

EFFECTIVE AND APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN GLOBAL ORGANIZATION

by

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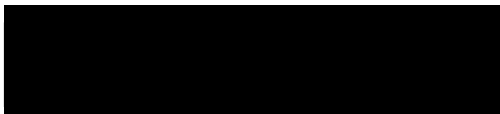
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28 January 2015

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

ASCII	American Standard Code for Information Interchange
AUM	Anxiety and Uncertainty Management
CAT	Communication Accommodation Theory
CEM	Contract Electronics Manufacturer
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
DMIS	Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity
DOM	Diversity Officer Magazine
DTUI	Diversity Training University International
EI	Emotional Intelligence
E-Mail	Electronic Mail
E-Shock	Electronic Shock
EVT	Expectancy Violations Theory
FAE	Fundamental Attribution Error
FTA	Face Threatening Act
GLOBE	Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness
MBA	Master of Business Administration

MDCC	Multiple Dimensions of Cultural Competence
MUHREC	Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee
NCIHE	National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer
R&D	Research and Development
SIT	Social Interdependence Theory
SIT	Social Interdependence Theory
TCC	Trust-Confidence-Cooperation
TKI	Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Classroom Problem Solving. A term coined by the researcher in this study, to describe an apolitical way of solving problem in situations of conflict, akin to the brainstorming activities in a classroom setting. The nature of such problem solving is to depersonalize conflict, and is part of the process of showing respect by not putting a personal face or accountability on the problem. Instead the focus is on gathering different opinions and finding among these the best solution to the problem faced in a cooperative and respectful manner. Disagreements are accepted as alternative ways of doing things rather than personal attacks.

Cross-cultural. Cross-cultural in this study is relating to the interaction between two or more cultures. This study does not make any distinction between ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘intercultural’. In order to appreciate the process of interaction better, cross-cultural understanding also involves some fundamentals of comparison between different cultures.

Distrust. This study defines distrust as lack of trust. This study does not make any distinction between distrust and mistrust.

Manager. This study not only sees manager as a person holding a managerial position, but also sees him/her as a leader too. This study treats the roles of manager and leaders similarly, and does not seek to emphasize the differences between manager and leaders. Even though there are differences between management and leadership (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Bryman, 1986; Kotter, 1990; Rost, 1991; Zaleznik, 1977), the two constructs overlap: when managers are influencing a group to meet its goals, they are involved in leadership; and when leaders are doing planning, organizing, staffing and controlling, they are involved in management (Northouse, 2010).

Nationality. This study defines nationality as the status of belonging to a particular nation by birth, and the representation of the general culture of that nation. This study does not make any distinction between culture and nationality, “as long as culture and nationality of a group are clearly defined by geographical borders” (Reisinger, 2009, p. 109). Only the locally born participants were selected in this study to represent the culture of the nation that they are coming from.

Real Experience Learning. A term coined by the researcher of this study, to describe a true and transformative learning experience that requires a person to be responsible for his/her own learning (Stephenson, 1992, 1998, 2012), and to adopt interpersonal reflection instead of intrapersonal reflection, and double loop learning instead of single loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1978; Brockbank & McGill, 2012; Brockbank, McGill & Beech, 2002).

ABSTRACT

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, challenges faced and perceived confidence of leaders positioned in a culturally diverse organization in managing communication and conflict with other diverse cultural groups.

Methodology. Qualitative methodology with qualitative description was used in this study. A total of 15 senior manager participants working for the same organization were being interviewed using critical incident technique. These participants were holding managerial positions and came from 9 countries of America, China, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Switzerland, Taiwan, and Thailand. Qualitative content analysis was used for data analysis.

Findings. The findings showed that building trust through personal relationships and showing respect were the two major issues when participants were managing communication and conflict with other culturally diverse groups. A personal relationship could facilitate effective and appropriate communication management with more accurate interpretation of others' behaviors, and higher tolerance towards others' occasional misbehaviors. In the absence of personal relationship, participants were more vulnerable to miscommunication and conflict escalation was most likely to happen under such distrusting circumstances. Participants often felt disrespected in situations of conflict when they perceived others had doubt in their capabilities to perform at the workplace. Showing respect had a depersonalizing effect on conflict. It was needed to sustain the process of cooperation and problem solving. The findings also showed that building trust and showing respect were perceived to be the main challenges of managing communication and conflict with other culturally diverse groups respectively. Other communication-related and conflict-related challenges were possible manifestation of mistrust and disrespect, and might be similarly

dealt with successfully when there were more trust and respect. The perception of confidence in managing communication and conflict with other culturally diverse groups was about having trust at work and getting respect at work. Trust was perceived as confidence that others would have good intentions to cooperate together for mutual beneficial outcomes; respect was perceived as being capable to apply confidently the acquired competence learned from working experiences. Confidence with respect and trust might further thrive in a supportive working environment that was made up of trust, respect, cooperation and active learning.

Research limitations. The nature of the organization under study and the selection of 15 participants limit the generalizability of the study to other organizations of different nationalities, job functions and/or other organizations operating in different markets.

Practical implications. This study provides a very informative and educational guide for anyone working for a global organization who aspires to better manage communication and conflict with their culturally diverse teams.

Value. This study provides new insights to effective and appropriate communication and conflict management in culturally diverse organization, by exploring common fundamentals of trust and respect and holding top management accountable for a more supportive company culture, as most current strategies and studies are often based on cultural differences, and they focuses mainly on middle/lower management.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the ever-flattening of the world, the challenge to stay competitive in this global economy drives many organizations to operate in different countries. Leaders positioned in such global organizations are now more likely than ever to communicate with culturally diverse teams that have different beliefs and work practices. However, such communication is often characterized by misunderstandings, misinterpretations and miscommunications leading to more conflict escalation. The growing need for effective and appropriate communication and conflict management are more evident for organizations seeking to realize the full potential of a culturally diverse workplace. This study will explore the voice and silence of leaders in managing communication and conflict among the diverse cultural teams. The Introduction Chapter will present the background of the study, the need for the study, the purpose and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

A fundamental shift is occurring in the world economy. We are moving away from a world in which national economies were relatively self-contained entities, isolated from each other by barriers to cross-border trade and investment; by distance, time zones, and language; and by national differences in government regulation, culture, and business systems. And we are moving toward a world in which barriers to cross-border trade and investment are tumbling; perceived distance is shrinking due to advances in transportation and telecommunications technology; material culture is starting to look similar the world over; and national economies are merging into an interdependent global economic system. The process by which this is occurring is commonly referred to as globalization (Hill, 2005, p. 4).

Globalization is real and inevitable when Friedman (2007) describes the world as ‘flat’. The world economy is more connected, integrated and interdependent. Such “world-wide connectedness” (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 54) implies that “events and developments in far-away distant places can have an impact on local happenings and events, just as forces and structures of local places can influence and enable events with rather significance global effects” (Shome & Hegde, 2002, p. 174). There are two aspects of globalization: the globalization of markets, where historically distinct and separate national markets are merging into one huge global marketplace; and the globalization of production, where goods and services from locations around the globe are sourced to take advantage of national differences in the cost and quality of factors of production (Hill, 2005). In response, many organizations begin to venture overseas and set up regional offices and/or factories to take advantage of the globalization. The organization under study is a Swiss company who positioned itself in the markets of Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM). A factory was established in Germany during the 1950s due to cheaper German labor cost at that time. Since then, regional offices were set up in Asia, Europe, North America and South America. Despite the present rising cost of manufacturing in Germany, the Germans are able to innovate with less labor intensive operations by adopting fully automated systems in the production lines to lower the manufacturing cost. However, there are doubts and dispute among the top-management of regional offices about whether the Germans are truthful in their arguments since most other competitors have already relocated their factories to cheaper locales in Asia. The current structure of the organization under study is similar to the ‘international division’ structure described by Hill (2005), where he states that 60 percent of most firms that have expanded internationally have initially adopted this structure. Nevertheless, such structural design is not without problems:

One problem with the structure is that the heads of foreign subsidiaries are not given as much voice in the organization as the heads of domestic functions ... or divisions ... Another problem is the implied lack of coordination between domestic operations and foreign operations, which are isolated from each other in separate parts of the structural hierarchy (Hill, 2005, p. 448).

The description of the problems above signifies the importance of communication in this global age, as most organizations “are at the intersection of diverse communicative, cultural, and social practices” (Stohl, 2001, p. 325) where communication is “the substance of global organizing” (Stohl, 2001, p. 335), and a “complex condition, one in which patterns of human interaction, interconnectedness and awareness are reconstituting the world as a single social space” (McGrew, 1992, p. 65). This implies that managers and employees must be able to work effectively with more and more people with differing cultures, customs, values, beliefs, and practices (Schmidt et al., 2007).

Furthermore, globalization together with rapid development of information technology has made most organizations to become more ‘virtual’, where time and distance are collapsed causing the line between organizational and national boundaries to be blurred, and anyone can access anyone and anything through information technology (Schmidt et al., 2007; Zakaria & Yusof, 2005). Ahuja and Carley (1999, p. 743) define a virtual organization as “a geographically distributed organization whose members are bound by a long-term common interest or goal, and who communicate and coordinate their work through information technology”. This denotes limited direct face-to-face communication (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1998; Kristof et al., 1995) where the majority of the communication is mediated by technology (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000; Townsend et al., 1996). The organization under study has been operating virtually most of the times while expanding its global presence. The

office in America may need to work with the Research and Development (R&D) team located in Germany for a new design with an OEM customer, and coordinate with the China office for local service and support when the OEM customer has outsourced the production of their product to a Contract Electronics Manufacturer (CEM) located in China. Such virtual operation in the midst of language and cultural diversity faces complexity in communicating over time, distance and space (Zakaria & Yusof, 2005). Virtual communication may encounter problems where information is prohibited from reaching its destination, errors where original meaning is not conveyed as intended, and misunderstandings (Orasanu, Fisher & Davision, 1997). In addition, the common goal mentioned earlier in Ahuja and Carley's (1999) definition of a virtual organization, is necessary to hold all the virtual members together. However, such a situation may be hard to sustain in the presence of inter-office competition. Nonetheless, a virtual organization may also need to address issues of understanding diverse cultural values (both organizational and national), building trust, learning, leadership and training (Zakaria & Yusof, 2005).

Within a global organization, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) empowers staff members to interact electronically with one another (Cecez-Kecmanovic & Busuttil, 2000), with electronic mail (e-mail) being one of the most familiar and widely used forms of CMC in the office (Baruch, 2005; Berghel, 1997; Derks & Bakker, 2010; Friedman & Currall, 2003; Gruz, 2011; Hughes & Wearing, 2007). Working virtually through CMC may have the advantage of overcoming distance and speed, but there is a lack of expressive (nonverbal) behavioral cues and contextual cues (Sproull & Kiesler, 1986). Bordia (1997, p. 108) observes that a "preoccupation with receiving, composing, and sending messages leads to a lack of awareness of social context" and thus often depersonalizes the communication. Such absence of proximity denies any opportunity for informal conversations that can help to expand contacts, gather support, and build rapport and smooth future communication (Hage,

1974; March & Savon, 1984; Sarbaugh-Thompson & Feldman, 1998; Schmidt et al., 2007).

On the other hand, the nature of being behind the computer screen is vulnerable to inappropriate behavior of “flaming, excessive self-disclosure, manipulation of other group members through violation of group behavioral norms” (Haythornthwaite, Wellman & Garton, 1998, p. 210). Nevertheless, CMC requires more time and effort than face-to-face communication to exchange social information and to uncover the situated and personalized knowledge of others (Sole & Edmondson, 2002). The problems of CMC especially in culturally diverse settings are very much influenced by differences in values and norms. People of different backgrounds in CMC know very well how to communicate with those of similar cultural background because of the characteristics of language which facilitate the conveyance of ideas and they are vaguely aware of their dependence on these linguistic traits which make their job easier (Lewis, 1999; Schmidt et al., 2007). Therefore, when the primary communication between members is mediated by either voice or computer and groups are multicultural, they are unable to make assumptions that would be typical within homogenous groups on the basis of similar culture and nonverbal cues (Barczak & McDonough, 2003; Maznevski & DeStefano, 2000; Schmidt et al., 2007).

1.2 Need for the Study

... the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts ... is usually a primary goal of diversity initiatives in organizations, where it is assumed to contribute to effective ... management of a diverse workforce ... (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 149).

The growing numbers of globalizations of the economy and global organizations have made cross-cultural business communication a current area of important concern, because the ability to navigate treacherous waters of cross-cultural conflict and the level of skills and tact

necessary to coax high quality decisions out of culturally diverse teams requires effective communication (Schmidt et al., 2007; Stohl, 2001). Varner (2002, p. ix) states that “research over the past few years has increasingly shown that the best theories and models in the areas of management, marketing, finance, and production can be transformed into successful operations only through effective business communication”. Considering the importance of communication, that is no lack of extensive research across a variety of academic disciplines on the subject of communication within a global organization. Given all the knowledge that is now available on the subject of communication, it is rather puzzling that poor communication in global organizations remains something that most employees continue to complain about (Forster, 2005), and leaders continue to face ‘stumbling blocks’ (Barna, 1994) or ‘barriers’ (Schmidt et al., 2007) or ‘noise’ (Hoopes, 1981) to effective and appropriate communication. Yet, when communication is less effective and less appropriate, it is often characterized by misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and miscommunications, leading further to conflict escalation (Stephan & Stephan, 2002).

Overwhelmingly, there is a lack of management expertise in the resolution of conflict ... too many businesses are run on the basis of “I’m the boss and you will do what I tell you”. There can be great benefit to education and training for the management to be able to mediate conflict whatever be that conflict – between workers, or between workers and management (Gramberg, 2006, p. 196).

Leaders must acquire basic conflict management skills in order to do their job well, but very often most of them lack these abilities, causing all types of conflict to grow and aggravate within the organization (Porter-O’Grady & Malloch, 2003). The possession of a polished conflict management skill is even more critical now due to the increasingly culturally diversified nature of the workplace (Ayub & Jehn, 2011; Gudykunst, 2004; Porter-O’Grady

& Malloch, 2003). Although some people deal with problems by disregarding them, most people spend a great deal of time ruminating over conflicts (Weinstein, 2001). Even so, most people still spent a sizeable amount of time addressing issues that have some forms of conflict at their base, not just thinking about it (OPP, 2008; Porter-O'Grady & Malloch, 2003; Tripp & Bies, 2009; XpertHR, 2011). However, despite the time spent addressing conflict related issues at the workplace, it seems apparent there is still a lack of real education on conflict management, in the sense that conflict is often perceived negatively and avoided (Boone & Kurtz, 2009; Johnston, 2000), or being "overlooked or sanitized" (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2004, p. 791). It is important for leaders not to deny conflict but to recognize, acknowledge and accept conflict, to experience the "right kind of conflict" and to see conflict as a learning experience of problem solving (Boone & Kurtz, 2009, p. 339).

It is not the presence of conflict that causes chaos and disaster, but the harmful and ineffective way it is managed. It is the lack of skills in managing conflict that leads to problems. When conflicts are skillfully managed, they are of value (Johnson, 1978, p. 247).

Nonetheless, most of the current literature on communication and conflict management in culturally diverse settings have their foundations predominately based on cultural difference in communication context (Hall, 1983, 1989) and/or values (Hofstede, 1980, 1983), and individualism-collectivism is often used to explain such cultural differences (Fiske, 1991; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Hui, 1988; Hui & Triandis 1986; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Smith et al., 1998; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Triandis, 1988, 1994, 1995). The approaches from these literatures are generally culture-specific, with the intention of generalizing the person concerned into an individualistic or a collectivistic mode, where separate recommendation is

later made for each situation involving an individualistic and a collectivistic respectively. For instance, individualists being direct in communication, tend to engage in low context, direct styles (from verbally explicit to verbally upfront) of conflict management; collectivists being indirect in communication, tend to engage in high context, indirect styles (from verbally understated to verbally effusive) of conflict management (Gudykunst, 2004; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey, 2004). However, most of the studies (Andreason, 2003; Boonsathorn, 2007; Chen, Tjosvold, & Fang, 2005; Selmer, 2005) were done in the context of sojourners' direct face-to-face experiences, which usually involved not more than two cultural groups (inclusive of the culture represented by the sojourners), describing situations between foreign managers (sojourners) and the local employees. Hence it might be easier for the managers to apply one specific communication strategy and/or conflict handling style onto the local culture group. However, little research was done in the context of virtual diverse teams comprising more than two cultural groups, which was a more realistic depiction of a typical global organization operating in various different countries. Even though these studies focus on cultural differences, they are 'intra' in nature rather than being 'inter' in nature:

What happens, for instance, when people in a high PD [Power Distance] culture interact with people from a low PD culture? Thus far, most research ... has emphasized cross-cultural differences in intra-cultural behavior rather than the interactions between people across different cultural dimensions (Andersen et al., 2002, p. 101).

