

A STUDY OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THAI AND
FOREIGN STAFF THAT CREATES NEGATIVE ATTITUDES IN
THE WORKPLACE

A MASTER'S PROJECT
BY
ANGKANA DAMRONGSINSAKUL

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in
Business English for International Communication at Srinakharinwirot University

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AN ABSTRACT

By

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The study presents nonverbal communication between Thai and Foreign Staff that create negative attitudes in the workplace. The objectives of this study are (1) to find out types of nonverbal communication between Thai and foreign staff that creates the negative attitudes for Thai staff working in Martello Realty Co., Ltd. and (2) to discover the most serious nonverbal communication that creates negative attitudes for Thai Staff working with foreigners. Questionnaires and interview were the methods used to gather information for this study. The findings show that there were 3 types of nonverbal communication creating negative attitudes for Thai Staff working in Martello Realty Co., Ltd., while the most serious nonverbal communication that creates negative attitudes for Thai Staff was Facial Expression and Eye Contact. To prevent the negative attitudes for Thai Staff, the company should provide communication course concentrated on nonverbal communication and cross-cultural communication for both Thai and foreign staff.

การศึกษาการสื่อสารอวัจนภาษาระหว่างพนักงานชาวไทยและชาวต่างชาติที่ก่อให้เกิด
ทัศนคติเชิงลบในที่ทำงาน

บทคัดย่อ

ของ

อังคณา ดำรงศิลป์สกุล

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา

ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ

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อัมพร ศรีเสริมโภค.

เนื้อหาในการศึกษานี้แสดงให้เห็นถึงการสื่อสารอวัจนภาษาระหว่างพนักงานชาวไทย และชาวต่างชาติที่ก่อให้เกิดทัศนคติเชิงลบในที่ทำงาน วัตถุประสงค์ของการศึกษานี้ประกอบด้วย (1) เพื่อศึกษาประเภทของการสื่อสารอวัจนภาษาระหว่างพนักงานชาวไทย และชาวต่างชาติที่ก่อให้เกิดทัศนคติเชิงลบต่อพนักงานชาวไทยที่ทำงานในบริษัทมาร์เทโล เรียลตี้ จำกัด และ (2) เพื่อศึกษาว่าการสื่อสารอวัจนภาษาประเภทใดที่ก่อให้เกิดทัศนคติเชิงลบมากที่สุดสำหรับพนักงานชาวไทยที่ทำงานในบริษัทมาร์เทโล เรียลตี้ จำกัด วิธีที่ใช้ในการรวบรวมข้อมูลสำหรับการศึกษาครั้งนี้คือการสัมภาษณ์และแจกแบบสอบถามให้แก่พนักงานชาวไทย ผลของการศึกษาพบว่า มีการสื่อสารอวัจนภาษา 3 ประเภทที่ก่อให้เกิดทัศนคติเชิงลบสำหรับพนักงานชาวไทยที่ทำงานในบริษัทมาร์เทโล เรียลตี้ จำกัด ซึ่งก็คือ การแสดงออกทางสีหน้า และแววตา ภาษาท่าทางอื่น และระยะห่างระหว่างบุคคล ทั้งนี้ยังได้พบว่าการแสดงออกทางสีหน้าและแววตาเป็นการสื่อสารอวัจนภาษาที่ก่อให้เกิดทัศนคติเชิงลบสำหรับพนักงานชาวไทยมากที่สุด เพื่อป้องกันการเกิดทัศนคติเชิงลบสำหรับพนักงานชาวไทย ทางบริษัทควรจัดให้มีหลักสูตรการสื่อสารสำหรับทั้งพนักงานชาวไทย และชาวต่างชาติ โดยมุ่งเน้นไปที่การสื่อสารอวัจนภาษาและการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรม

The Master's Project Advisor, Chair of Business English for International Communication Program and Oral Defense Committee has approved this Master's Project as partial fulfillments of the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakharinwirot University.

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The Master's Project has been approved as partial fulfillments for the Master's of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakharinwirot University.

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April..... 2007

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. Background

Nowadays people from different countries and different cultures interact with one another for various purposes. As a result, those who work in an international organization have to communicate with each other from across cultures around the world. Communication can easily go wrong because messages may be misinterpreted especially due to their different backgrounds. It is important for those who work with foreigners to know about the foreigners' background so that they can understand their communication. Communication problems can occur any time both verbally and nonverbally. Miscommunication can occur from differences in body language and gestures, different meanings for the same word and different assumptions made in the same situation. Nonverbal communication such as facial expression, eye contact, personal space and time are especially important factors that people should pay more attention when they communicate with others from different cultures.

In an organization, employers and employees have to communicate with each other all the time; therefore, to communicate effectively both of them have to be aware of messages that are sometimes unintentionally sent in nonverbal messages. There are several nonverbal acts that can be accurately translated into words in the language of a culture in which nonverbal acts are performed such as a handshake, a smile, and frown. Similar nonverbal acts could mean different things in different cultures. Nodding the head in

United States means agreement but in Japan, it means only that the message was received. Rosenblatt; Cheatham; & Watt (1977) claimed that sometimes a person frowns while listening to another person. It may indicate doubt or disagreement; on the other hand, the person may have a headache or may be bored. It is important for everyone to remain alert to nonverbal signals, but it is also essential that he/she decode them accurately. Hamilton; & Parker (1997) mentioned that managers at all levels send messages with their cloths; the size and location of their offices; the arrangement of their office furniture; where they sit during meetings; their facial expressions, gestures, and postures; their distance from others when standing; and even the time they arrive at meetings or social gatherings. On the other hand, employees also use nonverbal communication when they communicate with their employers. Hamilton; & Parker (1997) also pointed out that employees are sending just as many silent messages with their eye contact; their posture while standing and sitting; their facial expressions, gestures, and clothing; their distance from others; the time it takes them to complete their work; and even the way they decorate their desks.

