั๊ยครับ  
 19. Joy: อืม เรื่องตรงต่อเวลาค่ะ  
 20. Int: มันเป็นอย่างไงครับ  
 21. Joy: คือหนูก็พอรู้นะคะว่าฝรั่งเนี่ยเค้าเข้มงวดเรื่องเวลาและการตรงต่อเวลามาก ๆ คือประมาณ  
 22. ว่าเค้าคำนึงถึงพวกเรื่องเวลาที่เค้ามีกับพวกแพลนต่าง ๆ แล้วก็เคร่งครัดพวกเรื่องเวลางาน  
 23. เวลาประชุมอะไรประมาณนี้ วันก่อนหนูเลยโดนผู้โดยสารโมโหใส่  
 24. Int: เกิดอะไรขึ้นครับ  
 24. Joy: คือหนูพาเค้าไปผิด gate ค่ะ ก็หนูยังไม่ชินกับสนามบินอะอาจารย์  
 25. Int: แล้วเค้าว่าหนู หรือทำอะไรบ้างครับ  
 26. Joy: เค้าบอกว่าเพื่อนเค้ารอเค้าอยู่ค่ะ เค้าโมโหมากแล้วก็จะคอกหนู หนูก็ขอโทษเค้าหลายครั้ง

27. มาก ๆ ก็คืออาจารย์คนไทยอะไม่ได้เคร่งครัดเรื่องเวลาขนาดนั้นอะ สายประมาณ 10-15
28. นาทีก็ไม่ใช่เรื่องใหญ่ แต่ถ้าหนูเป็นเค้า หนูก็โมโหเหมือนกันนั่นแหละค่ะ
29. Int: ทำไมละครับ
30. Joy: ก็คือหนูรู้ว่าฝรั่งเนี่ยเป็นพวกตรงต่อเวลา มั่นใจ แล้วคือกลัวพูด ถึงขนาดขึ้นเสียงเลย
31. เหมือนที่เค้าทำให้หนูอะค่ะ (หัวเราะ)
32. Int: แล้วถ้าเรื่องนี้เกิดขึ้นกับหนูเองหนูจะทำยังไง
33. Joy: หนูคงไม่ไปตะคอกใส่ใครหรือคะอาจารย์ เพราะหนูเป็นคนไทย หนูว่าคนไทยขี้อายอะ
34. แล้วก็ชอบเก็บอารมณ์มากกว่า ทั้งที่จริงคือโกรธมาก

### Example 2: Peter

1. Peter: Many times I cannot speak well English because I'm concerned
2. about using appropriate English grammar.
3. Int: What do you mean?
4. Peter: I mean I have to take time to think about appropriate English
5. grammar structures before I speak. So, passengers have to wait for
6. me. I feel bad. I think I haven't practised it enough. But sometimes
7. I met passengers who were not good at English. It also took me a
8. while to understand them. I could tell that they had difficulty with
9. English gramma to construct sentences. It's like I was seeing myself.
10. (laugh)
11. Int: So how did you deal with that situation?
12. Peter: Sometimes, I smiled and acted like I understood them. I didn't want
13. them to feel bad. But I always try my best to make passengers
14. understand me. I never walk away from my passengers or ask
15. someone to help me. If I cannot construct a sentence at that moment,
16. I just say word-by-word which is relating to the topic we're talking
17. about. I said like "You-go-gate-number-two", "System-broken-no-
18. check-in", or "Staff-go-toilet". (laugh)