Furthermore, the need to determine if the person concerned is more of an individualistic or a collectivistic, together with the various options of 3 (Follett, 1925), 5 (Blake & Mouton 1970; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974), and 8 (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000)

conflict handling styles, is not pragmatic in reality that often leaves anyone who seeks to better themselves in effective and appropriate communication and conflict management, with “nothing more than thousands of useful but baffling anecdotes” (Andersen et al., 2002, p. 90).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of managers working in a global organization, their perception on the challenges faced and confidence, in handling issues of communication and conflict with other diverse cultural groups. This interpretive study using qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010), seeks to provide an educational and practical framework for managers working in a global organization to improve their communication and conflict management skills in a more effective and appropriate manner. The researcher of this study is hopeful that such a framework can encourage more reflections among the managers so that they can be transformed from today’s inspired learner to tomorrow’s better global leader in managing communication and conflict within the organization.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways to the research on effective and appropriate communication and conflict management in culturally diverse settings.

1.4.1 Qualitative Perspectives: Learning over Proving

Most management studies are quantitative in nature. Larsson and Lowendahl (1996) conducted a review on some journals (Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly, Organization Science, Strategic Management Journal), and could only find 12 qualitative studies between 1984 and 1994 (10 years). Buehring et al. (2003) also did similar studies, on the 18 major management journals, and found only 88 qualitative studies

between 1995 and 2003 (8 years). Likewise, Mendenhall et al. (1993) found that in between 1984 to 1990 (5 years) in 20 top management journals, only 2.2% used qualitative methods exclusively. Similarly, Maanen (1998) discovered 15% of the published works in Administrative Science Quarterly between 1956 and 1995, was qualitative in nature. In addition, Peterson (2004) did research on 124 articles from three major North American Journals (Journal of International Business Studies, Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly) over a ten year period (1990 to 1999), and found that the research method of these articles are pre-dominantly quantitative in nature. This study takes a less conventional path with a qualitative research approach, aspiring to explore new insights on communication and conflict management in culturally diverse settings that may fall through the quantitative measuring scales. The significance of this study is the subtlety and complexity of others' experiences, and the perception and interpretation they have of their experiences, which is more effectively and appropriately described as oral interviews than as a set of numbers.

1.4.2 A Framework for Effective and Appropriate Communication and Conflict Management in a Culturally Diverse Workplace

Most communication and conflict literatures have focused predominantly on perceived differences based mostly either on value or communication norms, and the corresponding different ways of communicating and handling conflict based on specific perceived difference (Hall, 1983, 1989; Hofstede, 1980, 1983; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Triandis, 1988, 1994, 1995). As mentioned earlier, the communication and conflict strategies are culture-specific, which handicap most practitioners in real life situations which often involved several culturally diverse groups. Adopting a direct communication and conflict handling approach may have offended other groups who prefer

an indirect approach; likewise, adopting an indirect communication and conflict handling approach may have offended other groups who prefer a direct approach. This study would have significantly filled the gap by providing a framework for effective and appropriate communication and conflict management in culturally diverse workplace. It is the belief of the researcher of this study that managers would have benefited from this framework by becoming better communicators and conflict handlers in the workplace.

1.4.3 Saving Time for More Productive Activities

It was mentioned earlier on that most people still spent a sizeable amount of time addressing conflict related issues at the workplace (OPP, 2008; Porter-O'Grady & Malloch, 2003; Tripp & Bies, 2009; XpertHR, 2011). This implies that conflict handling is a time consuming activity. This study can suggest possible ways to establish an effective and appropriate communication that minimize unnecessary conflict in the workplace. This could have saved more time for other more productive activities.

1.4.4 Saving Cost for the Organization

Miscommunication leading to conflict escalation could result in negative outcomes of personal attacks/insults, sickness/absence, bullying, resignation/termination, disruption of team, suffered productivity and destructive emotions of demotivation, angry/frustration, nervousness, sleepless/stressed (CIPD, 2008; OPP, 2008). This would possibly imply an overall loss to the organization due to lower productivity. An effective and appropriate communication and conflict management would significantly minimize such negative outcomes and destructive emotions. It would also significantly promote better cooperation at the workplace resulting in higher productivity.

1.4.5 Individual Growth through Learning

Should the framework of this study transform a practitioner into a better communicator and conflict handler at the workplace, this would significantly imply a personal growth within each individual practitioner, not just on gained experiences, but also on acquired competences learned from the gained experiences, and the capability to apply these competences. Such perspective would possibly help to nurture a corporate culture of learning.

1.5 Summary

This Chapter aims to introduce the background, need, purpose and significance of this study and convey its intention to explore the voice and silence of leaders in managing communication and conflict among the diverse cultural teams within global organization. Most of the studies on communication and conflict management in global organization are done in the context of direct face-to-face experiences, which usually involves not more than two cultural groups. However, little research is done in the context of virtual diverse teams comprising of more than two cultural groups, which is a more realistic depiction of a typical global organization operating in various different countries. This study is beneficial to all managers working in global organizations who are seeking to be a better communicator and conflict handler with their culturally diverse teams. Chapter 2 will cover the literature review; provide a conceptual framework for understanding the experiences, and perception of challenges faced and confidence in handling communication and conflict in culturally diverse settings; and the research questions for this study. Chapter 3 will provide details of the research methodology, the methods used in this study, and the background information of the participants taking part in this study. Chapter 4 will show the findings generated by this study

with respect to the participants. Chapter 5 to 6 will provide the discussions on the findings, and the recommendations for this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted the overall need for this study, covering some of the possible challenges and gaps in this research. This chapter further examines the theories and research aspects of communication and conflict at work, and the encounters of culture clashes/shock and practices when dealing with communication and conflict within a global organization. The review will also address how these encounters and practices might have influenced the perception of others during the process of interaction and learning, and draw out the subsequent impacts to the workplace relationship, management and leadership. At the end of the review, this chapter seeks to establish a conceptual framework and derive the research questions, to guide this study further down the journey of research.

2.2 Experiences in Handling Communication with Diverse Cultures

2.2.1 Culture Shock

Oberg (1960) applies a medical metaphor approach of incubation (or honeymoon)-crisis-recovery-adjustment, to describe the phases of culture shock:

Culture shock tends to be an occupational disease of people who have been suddenly transplanted abroad. Like most ailments, it has its own symptoms, cause and cure ... Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar cues and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life ... these cues ... are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept ... Now when an

individual enters a strange culture, all or most of these familiar cues are removed. He or she is like a fish out of water (p. 177).

Culture shock is primarily “a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one’s own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences” (Adler, 1975, p. 13); “frustration and confusion that result from being bombarded by too many new and uninterpretable cues” (Adler & Gundersen, 2008, p. 263); “an illness resulting from the loss of meaning brought about when people from one symbolic reality find themselves immersed in another” (Irwin, 2007, p. 1); “turmoil or a disturbance of mental equilibrium that includes feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, frustration, and dissatisfaction when a new culture or subculture is encountered” (Lewenson & Truglio-Londrigan, 2008, p. 73).

In general, the occurrence of culture shock is mostly caused by the loss of familiar cues, communication breakdown and identity crisis (Weaver, 1993). The ‘familiar cues and symbols of social intercourse’ of Oberg (1960) serve as “signposts which guide us through our daily activities in an acceptable fashion which is consistent with the total social environment” and also serve as “reinforcers of behavior because they signal if things are being done inappropriately” (Weaver, 1993, p. 140). However, communicating with other cultures is full of ambiguity and one will experience pain and frustration (culture shock) when familiar cues are no longer elicited by his/her behaviour (Weaver, 1993):

Many Euro-Americans ... they are accustomed to clear verbal messages and feedback, explicit rules of behavior, and the ability to predict the behavior of others. In many other cultures, people may say yes when they mean maybe because they seek to please. Or they may say maybe when they mean no because they don’t want to give negative feedback to another person (p. 140).

For more details of ambiguity caused by cultural variability, please refer to Section 2.2.3 and 2.2.4. Recognizing communication breakdown as a cause of culture shock focuses much more on the cross-cultural communication process, where the same message may elicit different meanings if sender and receiver come from different cultures and they have different languages, different nonverbal codes and different ways to feedback (Weaver, 1993):

Feedback involves both verbal and nonverbal messages and certainly varies with each culture. In many non-Western cultures, feedback is circuitous and subtle, whereas Americans prefer direct and unambiguous feedback (p. 143).

When communication breaks down, we may experience pain and frustration (culture shock), not so much because we have difficulty managing everyday tasks, but because the deeper layers of our identity cannot be expressed or reinforced (Shaules, 2007). For more details on how different cultures communicate differently, please refer to Section 2.2.4. When one enters a new culture, the current ‘culture program’ which has worked so well can be no longer adequate (Weaver, 1993). The current systems of ‘selective perception’ and interpretation cannot handle the bombardment of millions of new cues and one constantly needs to ask such questions as ‘To what should I pay attention?’ and ‘What does it mean?’ (Adler & Gundersen, 2008). Such a sense of confusion of not knowing what to pay attention to or how to solve problem results in culture shock, and identity crisis (change in identity) take place when one adapts to a new culture, ending with a new worldview and a different perception of one self (Weaver, 1993). Shaules (2007) links such culture shock caused by identity crisis (also see Section 2.2.5.1 for more details on social identity) to cross-cultural learning, when Weaver (1993) describes the loss of our normal cues as disorienting but this same disorientation can free us from our normal way of doing and perceiving:

When we come through culture shock ... we may now see the world in different ways and have a host of new alternatives for solving problems and considering reality. The breakdown in communication may be more of a breakthrough to new ways of interacting with others, and it might give us insights into our own need for human interaction on an authentic level. Ways of accomplishing tasks, solving problems, and thinking which may have worked effectively all our lives may be ineffective in a new culture. When we go through culture shock, we become aware of how our culture has shaped our thinking and perception, and we may become more conscious of our hidden culture and, in turn, transcend it (Weaver, 1993, p. 146).

The most frequently cited negative indicators of culture shock include: feeling of helplessness (Adler, 1975; Murdoch & Kaciak, 2011; Oberg, 1960; Sappinen, 1993); fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations, delay and outright refusal to learn the language of other cultures (Oberg, 1960); excessive fear of being cheated (Adler, 1975; Oberg, 1960; Sappinen, 1993); irritability, fears of being contaminated, disregarded (Adler, 1975); feelings of loss, deprivation, anxiety, confusion, strain, embarrassment, disappointment, frustration, impatience, anger (Sappinen, 1993); rejection (Sappinen, 1993; Taft, 1977); loss of control and a loss of sense of mastery in a situation (Sappinen, 1993); sleeplessness, stomach-aches, headaches, trembling hands, fatigue, tension, excessive concern about hygiene, hostility (Sappinen, 1993); confusion towards own role, values and identity (Sappinen, 1993); inability to cope (Sappinen, 1993; Taft, 1977); feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptom level and identity confusion (Berry et al., 1987; Taft, 1977); negative psychological reactions (Murdoch & Kaciak, 2011; Takeuchi et al., 2005); negative behavioural reactions, and physiological problems (Takeuchi et al., 2005); physical problem, uneasiness, feeling of powerlessness, defensive response,

withdrawal, lack of orientation, lack of trust and lack of self-confidence (Murdoch & Kaciak, 2011). On the other hand, the positive indicators one experienced before and after culture shock include: excitement; fascination; anticipation; intrigue; confident; stimulation; sense of discovery; challenge; euphoria; enthusiasm; capable; optimism; acceptance; self-assured; satisfaction; elation; creative; expressive; self-actualized; energetic; purposive (Zapf, 1991).

Oberg (1960) posits and distinguishes 4 stages of culture shock, akin to an illness: honeymoon stage; crisis stage; recovery stage; adjustment stage. Since then, other researchers continue to draw on Oberg's 4 stages model, and different labels have appeared to describe various stages of culture shock. The other models include the 4 stages model with slightly different labels from Oberg's model (Berry, 1985; Curle, 1973; Ex, 1966; Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Harris & Moran, 1979; Hertz, 1981; Kealey, 1978; Kohls, 1979, 1984a, 1984b; Lifton, 1969; Lysgaard, 1955; Pfister-Ammende, 1973; Rhinesmith & Hoopes, 1970; Richardson, 1974; Smalley, 1963; Zwingmann & Gunn, 1983), 5 stages model (Adler, 1975; Pedersen, 1995) and the 6 stages model that caters more to re-entry experiences (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Klopff, 1995; Trifonovitch, 1977). So far, the most common variant is still the 4 stages model. Despite the different labels from different researchers for each stage of culture shock, the first stage is still commonly meant as the honeymoon stage and the final stage is still commonly meant as the adjustment stage. As culture shock is the process of 'adjustment to new cultural environments' (Oberg, 1960), these stages are sometimes expressed as 'adjustment' (stages of adjustment) in some literature (Holtbrügge, 2008; Pedersen, 1995; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Selmer, 1995; Vance & Paik, 2011; Zapf, 1991). Matsumoto et al. (2006, p. 384) define adjustment as the "subjective experiences that are associated with and result from attempts at adaptation, and that also motivates further adaption. Adjustment, therefore, essentially refers to the general concept of well-being, which is an affective evaluation of one's life situation". Lee (2006) put it simply as "process of

adaptation” (p. 6) to cross-cultural communication. These stages of adjustment later become more codified under U-curve and W-curve models of adaptation to cross-cultural communication (La Brack, 2010). Please refer to Section 2.2.5.1 for more details on adaptation.

2.2.2 Stereotype versus Generalization

Cross-cultural studies are vulnerable to ‘threats’ and ‘allegations’ of stereotype, of being prejudicial, negative, ignorant and misleading towards other cultures (Barna, 1994 ; Hamilton, & Sherman, 1996; Oakes, 2003; Oakes, & Haslam, 2001; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). The SAGE dictionary of cultural studies defines stereotype as a “vivid but simple representation that reduces persons to a set of exaggerated, usually negative, character traits” (Barker, 2004, p. 188). Stereotype can be negative or positive beliefs held by an individual about others’ characteristics where an individual disrespects or respects others’ characteristics respectively (Jones, 1972, 1997). Stereotype can also be deductive when a person assumes that generalization apply to every single individual in the culture; or it can be inductive when a person makes generalization based on only a few encounters with other cultures or based on whatever the media is showing and portraying (Bennett, 1998; Cortés, 1992). The word ‘stereotype’ is today almost always a term of abuse (Dyer, 2002). However, when Lippmann (2007) first coined the word ‘stereotype’ in 1992, he did not intend it to have such negative connotation. He consider stereotype as “pictures in our head” (p. 9), a perception of “the world outside” (p. 9):

The world that we have to deal with ... is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported, and imagined ... [man] is learning to see with his mind vast portions of the world that he could never see, touch, smell, hear, or remember. Gradually he makes for himself a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world

beyond his reach. Those features of the world outside which have to do with the behavior of other human beings (p. 31).

It is a form of perception, imposes a certain character on the data of our senses before the data reach the intelligence (p. 96).

Such perception, according to Lippmann (2007), serves as a simplified and manageable guide to the outside world, is a natural, reasonable and pragmatic response to the hectic and complicated world we live in. If not, our perception of the world will be like “baby’s world, one great, blooming, buzzing confusion” (p. 80), and we will feel ‘exhausted’ and ‘weak’ at the end:

But modern life is hurried and multifarious, above all physical distance separates men who are often in vital contact with each other, such as employer and employee... there is neither time nor opportunity for intimate acquaintance. Instead we notice a trait which marks a well know type, and fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry about in our heads (p. 88).