Bailey (Online) defines workplace negativity as attitudes that people have towards their work, bosses, colleagues, and customers. It causes conflict, and the lowering of morale, productivity and profitability. Staff with negative attitudes will eventually cause a manager or a customer to become a negative and vice versa. Some people who just have negative attitudes about life will find something negative in any situation. Lack of awareness of nonverbal communication can leads to negative attitudes towards company, colleagues and works. Negative attitudes affect work performance. When people have negative attitudes, they also have frustration. They may not pay full attention to their work; even do

only what employers ask them to do, not put any efforts to get things done on time, not take good care of their customers, lose their responsibilities and finally quit their jobs. It is important to prevent negative attitudes that may happen and spread all over the company. To learn and understand each other's cultures would help to reduce the negative attitudes.

In today's global business environment, more and more people are required to understand others who come from countries and cultures differ from their own. Gudykunst (1988) indicated that Cross Cultural Communication is effective when the person interpreting the message attaches a meaning to the message similar to what was intended by the person transmitting it without our own internal perspective. Dahl (1998, 2000) said that awareness of cultural differences and recognizing where cultural differences are at work is the first step toward understanding each other and establishing a positive working environment. Gudykunst (1988) said that it is important for managers and employees at all levels to understand, appreciate, and manage the impact of cross-cultural communication in the workplace. Therefore, they can communicate with each other effectively without misunderstanding.

II. Statement of Problems

Thailand, like several other East and Southeast Asian countries, has developed rapidly in recent years, attracting foreign investment and foreign companies. Many International organizations were established in Thailand mostly in Bangkok; therefore a lot of foreigners have to move to Thailand. When communicating with foreign employers or

foreign customers, most employees find that cultures become one of the obstacles for them. Besides verbal communication, nonverbal communication is then the problems every employee has to face and runs into many situations and circumstances. In this study, the researcher mainly focuses on nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is an important factor that businessmen have to realize when they have to communicate with others who are from different cultures and backgrounds. Since the researcher is working in this company for 5 years, the researcher has observed many nonverbal communication used by foreigners both employers and customers that can generate negative attitudes. Therefore, the researcher would like to study what is the most serious nonverbal communication that generates negative attitudes in the company.

Martello Realty Co., Ltd. is one of leading International Real Estate Consultants. The company provides the clients with a comprehensive range of skills and services in real estate, restructuring, financial advisory and asset management. The company runs by foreigners and most customers are also foreigners. Therefore, apart from having a good command of spoken and written English, nonverbal communication plays a significant role in effective communication with foreigners.

III. Objectives of the Study

Since there are various problems in nonverbal communication, this study aimed at determining the outstanding nonverbal communication problems that create negative attitudes among Thai and foreign staff working for Martello Realty Co., Ltd, as the following:

1. To find out types of nonverbal communication between Thai and foreign staff that creates the negative attitudes for Thai staff working in Martello Realty Co., Ltd.

2. To discover the most serious nonverbal communication that creates negative attitudes for Thai Staff working with foreigners.

IV. Research Questions

1. What kinds of nonverbal communication create negative attitudes for Thai staff of Martello Realty Co., Ltd. while working with foreigners?

2. What is the most serious nonverbal communication that creates negative attitudes for Thai staff of Martello Realty Co., Ltd. while working with foreigners?

V. Significance of the Study

The different concepts of nonverbal communication can cause misunderstanding among workers. It is important for many Thai Staff who work in Martello Realty Co., Ltd. to discover the nonverbal communication that create negative attitudes so that they can work in the organization effectively. The findings of this study might be useful for Thai Staff to discover the solutions for these problems to avoid conflicts that might be happened while working with foreigners.

Additionally, this study could be helpful for International companies and multi-national organizations in Thailand that would like to develop nonverbal cross cultural communication among their foreign employers or customers and Thai Staff.

VI. Scope of the Study

The study mainly focuses on nonverbal communication of foreigners that create negative attitudes for Thai Staff working in Martello Realty Co., Ltd. The purpose of the study is to discover the most serious nonverbal communication of foreigners from three kinds of them. The first one is Facial Expressions and Eye Contact. The second one is Other Body Movements and Gestures. The last one is Personal Distance and Space.

The study consists of five chapters. Chapter One includes the introduction, statement of problems, objectives, research questions, significant of the study, scope, expected outcome and definition of terms. Chapter Two contains review of literature that are relevant to the study. Methodology of the study is discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four discussed the findings in terms of nonverbal communication that create negative attitudes for Thai Staff while working with foreigners. The final chapter, Chapter Five presents conclusions, discussions and recommendations.

VII. Expected Outcomes

The researcher expected to discover the most serious nonverbal communication problems that generate negative attitudes for Thai staff of Martello Realty Co., Ltd. while working with foreigners. Then Thai staff could use the findings to find the solutions to those problems. This would resolve working conflict among Thai Staff and foreigners concerning cross cultural communication.

VIII. Definitions of Terms

Terminologies in this study are defined as follows:

1. Nonverbal Communication is defined as all intentional and unintentional means other than writing or speaking by which a person sends a message, including facial expressions, personal space, time, eye contact, appearance, posture, gestures, size and location of office, and arrival time at meetings.

2. Thai Staff are Thai employees or Thai colleagues who work under or have worked with foreigners in Martello Realty Co., Ltd. in Bangkok.

3. Foreigners are European staff or customers who deal with Martello Realty Co., Ltd.

4. Work Place is Martello Realty Co., Ltd., one of leading International Real Estate Consultants. The company provides the clients with a comprehensive range of skills and services in real estate, restructuring, financial advisory and asset management. Most of clients are foreigners. The President of Martello Realty has British nationality. The company is located on Rama I Road in Bangkok.

5. Negative Attitudes are any bad feelings of Thai Staff caused by the action of foreigners. These bad feelings will affect work performances which also lead to problems in working.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter discussed secondary related data from textbooks on cross cultural communication and nonverbal communication, and from the Internet. The discussion is divided into four sections: (1) cross cultural communication (2) the importance of nonverbal communication (3) types of nonverbal communication, and (4) related research

I. Cross Cultural Communication

According to Millet (1999: online), Culture is a way people create, send and interpret information. It defines social structure, decision making-practices, and communication styles. It also impacts everyone and influenced how people act and respond.