### Thai transcriptions

1. Peter: หลายครั้งเลยอาจารย์ที่ผมคิด ๆ ซัด ๆ เวลาพูดภาษาอังกฤษ เพราะมันแต่กังวลว่าจะใช้
2. แกรมม่าถูกมั้ย
3. Int: คุณหมายความว่ายังไงครับ
4. Peter: ผมหมายความว่าผมจะต้องใช้เวลาคิดถึงโครงสร้างไวยากรณ์ก่อนที่จะพูด มันเลยแบบทำ
5. ให้ผู้โดยสารที่รอฟัง จริง ๆ ผมก็แอบรู้สึกเขินๆครับ ผมว่าผมคงไม่ได้ฝึกภาษามากพอ แต่
6. ก็มีบางทีนะครับที่ผมเจอกับผู้โดยสารที่ไม่เก่งภาษาอังกฤษ ผมก็ต้องใช้เวลาเหมือนกัน
7. นะกว่าจะเข้าใจเค้า ผมบอกได้เลยว่าเค้ามีปัญหาเรื่องการเรียงประโยคตามแกรมม่า
8. ภาษาอังกฤษเหมือนกัน มันเลยเหมือนว่าผมกำลังมองตัวเองอยู่ (หัวเราะ)
9. Int: แล้วคุณแก้สถานการณ์ยังไงครับ
10. Peter: บางครั้งผมก็เนียน ๆ อืมแล้วทำท่าว่าเข้าใจ คือผมไม่ยอมให้ผู้โดยสารเขินๆครับ แต่เอา
11. จริง ๆ ผมก็พยายามเต็มที่ให้ผู้โดยสารเข้าใจที่ผมสื่อสาร แล้วคือผมไม่เคยเดินหนี

12. ผู้โดยสารหรือให้รุ่นพี่เข้ามาช่วยเหลือจนครบอาจารย์ ถ้าผมเรียงประโยคไม่ถูกในตอนนั้น  
 13. ผมก็พยายามพูดเป็นคำ ๆ ไป คำที่เกี่ยวข้องกับเรื่องที่คุณ ประมาณว่า “You-go-gate-  
 14. number-two”, “System-broken-no-check-in”, “Staff-go-toilet”.  
 15. (หัวเราะ)

### Example 3: Pond

1. Int: Since this is your first time working here at this airport, how’s your  
 2. experiences when you were on duty?  
 3. Pond: It was great, Teacher. There’re good and bad. (laugh)  
 4. Int: Like what?  
 5. Pond: Many times I cannot think of English words when I speak with  
 6. passengers. There are a lot of English words that I don’t know  
 7. especially in a specific context like airlines industry.  
 8. Int: For example.  
 9. Pond: Like it happened when I was talking to a foreign passenger. When I  
 10. worked at the information counter a passenger asked me where the  
 11. jetway was but I didn’t know what it meant. I paused and took a little  
 12. while to think about the word before I continued to talk with him. I  
 13. saw that the passenger patiently waited for me. I don’t know if it was  
 14. another passenger, I might get a complaint because I was wasting  
 15. their time.  
 16. Int: What happened next?  
 17. Pond: So, I asked him if it was the name of an airline or if he meant  
 18. gateway. Well, he was kind because he saw me struggling. So, he  
 19. explained it to me. Then, I got it. You know. I tried my best to help  
 20. him. To my knowledge, it is called a passenger bridge. Finally, I  
 21. could guide him to the jetway successfully. He thanked me, and I  
 22. thanked him.  
 23. Int: It’s a happy ending. Well done.  
 24. Pond: But there was an awful incident as well, Teacher.  
 25. Int: Really. Can you share it with me?  
 26. Pond: Sure.  
 27. Int: You know you still have rights as a participant, right? If you’re  
 28. don’t what to, then we’ll drop it.  
 29. Pond: It’s OK.  
 30. Int: Well, what is it about?  
 31. Pond: There was a time that I felt I was harassed.  
 32. Int: Who made you feel that way?  
 33. Pond: A group of passengers.  
 34. Int: What happened?  
 35. Pond: Well, when I was greeting passengers at the gate, a group of  
 36. passengers made fun of us by acting like they were trying to avoid  
 37. getting shot by my colleagues and me. When they approached us,  
 38. one of them said “Please don’t shoot us.” Another said “Allah, oh  
 39. Allah”. The other laughed. It’s not funny. At that moment, I knew  
 40. exactly what joke they were making.