For the attempt to see all things freshly and in detail, rather than as types and generalities, is exhausting (p. 87).

The abandonment of all stereotypes for a wholly innocent approach to experience would impoverish human life (p. 89).

Such view is also supported by Zapf (1991) when he talks about interpreting incoming experiences with reference to pre-determined categories:

A culture can be understood from this perspective of shared meanings that are taken for granted as reality by those interacting within the network. This view of culture

proposes that a community of people tend to construct a common model or map of the world derived from their shared experiences and then use these pre-determined categories as a background or setting against which incoming experiences are interpreted. Without such a model or map, people would experience the world as totally chaotic and unpredictable. In addition to traditional behaviours and customs, culture then includes a conceptual style which reflects more a manner of organizing things, of putting things in a certain way, of looking at the world in a distinct fashion. People attempt to structure the outside world by matching external stimuli against internal conceptual patterns. When such a match is made, the person is able to give meaning to an outside event. If the match cannot be made, however, the person may feel disoriented, frustrated, or afraid. In order to survive and manage in our world, we must develop a useful set of expectations which allow us to interact with our social environment to meet our needs (p.105).

The element of learning is evident when Lippmann (2007) advocates everyone to be flexible like “plastic” (p. 97) as stereotypes are not meant to be taken as something being fixed; we are supposed to “hold them lightly, to modify them gladly” (p. 89) and be ready to change if needed through adjustment, adaptation and empathy:

If the experience contradicts the stereotype ... if he is still curious and open-minded, the novelty is taken into the picture, and allowed to modify it. Sometimes, if the incident is striking enough, and if he felt a general discomfort with his established scheme, he may be shaken to such extent as to distrust all accepted ways of looking at life, and to expect that normally a thing will not be what it is generally supposed to be (p. 97).

They are an ordered, more or less consistent picture of the world, to which our habits, our tastes, our capacities, our comforts and our hopes have adjusted themselves. They may not be a complete picture of the world, but they are a picture of a possible world to which we are adapted (p. 73).

The only feeling that anyone can have about an event he does not experience is the feeling aroused by his mental image of that event. That is why until we know what others think they know, we cannot truly understand their acts (p. 12).

Moving along the same optimistic intention of Lippmann (2007) of providing a learning guide to other cultures, some researchers use the word ‘generalization’ in their cross-cultural studies to represent a more positive connotation from stereotype (Bennett, 1998; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Charon, 2010; Galanti, 2000, 2004; Hoopes, 1981). Charon (2010) describes generalisation as:

A category is an isolated part of our environment that we notice and identify ... A generalization describes the category. It is a statement that characterizes objects included in the category and defines similarities and differences with other categories ... a generalization about a category will often be a statement of cause ... ideas that describe the qualities that belong to a category and ideas that explain why those qualities exist are what we mean by generalizations (p. 352).

In comparison to generalization, a stereotype is judgmental, tends to be an absolute category that overshadows all others in the mind of the observer, and it does not change with new evidence or encourage a search for understanding about why human beings are different from one another (Charon, 2010). The portion of understanding (why other people are different, or what causes other people to be different) in Charon’s (2010) definition of generalization is reinforced by Galanti’s (2000, 2004) explanation of generalization as ‘never ending learning’:

A generalization is a statement about common trends within a group, but with the recognition that further information is needed to ascertain whether the generalization applies to a particular person. Therefore, it is just a beginning. Because differences always exist between individuals, stemming from a variety of factors (Galanti, 2000, p. 335).

A stereotype is an ending point. No attempt is made to learn whether the individual in question fits the statement ... A generalization, in contrast, is a beginning point (Galanti, 2004, p. 5).

Nevertheless, making cultural generalization is a necessity when communicating with other cultures, which serve as a kind of supposition or guide about cultural differences, so as to avoid falling prey to 'naive individualism' (treating every person as individual), where one assume that every person is acting in some completely unique way; and to avoid relying excessively on common sense where the sense is common only to a particular culture and applying such common sense outside one's own culture is very often ethnocentric (Bennett, 1998; Bennett & Bennett, 2004). Several ways are being proposed to avoid stereotype while making cultural generalization:

Our generalizations about people must attempt to understand; our generalizations must be considered only tendencies among certain people; they must be accepted as open, tentative generalizations; and we must become aware of how we have arrived at our generalizations, always keeping in mind the importance of good evidence.

Generalizations must also respect the complexity of the individual, and we should seek to understand why people differ and be suspicious of those who simply categorize in order to condemn ... We should not throw careful generalizations out the windows in the name of treating all people as individuals. As much as every

individual might deserve being understood and treated as an individual, knowledge about anything, including human beings, is possible only through generalization (Charon, 2010, p. 360).

Cultural generalization can be made while avoiding stereotype by maintaining the idea of preponderance of belief. Nearly all possible beliefs are represented in all cultures at all times, but each different culture has a preference for some beliefs over others. The description of this preference, derived from large-group research, is a cultural generalization. Of course, individuals can be found in any culture who hold beliefs similar to people in a different culture. There just aren't so many of them ... they don't represent the preponderance of people who hold beliefs closer to the norm or central tendency of the group (Bennett, 1998, p. 6).

It is more beneficial to avoid cultural stereotypes by using accurate cultural generalizations. Useful cultural generalizations are based on systematic cross-cultural research. They refer to predominant tendencies among groups of people, so they are not labels for individuals. A given individual may exhibit the predominant group tendency a lot, a little, or not at all. So cultural generalizations must be applied to individuals as tentative hypotheses, open to verification... cultural generalizations can be used to describe cultural groups at varying levels of abstraction ... it is possible to make some cultural contrasts between people of Western cultures and peoples of Eastern cultures ... such as more individualistic versus more collectivist (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 151).

2.2.3 Cultural Variability by Value

Hofstede considers culture as mental programming, where “it is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people

from others” (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 6), and develop 4 dimensions of individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, to explain national cultural differences (cultural value differences) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 2001). Individualism-collectivism looks at the cultural tendency of people to be unique and independent or conforming and interdependent; power distance focuses on the importance of status difference and social hierarchies across cultures; uncertainty avoidance manages how cultures adapt to change and cope with uncertainties; masculinity-femininity refers to the degree to which a cultural group values ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ values (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2004; Hill, 2005; Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Schmidt et al., 2007). Among the 4 dimensions, individualism-collectivism is pervasive in a wide range of cultures, because it provides the underlying logic or motivational bases in framing why people behave the way they do in a cross-cultural context (Ting-Toomey, 2005), and it is the major and most common dimension of cultural variability being used in many cross-cultural researches (Fiske, 1991; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Hui, 1988; Hui & Triandis 1986; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Smith et al., 1998; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Triandis, 1988, 1994, 1995). Individualism is predominant in most northern and western regions of Europe and in North America, while collectivism is common in Asia, Africa, Middle East, Central and South America and Pacific Islands (Hofstede 1980, 1983, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Triandis, 1995).

Nevertheless, every aspect of nonverbal communication is affected by the degree of individualism or collectivism of a culture (Andersen, 2012). Individualistic people are more distant proximally than collectivistic people, where collectivistic cultures are interdependent, work, play, live together in close proximity to one another (Andersen et al., 2002; Gudykunst et al., 1996). Kinesic behavior tends to be more coordinated in collectivistic cultures where

people match one another's facial expression and body movements are in synchrony (Andersen, 2012). People in collectivist cultures suppress emotional displays that are contrary to the mood of the group because maintaining group affect is a primary value; people in individualistic cultures are encouraged to express emotions because individual freedom is of paramount value (Andersen, 1988; Andersen et al., 2002). People in individualistic cultures are more nonverbally affiliative, as affective relationships are not socially predetermined but must be acquired by each individual personally; in collectivistic cultures where traditional social ties, like those with extended family members continue to exist, people have less need to make specific friendships since one's friends are predetermined by the social relationships into which one is born (Andersen, 2012; Andersen et al., 2002; Hofstede, 1980, 2001). Individualistic cultures also display monochronistic patterns, in which one thing is done at a time; collectivistic cultures display polychronistic patterns, in which multiple things can be done simultaneously (Hall, 1983). Such manner of using time differently implies that individualists are more task focused in comparison to a relational and socio-emotional focus of collectivists (Andersen et al., 2002).

On the other hand, high power distance cultures may severely limit interaction, where they show nonverbal traits of untouchable, and regulated nonverbal display; low power distance cultures show a more tactile, relaxing and clear vocalic cues (Andersen, 2012). For kinesic behavior, high power distance cultures encourage emotional expressions that reveal status differences: people are expected to show only positive emotions to high-status others and only negative emotions to low status others (Matsumoto, 1991). Direct eye gaze is considered 'hostile' by the high power distance cultures, and indirect eye gaze is considered as 'disinterest' by the low power distance cultures (Andersen et al., 2002; LaFrance & Mayo, 1976, 1978).

Nevertheless, reduction of anxiety and uncertainty in cross-cultural communication is achieved in part through adaptation to nonverbal communication behavior (see Section 2.2.5.3 for more details on adaptation through AUM): compatibility in nonverbal communication is one key element to effective message interpretation, and misunderstanding often take place in cross-cultural communication because of nonverbal incongruity (Andersen et al., 2002). Among some of the more difficult to adapt nonverbal behaviors are: interpersonal distance, use of touch, amount of eye contact, and time boundaries (Andersen et al., 2002). People from countries high in uncertainty avoidance tend to show more emotions than those from countries low in uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). Familiarity with a culture helps in interpreting nonverbal expressions of emotion, and this implies that with repeated interaction, one may reduce the nonverbal cues of dissimilarity, and so reduce anxiety and uncertainty (Andersen et al., 2002; Gudykunst, 1995).

Nonetheless, Hofstede's work has received several criticisms. Many researchers argue that survey is not an appropriate instrument to determine and measure cultural difference accurately, because the phenomenon under study is subjective and culturally sensitive (McSweeney, 2002; Schwartz, 1999). Hofstede (1980, 1998, 2001) replied that survey was one method but not the only method that was used. Other researchers also reason that nations are not the proper unit of analysis as cultures are not necessarily bounded by borders (McSweeney, 2000) and are fragmented across group and national lines (DiMaggio, 1997; Myers & Tan, 2002; Straub et al., 2002). Hofstede (1998, 2002) countered this that nations were the only means anyone could have (as a matter of practicality) to identify and measure cultural differences:

True, but they are usually the only kinds of units available for comparison, and they are better than nothing (Hofstede, 2001, p. 73).

Some researchers feel that a study based on only one company cannot possibly provide information on the entire cultural systems of a country (Graves, 1986; McSweeney, 2002; Olie, 1995; S ndergaard, 1994). Hofstede (1980, 2001) explained he was not making absolute measure but gauging differences between cultures, and use of one company eliminates the effect of organizational cultures from different companies influencing behavior differently, leaving behind only national culture to be studied:

What were measured were differences between national cultures. Any set of functionally equivalent samples from national populations can supply information about such differences. The IBM set consisted of unusually well-matched samples for an unusually large number of countries. The extensive validation ... will show that the country scores obtained correlated highly with all kinds of other data, including results obtained from representative samples of entire national populations (Hofstede, 2001, p. 73).

In addition, some researchers have claimed that the study is too old (1967-1973) to be of any modern value, and may not capture aspects of recent cultural change (Jones, 2007). Hofstede (2001) refuted this by claiming that cultural changes occurred very slowly and so had remained inherently stable over the centuries:

The dimensions found are assumed to have centuries-old roots; only data that remained stable across two subsequent surveys were maintained, and they have since been validated against all kinds of external measurements; and recent replications show no loss of validity (p. 73).

This claim is supported by an analysis of empirical data from Western European countries spanning the period from 1970 to 2006: while Western cultures did evolve and even tended to

show some incomplete convergence, at least on a number of subjectively selected variables, their paths practically never crossed during those 36 years (Inglehart, 2008). Another critique on Hofstede's work is the presence of Western bias that may have influenced his data collection (Ailon, 2008). To resolve this problem, Hofstede (2001) introduced a new dimension 'long-term versus short-term orientation' (originally based on Confucian teaching) to provide a better Asian perspective.

2.2.4 Cultural Variability by Communication

Culture affects communication and communication affects culture (Hall, 1959). While individualism-collectivism (Hofstede, 1980, 1983) mentioned in Section 2.2.1 differentiates culture in terms of value, Hall's (1976) high and low context define cultural differences based on communication (Gudykunst, 2004; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). Context here is referred as the information that surrounds an event and is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event (Hall & Hall, 1987, 1990). According to Hall (Hall & Hall, 1987, 1990), the elements that combine to produce a given meaning, events and context, are in different proportions depending on the culture, and the cultures of the world can be compared on a scale from high to low context:

All cultures arrange their members and relationships along the context scale, and one of the great communication strategies, whether addressing a single person or an entire group, is to ascertain the correct level of contexting of one's communication (Hall, 1983, p.61).

And high context communication and low context communication are described as:

A high context communication ... is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in

the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low context communication is just the opposite ... the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code (Hall, 1976, p. 91).

In other words:

High context or low context refers to the amount of information that is in a given communication as a function of the context in which it occurs. A highly contexted communication is one in which most meaning is in the context while very little is in the transmitted message. A low context communication is similar to interacting with a computer, if the information is not explicitly stated, and the program followed religiously, the meaning is distorted (Hall, 1983, p. 229).

Low and high context communication are used in all cultures, and one form however is more likely to predominate (Gudykunst & Lee, 2002). Individualists tend to engage in low context, direct styles (example from verbally explicit to verbally upfront) of conflict management; collectivists tend to engage in high context, indirect styles (example from verbally understated to verbally effusive) of conflict management (Gudykunst, 2004; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey, 2004). High context cultures are those from China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, while low context cultures are those from Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland, United States, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Canada (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Hall, 1976, 1983; Ting-Toomey, 1985).

High context cultures prefer to establish a relationship first (written and spoken communications are not ignored but they are secondary), base their agreement on trust (agreement can be made on a handshake on someone's word), value personal relations and goodwill (have a tendency to take a greater interest in your position, your business card, your

dress, material possession and other signs of status and relationships), and negotiate slowly and ritualistically; low context cultures prefer to get down to business first (pay secondary attention to non-verbal messages), base their agreement on precise legal contract, value expertise and performance (preoccupied with detailed written rules), and negotiate efficiently and quickly (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2004; Hall, 1976, 1989). Hence high context communication emphasizes the importance of multilayered contexts (for example historical context, social norms roles, situational and relational contexts) that frame the interaction encounter, as such a high context style stresses on non-verbal nuances and subtleties to signal conflict meanings (Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 2004). A case of high context communication greatly dependent on non-verbal messages is the Japanese tea ceremony, in which the subtlest behaviours are attributed with significant meaning (Andersen et al., 2002; Jandt, 1995; Lustig & Koester, 1999). Another example is looking up words in a Chinese dictionary:

To use a Chinese dictionary, the reader must know the significance of 214 radicals (characters) ... to find the word for star one must know that it appears under the sun radical ... to be literate in Chinese, one has to be conversant with Chinese history (Hall, 1976, p. 91).

Low context communication in contrast, emphasizes the importance of explicit verbal message to convey personal thoughts, opinions and feeling, as such a low context style stresses on assertive, complementary non-verbal gestures to punctuate the important conflict points (Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 2004). A portrayal of American communication style reflects the 'explicitness' of low context style:

The American way of life ... affords little room for the cultivation of ambiguity. The dominant American temper calls for clear and direct communication. It expresses itself in such common injunctions as 'Say what

you mean', 'Don't beat around the bush', and 'Get to the point' (Levine, 1985, p. 28).

Because of this, Americans 'never get the point' and Japanese 'never get to the point':

The communication strategies of the United States and Japan provide a different perspective in the matter of contexting. Americans lacking extensive experience with the Japanese (particularly older Japanese who have not adapted to European communication patterns) frequently complain of indirection ... they have difficulty knowing what the Japanese are 'getting at'. This is because the Japanese are part of high context tradition and do not get to the point quickly. They talk around the topic. The Japanese think intelligent human beings should be able to discover the point of a discourse from the context, which they are careful to provide (Hall, 1983, p. 62).