Cross cultural communication is about when people compare or deal with two or more different cultures. Jandt (1995) stated that cross cultural communication generally refers to face-to-face interactions among people of diverse cultures. Imagine how difficult communication can be if the source or the message producer and the receiver are in different contexts and shared symbols.

What is acceptable in one culture may be completely unacceptable in another. One culture may determine that snapping fingers to call a waiter is appropriate; another may consider this gesture rude. Rodrigues (2001) stated that in the communication between

people of different cultures, even if they share a common language, things can go wrong. In particular, knowledge of a language does not automatically give a person the background knowledge that native speakers assume he or she shares. According to Hall (1990) many times, people of one culture do not understand the joke of another culture they are encountering with. This may eventually result in misunderstanding and the listener might feel offended. Adler (1989) indicated that differences in culture affect communication in other ways as well. For example, members of certain cultures are much more likely to use indirection than members of certain other cultures. The Japanese are famous for being indirect, while Americans are famous for being direct. Because Americans aren't used to the level of indirection that Japanese use them completely, they misunderstand what's being said. Hall (1990) pointed that one of the problems with cultural differences is that the underlying messages about the relationship are likely to be misunderstood. For example, the loud, direct style of Americans is often seen by Asians as rude and disrespectful. Yet the Americans are not trying to be rude. Similarly, the Japanese reluctance to say "no" is seen by Americans as shifty and dishonest.

II. The Importance of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication expresses meaning or feeling without words. Universal emotions, such as happiness, fear, and sadness, are expressed in a similar nonverbal way throughout the world. Although nonverbal communication can be defined in several different ways, in this study the researcher defines it as all intentional and unintentional messages

that are neither written, spoken, nor sounded according to Hamilton; & Parker (1997). Communication involves verbal and nonverbal clues. However, nonverbal communication is more important. This is because people from different cultures interpret nonverbal cues differently. Nonverbal communication is worldwide and varied among cultures. Knapp (1980) indicated that nonverbal communication is so important because most people believe “how you say it” more than “what you say”. Frank (1998: online) stated that it is important to note that body language has different meanings in different cultures. How people can interpret body language depends on the situation, the culture, the relationship people have with the person as well as the gender of the other. This means that there is not one signal that has the same meaning all over the world. If people do not take this into account, they may get in some serious trouble. Hamilton; & Parker (1997) mentioned that to accurately determine the meaning of a nonverbal message in the business, one must know the sender’s personal frame of reference which is the perspective from which a system is observed, the specific situation, and the cultural background of the sender. The success of communication in an organization often depends on how well employers and employees can read the nonverbal messages from others. In addition, successful use of nonverbal communication may also help both employers and employees in establishing and maintaining needed interpersonal relationships.

III. Types of Nonverbal Communication

There are many types of Nonverbal Communication, however in this research,

according to Hamilton and Parker, will cover only those types of nonverbal communication that are most applicable to business communications which are facial expressions and eye contact, including other body movements and gestures, clothing and personal appearance, distance and personal space, physical environment, and time.

1. Facial Expressions and Eye Contact

Danziger (1976) described that face and eyes are probably the most expressive parts of the body. People can establish rapport with the facial expression. The fact that members of one culture do not express their emotions as openly a member of another does not mean they do not experience emotions. It is considered negative or suspicious to have a “deadpan” expression (facial expression displaying no emotions) or a “poker face.” Hill (2001) stated that a person’s face communicates emotions clearly: A subordinate’s confusing expression indicated the need to continue with an explanation, a customer’s smile and nodding signal the time to close a sale, and a colleague’s frown indicates that your request for help has come at a bad time. He also mentioned that facial expressions, like other nonverbal signals, are ambiguous. Rodgers (1995) claimed that a face is the primary site for expressing emotions; it reveals both the type and the intensity of the feelings. Ted (1993: online) indicated that the most obvious expression is a smile. Smiles communicate warmth, openness, understanding and agreement. When people are busy and don't wish to be interrupted, they usually don't smile. The message is generally clear: Don't bother.

Therefore managers should be especially careful how they present themselves. A smile communicates a positive impression.

Levine; & Mara (1982) explained that eye contact is important because insufficient or excessive eye contact may create communication barriers. It is important in relationships because it serves to show intimacy, attention, and influence. Bovee; & Thill (2000) explained that the eyes are especially effective to indicate attention and interest, influencing others, regulating interaction, and establishing dominance. Although the eyes and the face are usually a reliable source of meaning. People sometimes manipulate their expressions to simulate an emotion they do not feel or to mask their true feelings. Richard (1997: online) mentioned that people are easily confused when other person uses either stronger or weaker eye contact than they do.

Figure 1 displays the variation of eye contact.

INTENSE EYE CONTACT The Arab World and the Mediterranean Region

Latin Europeans and Latin Americans

FIRM TO MODERATE EYE CONTACT Northern Europe and North America

Korea and Thailand

INDIRECT EYE CONTACT Most of Asia

Business visitors to East and Southeast Asia should prepare themselves to encounter exactly the opposite style of gaze behavior. Here a direct gaze may be interpreted as a hostile act. For instance, with the Japanese people should try not to stare them in the eye across the conference table. Kinsley (2000: online) mentioned that in most

of Asia, it is rude to look directly to whom you talk to.. According to Hamilton; & Parker (1997) the eyes are the most expressive part of the face and have considerable effect communication. In American Culture, eye contact performs several functions.

1.1 Eye Contact Shows Interest and Attentiveness

American people in Business or the professions expect those to whom they are speaking to look at them. Lack of eye contact on the part of the listener is interpreted as disinterest or even disrespect. At the same time lack of eye contact on the part of the speaker may cause the listener to interpret the message less favorably. Glaser (2004: online) stated that a person who isn't making eye contact is likely bored or impatient.

1.2 Eye contact signals the wish to participate or the wish to be left alone

When boss asked a question, the moment the employees made eye contact with their boss showed that they were going to be called on to answer the question.

1.3 Eye Contact controls the flow of communication

Lack of eye contact can also control the flow of communication by signaling that it is time for a conversation to end.