41. Int: What was that joke?  
 42. Pond: They mocked us because we are Muslim. They saw us wearing hijab  
 43. and acted like we were ISIS. My colleague didn't get it but I knew  
 44. what they meant. I've never experienced this before in my entire life.  
 45. Int: I'm sorry to hear that. How did you feel at that moment?  
 46. Pond: I admit that I was really angry since it's really inappropriate. It's  
 47. disrespectful to me as a Muslim and as a person. Not all Muslims  
 48. are terrorists and wearing hijab doesn't make people a terrorist.  
 49. What they did is disgusting and insulting. We say  
 50. 'Assalamualaikum' [meaning may the peace be upon you] when we  
 51. meet each other, even when we meet people from different religions.  
 52. So, what they behaved and said when they saw us  
 53. was not peace. It's 'Saiton'. [meaning an evil in Islam]  
 54. Int: What did you do at that moment?  
 55. Pond: What I could do at that moment was keeping my emotion at bay and  
 56. 'Nam-khooon-wai-nai, Nam-sai-wai-nok' [meaning biting one's  
 57. tongue].  
 58. Int: Good for you.  
 59. Pond: This is just because they were passengers. They paid to fly with us.  
 60. Still, I hate to be treated like that but I had to smile at them and acted  
 61. like it's nothing. I think passengers are different. There are good and  
 62. bad passengers. Not all white passengers are like them. I've met  
 63. many nice and polite passengers. In the past, I joined many  
 64. voluntary camps. I met many people from around the world. They  
 65. were really nice to me. And I was wearing hijab at that time too.  
 66. This group was just a minority, a bad one. I hope that they will learn  
 67. a lesson someday soon.

### Thai transcriptions

1. Int: คือนี่เป็นครั้งแรกที่หนูได้ทำงานที่สนามบินดูมัย ประสบการณ์ทำงานของหนูเป็นยังไง  
 2. บ้างครับ  
 3. Pond: ดีเลยคะอาจารย์ จริง ๆ ก็มีทั้งดีและไม่ดี (หัวเราะ)  
 4. Int: ยังไงครับ  
 5. Pond: ก็หลาย ๆ ครั้งหนูนึกคำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษไม่ออกเวลาหนูคุยกับผู้โดยสาร จริง ๆ มันมีอีก  
 6. หลายคำที่หนูไม่รู้ โดยเฉพาะพวกคำที่ใช้ในสายการบินอะคะ  
 7. Int: เช่นอะไรบ้างครับ  
 8. Pond: เหมือนตอนที่หนูคุยกับผู้โดยสารต่างชาติคะอาจารย์ คือตอนนั้นหนูทำงานอยู่ที่เคาน์เตอร์  
 9. ประชาสัมพันธ์ แล้วผู้โดยสารก็ถามหนูว่า jetway อยู่ทางไหน แต่หนูไม่รู้ว่าเค้าหมายถึง  
 10. อะไร หนูก็หยุดไปแป๊บนึง แล้วก็กลับไปคุยกับเค้าต่อ หนูเห็นว่าเค้ารอคำตอบอยู่ ใจเย็น  
 11. มาก คือถ้าเป็นผู้โดยสารคนอื่นหนูอาจโดนบ่นแล้วเพราะทำให้เค้าเสียเวลา  
 12. Int: แล้วเกิดอะไรขึ้นหลังจากนั้นมัยครับ  
 13. Pond: หนูก็ถามเค้าคะอาจารย์ว่าเป็นชื่อสายการบินมัย หรือว่าเค้าหมายถึง gateway แต่เค้าใจดี  
 14. มากคะอาจารย์ เค้าเห็นว่าหนูกำลังงง เค้าก็เลยอธิบายให้หนูฟังจนหนูเข้าใจว่าเค้า  
 15. หมายถึงอะไรแล้วหนูก็พยายามสุดฤทธิ์ที่จะช่วยพาเค้าไป จริง ๆ แล้วที่หนูรู้เนี่ยมัน