2.2.5 Practices in Handling Communication with Diverse Cultures

2.2.5.1 Adjustment and Adaptation

Cross-cultural adjustment was mentioned earlier in Section 2.2.1 on culture shock. In fact adjustment can be in the form of positive and negative outcomes, and culture shock is predominantly viewed as one of the negative outcomes of adjustment (Matsumoto et al., 2006; Pedersen, 1995). Other negative outcomes include: emotional distress (Furukawa & Shibayama, 1994); depression, anxiety, diminished work performance, difficulties in interpersonal relationship (Matsumoto et al., 2001); dysfunctional communication (Gao & Gudykunst, 1991; Okazaki-Luff, 1991). In contrast, positive outcomes of adjustment include: self-confidence, positive mood, interpersonal relationships, stress reduction (Matsumoto et al., 2001); gains in language competence, self-esteem, awareness, health (Babiker et al.,

1980; Kamal & Maruyama, 1990); evolving in positive ways to become fundamentally different, better individuals with development of multicultural identities and multiple perspectives to engage the world (Matsumoto et al., 2006).

Some researchers have proposed approaches to adjustment: having successful relationship with people from other cultures, having warm, cordial, respectful, cooperative interaction, and accomplishing tasks in an effective, efficient manner (Brislin, 1981); managing psychological stress effectively (Hammer, Gudykunst & Wiseman, 1978). Some studies go deeper and attempt to identify factors that influence cross-cultural adjustment (Matsumoto, 1999; Matsumoto et al., 2001), such as knowledge, language proficiency, attitudes, previous experiences, levels of ethnocentrism, social support, cultural similarity, self-construals (Matsumoto et al., 2006). Among these factors, knowledge of other cultures, ethnocentrism and language proficiency are most prominent, and many cross-cultural training programs involve language skill training, knowledge training and awareness training (under the assumption that if people can speak language of other culture, and if they know some basic facts about other culture, and if they can recognize the existence of ethnocentrism, how their own cultural upbringing contribute to how they interact with the world and with others, and how their viewpoint is one of many valid and legitimate views, they can adjust better) (Matsumoto et al., 2006).

On the other hand, Matsumoto et al. (2006) advocate emotion regulation (the ability to regulate one's emotion) as the key path to successful cross-cultural adjustment, building their arguments on stress and coping theory, learning theory and growth theory, where emotion regulation allows individuals to engage in clear thinking about cross-cultural incidents without retreating into psychological defenses. Matsumoto et al. (2006) reason that cross-cultural adjustment is full of inevitable conflict due to cultural differences (differences

in language, nonverbal behaviors, values, norms, attitudes, rules, systems and other manifestations of culture) and such conflict situations are often accompanied with negative emotion which often easily lead to a negative experiences, frustration, stereotypes, attitudes and a host of other affective or cognitive outcomes that are not conducive to successful adaptation. However emotion is not just influenced by major events (or critical incidents), it can be affected by cumulative effects of day-to-day events such as daily hassles (De Benedittis & Lorenzetti, 1992; DeLongis et al., 1982; DeLongis, Folkman & Lazarus, 1988; Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer & Lazarus, 1981; Kinney & Stephens, 1989; Zautra, Guarnaccia & Dohrenwend, 1986) due to new cultural context, the inherent ambiguity of new cultural systems and cross-cultural communication, and inevitable conflict that arises because of cultural differences (Matsumoto et al., 2006). In addition, emotions, be they negative or positive, provide information about relationships with other people (Buck, 1984); color one's experiences, giving them meaning and relevance for one's well-being (Matsumoto et al., 2006); and motivate behavior (sadness and anger make a person do something, happiness and joy reinforce behaviors) such that there is a need to understand others' emotions in order to understand why others behave the way they do (Tomkins, 1962, 1963). Therefore emotion regulation is often engaged together with learning about new culture that includes analyzing the cultural underpinnings of the context, and understanding the intentions and behaviors that produced conflict in the first place from a different cultural perspective (Matsumoto et al., 2006).

The main goal of cross-cultural adaptation is to adopt an adaptation pattern that minimizes negative outcomes of cross-cultural adjustment and maximizes positive outcomes of cross-cultural adjustment (Matsumoto et al., 2006). One of the adaptation models that focus on stress and coping was the U-curve model developed to describe Oberg's adjustment stages (Oberg, 1960) as a form of cross-cultural adaptation (Lysgaard, 1955, p. 51):

“[We] observed that adjustment as a process over time seems to follow a U-shaped curve: adjustment is felt to be easy and successful to begin with; then follows a ‘crisis’ in which one feels less well adjusted, somewhat lonely and unhappy; finally one begins to feel better adjusted again, becoming more integrated into the foreign community.”

The U-curve model was later broadened to a W-curve model (by adding another U) to cater for reentry experiences (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). Both models help to explain culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation, by expressing the fluctuation of experiences during cross-cultural communication between high and low level of mood, well-being, sense of harmony, competence or degree of adjustment, depicting culture shock as a cycle of adjustment marked by progression of stages, with the first stage mostly described as honeymoon stage full of excitement and enthusiasm, and the final stage mostly described as adjustment stage accompanied with acceptance (Chaney & Martin, 2004; Copeland & Griggs, 1985; Deutsch & Won, 1963; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Lee, 2006; Lysgaard, 1955; Schmidt et al., 2007; Zapf, 1991). For details on the stages, please refer to Section 2.2.1. However, the U-curve and W-curve models are only limited within a heuristic context as a viable and useful theoretical and explanatory tool, or as a simple pedagogical device, and have not held up to critical empirical testing and research: they are neither accurately descriptive nor particularly predictive; they do not capture either the messiness and unpredictability of the process nor did they account for cases where the stages do not occur in order, are frequently repeated or seem compressed or blended or are absent altogether (La Brack, 2010). Church (1982) concludes the models as weak, inconclusive and over generalized. Contrary to the models’ proposition, Ward et al. (1998) find that adjustment problems are greatest at the beginning and decrease over time, and so the models are less than precise in ability to predict cross-cultural adaptation. Kohls (1979, 1984a, 1984b) discovered

that the models are accurate in describing the adaptation process for only 10% of the participants in the study and therefore Kohls (1979, 1984a, 1984b) argued that a cyclical model is more accurate in unfolding culture shock process instead of the original ups and downs.

On the other hand, some researchers prefer ‘acculturative stress’ over ‘culture shock’ to be a more accurate description of cross-cultural experience, where stress (not honeymoon) is most likely to be experienced in the first place during the adaptation process (Berry, 1970; Berry & Annis, 1974; Berry et al., 1987; Berry & Sam, 1997; Kim, 1988, 1995, 2001, 2002; Mishra, Sinha, & Berry, 1996; Ward, 2001), where acculturation is “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield et al., 1936, p. 149). Hence, ‘acculturation stress’ portrays a less negative experiences and outcomes of cross-cultural communication as compared to ‘culture shock’ (Berry, 1997; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Vega & Rumbaut, 1991). Redfield et al.’s (1936) definition of acculturation highlights 3 building blocks of acculturation process: contact (interaction with other cultures within the same time and space); reciprocal influence (mutual influence between dominant and minority group); and change (address process question on how change comes about and outcome question on what has changed during the process) (Sam, 2006).

Nevertheless, the stress-adaptation-growth model by Kim (1988, 1995, 2001, 2002), see stress as a learning experience where it emphasizes the learning and growth facilitating nature of the adaptation process, and proposes that cultural adaptation and personal growth take place progressively like in a spiral process (as spiral advances, less stress is experienced and more adaptation is achieved), whereby individual switch between stressful experiences

(culture shock), and adaptation and growth that result from the challenge, and each successful overcoming of stressful situation leads individual to higher level of adaptation. Kim (2004) sees acculturation (acquisition of other cultural practices) as activity of learning, that occurs side by side with deculturation (unlearning some old cultural practices) to evoke transformation. During the adaptive transformation or changes, presence of stress is inevitable due to 'identity conflict' (Leong & Ward, 2000), between the need for acculturation and the resistance to deculturation (Kim, 2004), and between the desire to retain old customs and keep the original identity on the one hand, and the desire to adopt new ways to seek harmony with the new milieu on the other (Boekstijn, 1988; Kim 2001; Zaharna, 1989). Stress is seen as 'challenge' and such 'challenge' is important for personal growth and it is by experiencing difficulties that learning and adaptation will take place (Kim, 1988, 1995, 2001, 2002). Hence culture shock experience should be viewed in a broader context of transition shock (transitional learning experience), a phenomenon that leads to deep learning, growth and self-awareness, reflecting movement from a state of low self-awareness and cultural awareness to a state of high self-awareness and cultural awareness (Adler, 1975). So culture shock is not a 'disease' for which adaptation is the cure but is at the very heart of the cross-cultural learning experience, self-understanding and change (Adler, 1987, 1997; Adler & Gundersen, 2008).

Hence appropriate and tolerable level of stress can actually be a motivating force for learning (Zapf, 1991). Kim's (1988, 1995, 2001, 2002) stress-adaptation-growth model establishes that cross-cultural adaptation and growth are the result of culture learning that lead to transformation in individual's behavior. Such transformation is manifested in increased functional fitness, psychological health and intercultural (cross-cultural) identity (Kim, 2001). The intercultural (cross-cultural) identity here is the extra or supplementary identity developed gradually during cross-cultural communication and adaptation, in addition

to the original cultural identity that is currently possessed by individual (Kim, 2001; Kim & Ruben, 1988; Sarbaugh, 1988). During cross-cultural adaptation or communication, individual experiences self-shock (Zaharna, 1989) or boundary-ambiguity syndromes (Hall, 1976), a sense of disconnection to his/her original cultural identity as it loses its distinctiveness, when individual realizes that his/her original cultural identity does not 'fit in' (akin to socio-cultural adaptation, see Section 2.2.5.1) any more, and that there is a need to develop a new identity. This is not to say that an individual has to choose one or the other identity, but to maintain a positive original cultural identity and the development of a flexible cross-cultural identity together at the same time (Kim, 2001). Cross-cultural identity represent a dynamic and complex process of interpretive activity and helps to link individual to more than one cultural group (Kim, 2001), and it is based not on belongingness which implies either owning or being owned by a single culture, but on a style of self-consciousness that situates oneself neither totally a part of, nor totally apart from a given culture (Adler, 1982). Most studies focus on negative concerns of cross-cultural identity (De Vos, 1990; De Vos & Suárez-Orozco, 1990). However, there is growing recognition of flexible, evolving and differentiated identities coexisting together without conflict (Berry, 1980; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Deaux et al., 1995; Der-Karabetian, 1980; Hutnik, 1986; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992; Rosenthal & Hrynevich, 1985; Ting-Toomey, 1981, 1993) and that cross-cultural identity development is building on, not discarding the original cultural identity (Boekstijn, 1988; Phinney & Rotheram, 1987).

In summary, the learning theories on adaptation described above imply that time is needed for culture learning: the longer the time one engages with other cultures, the more he/she will learn to behave appropriately and effectively to adapt. It takes 3 or more years of learning through cross-cultural experiences to become cross-culturally competent (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Moodian, 2009).

Adaptation can be cognitive in nature through identity development, in the way individuals perceive and think about themselves and other cultural groups, including: how they process information about their own group (in-group) and other groups (out-groups) and how identity shift during cross-cultural experiences (Ward, 2001). One such theory on adaptation is the social identity theory (Ward, 2001; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). According to social identity theory, each individual strives to enhance his/her self-esteem, which is composed of personality identity and social identity (Aberson, Healy & Romero, 2000; Tajfel, 1981). Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) examines how a group affects an individual's identity by exploring relationships between identity, categorization, and comparison, with main focus on the motivations behind the formation of in-group and out-group. Such motivation is due to a need among group members to differentiate their own groups positively from others to achieve a positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity theory sees identity as part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his/her knowledge of his/her membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership, and social identity theory begins with categorization, where people streamline their perception by categorizing received stimuli (Tajfel, 1981). Tajfel argued that categories are differentially valued within cultures and therefore identities also carry varying degrees of positive and negative value for the self: individuals obtain assessment of their in-group's value relative to an out-group through social comparison process, where it is assumed that humans need positive and distinctive group identities, from which individual self-esteem and sense of personal value can be derived (Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Hence people want to maintain a positive identity, including a positive group (social) identity, by judging their groups to be superior to other groups, just as social comparison makes one feels good when he/she outperforms another individual, comparison between one

group and other group makes them feel good when their group outperforms the other groups (Breckler, Olson & Wiggins, 2006; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However social identity theory also suggests potential conflict due to competitive intergroup orientation as a result of the need for positive social identity, and this can cause perceptual biases in favor of the in-group at the expense of the out-group (MacKuen & Rabinowitz, 2006). This is evident in studies that show in-group favoritism (where people are motivated to be favorable to group to which they belong or identify) and out-group derogation (where in-group identity is threatened), reflecting people's desire to make their group superior to the out-group to create a positive social identity (Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Social identity is also related to the theory of anxiety and uncertainty management as one of influencing factors to anxiety and uncertainty (see Section 2.2.5.3 for more details on anxiety and uncertainty management). In Kim's (1988, 1995, 2001, 2002) stress-adaptation-growth model, social identity appear as newly developed 'cross-cultural identity' during cross-cultural communication that is based in neither culture but that sits between them. On the other hand, social identities are linked to conflict and face negotiation theory, where conflict is an identity-bound concept in which the faces or 'situated identities' of the interactants are called into question (see Section 2.5.5.1 for more details on face negotiation theory).

2.2.5.2 Accommodating Others: Communication Adaptation Theory

Section 2.2.5.1 describes the various ways people adjust to adapt when interacting with other cultures. Another form of adaptation is to accommodate others during communication by making changes in speech and language use. Such accommodation can be explained by the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Coupland et al., 1988; Gallois et al., 1988, 1995; Giles et al., 1987). CAT illuminates the process by which one can

both reduce and magnify communicative differences between people by convergence and divergence strategies: convergence is a strategy of reducing dissimilarities in the communication features used with other communicators; while divergence is a strategy of accentuating dissimilarities in the communication features used with other communicators, where communication features include language used, phonological variants, accentedness, speech rates, levels of lexical diversity, gestures, posture, smiling, use of humor, pause frequencies and length (Gallois et al., 1988, 1995; Garrett, 2010; Giles & Noels, 1997). However, accommodation is not always appropriate or effective (Giles & Coupland, 1991) as both convergence and divergence has its own strength and weakness: positive effects of convergence include increased attraction, social approval, increased persuasion, while negative effects include incorrect stereotypes of out-group, perceived condescension and loss of personal identity; positive effects of divergence include protects cultural identity, asserts power differences, increased sympathy, while negative effects include perceived disdain for out-group, perceived lack of effort and increased psychological distance (Dainton & Zelley, 2011).

On the other hand, how an individual chooses to communicate in convergence or divergence manner, depends very much on how negative or positive he/she feels about his/her own social identity (Abrams, O'Connor & Giles, 2002; Coupland et al., 1988; Dainton & Zelley, 2011; Gallois et al., 1988, 1995; Giles et al., 1987; Gudykunst, 2002). It is human nature, whether through conscious or unconscious effort, for people to categorize information to simplify and create understanding when communicating with others (Dainton & Zelley, 2011). This has been mentioned in Section 2.2.2 when people interpreting incoming experiences with reference to 'pre-determined categories', and in Section 2.2.5.1 where social identity theory begins with 'categorization' during the process of forming in-group and out-group. People categorize themselves and others to be part of an in-group or

out-group: people use convergence strategy to move towards others to signal acceptance and understanding, when they want to be viewed as part of an in-group; people (who feel especially strong about their own social identity) use divergence strategy to move away from others to signal disagreement or rejection, when they want to differentiate themselves from others (Coupland et al., 1988; Gallois et al., 1988, 1995; Giles et al., 1987).

Besides social identity, individualism-collectivism also influences the accommodating process of CAT (See Section 2.2.3 for more details on individualism- collectivism). Members of individualistic cultures tend to adopt personal verbal communication and tend to converge toward others more than members of collectivistic cultures (Gallois et al, 1995; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002). Likewise, individualistic cultures are more likely to react to convergence from out-group members in a positive manner, reciprocally converge toward out-group; collectivistic cultures are more likely to use verbal contextual style (that emphasizes role relationships), politeness strategies and formal language with out-group members (Gallois et al, 1995; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002). Nevertheless collectivistic cultures who perceive hard boundaries incline to react negatively toward out-group members who attempt to converge communicatively as compared to individualistic cultures; collectivistic cultures diverge if they perceive the convergence as overstepping in-group boundaries more than individualistic cultures (Gallois et al, 1995; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002).