2. Other Body Movements and Gestures

People can communicate to one another in the way they move their bodies. According to Hamilton; & Parker (1997), movements and gestures of other parts of the body are even more closely tied to culture than are facial expressions and eye contact.

Therefore, it is extremely misleading to isolate a single body movement (such as crossing the legs) and give it a precise meaning. Levine; & Mara (1982) mentioned that gestures refer to specific body movements that carry meaning. Hands can form shapes that convey many meanings: "Come here," "Go away," and "It's O.k." can be expressed nonverbally using only hands. They also added that all over Asia to use the index finger in the familiar Euro-American beckoning motion is reserved for calling dogs and prostitutes. Bovee; & Thill (2000) marked that by moving body, people can express both specific and general messages, some voluntary and some involuntary. Throughout East and Southeast Asia it is very rude to point at anyone with forefinger. Instead, use the whole hand - flat with the palm down in Japan, clenched with the thumb on top in most of the Asian countries. People may also jerk their chin in the direction they wish to indicate. The most subtle way is simply glance in the direction wish to indicate. Richard (1997: online) claimed that in France, Italy and Germany if people tap their forehead or temple with their finger while looking at someone they are saying nonverbally that he is stupid! In Spain or Great Britain that same gesture is self-referential and means that the user is so clever. In the Netherlands, watch carefully. If a Dutchman taps the right side of his head with the index finger vertical it translates that they think the other person is very smart. But if he taps his forehead with the finger horizontal he is saying that the other person is an idiot. To point something or someone with the toes was considered very rude in Thailand. Sitting cross-legged also shows the sign of disrespect. Richard (1997: online) also indicated that the bottom of the shoe or of the foot is also regarded as unclean in Thai cultures. Foreign visitors should avoid crossing their legs in such a way that the sole of their shoe is visible to anyone.

3. Clothing and Personal Appearance

Clothing and appearance also communicate nonverbal messages. As stated by Bovee; & Thill (2000), people respond to others on the basis of their physical appearance. When people think someone is capable and attractive, he feels good about himself, and that feeling affects his behavior, which in turn affects other people's perceptions about him. Hamilton; & Parker (1997) claimed that the appearance and clothing help others determine status, credibility, and persuasiveness. They also mentioned that clothing is very important to an organization's image and sales that many companies have hired image consultants to help select the most appropriate clothing or uniform for their employees. Rosenblatt; Cheatham & Watt (1977) stated that it is natural that a person just graduated from university would dress in a fashion appropriate for his age; however, it is important that the style should not be too different from accepted styles currently being worn in the business world. James (1999: online) mentioned that personal appearance is a major factor used to judge a person simply because the first impression of a person is based on appearance. One's physical appearance creates an image of the person in the same way other nonverbal messages do. To establish credibility, people should wear styles that fit the environment and feel comfortable.

4. Distance and Personal Space

Hall (1959) stated that the rules of informal level are unconsciously learned by imitation. Once the behaviors of the informal level are learned, they usually become

automatic. People expect others to act in similar way. When someone broke the rules, people become anxious, then extremely uncomfortable, and finally they may withdraw from the situation or react angrily. The informal distance rules for conversing in various situations differ from culture to culture, family to family, and person to person. The proper physical distance for conversations between strangers, friends, or intimates are nonverbal behaviors at the informal level. Blatner (2002: online) indicated that the distance which people feel comfortable approaching others or having others approach them. People from certain countries, such as parts of Latin America or the Middle East often feel comfortable standing closer to each other, while persons of Northern European and most Asians tend to prefer a relatively greater distance. When someone violates an individual's personal space requirements, that person becomes uncomfortable and will move to correct the distance as stated by Hamilton; & Parker (1997). According to Bovee; & Thill (2000) the distance people put between themselves and others also reflects feelings and attitudes, and it affects communication. Hill (2001) marked that distance also creates feelings. People who communicated at a greater distance as less friendly and understanding than those who positioned themselves closer. Rosenblatt; Cheatham & Watt (1977) mentioned that impersonal business or casual conversations can be carried on in social distance space. People are very much aware of the presence of one another, but they neither interfere with each other nor are they oppressively near. Richard (1997: online) claimed that every human being is surrounded by an invisible envelope of air called a 'space bubble' which varies in size according to (a) where in the world someone grew up and (b) the particular situation. No spatial problem exists as long as the people involved share similar-sized

comfort zones. The difficulties begin in cross-cultural situations when different-sized space bubbles collide. Figure 2 showed the approximate range of same-gender space-bubble sizes across cultures in a business situation.

Figure 2 Approximate range of same-gender space-bubble sizes

CLOSE: 20 to 35 cms (8 to 14 inches) The Arab World, The
Mediterranean Region, Latin Europe, Latin America

DISTANT: 40 to 60 cms (16 to 24 inches) Most Asians, Northern,
Central and Eastern Europeans, North Americans

5. Physical Environment

Physical environments reveal characteristics of the owner of the territory; they also affect how people communicate. Hill (2001) mentioned that power locations become apparent when we look at the amount and location of existing space given to various employees and groups. According to Hamilton; & Parker (1997) color also affects avoidance or approach behaviors and is a determining factor in whether an environment is judged as attractive or not. Room size can also alter communication as stated by Hamilton; & Parker (1997) large room tends to inhibit relaxed discussions, while a smaller room seems to encourage discussion and frank disagreement. Furniture arrangement also plays an important role in the way people communicate. Hill (2001) stated that if managers, think about arranging their subordinates' working areas to increase communication between people they want to interact and to separate those who don't need to talk to one another.

They can encourage communication easily. James (1999: online) indicated that when people are side by side, the communication flow is minimal. This indicates that people in different seating positions give and receive different amounts of communication. A person sitting at the head of a table probably receives more communication than those on the sides, since, from the head of the table, one can easily engage in face-to-face communication and the communication centralizes there. A person sitting in a high position is usually the leader.