16. เรียกว่า **passenger bridge** แต่ในที่สุดหนูก็พาเค้าไปตรงนั้นได้ เค้าก็ชอบคุณหนู หนูก็
17. ชอบคุณเค้าค่ะ
18. Int: **Happy ending** เก่งมากครับ
19. Pond: แต่ก็มีเหตุการณ์แน่ ๆ นะคะอาจารย์
20. Int: จริงอะ หนูเล่าให้ฟังได้มั๊ยครับ
21. Pond: ได้ค่ะ
22. Int: คือหนูทราบไหม๊วะว่าหนูมีสิทธิ์ในฐานะผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัย คือถ้าหนูไม่ยอมเล่า เราก็ไปคุย
23. เรื่องอื่นกัน
24. Pond: หนูไม่มีปัญหาเลยคะ
25. Int: อะ งั้นเป็นเรื่องเกี่ยวกับอะไรครับ
26. Pond: มันมีอยู่ครั้งนึงที่หนูรู้สึกว่าคุณถามอะคะ
27. Int: โครอะ โครทำให้หนูรู้สึกแบบนั้นอะ
28. Pond: ผู้โดยสารค่ะอาจารย์
29. Int: เกิดอะไรขึ้นครับ
30. Pond: คือตอนที่หนูขึ้นสวัสดิ์ผู้โดยสารอยู่หน้า **gate** ผู้โดยสารฝรั่งกลุ่มนึง หนูเห็นแล้วแหละว่า
31. เค้ากำลังแบบทำท่าล้อเลียนหนูกับเพื่อน คือกลุ่มเค้าทำท่าเหมือนกับหลบกระสุนจากหนู
32. กับเพื่อนหนูคะ พอเค้าเข้ามาใกล้เค้าก็แบบพูดประมาณว่า **“Please don’t shoot us.”** บาง
33. คนก็พูด **“Allah, oh Allah”** แล้วกลุ่มเพื่อนเค้าก็หัวเราะ หนูว่ามันไม่จำเลย ตอนนั้นคือหนู
34. รู้สึกว่าเค้ากำลังล้อหนูเรื่องอะไร
35. Int: เรื่องอะไรเหอครับ
36. Pond: ก็คือเค้าล้อเพราะพวกหนูเป็นมุสลิม แบบเค้าเห็นว่าเรากลุ่มอิญาบ แล้วประมาณว่าเราเป็น
37. พวก **ISIS** คือหนูเกิดขึ้น แต่เพื่อนหนูไม่เกิด เอาจริง ๆ หนูไม่เคยเจอเหตุการณ์อะไรแบบ
38. นี้มาก่อนในชีวิตเลยอาจารย์
39. Int: เสียใจที่เกิดเรื่องแบบนี้ขึ้นนะครับ ตอนนั้นหนูรู้สึกยังไงอะ
40. Pond: หนูยอมรับค่ะอาจารย์ว่าหนูโกรธมาก เพราะมันไม่เหมาะสมเลย มันแบบไม่ให้เกียรติ
41. กันอะ ทั้งในฐานะที่หนูเป็นมุสลิม และในฐานะที่หนูก็เป็นคนคนหนึ่ง คือไม่ใช่มุสลิมทุก
42. คนจะเป็นพวกก่อการร้าย แล้วก็กลุ่มอิญาบเนี่ยก็ไม่ได้ทำให้ใครต้องกลายเป็นพวกก่อ
43. การร้าย แล้วคือสิ่งที่เค้าพูดอะ มันน่ารังเกียจอะอาจารย์ แบบหมีนเรามากอะ มุสลิมเนี่ยพูด
44. ว่า อัซซาลามมูออลัยกุม (ขอความสันติจงมีแด่ท่าน) เวลาเจอหน้ากัน ทั้งกับคนต่างศาสนา ก็
45. ตาม แต่สิ่งที่พวกเค้าพูด เค้าแสดงออกเนี่ยมันไม่ใช่สันติเลยคะอาจารย์ แต่มันเป็นชัฎฏอน
46. มารร้าย
47. Int: แล้วตอนนั้นหนูทำไงอะครับ
48. Pond: คือตอนนั้นที่หนูทำได้คือสงบสติอารมณ์คะ หนูแบบน้ำชุ่มไว้ใต้น้ำใส่ไว้นอกสุดฤทธิ์
49. Int: ดีแล้วครับ
50. Pond: คือหนูมองว่าพวกเค้าเป็นผู้โดยสาร เค้าจ่ายเงินมาบินกับสายการบินเรา แต่ก็นั่นแหละคะ
51. หนูคือเกลียดการที่ถูกทำแบบนี้มาก ๆ แต่ก็ยังต้องยิ้มแล้วทำเหมือนไม่มีอะไรเกิดขึ้น หนู
52. มองว่าผู้โดยสารแต่ละคนก็แตกต่างกันนะ ผู้โดยสารฝรั่งก็ไม่ได้เป็นแบบพวกนี้เสมอ คือ
53. หนูอะ ก็เจอผู้โดยสารที่ดี ที่สุภาพด้วยเหมือนกัน คือก่อนหน้านี้ หนูเคยเข้าค่ายอาสาหลาย
54. ที่ หนูเจอเพื่อร่วมค่ายจากหลายประเทศเลยอาจารย์ หนูว่าพวกเค้าก็ดีกว่าหนูนะอาจารย์
55. แล้วตอนนั้นหนูก็ใส่อิญาบด้วย หนูว่าพวกนี้จะเป็นส่วนน้อย ส่วนที่แน่ ๆ หนูขอให้พวกนี้
56. เจอของจริง ได้รับบทเรียนเข้าสักวันคะ