2.2.5.3 Anxiety and Uncertainty Management

The process of cross-cultural adjustment mentioned in Section 2.2.5.1 can be stressful because there is insecurity and ambiguity of not knowing what is appropriate, coupled with a potential inability to understand feedback from other cultures due to a lack of knowledge of language or culture (Black & Gregersen, 1991a, 1991b; Lee, 2006; Louis, 1980) and it is also during the process of cross-cultural adjustment that such anxiety and uncertainty is reduced

(Black, 1988; Black & Gregersen, 1991a, 1991b; Church, 1982; Lee, 2006;). Building on Berger and Calabrese's (1975) uncertainty reduction theory, Gudykunst (1993, 1995) maintains that effective communication emerges from mindfully managing anxiety and uncertainty, in his theory of Anxiety and Uncertainty Management (AUM). This theory seeks to explain the process that takes place when individual communicates with someone from other cultures or 'stranger' (refer to those who are physically present and participate in a situation and at the same time are outside the situation because they are members of different groups) (Gudykunst, 1995).

Uncertainty is a cognitive phenomenon that affects the way one thinks about strangers, such that predictive uncertainty involves one's inability to predict strangers' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, values and behavior (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b). Therefore, one experiences more uncertainty when he/she communicates with out-group members or strangers or people from other cultures, than with in-group members (Gudykunst, 1985a, 1985b; Lee & Boster, 1991). Each individual will have minimum and maximum thresholds for uncertainty that are different across cultures and individuals, where maximum thresholds are the highest amount of uncertainty one can have and think he/she can predict strangers' behavior adequately to feel comfortable communicating with them, and minimum threshold are the lowest amounts of uncertainty he/she can have and not feel bored or overconfident about one's predictions of strangers' behavior: if one's uncertainty is above one's maximum threshold, strangers' behavior is seen/perceived as unpredictable and he/she will not have confidence in his/her prediction or explanation of strangers' behavior; if one's uncertainty is below one's minimum threshold, he/she is likely to misinterpret strangers' messages because he/she does not consider the possibility that his/her interpretation of strangers' messages are wrong (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b). Therefore to communicate effective, one's uncertainty must be between one's maximum threshold and minimum

threshold (Gudykunst, 1993). As a result, where one's minimum and maximum threshold are located depend on general acceptance of uncertainty in one's culture (see Section 2.2.3 for Hofstede's cultural variability of uncertainty avoidance), and one's personal tolerance for ambiguity (Budner, 1962) and/or uncertainty orientation (Sorrentino & Roney, 1999), where predominantly one will be under the influence of one's own cultural value, leaving a few deviant individuals with different personality due to different tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty orientation (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b).

It is established that the extent one values uncertainty varies across cultures, such that members of high uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to display rigidity of attitudes toward strangers, indicating an inability to tolerate ambiguity when interacting with strangers, have negative expectations regarding strangers' behavior and they are more formal to strangers as compared to members of low uncertainty avoidance (Gudykunst, 1995, 2005a, 2005b; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002). Members of high uncertainty avoidance cultures believe that what is different is dangerous; members of low uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to believe that what is different is curious (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). This is supported by some studies that show: Koreans create ambiguous messages so that others cannot figure out their meanings (Lim & Choi, 1996); silence is often a response to uncertainty for Western Apaches until they feel comfortable speaking to strangers (Basso, 1979); Puerto Rican (Morris, 1981) and Malagasy (Keenan, 1976) appreciate ambiguity and uncertainty, and often engage in ways to preserve uncertainty.

Anxiety is the affective equivalent of uncertainty, stems from feeling uneasy, tense, worries, or apprehensive about what might happen (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b). It is also a generalized or unspecified sense of disequilibrium (Turner, 1988), based on the anticipation of negative consequences (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). There are 4 possible negative

consequences: fear of negative consequences for self-concepts (confusion, frustration, feeling incompetent); fear of negative behavioral consequences (being exploited, harmed); fear of negative evaluations by strangers or out-group members (being rejected, ridiculed); fear of negative evaluations by in-group members (rejection, being identified with out-group members) (Stephan & Stephan, 1985, 2000). Each individual will have minimum and maximum thresholds for anxiety, where maximum thresholds are the highest amount of anxiety one can have and feel comfortable communicating with strangers, and minimum threshold are the lowest amounts of anxiety he/she can have and care about his/her communication with strangers: if one's anxiety is above one's maximum threshold, one will feel uneasy and tends to withdrawn from communication with strangers, focus on anxiety and not on the effectiveness of his/her communication, and process information in a simplistic manner; if one's anxiety is below one's minimum threshold, one does not care what happen, and does not have any curiosity about what may happen, and does not feel motivated to communicate effectively with strangers (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b). Therefore to be motivated to communicate, one's anxiety must be between one's maximum threshold and minimum threshold (Gudykunst, 1993). As a result, where one's minimum and maximum threshold are located depend on the degree to which one feels in control (Fiske & Morling, 1996).

Managing anxiety over some time is associated with developing trust (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b), where trust is confidence that one will find what is desired from another rather than what is feared (Deutsch, 1973), and often little more than a naive expression of hope (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). For relationships with strangers to become close, some minimal degree of trust is necessary, as anxiety is often viewed as a dialectic involving fear and trust: when one trusts strangers, he/she expects positive outcomes from communicating with them; when one have high level of anxiety, he/she fears negative outcomes from

communicating with them (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b). Anxiety can also lead to avoidance, uncomfortableness and bias (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b): one avoids stranger so that it gives him/her some space and allows him/her to manage his/her own anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), but with possible negative consequences of not being able to develop necessary skills for cross-cultural communication (Schlenker & Leary, 1982); feeling uncomfortable reinforces one viewing oneself as incompetent cross-cultural communicators (Schlenker & Leary, 1982), causing nervous behavior that may be perceived or misinterpreted as prejudice or hostility by strangers (Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998; Devine, Evett, & Vasquez-Suson, 1996); one in anxiety is more likely to focus on the behaviors he/she expects to see based on his/her negative stereotypes, and fail to recognize those inconsistent behavior outside his/her expectations (Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

Mindfulness (Langer, 1989a, 1989b) is a moderating process between anxiety and uncertainty management, and effective communication (Gudykunst, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). In most time, one is not mindful with his/her behavior when communicating with strangers, often interpret strangers' messages using his/her own frames of reference, and may not realize and recognize whether if the communication is ineffective, or if there is misinterpretation on the actual intention (Langer, 1989a, 1989b). However, when one is mindful, he/she can choose how he/she is going to communicate more effectively with strangers and this involves (Langer, 1989a, 1989b, 1997): using smaller (instead of broad) categories to make predictions about strangers' behavior, where being mindful is about making more, not fewer distinctions because categorizing is fundamental and natural human activity (this is the way one comes to know the world) and any effort to remove bias by attempting to eliminate the perception of differences is doomed to failure; being open to new information by seeing new perspectives and subtle cues that are hidden by mindless communication (often leads to misunderstandings) with stranger, when one focuses more on

communication process instead of communication outcome; being aware of possible alternative perspectives as strangers use different perspectives and interpretation. In short, when one has managed his/her anxiety, he/she needs to manage his/her uncertainty by trying to develop accurate predictions and explanations for strangers' behaviors: when one communicates on automatic pilot (mindlessly), he/she predicts and interprets strangers' behavior using his/her own frame of reference; when one is mindful, he/she is open to new information, aware of alternative perspectives and can make accurate predictions (Gudykunst, 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Langer, 1989a, 1989b, 1997).

Beside mindfully managing uncertainty and anxiety, other factors such as social identity (see Section 2.2.5.1 for more details on social identity) that vary across cultures, also influence the amount of uncertainty and anxiety that individual experience. Social identity falls under 'self and self-concept' (one of the superficial causes of uncertainty and anxiety) in AUM model (Gudykunst, 1998a, 2002, 2005a):

An increase in the degree to which our social identities guide our interactions with strangers will produce a decrease in our anxiety and an increase in our confidence in predicting their behavior ... An increase in perceived threats to our social identities when interacting with strangers will produce an increase in our anxiety and a decrease in our confidence in predicting their behavior (Gudykunst, 2005a, p. 294).

In addition to social identity, individualism-collectivism (see Section 2.2.3 for more details on individualism-collectivism) are related to the 'self construals' that falls under 'self and self-concept' (one of the superficial causes of uncertainty and anxiety) in AUM model: where individualist cultures need to sustain their independent self construals and they allow personal identities to influence their behavior and self-monitor more with strangers than do

collectivistic cultures; collectivistic cultures use interdependent self construals to guide their behavior and they allow social identities to influence their behavior and are concerned with social appropriateness when interacting with strangers more than individualistic cultures (Gudykunst, 1998a, 2002, 2005a; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002). Similarly, uncertainty avoidance (see Section 2.2.3 for more details on uncertainty avoidance) and expectancy violations theory (see Section 2.2.5.4 for more details on expectancy violations theory) have its role in ‘reaction to strangers’ (one of the superficial causes of uncertainty and anxiety) in AUM model: cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to display rigidity of attitudes toward strangers, indicate an inability to tolerate ambiguity when interacting with strangers, and therefore have negative expectations regarding strangers’ behavior, and view the situation in which interaction with strangers occurs as formal more than low uncertainty avoidance cultures (Gudykunst, 1998a, 2002, 2005a; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002).

2.2.5.4 Expectation Violation: Expectancy Violation Theory

According to the Expectancy Violation Theory, people develop expectancies about what is typical (predictive) and appropriate (prescriptive) communicative behavior in various types of social interaction (Burgoon, 1983, 1993; Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Burgoon & Walther, 1990). Expectancies in this case are enduring patterns of anticipated behavior (verbal and nonverbal), primary interaction schemata that defines, shape interpersonal interaction, and are based on social norms and individual-specific patterns of typical behavior (Burgoon, 1995; Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005; Burgoon & Walther, 1990). In other words, expectancy helps us to make sense of what people do in a given situation and enable us to assess what we experienced and so enable us to respond (Jongste, 2013). Hence when individuating information is absent or open to interpretation, expectancies tend to be stereotypic (Hamilton, Shermon & Ruvolo, 1990) because during cross-cultural

communication, people have very little personalized knowledge about the person from the other cultures (implies lack of personal relationship) and this leaves expectancies to be developed, based only on cultural norms or stereotypes (see Section 2.2.2 for more details on stereotype) (Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005).

When expectancies are violated, individuals (perceivers) interpret (meaning of the violative act) and evaluate (desirability of the violative act) if the ‘violator’ (communicator) is rewarding (interaction with violator is perceived to be useful, gratifying, pleasant) or non-rewarding (interaction with violator is perceived to be useless, ungratifying, unpleasant), and if the behavior is positive (enacted actions are above expectation) or negative (enacted actions are below expectation), by considering communicator’s characteristics, relationship between perceiver and communicator, and the context of actual communication that took place (Burgoon, 1995; Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005; Burgoon & Walther, 1990). Such assessment will decide if the violation is positive or negative, with favorable or unfavorable outcomes respectively:

Positive violations are predicted to yield more favorable interaction outcomes than conforming to expectations; negative violations are predicted to yield more unfavorable consequences than conforming to expectations (Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005, p. 159).

Positive and negative behavior from a rewarding violator will be assessed and judged more favorably (positive violation) as the perceiver will converge to reciprocate, and diverge to compensate respectively with the violator (See Section 2.2.5.2 for more details on convergence and divergence) (Burgoon, 1995; Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005; Burgoon & Walther, 1990). One of the reasons why rewarding violator can ‘get away’, with his/her negative behavior being disregarded by the perceiver is attributed to his/her prior reputation

that has anchored credibility and established trust with the perceiver (Burgoon, 1993; Jongste, 2013).

In the context of communicating in diverse cultural settings, expectancy varies across cultures, where collectivist cultures place more positive value on communicative indirectness and restrained expressiveness than do individualist cultures: collectivist cultures may be more distressed by forthrightness and flamboyance than individualist cultures (see Section 2.2.3 for more details on individualism- collectivism) (Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005). Stereotypic expectancies was mentioned earlier on in this Section, and it was recommended with repeated interactions, communication with others will evolve from non-interpersonal to interpersonal (Miller & Steinberg, 1975), and with greater familiarity will reduce stereotype and foster increased confidence associated with the expectancies (Gudykunst, 1985a, 1985b; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986). This is in line with Gudykunst's (1993, 1995) AUM theory that when people feel confident in their ability to predict the behaviors of others, their anxiety is low and adaptive behaviors are likely to happen (see Section 2.2.5.3 for more details on anxiety and uncertainty management). In case of violation of expectancies, there is a raised emotional impact, as a deviation from what people expect is arousing and distracting (Burgoon, 1993) and this implies the necessity for better emotional management with emotional intelligence (see Section 2.6.3 for more details on emotional intelligence). In addition, non-rewarding violator is also vulnerable to fundamental attribution error for his/her perceived 'negative' behavior, due to poor relationship (and thus lower familiarity) between perceiver and violator (see Section 2.5.3 for more details on fundamental distribution error).

2.3 Challenges in Handling Communication with Diverse Cultures

This section will discuss some of the ‘stumbling blocks’ (Barna, 1994) that need to be overcome when communicating with diverse cultures: projected similarities, ethnocentric minimization; stereotype, prejudice, discrimination; stress; language; building relationship.

2.3.1 Projected Similarities, Ethnocentric Minimization

Projected similarity refers to the assumption that people are more similar to you than they actually are, and it involves assuming, imagining and perceiving similarity when differences actually exist (Adler, 1991, 1997; Adler & Gundersen, 2008). Such false expectation creates an immediate potential for communication problems (Silverthorne, 2005), misunderstanding caused by misperception, misinterpretation, misevaluation (Adler, 1991, 1997; Adler & Gundersen, 2008), and inappropriate and ineffectively behavior (Adler & Gundersen, 2008). Adler (1991, 1997) explains this tendency as a form of subconscious parochialism:

I assume that there is only one way to be: my way. I assume that there is only one way to see the world: my way. I therefore view other people in reference to me and to my way of viewing the world (Adler & Gundersen, 2008, p. 85).

Under such parochial perception, people may fall into an:

Illusion of understanding while being unaware of ... [their] misunderstandings. ‘I understand you perfectly but you don’t understand me’ is an expression typical of such situation. Or all communicating parties may fall into a collective illusion of mutual understanding. In such

a situation, each party may wonder later why other parties do not live up to the ‘agreement’ they had reached (Maruyama, 1974, p. 3).

Such perception is similar to minimization (see Section 2.4.2 for more details on minimization) where the ethnocentric minimization assume similarity by seeing all human beings the ‘same’ under some single transcendent principle, law or imperative (Bennett, 1986). Ethnocentrism (see Section 2.4.2 for description of ethnocentrism) itself is the tendency to interpret or to judge all other groups according to the categories and values of one’s own culture (Ruhly, 1982). It is a belief in cultural superiority where people perceive their nation/culture as the center of the world and that their values of their culture is natural and correct and if other cultures do thing differently, they are ‘wrong’ (Triandis, 1994). Such ethnocentric worldwide is ‘industrial-age paradigm’ and is no longer valid in today’s challenging organizational environment (Harmon, 1988). What is required is a ‘citizen of the world’ who interacts comfortably with people who come from diverse backgrounds, hold different values and express discrepant belief (Pearce & Pearce, 2000). One of the possible reasons for people to have this tendency is that it reduces the discomfort of dealing with difference (Barna, 1994), by mindlessly managing anxiety and uncertainty (see Section 2.2.5.3 for more details on anxiety and uncertainty management) and making fundamental attribution error when others act ‘strangely’ (see Section 2.5.3 for more details on fundamental attribution error). Another explanation is the Western trappings (in the form of Western-centered universalism) permeating more and more into the world, giving the illusion of increased similarity, when different cultures wear Western clothing, speak English, use similar Western greeting rituals and own Western products (Barna, 1994; Mackinnon, 2013; Tsuda, 2010).