6. Time

The way people use time provides a number of silent messages. According to William (1995: online) time is an indicator of status in that the longer persons wait for someone, the more powerful the person awaited is; and the longer they keep other people waiting, the more powerful they are. The amount of time persons spend with someone is also a measure of importance. Hill (2001) stated that the manager who never has time to talk over a problem with an employee or who postpones performance reviews because he or she doesn't have time is saying something about his or her regard to subordinates. Hamilton; & Parker (1997) indicated that whether it is acceptable to arrive late for an appointment often depends on whether anyone is meeting someone of equal rank, someone more important, or someone less important. Also, anyone who is consistently late for appointments or in completing work assignments may be deemed inconsiderate or undependable. Rosenblatt; Cheatham & Watt (1977) mentioned that in some cultures, time is of no importance.. American businessmen tend to move pretty much by the clock- a two

o'clock appointment usually means two o'clock.

IV. Related Research

Manusov and Trees (2002) conducted the research entitled "Are you kidding me? : The Role of Nonverbal Cues in the Verbal Accounting Process"

This research reported on an investigation of 78 interactions for the messages sent by nonverbal cues in account sequences. Account elicitations and evaluations were rated based on vocal and facial behaviors communicating five messages: (a) positive or negative affect, (b) certainty or uncertainty, (c) understanding or confusion, (d) agreement or disagreement, and (e) belief or disbelief. The researchers also coded the accounters' discourse that followed elicitations and evaluations to investigate the relationship between nonverbal messages and the account forms used by the teller. The results showed that, even when controlling for what a person said, the messages sent by nonverbal cues could all predict subsequent account forms, although not always in the way expected. These results help their argument that nonverbal cues may be an important part of moving through account sequences, both on their own and when combined with verbal utterances.

Gunawan (2001) conducted the research entitled "Non-Verbal Communication: The "Silent" Cross-Cultural Contact with Indonesia"

This paper explores the similarities and differences of non-verbal communication between Indonesians and non-Indonesian speakers. By doing comparisons, the learners learning Indonesian will avoid themselves from interpreting non-verbal communication that is culturally different from their own. Moreover, this paper provided the examples of non-verbal gestures which have the same and different meaning in the United States and Indonesia. The results showed that non-verbal communication differs from culture to culture. One gesture may be common in a certain country and have a clear interpretation; it may be meaningless in another culture or even have an opposite meaning. If someone does not understand the non-verbal communication from different cultures, it is possible that he / she can make a mistake of reading the other person incorrectly.

Monthienvichienchai, (online: 2003) conducted the research entitled "Thai Smiles with Different Meanings".

The paper investigates different types of Thai smiles Thai people use as a method of indirect communication. The types of Thai smiles were drawn from smiles described in Thai literary works from the Sukhothai period (1257 A.D.) to the present time. Subsequently, they were categorized into two groups of expressions of emotion: enjoyment and non-enjoyment smiles. Smiles in both categories were then again grouped into different types of smiles based on their meanings. The procedure yielded 113 types of Thai smiles out of which there are 38 types of enjoyment smiles and 75 types of non-enjoyment smiles. Smiling, a form of nonverbal communication across culture has various meanings in Thai

contexts. It often acts as an important nonverbal cue in Thai communication style and plays an important role in intercultural communication between Thai people and foreigners.

Conclusively, smiling, a form of nonverbal communication has various meanings in Thai contexts. In view of effective intercultural communication, it is vital for foreigners to bear in mind that Thai people use smiles as a vehicle of their communication style to communicate their emotions and also to get their messages across, rather than just to convey a vague sense of happiness.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach and analysis will be used in the study. Both primary and secondary data will be analyzed. The primary data come from in-depth interviews with Thai Staff who work in Martello Realty Co., Ltd.

Primary Data

Data Collection

1. Interview

The researcher interviewed 24 Thai Staff of Martello Realty Co., Ltd. to survey the serious nonverbal communication problems they faced while working with foreigners. Among 6 types of nonverbal communication mentioned in Chapter 2, the findings showed that facial expressions and eye contact, body movements and gestures, and distance and personal space were the serious nonverbal communication barriers.

There are many kinds of facial expressions such as frowning, confused, sad, barely tolerant, and anxious including facial expression displaying no emotion. It was found that facial expression displaying no emotion was a kind of facial expression that could create the most negative attitudes. For other body

movements and gestures, there are many kinds of them for example, folding arm, crossing leg, pointing, waving, putting legs on the furniture, and scratching head. It was found that pointing with index finger and putting leg on the table or chairs were the kinds of movement and gestures that generate most negative attitudes.

2. Questionnaire

Questionnaires were distributed to 24 Thai Staff working in Martello Realty Co., Ltd. The questionnaires were divided into two parts as follows:

- **Part 1: General Background**

The objective of this part is to collect personal data of the respondents, which consists of 4 questions: age, educational level, period of working, and working position, whether they would affect to their negative attitudes to foreigners' Nonverbal Communication.

- **Part 2: Nonverbal Communication**

This part consists of 8 questions. The objective of this part is to find out nonverbal communication that creates the most negative attitudes for Thai staff of Martello Realty Co., Ltd. while working with foreigners.

The questionnaire used for this research is illustrated in Appendix A.

Population

Populations involved 24 employees consisting of 21 females and 3 males. Thai staff are the focus group of this study. The population selected were Thai staff working in Martello Realty Co., Ltd.

Secondary Data

Secondary Data were gathered from relevant textbooks, journals, articles, previous research and the Internet. The theories concern types of nonverbal communication most applicable in business, the importance of nonverbal communication and theories about cross cultural communication also included.

Analysis and Discussion

The researcher used secondary data from Chapter 2 as tools to analyze and summarize the primary data. The answers to the questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed by using percentage to identify the feeling of Thai staff toward the foreigner's nonverbal communication. Discussion and suggestion were given at the last stage.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study in which the summaries and interpretation of the data gathered will be discussed in detail.

The findings were divided into two parts: 1) personal data and 2) nonverbal communication. Moreover, the data from the in depth interview and questionnaires were analyzed according to the objectives of the study described in Chapter One.

The summaries and interpretations were presented and discussed according to the information gathered from the questionnaires.