## APPENDIX K

### Communication challenges and associated strategies

**Note:**

The following tables presents communication challenges and associated strategies by individual participant. Table K.1 shows participants' English language difficulties. Table K.2 shows participants' non-linguistic cultural issues. Table K.3 shows participants' associated strategies in dealing with English language difficulties. Table K.4 shows participants' associated strategies in dealing with non-linguistic cultural issues.

Group	Name	English grammar	Vocabulary size	English pronunciation	Different English accents	Rapid speech
Low	Aoy	x	x		x	x
	Ekky	x	x			x
	Kro	x		x	x	x
	Kim				x	x
Medium	Fon			x	x	x
	Joy	x				x
	Ohm		x			x
	Pond		x			x
High	Joe			x		x
	Meow	x				x
	Peter	x	x			x
	Yuan					x

Table K.1: Participants' English language difficulties

Group	Name	Sexual orientation-based harassment	Religious Harassment	Gender-based discrimination	Sexual harassment	Racism	Linguicism
Low	Aoy						
	Ekky						
	Kro						
	Kim				x		
Medium	Fon				x		
	Joy						
	Ohm			x			
	Pond		x				
High	Joe					x	
	Meow					x	
	Peter	x					
	Yuan						x

Table K.2: Participants' non-linguistic cultural issues

Group	Name	Ask for help	Request clarification	Don't give up	Spell out the word	Request repetition
Low	Aoy	x				x
	Ekky	x				x
	Kro	x			x	x
	Kim					x
Medium	Fon			x	x	x
	Joy		x			x
	Ohm		x	x		x
	Pond			x		x
High	Joe					x
	Meow			x		x
	Peter			x		x
	Yuan					x

Table K.3: Associated strategies in dealing with English language difficulties

Group	Name	Control emotions	Forgive
Low	Aoy		
	Ekky		
	Kro		
	Kim	x	
Medium	Fon	x	x
	Joy		
	Ohm	x	
	Pond	x	
High	Joe	x	
	Meow	x	x
	Peter	x	x
	Yuan	x	x

Table K.4: Associated strategies in dealing with non-linguistic cultural issues

## APPENDIX L

### Participants' attitudes towards passengers

**Note:**

Table L.1 shows the numbers of negative and positive attitudes that participants have towards passengers. Table L.2 shows examples of how negative attitudes and positive attitudes are coded.

Group	Name	Negative Attitudes	Positive Attitudes
Low	Aoy	9	2
	Ekky	7	2
	Kro	8	3
	Kim	8	3
Medium	Fon	2	3
	Joy	2	5
	Ohm	3	3
	Pond	2	4
High	Joe	1	5
	Meow	0	6
	Peter	1	5
	Yuan	1	5