2.3.2 Stereotype, Prejudice, Discrimination

Stereotype, as described in Section 2.2.2, creates order out of the chaos of social reality (Stephan & Stephan, 2002), by making the world predictable to reduce the threat of unknown (Becker, 1962). However, it is all too often overgeneralized, inaccurate and negative (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996; Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994; Stephan & Stephan, 2002;), and is frequently used to dominate, disparage or dehumanize members of out-groups (Stephan & Stephan, 2002). It is one of the ‘stumbling blocks’ for communication because they (negative stereotypes) interfere with objective viewing of stimuli, and sensitive search for cues to guide the imagination towards the other person’s reality (Barna, 1994). As people often base their behavior towards out-group members on stereotype (where it provides guidelines for cross-cultural interaction and expectation for others’ behavior), out-group members often reciprocate according to the way they are being treated and thus falsely confirm the stereotype (Snyder, 1992). For example when a person stereotypes others to be reserved, he/she will treat others cautiously and formally, and others will respond in kind. Hence the expectation becomes reality, a self-fulfilling prediction (Stephan & Stephan, 2002). However when stereotype become inaccurate and negative, it becomes a barrier to effective communication with other cultures (Clausen, 2006; Hofstede, Pedersen & Hofstede, 2002; Lehman & DuFrene, 2011;). Stereotype is not easy to overcome as it is firmly established as truism by one’s own national culture, being used to rationalize prejudices, and being sustained by the tendency of people to perceive selectively only those pieces of new information that match to their realities (Barna, 1994).

While a stereotype is a ‘belief’ that something is probably true or that something exists (a cognitive response to other people), a prejudice, on the other hand, is an ‘attitude’, a positive or negative attitude toward a group or its individual members (an affective response

to other people) (Schmidt et al., 2007). It has a negative connotation most of the time, where negative prejudice is an antipathy based on a faulty and inflexible generalization expressed toward a group as a whole or toward an individual member of that group (Allport, 1954). However, people are prejudiced to some degree or another, and it is more accurate to think of prejudice as varying along a continuum from low to high (Schmidt et al., 2007; Smith, 1994). Therefore, a higher prejudice contributes to negative affect, negative cross-cultural interaction, cross-cultural ineffectiveness, communication incompetence and maladjustment (Stephan & Stephan, 2002). Discrimination in addition, is prejudice 'in action' (behavioral response to other people) (Schmidt et al., 2007), treating members of out-groups disadvantageously (Williams, 1947). It involves denying individuals or groups of people equality of treatment which they may wish (Allport, 1954), or actions designed to maintain own-group characteristics and favored position at the expense of the comparison group (Jones, 1972), or segregation and biases in the availability of resources (Schmidt et al., 2007) or in-group favoritism (Brewer, 1979, 1999; Otten & Mummendey, 2000).

Some of the possible causes of prejudice and discrimination include realistic group conflict and symbolic bases of prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 2002). Realistic group conflict is perceived conflict that rises from competition for limited resources (Stephan & Stephan, 2002; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Sherif, 1966); whereas symbolic bases of prejudice is conflict that rises from contradicting values and attitudes between in-group and out-group (Sears, 1988). Traditionally discriminatory behavior was considered to be the result of negative prejudice and associated with negative stereotype, or that stereotype, prejudice and discrimination were positively related (Allport, 1954; Brehm, Kassin & Fein, 1999; Brigham, 1971):

The traditional view of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination suggested a relatively straightforward relationship among these phenomena ... a greater degree of stereotyping would be expected to be positive related to prejudice ... prejudice ... would then directly predict [negative] discrimination (Dovidio et al., 1996, p. 283).

However, other studies have shown that the relationships between these 3 phenomena are generally moderate but certainly do exist at a lesser extent (Dovidio et al., 1996). The important implication of this is that discrimination can occur without prejudice and prejudice can occur without discrimination (Ryckroft, 2009; Weiten, Dunn & Hammer, 2012), and the study on such relationships is often very complex and influenced by many factors (Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue, 2006; Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Blagden, 2012; Dovidio et al., 1996; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010; Schneider, 2004; Whitley & Kite, 2006).

2.3.3 Stress

Anxiety was defined in Section 2.2.5.3. Anxiety also known as stress, is common in cross-cultural experiences due to the number of uncertainties present (see Section 2.2.5.3 for more details on uncertainty) (Barna, 1994):

Stress, indeed, is considered to be inherent in intercultural [cross-cultural] encounters, disturbing the internal equilibrium of the individual system. Accordingly, to be interculturally competent means to be able to manage such stress, regain internal balance, and carry out the communication process in such a way that contributes to successful interaction outcomes (Kim, 1991, p. 267).

The association of stress to culture shock and acculturation was mentioned in Section 2.2.1 and its relationship with adaptation by coping and learning was described in detail in Section 2.2.5.1. Too much stress requires some sort of relief which often comes in the forms of defense (skewing of perceptions, withdrawal, hostility) that behave as ‘stumbling blocks’ to cross-cultural communication (Barna, 1994).

Defense arousal prevents the listener from concentrating upon the message. Not only do defensive communicators send off multiple value, motive, and affect cues, but also defensive recipients distort what they receive. As a person becomes more and more defensive, he becomes less and less able to perceive accurately the motives, the values, and the emotions of the sender (Gibb, 1961, p. 141).

Stress, unlike other ‘stumbling blocks’, is unique on its own and often underlies and compounds other ‘stumbling blocks’: projected similarities is a form of defense mechanism to protect against the stress of recognizing/accommodating to cultural differences; use of stereotype is a form of defense mechanism to alleviate the stress of the unknown/cross-cultural encounter (Barna, 1994). On the other hand, if a person experiences stress over a prolong period of time while working with other cultures within the organization, he/she may experience symptoms similar/relating to culture shock: reserve energy supplies become depleted; person’s physical capacity is weakened; feeling of exhaustion, desperation, depression; strain of constantly on guard to protect oneself against making stupid mistakes (Barna, 1994; Selye, 1969).

The innate physiological makeup of the human animal is such that discomfort of varying degrees occurs in the presence of alien stimuli.

Without the normal props of ones’ own culture there is unpredictability,

helplessness, a threat to self-esteem, and a general feeling of ‘walking on ice’, all of which are stress producing (Barna, 1983, p. 42).

However, if the person do not employ defense to relief himself/herself, he/she may suffer from the strain of constant adjustment with physical body ailments such as stomach or back aches, insomnia, inability to concentrate or other stress-related illness (Barna, 1983). Such physiological reactions are not easy to avoid, as they are ‘alerts’ automatically set off by one’s biological systems as part of human natural response to anything that is perceived as ‘not normal’ (Oken, 1974; Toffler, 1970; Ursin, 1978).

2.3.4 Language

Language is a tool with which people make sense of the world and share that sense with others (Beebe & Masterson, 1982). However accurate interpretations do not automatically happen when people use language cross-culturally because of varying language’s characteristics (accents, symbols, perception, value, speech acts), complexities of nonverbal communication and cross-cultural factors (see more details on cultural variability in Section 2.2.3 and 2.2.4), that can create challenges when communicating with others (Schmidt et al., 2007). For nonverbal communication from the perspective of: individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, please refer to Section 2.2.3; high-low context, please refer to Section 2.2.4). This Section focuses on the challenges pose by the characteristics of language.

Accents represent additional variation in language, in terms of specific mode of personal discourse characterized by how people articulate certain words using a unique inflection or tone (such as common language but with Northern accent or Southern accent) (Schmidt et al., 2007). Again, spoken accents are subjected to possible stereotype (for example with typecast of Northern or Southern people) (Schmidt et al., 2007). Likewise

different accents of same language can be a communication barrier unless the non-native speaker emulates the native speaker more closely (Novinger, 2001). Therefore it is a daunting task for non-native English speaker to communicate with someone with American accent or Scottish accent or Indian accent:

Others may hear an unfamiliar accent and immediately try to relieve themselves of the communication burden by saying, 'I can't understand you' and sometimes what they mean is 'I don't want to try to understand you' or, in a more extreme case 'I don't want to understand you' (Hudley & Mallinson, 2013, p. 48).

Nevertheless, language is symbolic, where there is arbitrary and ambiguous connection between words (symbols) and the objects (referent, ideas or things to which they refer): same word (symbol) often means different things to different people (Adler & Proctor II, 2011; Schmidt et al., 2007):

If everyone used symbols [words] in the same way, language would be much easier to manage and understand, but your own experience shows that this isn't always the case. Messages that seem perfectly clear to you prove confusing or misleading to others. You tell the hair stylist to 'take a little off the top' and then are stunned to discover that her definition of 'a little' was equivalent to your definition of 'a lot' ... Misunderstandings ... remind us that meanings are in people, not in words (Adler & Proctor II, 2011, p. 162).

Since every word means something different to each person, this suggests that words don't have any meaning, it is the people who provide the meaning (Schmidt et al., 2007). Hence language is abstract in a way that any use of language involves some sorts of abstraction

(process of selecting some details and omitting others) where words (symbols) are specifically selected to represent the objects (Schmidt et al., 2007). Such relationship between symbols, thoughts and objects are well explained by Ogden & Richards's (1923) semantic triangle model, where one's thought 'symbolizes' the symbol and 'refers' to the object, so that the relationship between 'symbol' and 'object' is indirect (imputed), while direct relationship exists between 'thought' and 'symbol' and between 'thought' and 'object' (Nirenburg & Raskin, 2004; Schmidt et al., 2007). Such relationships expose the potential for misuse and abuse of language:

Language is often used to refer to things that do not, in fact, exist... if only people used words right, many real-world problems would disappear... speakers can avoid 'abusing' language ... that language can and should be made, in some sense, logical (Nirenburg & Raskin, 2004, p. 96).

We can only hope that others will perceive a similar relationship between object and symbol and come to a similar understanding of the thought being conveyed (Schmidt et al., 2007, p. 89).

In addition, language also shapes one's perception of others: language frames human expression, where the grammatical structure and function of language shapes human thought processes and the manner in which human perceive reality (Jackson II, 2010; Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956). Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956) further explains such perception in an experience-thought-language relationship: in experience-thought relationship, people experience certain things in their environment and form concepts (thoughts) about those things; in thought-language relationship, people then develop language to express their concepts (thoughts); in language-experience relationship, language itself influence how they see the world (Brym & Lie, 2010). The theory posits that language shapes

people thinking regarding what is important in their culture and defines how they perceive reality (linguistic relativity), and that language determines cognition or actually shapes people thinking (linguistic determinism) (Sapir, 1921; Schmidt et al., 2007; Whorf, 1956). This implies that there is a connection between one's language and behavior (Schmidt et al., 2007):

In the United States, we are highly competitive, and words and phrases from athletics are incorporated into our business speech (e.g., the ball is in your court; three strikes and you're out; take the ball and run with it). This also contributes to our linear way of thinking and being direct and to the point. By contrast, many European and Latin American countries emphasize relationships with many words and phrases used to characterize the nature of those associations and define the appropriate interaction. This further contributes to distinctive thinking patterns that incorporate relational loops that are more circuitous and meandering. When individuals conduct business in relationship-intensive cultures, much of what the listener thinks the speaker said is dependent on the previous relationship (p. 89).

Therefore in order to communicate effectively, a global communicator must be aware of the dynamic relationships between experience, thought (thinking), language, culture and behavior (Schmidt et al., 2007).

Different cultures use language differently as they place different values on speech: the West developed a rich tradition of speech, subscribing to the principle of the universality of meanings, as compared to the East, where they believed that language is 'limiting' one's thinking, as meanings are particular and full understanding requires mental unification with

the other person (oneness or harmony) (Lim, 2002). To the East, prudent speech is always encouraged (Waley, 1938):

If a gentleman is frivolous, he will lose the respect of his inferiors (p. 85).

Hence silence is often preferred to avoid saying improper or wrong words (Lim, 2002; Morsbach, 1976; Oliver, 1971; Smutkupt & Barna, 1976). Asian culture though it values knowledge, discourages verbalizing knowledge: for if one said is truthful, the verbalization constitutes a violation of modesty or manifestation of ignorance, and that may result in losing face (see Section 2.5.5.1 on face issues) (Lim, 2002). In contrast, the West place a premium not only on knowing but also saying what one knows (Wierzbicka, 1991), and see silence as ‘breakdown’ in communication (Hasegawa & Gudykunst, 1998). Therefore, slow speech rate is frequently employed in Asia to project the image of credibility, sincerity and trustworthiness, as compared to the West (Lim, 1997; Lee & Boster, 1992). Hence, in the eyes of the West, Asians are very ‘reticent’ (Kang & Pearce, 1983). Nevertheless, the West emphasizes the importance of reasoning and logical persuasion (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984):

This rhetorical tradition reflects in a profound way the Western cultural pattern of logical, rational, and analytic thinking. A primary function of speech in this tradition is to express one’s ideas and thought as clearly, logically, and persuasively as possible, so the speaker can be fully recognized for his or her individuality in influencing others (p. 11).

Hence, the Asian view speech and rhetoric in holistic manner, where words are only part of the total communication context, which also includes personal character and the nature of the relationship between the communicators: speech is aimed at social integration and harmony, rather than at the well-being of a specific speaker (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984, 2003; Lim, 2002).

Likewise, language is used differently in terms of speech acts: emphasis of global goal over local goal in Asian communication leads them to be less assertive and less expressive, as compared to the West (Lim, 2002), because Asians tend to be concerned more with the overall emotional quality of the interaction than with the meaning of particular words or sentences (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984), and so accomplishing current task or performing the intended speech act successfully by elaborating the informational content and reasoning with evidence is not as important as maintaining the relationship, as they believe in the long run it is their relationships, not their words that will help accomplish their communication goals (Lim, 2002). This implies Asians tend to suppress confrontation or expression of negative verbal message (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984), and this reinforces the non-confronting conflict styles of collectivists mentioned in Section 2.5.5.2. In addition, Asians also tend to suppress expression of their emotions as they deem being emotional to be lack of self-control, a frivolous act: Asians will say 'good' instead of 'fantastic' and 'not very good' instead of 'terrible' in a manner of hesitancy and indirectness (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984, 2003; Lim, 2002). On the other hand, high ambiguity is common in Asian message, stemming from: their language structure, for example the verbs come at the end of the sentence implying that the illocutionary act of a sentence cannot be determined until the whole sentence has been uttered; and their attitudes toward verbalization, for example Japanese can talk for hours without clearly expressing their opinion to another (Lim, 2002; Morsbach, 1976). Lengthy contact is suggested to decode the high context message (Lim, 2002):

What is verbally expressed and what is actually intended are two different things. To understand the real intention, what one needs to employ are not the knowledge of conversational maxims and contextual information but

pure intuition obtained through a lengthy history of contact with the speaker (p. 81).

Indirectness, often prominent among Asians, is expressed in manners of: avoiding verbalization; obscuring; not saying what they want; avoid precision and specification; manifest high degree of dissimulation; beat around the bush; not saying what's on one's mind; unwillingness to face issues in their naked truth; never saying what one really thinks; avoiding gratuitous truths; never showing one's real feelings directly (Geertz, 1976; Lim, 2002; Mizutani & Mizutani, 1987; Wierzbicka, 1991). Such expressions support the notion that collectivists (predominantly Asians) are high in context and adopt indirect communication style, while individualists (predominantly the West) are low in context and adopt direct communication style (see Section 2.2.4 for more details on high-low context). Indirectness-directness also play a role in giving and saving face, that the heavier the Face Threatening Act (FTA), the greater the demand for linguistic politeness, and hence indirectness is preferred over directness (see Section 2.5.5.1 for more details on face negotiation theory) (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ting-Toomey, 1985, 1988, 2005; Zhang, 1995).