Part I: Personal Data

The personal data of the employees who work in Martello Realty Co., Ltd. namely age, educational level, length of working and positions were summarized as shown in Table 1-4 respectively.

TABLE 1 AGE OF EMPLOYEES

Categories	Number of employees (24)	Percentage (%)
• 20-25	7	29.17
• 26-30	7	29.17
• 30-35	6	25.00
• more than 35	4	16.67
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>100.00</u>

From table 1, the data showed that 29.17% (N=7) of the employees were 20-30 years old and 26-30 years old; 25% (N=6) of the employees were 30-35 years old while 16.67% (N=4) were more than 35 years old.

TABLE 2 EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF EMPLOYEES

Categories	Number of employees (24)	Percentage (%)
• Below Bachelor Degree	3	12.50
• Bachelor Degree or equivalent	15	62.50
• Master Degree	6	25.00
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>100.00</u>

For educational level as shown in Table 2, 62.50% (N=15) of the employees had a Bachelor's degree; 25% (N=6) had a Master's degree. Only 12.50% (N=3) had a lower degree than a Bachelor's degree.

TABLE 3 LENGTH OF WORKING

Categories	Number of employees (24)	Percentage (%)
• 1-2 years	11	45.83
• 2-5 years	9	37.50
• more than 5 years	4	16.67
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>100.00</u>

As presented in Table 3, indicated that 45.83% (N=11) of the employees have been working in the company for 1-2 years; 37.50% (N=9) of the employees have been working in the company for 2-5 years. Another 16.67% (N=4) of them have been working in the company for more than 5 years.

TABLE 4 POSITIONS OF EMPLOYEES

Categories	Number of employees (24)	Percentage (%)
• Manager	7	29.17
• Supervisor	9	37.50
• Staff	6	25.00
• Others (Maids)	2	8.33
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>100.00</u>

The data from Table 4 demonstrated that 37.50% (N=9) of the employees were in Supervisor position; 29.17% (N=7) of them were in Manager Position while 25% (N=6) of the employees were in staff position. Only 8.33% (N=2) of them were in other positions.

From the answers in Part II, they proved that age, educational level, length of working and working positions of employees were not the factors that create or reduce negative attitudes for Thai staff toward foreigners' nonverbal communication.

Part II: Nonverbal Communication

1. The most serious of Nonverbal Barriers

62.50% (N=15) indicated that Facial Expression and Eye Contact was the most serious of Nonverbal Communication. Followed by 25% (N=6) of the employees

demonstrated that Other Body Movement and Gestures were the most serious of Nonverbal Communication. 12.50% (N=3) of the employees decided that Distance and Personal Space were the most serious of Nonverbal Communication.

From the interview, Facial Expression and Eye Contact came at the first rank at 62.50% because it was difficult to hide feelings expressed on the face unlike body movement and gestures and Distance and Personal Space. In addition, some of the Thai Staff lack confidence in communicating with foreigners, so they dare not make direct eye contact with foreigners. They also felt uncomfortable when being stared at especially from people in a higher position. Distance and Personal Space came in the last rank at 12.50% because Thai Staff are influenced by the Internet, news, and movies from other cultures. Moreover, there are many foreign tourists visiting Thailand. Therefore, distance is not a barrier when communicating with foreigners.

This section was divided into three subcategories: 1. Facial Expression and Eye Contact, 2. Body Movement and Gestures; and 3. Personal Distance and Space.

1. Facial Expression and Eye Contact

Table 5 below shows the response of Thai staff when asking a foreigner's opinion, their facial expression displaying no emotion.

TABLE 5 FEELINGS OF THAI STAFF WHEN FOREIGNERS HAD FACIAL EXPRESSION
DISPLAYING NO EMOTION

	Number of employees (24)	Percentage (%)
• Comfortable	0	0
• All right	1	4.17
• Uncomfortable	23	95.83
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>100.00</u>

From table 5, 95.83% (N=23) of the employees felt uncomfortable when foreigners had no facial expression. Only 4.17% (N=1) felt all right. None of them felt comfortable.

Most of employees thought that it was quite impolite not to express any feelings when someone asked for an opinion. It was difficult to know the other party's thoughts. Thai staff may interpret this action as being uninterested or inattentive, and also didn't want to participate in the conversation.

1.1 91.67% (N=22) of the employees stated that the foreigners made direct eye contact when they had a conversation.

1.2 Table 6 below showed the feelings of Thai staff when foreigners made direct eye contact

TABLE 6 FEELINGS OF THAI STAFF WHEN FOREIGNERS MADE DIRECT EYE
CONTACT

	Number of employees (24)	Percentage (%)
• Comfortable	1	4.17
• All right	2	8.33
• Uncomfortable	21	87.50
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>100.00</u>

From Table 6, 87.5% (N=21) of the employees stated that when foreigners made direct eye contact, they felt uncomfortable while 8.33% (N=2) of the employees demonstrated that they felt all right. Only 4.17% (N=1) of them felt comfortable.

Normally, foreigners especially Europeans always make direct eye contact when they have a conversation. There are many reasons for making direct eye contact, for example, people make direct eye contact to show interest and attentiveness to the other party. However, in Thai culture, Thais believe that to look directly in the person's eye while speaking is considered disrespectful especially with those more senior or in higher position. Therefore, they may feel uncomfortable when foreigners make direct eye contact to them. For foreigners, not to look at a person they are speaking to is shown that he/she might not tell the truth.

2. Other Body Movement and Gestures

2.1 Pointing with the index finger

TABLE 7 FEELINGS OF THAI STAFF WHEN FOREIGNERS USING THEIR INDEX FINGER TO POINT AT THAI STAFF

	Number of employees (24)	Percentage (%)
• Comfortable	0	0
• All right	4	16.67
• Uncomfortable	20	83.33
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>100.00</u>

From Table 7, 83.33% (N=20) of the employees demonstrated that when foreigners pointed at them with the index finger, they felt uncomfortable. Only 16.67% (N=4) of them stated that they felt all right, if the foreigners pointed at them.