Table L.1: The number of participants' negative and positive attitudes

Codes	Examples
<b>Negative Attitudes</b>	<p>- "I don't like Chinese passengers. They are noisy. I mean all of them." (Aoy)</p> <p>- "Chinese people like to spit on the floor. They're disgusting. I saw them spit many times in the lounge. When I see Chinese passengers, I don't want to get near them. I'm afraid that they might spit on me." (laugh) (Ekky)</p> <p>- "I feel awkward when I see foreign passengers kissing in public. Mostly they are Western." (Kro)</p> <p>- "Indian people are difficult to deal with especially when they speak English. I don't understand them. When they come to my counter, I always ask my colleague to help me deal with them because I'm not happy to deal with them." (Kim)</p> <p>- "I'm not happy when Chinese people shouting at each other in front of my counter. It's quite annoying." (Fon)</p> <p>- "I don't enjoy dealing with Indian people or Middle Eastern people. They are quite smelly. (laugh)" (Joy)</p>

	<p>- "I'm uncomfortable to deal with black passengers. I think they're intimidating. Their appearances is quite scary to me. They're also quite aggressive and loud." (Ohm)</p> <p>- "I don't like Chinese passengers. They're demanding and stingy. Many times, they ask for discount for the excessive weight of their luggage. They should have understood the regulations before flying." (Pond)</p> <p>- "I feel insecure to deal with people from the middle east. I think the way they dress makes me feel insecure because I never know what they're holding under their dresses." (Joe)</p> <p>- "Like when I saw some foreign passengers put their feet on the head rest of the chair and other passengers were sitting, I was a bit uncomfortable because in Thai culture it is disrespectful as head is considered a sacred part of body." (Peter)</p> <p>- "It's always uncomfortable for me when I see 'Farang' passengers hugging and cuddling in public." (Yuan)</p> <p>- "When I saw passengers kissing in public, I felt awkward. If you want to kiss each other, do it privately. It's so wrong on many levels in Thai culture. It's a sin called Ka-Me in Buddhism. I guess it's not in the instructions of their religions." (Aoy)</p>
<p><b>Positive Attitudes</b></p>	<p>- "I think American passengers are friendly. I kind of like them." (Aoy)</p> <p>- "I like Japanese passengers. They're very decent. They always get in queues. I feel that I'm lucky if there're Japanese passengers in my shift." (Ekky)</p> <p>- "I kind of like 'Farang' passengers. I mean they're very friendly and they try to understand me when I cannot communicate using English." (Kro)</p> <p>- "I always request to work for Japanese flights. You know I like Japanese passengers. They're decent and they always follow the instructions. When I work for them, I never feel tired." (Kim)</p> <p>- "I feel that Malaysian people are very easy to deal with. They have similar cultures to Thai. They can speak English. There're a lot of Malaysian passengers coming to Thailand for Songkran festival. That makes me happy." (Fon)</p> <p>- "I prefer to deal with 'Farang' passengers because I don't have to worry about their English. I don't have to take a lot time to make them understand what I'm saying." (Joy)</p> <p>- "I think Asian passengers are quite decent like Japanese. I prefer to have them in my shift. They just sit and wait for the flight quietly." (Ohm)</p> <p>- "I'm happy and I'm comfortable to deal with Muslim passengers. It's like I can help, I can take care of people of the same religion." (Pond)</p> <p>- "I don't have any problems to deal with passengers. They're my clients. But I like to approach 'Farang' passengers more. I think they're friendly</p>

	<p>and always ready to talk to me. (Joe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “I personally feel that <i>‘Farang’</i> passengers are friendlier than Asian passengers. I like to talk to them and ask them if they need help.” (Peter)</li> <li>- “I like to talk to <i>‘Farang’</i> passengers. They’re easy going and friendly. They remind me of when I was in the states.” (Meow)</li> <li>- “I like to see when Muslim passengers greet each other. They touch hands and put their own hands on their own chests. I think it shows they respect each other. It’s a warm gesture like when Thai people make a <i>‘Wai’</i>.” (Yuan)</li> </ul>
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Table L.2: Examples of negative and positive attitudes

## APPENDIX M

### Participant's intercultural experiences and regularity of English use

**Note:**

Table M.1 shows participant's intercultural experiences in other countries. Table M.2 shows regularity of participants' intercultural communication through English