Nevertheless, English is universally accepted as the language of business with organization because of its extensive business-related vocabulary (Katsioloudes & Hadjidakis, 2007; Neelankavil & Rai, 2009; Schaffer, Agusti & Earle, 2009). In addition, internet plays a role in spreading English due to the fact that computer hardware and software was developed primarily by English speakers who tailored it to English: during 1982 to 1995 it was difficult to communicate via internet in any other language that could not be expressed in the standard English alphabet defined by the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) (Greiffenstern, 2010; Romaine, 2009; Sheyholislami, 2012). Even

English is used by many, it does not necessarily mean that the language is equally understood by people from different backgrounds due to different language characteristics (as mentioned above) from country to country: for example ‘truck’ in United States is ‘lorry’ in England and ‘gas’ is ‘petrol’ (Neelankavil & Rai, 2009). Yet there are still many countries (such as Asia) where English is not their native language and this poses challenge to cross-cultural communication between native and non-native English speaker (Banutu-Gomez, 2011; Henley & Daly, 2004; Schermerhorn & Bond, 1997). Some researchers strongly advocate learning of another non-native language as part of cross-cultural competence (Aviel, 1990; Barnum & Wolniansky, 1989; Hawkins & Cummings, 2000; Herbig & Kramer, 1992; Kreitner, 2009; Ogbu, 2008).

Being able to speak essential words and phrases in the language of the local workforce is critical, but knowing the language is even better. This skills lends credibility to the leader and also increases the trust and respect received from their employees ... Americans are often critical of non-English-speaking participants in meetings and are impatient with mispronunciation and inadequate grammar, yet these same Americans are unwilling to learn the local language (Schmidt et al., 2007, p. 127).

However, it is a difficult competence to acquire (Jordan & Cartwright, 1998; Torrington, 1994).

2.3.5 Building Relationship

In many cross-cultural interactions, individuals may not be overly concerned with having smooth interaction but rather may take bold measures to highlight their distinct cultural identity (see Section 2.2.5.1 for more details on identity) (Abrams, O’Connor & Giles, 2002). This implies the challenging nature in building relationship during cross-

cultural communication (Barner & Barner, 2012; Rabotin, 2011). However, relationship is the foundation for trust (see building trust in Section 2.6.1), that leads to confidence (see confidence in Section 2.4.3), resulting in cooperation (see cooperative goals in Section 2.5.5.3) (Earle, Siegrist, & Gutscher, 2007; Grossmann, Prammer & Neugebauer, 2011; Hardin, 2002; Saunders et al., 2010; Sullivan & Peterson, 1994). Skills (language, job, technical, social) are required to develop relationship to be cohesive and functional, where mutual enjoyment and productivity can be derived through shared experiences (Schmidt et al., 2007; Taft, 1977). Relationship can be further distinguished into professional and personal relationships: a professional relationship is task-oriented relationship in which the parties' attention and activities are primarily directed toward achievement of goals external to their relationship; a personal relationship is social-emotional relationship whose primary focus is the relationship itself and the persons in the relationship (Deutsch, 1985; Lewicki, 2006; Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). However a relationship is developmental and multifaceted (Lewicki, 2006), if:

All relationships develop as parties share experiences with each other and gain knowledge about the other. Every time we encounter another person, we gain a new confirming experience that strengthens the relationship. If our experiences with another person are all within the same limited context, then we gain little additional knowledge about the other. However, if we encounter the other in different contexts, then this variety of shared experience is likely to develop into broader, deeper knowledge of the other (P. 97).

Since people come to know each other in many contexts, this implies that they may trust others in some contexts and distrust in other contexts (see Section 2.6.1 for more details on trust and distrust).

At the early start of relationship development, the initial interaction is often crucial if a relationship is to continue, for the initial social penetration proves more difficult in such cross-cultural context (Chen, 2002; Lee & Boster, 1991). This could be explained by: the tendency for individualist to self-disclose more (and hence more social penetration) as compared to collectivist (Chen, 1995, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1991); collectivists reportedly feel more uncertain interacting with out-groups than in-groups, as compared to individualists (Chen, 2002; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986); collectivists make greater in-group versus out-group distinctions as compared to individualists, differentiate in-groups and out-groups more in their perceptions of synchronization, personalization and difficulties of interacting with others (Chen, 2002; Gudykunst et al, 1992; Gudykunst, Yoon & Nishida, 1987). Nonetheless, communicators in initial interaction are usually less perceptive and less responsive, and they may need explicit message input and adaptive verbal strategies to increase interaction involvement and facilitates interaction (Chen, 1995, 1997, 2002).

After the initial interaction, is the relationship formation, where people enter into relationship because of personal liking for each other (due to perceived similarity), with experience of relationship closeness, commitment and satisfaction (Chen, 2002; Gurung & Duong, 1999; Kouri & Lasswell, 1993; Lampe, 1982; Shibazaki & Brennan, 1998). This implies that an awareness of perceived similarities (not just the obvious perceived dissimilarities) is important to relationship building with other cultures (Schmidt et al., 2007):

We are attracted to and tend to like people who are similar to us; however, similarity is based not on whether people actually are similar, but on the

perceived recognition or discovery of similar traits. When people think they're similar, they have higher expectations about future interactions. Therefore, this process of discovery is crucial in developing relationships (p. 69).

Perceived similarities in cultural and sociological backgrounds, such as values (Obot, 1988), language and attitude (Simard, 1981), behavior (Collier & Bornman, 1999), communication styles (Lee & Gudykunst, 2001) are proven to facilitate relationship formation (Gareis, 1995, 1999; Grant, 1993; Kouri & Lasswell, 1993; McDermott, 1991; Osbeck, Moghaddam & Perreault, 1997). This also suggests that convergence in communication supports building up perceived similarities and so helps in relationship building (see Section 2.2.5.2 for more details on convergence, communication adaptation theory). One of the obstacles to the establishment of perceived similarity is cultural distance (see Section 2.2.5.1 for more details on cultural distance) that creates perceived dissimilarity and conflict during cross-cultural communication (Triandis & Trafimow, 2003): the greater the cultural distance, the lower the perceived similarity or higher the perceived dissimilarity (Byrne, 1971; Triandis, 1995). Nevertheless, frequent interaction may lower perceived dissimilarity: the more interactions, the greater the chances that commonalities between the members of the groups will be discovered (such as common friends, common feelings, common reactions to events) (Triandis & Trafimow, 2003). In addition, the more interaction, the more likely it is that any stereotypes (see Section 2.2.2 for more details on stereotype) can be changed into sociotypes (valid and accurate stereotypes) (Triandis & Vassiliou, 1967). Hence when a person learns more about the others, he/she can make 'isomorphic attributions' about the behavior of others (Triandis, 1975):

When a member of the other group performs a behavior the attributions that the observer and the actor make about that behavior are similar and thus the behavior has a similar meaning in the two groups. Consequently, people feel that they understand what the other group is doing, and even if they do not like what it is doing, the behavior is not as threatening as it is when they do not understand it (Triandis & Trafimow, 2003, p. 377).

This supports the theory that people are 'more forgiving' towards in-group members for negative behavior, as compared to out-group members because there is less perceived similarity with out-group members (see Section 2.5.3 for more details on fundamental attribution error).

2.4 Proficiency in Handling Communication with Diverse Cultures

2.4.1 Dimensions of Competence: Awareness, Attitude, Knowledge, Skills

Competent communication is interaction that is perceived as effective in fulfilling certain rewarding objectives in a way that is also appropriate to the context in which the interaction occurs (Spitzberg's 1988), where the term 'effective' suggests that:

People are able to achieve desired personal outcomes. To do so, competent communicators should be able to control and manipulate their social environment to obtain those goals. This presumes that competent communicators are able to identify their goals, assess the resources necessary to obtain those goals, accurately predict the other communicators' responses, choose workable communication strategies, enact those communication strategies, and finally, accurately assess the results of the interaction (Wiseman, 2002, p. 209).

On the other hand, the term ‘appropriate’ suggests that:

The use of messages that are expected in a given context and actions that meet the expectations and demands of the situation. This criterion for communication competence requires the interactant to demonstrate an understanding of the expectations for acceptable behavior in a given situation. Appropriate communicators must recognize the constraints imposed on their behavior by different set of rules, avoid violating those rules with inappropriate responses and enact communication behaviors in an appropriate manner (Wiseman, 2002, p. 209).

Therefore, a culturally competent individual will require “ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts” (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 149). Nonetheless, definition of cross-cultural competence is fraught with potential differences (Ridley, Baker & Hill, 2000; Ridley et al., 1994; Sue, 2001). Some researchers define cross-cultural competence as cultural sensitivity (Ridley et al., 1994); levels of worldview (Trevino, 1996); skills necessary for successful cultural intervention (Sue, 1990); knowledge of cultural differences (Pedersen, 1994); cross-cultural awareness of attitude, knowledge and skills (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005; Pedersen, 2006; Sue, 2001; Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992); cross-cultural motivation, knowledge and skills (Gudykunst, 2004; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Wiseman, 2002); cross-cultural mindfulness, knowledge and skills (Ting-Toomey, 2004); awareness of one’s cultural assumptions (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994). From these rich arrays of description, the most prominent definition is from Sue’s (2001) Multiple Dimensions of Cultural Competence (MDCC), where she explains cross-cultural competence according to awareness of attitude, knowledge and skills. Nonetheless, many other studies on cross-cultural competence are done

based on the components of cross-cultural competence in terms of awareness of attitude, knowledge and skills (Carney & Kahn, 1984; Coleman 1997; D'Andrea, Daniels & Heck, 1991; LaFromboise, Coleman & Hernandez, 1991; Nwachuku & Ivey, 1991; Pedersen, 1994; Ponterotto, Sanchez & Magids, 1991; Sabnani, Ponterotto & Borodovsky, 1991; Sadowsky, Taffe, Gutkin & Wise, 1994; Sue, 2001; Trevino, 1996). On the other hand, Martin and Vaughn's (DOM, 2010) define cross-cultural competence as consisting of four components (awareness, attitude, knowledge, skills) that are dependent on one another and cannot exist independently. Such move is to distinguish between bringing one's cultural bias and beliefs into consciousness (awareness) and examining beliefs and values about cultural differences (attitude) (DOM, 2010).

A culturally competent communicator is sometimes described as a 'cosmopolitan communicator', or 'universal person' or 'transcultural communicator', where he/she: is not owned by his/her culture but is capable of negotiating ever new formations of reality and lives on the boundary: shows respect for all cultures; demonstrates an understanding of what individuals in other cultures think, feel and believe; appreciates the differences among cultures; is able to participate in other's world view (Adler, 1977, 1982; Bennett, 1977; Kim, 1989, 2001; Schmidt et al., 2007; Walsh, 1973, 1979). Other qualities possessed by culturally competent communicator also include: cognitive complexity necessary to perceive and consider alternative explanations of situations; mindfulness to actively processing information, to negotiate potentially problematic social interactions more effectively than mindless individuals, to focus on understanding other's perspectives, and to be mindful of others; rhetorical sensitivity to adapt message to diverse audiences; empathy to be more sensitive to the needs of others and understanding their point of view; active listening; tolerance for change, ambiguity; flexible and adaptable to accommodate behavior to people from other cultures; language skills; accurate prediction and explanation/interpret on the

behavior of people from another culture to reduce anxiety and uncertainty (by being experts in learning through observation, reflection and application); strong interpersonal skills; global mindset but also think locally; initiative and enthusiasm; ability to promote/achieve consensus; self-confident; commitment to product and corporate values; skills to manage team that work autonomously (virtual team) and communicate through technology (E-mail); long term orientation; work as equal with others; facilitate organizational change; encourage atmosphere of learning; approach conflicts in collaborative manner; behave in manner that demonstrate knowledge and respect for others (Barczak & McDonough, 2003; Black & Gregersen, 1991a, 1991b; Bureson & Caplan, 1998; Burlson & Waltman, 1988; Burgoon & Langer, 1996; Delia, O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 1982; Devine, Evett & Vasquez-Suson, 1996; Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Gudykunst, 1998b; Hart & Burks, 1972; Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980; Langer, 1989a, 1989b; Maznevski & DiStefano, 2000; McDonough & Kahn, 1996; Moran & Riesenberger, 1997; Odenwald, 1996; O'Keefe, 1988, 1996; Schmidt et al., 2007; Spitzberg, 1991).

Nevertheless, most of the competencies described above can be represented through transformational leadership, emotional intelligence (see Section 2.6.3 for more details on emotional intelligence) and cultural intelligence. Competencies are engagement of transformational leadership practice and they are important for the realization of transformational leadership (Cooper, 2010). Transformational leadership (with the dimensions of intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, individual consideration, inspirational motivation), is a more effective form of leadership globally because it is more consistent with people's prototypes of an ideal leader and so it is more endorsed across the cultures (Bass, 1985a, 1985b, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 1990, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Metcalfe & Metcalfe, 2002, 2003). Transformational leadership has been found to be more acceptable and effective in Canada (Howell & Avolio, 1993; Howell & Frost, 1989), Japan

(Bass, 1997), Netherlands (Koene, Pennings & Schreuder, 1991), Singapore (Koh, Terborg & Steers, 1991) and United States (Bass & Avolio, 1993). In addition, GLOBE project identifies that transformational leadership is positively endorsed by all cultures (House et al., 2004). On the other hand, emotional intelligence correlates highly with all the dimensions of transformational leadership; this supports the applicability of emotional intelligence across cultures (Barling, Slater & Kelloway, 2000; Gardner & Stough, 2002; Palmer et al., 2001; Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002):

Leaders who considered themselves transformational ... reported that they could identify their own feelings and emotional states, express those feelings to others, utilize emotional knowledge when solving problems, understanding the emotions of others in their workplace, manage positive and negative emotions in themselves and others, and effectively control their emotional states (Modassir & Singh, 2008, p. 9).

Another relatively new intelligence that is more cross-cultural focus is cultural intelligence, defined as an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in cultural diverse settings, based on Sternberg and Detterman's (1986) integration of the various loci of intelligence (metacognition, cognition, motivation, behavioral capabilities) residing within the person, and also built on the growing interest in emotional, social, practical intelligence (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Earley & Ang, 2003; Livermore, 2010; Ng, Van Dyne & Ang, 2012).

2.4.2 Awareness: Cultural Sensitivity

Since cross-cultural awareness concerns about bringing one's cultural bias and beliefs into consciousness (DOM, 2010) and recognizing any deep-seated prejudices and stereotypes that can create barriers for cross-cultural conflict management (DOM, 2011), this implies the

need to develop sensitivity towards cultural differences from other cultural groups (Adams, 1995). Cross-cultural sensitivity is a cognitive reaction that involves knowing that cultural differences and similarities exist and without assigning value to cultural differences (Evans, 1995). In attempt to address such cross-cultural sensitivity issue, DMIS (Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity) was developed by Bennett (1986, 1993) as a framework to explain the experiences of people in cross-cultural situation and the reaction of people to cultural differences (Bennett, 1986, 1993, 2004; Bennett & Bennett, 2004). The underlying assumption of the model is that as one's experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in cross-cultural relations increases (Bennett, 1986, 1993, 2004; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003). According to this view, experience does not occur simply by being in the vicinity of events when they occur, as it is a function of how one construes/interprets the events, and thus people do not respond directly to events but they respond to the meaning they attach to events (Bennett, 1986; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003):

Experience is made up of the successive construing of events. It is not constituted merely of the succession of events themselves. A person can be a witness to a tremendous parade of episodes and yet, if he fails to keep making something out of them ... he gains little in the way of experience from having been around when they happened. It is not what happens around him that makes a man experienced; it is the successive construing [interpreting] and reconstruing [reinterpreting] of what happens, as it happens, that enriches the experience of his life (Kelly, 1963, p. 73).

The extent to which the event of cross-cultural conflict will be experienced is a function of how complexly it can be construed/interpreted:

The more perceptual and conceptual discriminations that can be brought to bear on the event, the more complex will be the construction [interpretation] of the event, and thus the richer will be the experience (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003, p. 423).

The event in Bennett's (1986, 1993, 2004) framework is cultural differences. On the other hand, it could also be conflict event among diverse cultural groups in this study.

Cross-cultural sensitivity is not natural to any single culture, the development of this ability demands new worldview, because cultures differ fundamentally in the way they create and maintain their worldview:

The set of distinctions that is appropriate to a particular culture is referred to as a cultural worldview. Individuals who have received largely monocultural socialization normally have access only to their own cultural worldview, so they are unable to construe and (thus are unable to experience) the difference between their own perception and that of people who are culturally different. The crux of the development of intercultural sensitivity is attaining the ability to construe (and thus to experience) cultural difference in more complex ways. The DMIS assumes that construing cultural difference can become an active part of one's worldview, eventuating in an expanded understanding of one's own and other cultures and an increased competence in intercultural [cross-cultural] relations. Each orientation of the DMIS is indicative of a particular worldview structure, with certain kinds of attitudes and behavior vis-à-vis cultural difference typically associated with each configuration. Thus the DMIS is not a descriptive model of changes in attitudes and behavior. Rather, it is a model of changes in worldview structure, where the observable behavior

and self-reported attitudes at each stage are indicative of the state of the underlying worldview (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003, p. 423).