In the employees' opinion, none of them felt comfortable with this action because it is considered very rude to point at someone with the index finger. For those who felt all right, it could be because they had learned that pointing fingers in another culture is not very rude. Therefore, they could adapt themselves according to this culture.

2.2 Feet on the table

TABLE 8 FEELINGS OF THAI STAFF WHEN FOREIGNERS PUT THEIR FEET ON THE TABLE WHILE TALKING WITH THAI STAFF

	Number of employees (24)	Percentage (%)
• Comfortable	1	4.17
• All right	3	12.50
• Uncomfortable	20	83.33
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>100.00</u>

From Table 8, 83.33% (N=20) of the employees felt uncomfortable when foreigners put their feet on the table while 12.5% (N=3) of the employees mentioned that when foreigners put their feet on the table, they would feel all right. Only 4.17% (N=1) of them indicated that they felt comfortable.

From the interview, most of the Thai Staff felt uncomfortable when foreigners put their feet on the table. In Thai culture, feet are considered as a lower part of the body and are regarded as unclean. On the other hand, if a person felt comfortable, he/she may think that the foreigners did that just for relaxation. They did not intend to be rude. For those who felt all right, they could accept it because they have accepted different cultures that putting

feet up on the table is acceptable.

3. Distance and Personal Space

3.1 The Distance

TABLE 9 THE DISTANCE WHEN THE FOREIGNERS CAME CLOSE TO DISCUSS
SOMETHING

	Number of employees (24)	Percentage (%)
• Less than 20 cm.	18	75.00
• 20-35 cm.	4	16.67
• 40-60 cm.	2	8.33
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>100.00</u>

From Table 9, 75% (N=18) of the employees showed that foreigners came close to them to discuss something at less than 20 cm. while 16.67% (N=4) of the employees stated that foreigners came close at 20-35 cm. Another 8.33% (N=2) of the employees demonstrated that foreigners came close at 40-60 cm. to discuss something.

Some of the employees thought that foreigners who came close at less than 20 cm. to discuss with them did this because they got familiar with that particular Staff member

or maybe because the topic was quite confidential.

3.2 The Feelings of Thai staff when the foreigners came close at less than 20 cm. in distance

TABLE 10 FEELINGS OF THAI STAFF WHEN FOREIGNERS CAME CLOSE AT LESS THAN 20 CM.

	Number of employees (24)	Percentage (%)
• Comfortable	1	4.17
• All right	4	16.67
• Uncomfortable	19	79.17
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>100.00</u>

From table above, 79.17 % (N=19) of the employees felt uncomfortable if foreigners came close to them at less than 20 cm. while 16.67% (N=4) of the employees felt all right if the foreigners came close to them at less than 20 cm. Only 4.17% (N=1) of them felt comfortable with foreigners that came close to them at less than 20 cm.

In the employees' point of view, mostly female felt uncomfortable if foreigners came close to them at less than 20 cm; this was because they felt that their space was invaded.

20 cm. was too close especially when foreigners were of the opposite sex of the Thai Staff member. On the other hand, those who felt all right and comfortable may believe that the foreigners treated them as a friend.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a conclusion of the study based on the research questions and discusses the findings whether they conform to or contrast with the nonverbal communication theories or related previous research mentioned in Chapter 2. Finally, suggestions of how to nonverbally communicate in international company are presented.

Conclusion

This research explored types of nonverbal communication between Thai and foreign staff that create negative attitudes for Thai staff working in Martello Realty Co., Ltd. There are 3 types of nonverbal communication in this study. The research questions of this study are 1) What kinds of nonverbal communication that create negative attitudes for Thai staff of Martello Realty Co., Ltd. while working with foreigners? 2) What is the most serious nonverbal communication that creates negative attitudes for Thai staff of Martello Realty Co., Ltd. while working with foreigners?

The findings are illustrated below.

Research Question 1: What kinds of nonverbal communication that creates negative attitudes for Thai staff of Martello Realty Co., Ltd. while working with foreigners?

The findings explained 3 types of nonverbal communication that created negative attitudes for Thai Staff which are facial expression and eye contact, other body movement and gestures, and personal distance and space.

1. Facial Expression and eye contact

The question number 2 - 4 in Part II provided information on facial expression and eye contact. Question 2 concluded that facial expression was one of the three types of nonverbal communication that generate negative attitudes. The findings showed 95.83% of Thai Staff felt uncomfortable when they saw no facial expression from foreigners. Only 4.17% of Thai Staff answered that he/she felt all right when saw no facial expression of foreigners. None of them felt comfortable with this action.

Question number 3 and 4 were concerning with eye contact. Most of the Thai Staff felt uncomfortable when foreigners looked directly in their eyes while speaking at 87.5%. Followed by 8.33% of Thai Staff felt all right when foreigners made direct eye contact. Only 4.17% felt comfortable when foreigners made direct eye contact.

2. Other Body Movements and Gestures

Question number 5 and 6 illustrated about body movement and gesture. From question number 5, 83.33% of Thai Staff felt uncomfortable when foreigners

using their index finger to point at them. 16.67% of the Thai Staff felt all right.

None of them feel comfortable when they were point at.

Question number 6, most of Thai Staff at 83.33% felt uncomfortable when foreigners put their feet on the table. 12.5% of the Thai Staff felt all right with this action. Only 4.17% of them felt comfortable.

3. Personal Space and Distance

Questions number 7 and 8 described personal space and distance. From Question number 7 75% of the Thai Staff mentioned that foreigners always came close less than 20 cm. when they would like to discuss something. 16.67% of Thai Staff stated that foreigners came close around 20-35 cm. Only 8.33% of Thai Staff indicated that foreigners came close around 40-60 cm.

From question number 7, most of the foreigners came close less than 20 cm. Therefore Question number 8 was involved with question number 7; it explained the feeling of Thai Staff when foreigners came close less than 20 cm. Most of the Thai Staff felt uncomfortable as stated in the findings at 79.17%. Followed by 16.67% felt all right and only 4.17% felt comfortable.

Research Question 2: What is the most serious nonverbal communication that creates negative attitudes for Thai Staff of Martello Realty Co., Ltd. while working with foreigners?