Group	Name	Intercultural experiences in other countries	Countries	Purposes
Low	Aoy	No	-	-
	Ekky	No	-	-
	Kro	No	-	-
	Kim	No	-	-
Medium	Fon	Yes	Malaysia, Indonesia	education, travel
	Joy	Yes	Australia, Malaysia, Singapore	education, part-time job, travel
	Ohm	No	-	-
	Pond	No	-	-
High	Joe	Yes	USA, Malaysia, Singapore	education, part-time job, travel
	Meow	Yes	USA, Malaysia, Mexico, Brazil, Singapore	education, part-time job, travel
	Peter	Yes	USA, Canada, Singapore, Philippines	education, part-time job, travel
	Yuan	Yes	Malaysia, Singapore,	education, travel

Table M.1: Participant's intercultural experiences in other countries

<b>Group</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Regularity</b>	<b>Places</b>
Low	Aoy	Not often	Classrooms
	Ekky	Not often	Classrooms
	Kro	Quite often	Classrooms, chat with international friends (online)
	Kim	Not often	Classrooms, chat with international friends (online)
Medium	Fon	Often	Classrooms, chat with international friends (online)
	Joy	Daily	Classrooms, online chat with international friends,
	Ohm	Daily	Classrooms, chat with international friends (online), chat with international friends (face-to-face)
	Pond	Daily	Classrooms, chat with international friends (online), chat with international friends (face-to-face)
High	Joe	Daily	Classrooms, chat with international friends (online),
	Meow	Daily	Classrooms, chat with international friends (online), chat with international friends (face-to-face)
	Peter	Daily	Classrooms, chat with international friends (online), chat with international friends (face-to-face)
	Yuan	Almost daily	Classrooms, chat with international friends (online)

Table M.2: Regularity of participants' intercultural communication through English

## APPENDIX N

### Examples of the coding system applying thematic analysis

**Note:**

Table N.1 shows the coding system applying thematic analysis of this study which mainly focused on coding for content. It should be noted that thematic analysis was applied with the original transcripts which are in Thai. After the interviews were transcribed, they were manually coded for evidence to create themes. Only selected extracts and examples were translated from Thai into English. The arrow moving from right to left shows how themes are formulated, starting from the extracts into codes, and themes respectively.



Themes	Codes	Extracts from the interviews
<b>English language difficulties</b>	<b>English grammar</b>	<p>- “English grammar is a problem for me. I’m not good at it. It’s difficult. I’m confused with sentence structure which is different from the Thai language, especially when I had to speak more complex sentences.” (Aoy)</p> <p>- “You know our language is different from the English language, right? So, when I communicate with passengers, I usually have a problem with English grammar, like tenses, and sentence structure. It’s confusing.” (Ekky)</p>
	<b>Vocabulary size</b>	<p>- “I don’t know all English words. So, when I talked to them, I paused many times to think.” (Aoy)</p> <p>- “Mostly, I struggled with vocabulary. I couldn’t remember English words even the simple ones.” (Peter)</p>
	<b>English Pronunciation</b>	<p>- “I think English pronunciation is quite difficult to deal with because there’re a lot of English words that I don’t know how to pronounce appropriately.” (Fon)</p> <p>- “I think pronunciation of English words is an obstacle in communication because if you don’t pronounce words appropriately, chances are people don’t understand you.” (Joe)</p>

<p><b>Non-linguistic cultural issues</b></p>	<p><b>Sexual orientation-based harassment</b></p>	<p>- “I’m openly gay and I’m OK with it. But I’m unhappy when I get mocked for being gay. There was a group of Muslim passengers making fun of me by doing girlish gestures to mock me and called me ‘Sissy’.” (Peter)</p>
	<p><b>Racism</b></p>	<p>- “I could tell that they were mad because their faces showed. I apologised to them many times because I know it’s my fault. While I was waiting for my supervisor, I heard the husband swore ‘Monkey’ and he turned his face away.” (Joe)</p> <p>- “The passenger and his friends were showing racist slant-eyes gestures to me and laughed.” (Meow)</p>
	<p><b>Linguicism</b></p>	<p>- “Some passengers made fun of my accents when I was speaking English. They repeated what I spoke to mock me and laughed.” (Yuan)</p>

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