From question number 1 in part II, the most serious nonverbal communication that creates negative attitudes for Thai Staff was Facial Expression and Eye Contact as stated in the findings at 62.50%. 25% of the Thai Staff indicated that Other Body Movement and Gestures was the most serious nonverbal communication. 12.50% of them mentioned that Personal Space and Distance was the most serious nonverbal communication.

The findings illustrated that age, educational levels, working period, and positions of employees were not affecting to create the negative attitudes for Thai Staff toward foreigner's nonverbal communication.

Discussion

From the findings of this study, the researcher divided the discussion into three main topics; 1) Facial Expression and Eye Contact, 2) Other Body Movement and Gestures and 3) Personal Space and Distance

1. Facial Expression and Eye Contact

The findings showed that facial expression and eye contact were the most serious nonverbal communication, compiled with Danziger's statement (1976) who described that face and eyes are probably the most expressive parts of the body and also complied with Rodgers' statement (1995) who claimed that a face is the primary site for expressing emotions; it reveals both the type and the intensity of the feelings.

The findings on eye contact compiled with Kinsley's statement (2000: online) who mentioned that in most of Asia, it is rude to look directly to whom you talk to.

2. Other Body Movements and Gestures

The findings on other body movements and gestures conformed with Bovee & Thill's (2000) statement who noted that throughout East and Southeast Asia it is very rude to point at anyone with forefinger. Instead, use the whole hand - flat with the palm down in Japan, clenched with the thumb on top in most of the Asian countries. It also compiled with Rugsaken's statement (online) indicating that in Thailand, Japan, China, Malaysia, France and etc., do not put the feet up on the desk or any other pieces of furniture.

3. Personal Space and Distance

For personal space and distance, the findings conformed with Blatner's statement (2002: online) said that people from certain countries, such as parts of Latin America or the Middle East often feel comfortable standing closer to each other, while persons of Northern European and most Asians tend to prefer a relatively greater distance. It also complied with Hamilton; & Parker's statement (1997) mentioning that when someone violates an individual's

personal space requirements, that person becomes uncomfortable and will move to correct the distance.

Suggestions

From the findings, the company may never realize about the impact of negative attitudes of Thai Staff toward their work. It would appear in the form of delayed or abandoned projects, misunderstood communications, frustrated employees and a loss of company reputation. Therefore, before foreigners come to work in other countries, they should learn about cultures of the target country that they have to visit and how to work and approach the people there in various situations appropriately. The company should provide communication courses concentrating on nonverbal communication and cross-cultural communication for both Thai and foreign staff. Thai Staff can learn about the other culture, not to be upset of the foreigners' actions or behaviors that are different from Thai Culture. On the other hand, foreigners will also learn about Thai Culture and about what they should do and should not do while working in Thailand. As a result, both Thai and foreigners can work together smoothly and cooperatively to get the effective outcome for the company.

Limitations of the Study

This study covers the case study of only Martello Realty Co., Ltd. The nonverbal communication that creates negative attitudes may differ from the other companies. Additionally, there are many factors that create barriers in communication in the work place.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the findings, the following areas for further research are suggested.

1. From the study, Thai Staff had negative attitudes toward the foreigner's nonverbal communication which can lead to communication barrier. Further research should focus on how to overcome and how to prevent the nonverbal communication problems that generate negative attitudes.
2. This study was only limited to the case study of Martello Realty Co., Ltd. Therefore, another study should explore nonverbal communication problems among Thai staff and foreigners in other companies.
3. There should be a further study on Thai nonverbal communication that creates negative attitudes to foreigners to check whether the foreigners would have the problems with Thai nonverbal communication or not because this study only focused on nonverbal communication of foreigners.
4. This study mainly focused on only three types of nonverbal communication, therefore there should be a further research on the other types of nonverbal communication in terms of how to address people, gift giving practice, and touching.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is prepared by Miss Angkana Damrongsinsakul, a graduate student of the Business English for International Communication Program, Department of Western Language, Faculty of Humanities, Srinakarinwirot University, who is now working on a Master's Project entitled "The study of nonverbal communication between Thai and foreign staff that create negative attitudes in the workplace". The purpose of this questionnaire is to discover the most serious nonverbal communication that create negative attitudes for Thai Staff working with foreigners.

Your response to the questions will be very useful for the study. Many thanks for your kind cooperation.

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Part I: General Background

Instruction: Please read and write your answer and / or put a check (x) in the box provided according to your opinions.

1. Personal Data

1.1 Age

1.2 Position

1.3 What is your highest education level?

- ☐ Below a Bachelor Degree
- ☐ Bachelor Degree or any equivalent Degree
- ☐ Master Degree

1.4 How long have you been working in this company?

- ☐ 1 - 2 years
- ☐ 2 - 5 years
- ☐ more than 5 years

Part II: Nonverbal Communication

1. Which one do you think is the most serious? (Choose only one)

- ☐ Facial Expression and Eye Contact
- ☐ Other Body Movement and Gestures
- ☐ Distance and Personal Space

2. When you ask the foreigners' opinion and they had facial expressions displaying no emotion, how do you feel?

- ☐ Comfortable
- ☐ All right
- ☐ Uncomfortable

3. When you have a conversation with foreigners, do the foreigners make direct eye contact or indirect eye contact?

- ☐ Direct
- ☐ Indirect

4. From the previous question, how do you feel?

- ☐ Comfortable
- ☐ All right
- ☐ Uncomfortable

5. If the foreigners use their index finger to point at you while talking to you, how do you feel?

- ☐ Comfortable
- ☐ All right
- ☐ Uncomfortable

6. If the foreigners put their leg on the table while talking to you, how do you feel?

- ☐ Disrespectful
- ☐ Friendly
- ☐ Relaxed
- ☐ Others

7. Please identify the distance when the foreigners comes close to you to discuss something

- ☐ less than 20 cm.
- ☐ 20 - 35 cm.
- ☐ 40 - 60 cm.

8. From the question above, how do you feel?

- ☐ Comfortable
- ☐ All right
- ☐ Uncomfortable

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VITAE

VITAE

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