The DMIS framework is made up of a progression (or development) of worldview (or orientation) toward cultural difference, with 3 ethnocentric orientations (denial, defense, minimization) where one's culture is experienced as central to reality, and 3 stages of ethnorelative orientations (acceptance, adaptation, integration) where one's culture is experienced in the context of other cultures (Bennett, 1986, 1993, 2004; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003). As a whole, the more ethnocentric orientations can be seen as ways of avoiding cultural difference, either by denying its existence, by raising defenses against it, or by minimizing its importance, and the more ethnorelative orientations are ways of seeking cultural difference, either by accepting its importance, by adapting perspective to take it into account, or by integrating into a definition of identity (Bennett, 2004). Cross-cultural awareness is related to attitude, knowledge and skills in the sense that without awareness in the first place, one's attitude is just being 'politically correct', gained knowledge is insufficient enough to allow one to experience the cultural worldviews and acquired skills will only make one a 'fluent fool' (Bennett, 2004, p. 69):

So, the fact that you are knowledgeable about a culture may or may not be associated with the ethnorelative experience of acceptance. I know a lot of people who are knowledgeable ... who do not seem to have any general feeling [cross-cultural awareness] for those cultures. I suspect it is because, despite their specific knowledge, these people are not able to experience the cultural worldviews [cross-cultural awareness] of which those behaviors are a part ... People may have some of the linguistic or behavioral skills of another culture without any feeling for how to use those skills in culturally appropriate ways, a

condition that I have coined being a fluent fool ... like knowledge, the skills are not very useful unless they are accompanied by an acceptance/adaptation worldview ... Most commonly, people might have positive attitudes toward another culture without having the ability to experience the other culture [cross-cultural awareness] with much depth. I have observed this to be typical of efforts to appear ... politically correct.

2.4.3 Confidence through Capability Development, Diversity Training, Trust, Supportive Working Environment

Capability is purposive and sensible action (Weaver, 1994), an integration of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding used appropriately and effectively, not just in familiar contexts but in response to new and changing circumstances (Burgess, 1979; Stephenson, 1992, 1998, 2001, 2012). Capability is a broader concept than that of ‘competence’ (see Section 2.4.1 for more details on competence of awareness, attitude, knowledge, skill):

Competence is primarily about the ability to perform effectively, concerned largely with the here and now. Capability embraces competence but is also forward-looking, concerned with the realization of potential. A capability approach focuses on the capacity of individuals to participate in the formulation of their own developmental need and those of the context in which they work and live. A capability approach is developmental and is driven essentially by all the participants based on their capacity to manage their own learning, and their proven ability to bring about change in both. Capability includes but goes beyond the achievement of

competence in present day situations to imagining the future and contributing to making it happen (Stephenson, 2012, p. 3).

Hence competence focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness, while capability focuses not only on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness, but also on people's confidence in applying the knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness when face with unfamiliar circumstances (contexts) and unfamiliar problem (Stephenson, 2012). Capable people have confidence in their ability to: take effective and appropriate action; explain what they are about; live and work effectively with others; and continue to learn from their experiences as individuals and in association with others, in a diverse and changing society (Stephenson, 1992, 2012). Therefore, being confident is about developing one's capability, as capability development empowers a person, giving him/her satisfaction and self-esteem when his/her personal potential is realized (NCIHE, 1997; Stephenson, 2012). There are three aspects of being confident: confidence in one's ability to learn about the new context and to test possible ways forward from which one can learn; confidence in oneself (belief in one's power to perform); confidence in one's judgment if one is to take actions in uncertainty and to see initial failure as a basis of learning how to do better (proven powers of judgment in unfamiliar situations in new situations) (Stephenson, 1992, 1998, 2012).

In most instances when dealing with diverse cultures, people with little experience have less familiarity with the context and have not previously experienced the problems with which they are faced, and so mindless application of solutions that work for familiar problems may have disastrous effects (Stephenson, 2012). To develop a true and justified confidence in one's ability to take purposive and sensible action, and to develop characteristics of confidence (belief in ability to learn, personal power, power of judgment),

one needs real experience of being responsible and accountable for his/her own learning within a supportive environment (more details of supportive working environment at latter part of this Section) (Stephenson, 1992, 1998, 2012). This will involve getting oneself to familiarize with the unfamiliar context and problems; devising solutions and ways of applying them without the certainty of knowing the outcome, as a way of learning more about both the context and the problem (and this infers that the solution devised for the problem will be essentially propositional in nature, developments from existing understanding); having intuition, judgment and courage as there is no certainty of consequences based on previous experience (Stephenson, 1992, 2012).

Nevertheless, the implication of capability development is that organizational training programs (in particular diversity training) are important practices for building capabilities, and therefore diversity training is also fundamental to confidence building in handling culturally diverse groups (Ferreira, Erasmus & Groenewald, 2007; Haldeman, 2012; Hardina et al., 2007; Hurst, Kammeyer-Mueller & Livingston, 2012; Kozlowski, 2011; Phillips & Gully, 2014; Roberson, Kulik & Tan, 2013; Stephenson, 1992, 1998, 2001, 2012).

Diversity is about global competency. You should be able to work with anyone, anywhere, from any background (Phillips & Gully, 2014, p. 231).

Diversity training is training that is specifically designed to better enable members of an organization to function in a diverse workplace, by attempting to: create awareness of meaning and importance of valuing diversity; change attitude to reduce stereotype and hidden biases; gain knowledge on cultural differences, different communication styles, group-based prejudice or discrimination; develop skills needed to manage a diversified workforce effectively such as communication skills, conflict resolution skills, relationship building skills (Armour, Bain & Rubio, 2004; Avery & Thomas, 2004; Baba & Herbert, 2004; Bush &

Ingram, 2001; Cornett-DeVito & McGlone, 2000; Ferguson et al., 2003; Ferreira, Erasmus & Groenewald, 2007; Gany & Thiel de Bocanegra, 1996; Gudykunst, Guzley & Hammer, 1996; Hayles, 1996; Hill & Augoustinos, 2001; Kerka, 1998; Roberson, Kulik & Tan, 2013).

Furthermore, diversity training also promotes equality, fairness and inclusiveness, enhances trust, communication and cooperation, and creates a positive work environment (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Some empirical studies support the effectiveness of diversity training

(Abernethy, 2005; Anderson & Cranston-Gingras, 1991; Armour, Bain & Rubio, 2004; Brathwaite & Majumdar, 2006; Choi-Pearson, Castillo, & Maples, 2004; Combs & Luthans, 2007; Edelstein, 2007; Gany & Thiel de Bocanegra, 1996; Hebblethwaite et al., 2006; Hill & Augoustinos, 2001; Krajic et al., 2005; Kulik & Roberson, 2008; Majumdar et al., 2004; Nicholson et al., 2007; Roberson, Kulik, & Pepper, 2001; Tan, Morris & Romero, 1996; Thomas & Cohn, 2006). But there are also some researchers who find that the benefits from such training are negligible (Baba & Hebert, 2004; Bush & Ingram, 2001; Chrobot-Mason, 2004; Finkel et al., 2003; Hill & Augoustinos, 2001; Papadopoulos, Tilki & Lees, 2004).

There are several reasons why diversity training programs might have failed: off-the-shelf diversity programs not tailored to an organization's structure or culture are often ineffective at generating employee commitment, where employees do not see how the material is relevant to their jobs and many will see the training programs as a waste of their time; lack of management support to implement on-the-job changes and thus transfer is most unlikely to occur; lack of long term evaluation of training results; lack of rewards for increasing diversity; lack of empowerment to employees to acquire the knowledge and ability they need to apply these skills in the workplace (Combs, 2002; Kozlowski et al., 2000; Kozlowski & Salas, 1997; Phillips & Gully, 2014; Rynes & Rosen, 1995). Out of these reasons, the enthusiastic support and involvement of organizational management is the foundation of diversity training success: organizational management must clearly communicate the

importance of diversity as an organizational value and business goal, and clearly link the diversity programs to the mission and objectives of the organization to maintain employee's interest and commitment to changing their behavior (Phillips & Gully, 2014).

On the other hand, the relationship between confidence and trust (see Section 2.6.1 for more details on trust) is heavily discussed among some literatures (Barber, 1983; Coleman, 1990; Cook, Hardin & Levi, 2005; Cook & Wall, 1980; Deutsch, 1960; Dikken & Rose, 2010; Frost, Stimpson & Maughan, 1978; Gambetta, 1988; Hardin, 2002; Jones, James & Bruni, 1975; Luhmann, 1988; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; Misztal, 1996; Padua, 2012). When Deutsch (1960) considered the reasons why one person would trust another person to produce some beneficial events, he rationalized "the individual must have confidence that the other individual has the ability and intention to produce it" (p. 125). Likewise, Cook and Wall (1980), define trust as "the extent to which one is willing to ascribe good intentions to and have confidence in the words and actions of other people" (p. 39). Hence, confidence and trust are used interchangeably without any clear distinctions being made by some researchers (Coleman, 1990; Frost, Stimpson & Maughan, 1978; Gambetta, 1988; Jones, James & Bruni, 1975), but:

Confidence, it would seem, has something to do with trust, but the relation between the two is not easy to establish (Barber, 1983, p. 87).

Nonetheless, there are some attempts to differentiate confidence and trust (Bengtsson, 2000; Luhmann, 1979, 1988; Misztal, 1996; Padua, 2012; Pieters, 2010; Seligman 1997, 1998, 2001; Weber, 2012; Weber & Carter, 2003). Luhmann (1988) suggests that confidence often involves accepting/increasing one's own vulnerability without further consideration, neglects the possibility of disappointment, and does not presuppose a situation of risk (mostly because there is not really a choice given) (Bengtsson, 2000; Pieters, 2010). When there is a choice,

trust takes over the function of confidence: the risky situation is evaluated and a decision is made about whether or not to take the risk (Luhmann, 1988; Pieters, 2010).

The distinction between confidence and trust thus depends on perception and attribution. If you do not consider alternatives ... you are in a situation of confidence. If you choose one action in preference to others ... you define the situation as one of trust (Luhmann, 1988, p. 97).

Misztal (1996, p. 16) reasons similarly: “Trust is a matter of individual determination and involves choosing alternatives ... while confidence is more habitual expectation”. In addition, trust is an emotional and reciprocal two-way process; confidence is a rational one-way process (Padua, 2012). Confidence is externally oriented whereas trust is internally oriented; when disappointment occurs in the case of confidence, one does not attribute responsibility to one’s own behavior for that outcome, with the opposite being true in the case of trust (Weber, 2012; Weber & Carter, 2003). Confidence takes the form of an assurance that one’s expectations will be met; an assurance that is conferred by systemic arrangements and a culture characterized by a generalized belief in trust, or trust in trust (Weber, 2012; Weber & Carter, 2003). Regardless of various views on the relationship between confidence and trust, both confidence and trust share the same elements: voluntary engagement; uncertainty of consequences; acceptance of vulnerability (Bengtsson, 2000). Most studies would have agreed that trust is more fundamental than confidence, and if trust is dead, so too will be confidence (Baraldi & Farini, 2013; Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998; Siegrist, Gutscher & Keller, 2007; Taylor, 2010). Such conclusion is supported by Trust-Confidence-Cooperation (TCC) model (Earle, Siegrist & Gutscher, 2007; Siegrist, Gutscher & Earle, 2005), where it shows how trust leads to confidence and later result in cooperation (see cooperation in Section 2.5.5.3). This also implies that cooperation needs both trust and confidence.

Another school of thoughts gives a contrasting view on confidence-trust relationship, where confidence is based on performance and not on trust (Smith, 2001). Confidence in this case, concerns the establishment of explicitly predictable outcomes where information is objective, standardised and scientific and there is little opportunity to exercise discretion about action (Marsh & Dibben, 2005; Smith, 2001). In order to achieve “governance” and “accountability”, risk is considered as the “confidence interval within a bell-curve normal distribution” (Dibben & Rose, 2010, p. 163). In other words, the search for confidence is indicative of the need to check for more information instead of just taking the other’s word for it (that is explicitly and critically compare the performance of others for governance and accountability purposes), but such behaviour is very often being perceived by other party as ‘not trusting’ (Davies & Mannion, 1999; Dibben & Rose, 2010; Smith, 2001). This is akin to high uncertainty avoidance behaviour (seeking information to reduce uncertainty) mentioned in Section 2.2.3. People who seek performance-based confidence: rely largely on explicit (numerical) measurement of individual performance to establish a degree of confidence; intend to ameliorate the effects of personal judgment based on one’s trust of another; downplay the moral components of decision making (based solely on the trust of another person); rely more on evidence-based decision making (Davies & Nutley, 2000; Dibben & Rose, 2010; Smith, 2001). However, such intense focus on performance measurement, coupled with a range of potential indictments for any failure to meet organizational objectives has eroded the interpersonal trust between employees and managers necessary for effective professional relationship, because such monitoring acts is seen as intrusive and interfering and untrusting (Chao & Moon, 2005; Dibben & Rose, 2010; O’Neill, 2002; Smith, 2001). Hence the drive for accountability through establishment of explicit quantitative measures of performance standards (resulting in increased sense of scrutiny and critical comparison) is in direct conflict with interpersonal trust (Dibben & Davies, 2004; Dibben & Rose, 2010).

In addition, as mentioned earlier in this Section, confidence development calls for a supportive working environment (Stephenson, 1992, 1998, 2012). As countries have their own national cultures, so do organizations with their organizational cultures (shared values, beliefs and norms), being reflected in company policies, rules and procedures (Chairsrakeo & Speece, 2004; Ott, 1989; Sweeney & Hardaker, 1994; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Williams & Attaway, 1996). An organizational culture can be bureaucratic or supportive culture (Chairsrakeo & Speece, 2004; Ouchi, 1981; Wallach, 1983; Williams & Attaway, 1996):

Bureaucratic cultures tend to be rule intensive, non-innovative, non-cooperative, and slow to change. The roles and obligations of participants are usually contractual in nature and are set out in advance. Rewards are only provided in exchange for increases in performance by organizational members. Goal congruity is low, with each party using the other as a means for furthering his or her own goals. The organization typically minimizes problems of self-interest and goal incongruity through close controls, monitoring, and rules. Supportive cultures exhibit empowered, innovative, cooperative, and adaptive conditions. Members recognize, accept, and promote an obligation of interdependence [cooperative goal] that goes beyond the simple exchange of labor for salary. Managerial control systems are based on socialization, interrelationships, and the internalization of norms which leads to mutual commitment based on mutual interests [common grounds]. High levels of goal congruity [common goal] promote a long-term perspective based on equity of rewards and costs. Pressure to conform is high, and members share a

strong sense of pride, goal congruence, and identification (Chaisrakeo & Speece, 2004, p. 270).

2.5 Experiences in Handling Conflict with Diverse Cultures

2.5.1 Conflict: Underlying Sources

Some of the primary contributions to causes of conflict in today's organizations include: globalization with the consequent need for greater understanding and effectiveness in dealing with cross-cultural dynamics; constant and more rapid rate of change especially in external environment for organizations; greater employee diversity; flatter organizational hierarchies causing less managerial oversight, more self-managed groups and virtual teams; increasing work complexity which leads to numerous perspectives and viewpoints; increasing electronic communication (particularly e-mail) which causes less face-to-face contact (losing benefit of nonverbal cues) and more 'freedom' to communicate in confronting, potentially hostile manners (Burke, 2006).

Nevertheless, most literature that describes conflict arises mainly from either task or relationship issues (Amason 1996, Eisenhardt, Kahwajy & Bourgeois, 1997; Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954; Jehn, 1997a, 1997b; Jehn & Greer, 2013; Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999). Task conflict focuses on substantive aspects of the conflict and it happens when people disagree with each other on their task or content issues (Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954); there is disagreement among groups members' ideas and opinions about the task being performed, such as disagreement regarding an organization's current strategic position or determining the correct data to include in a report (Jehn, 1997a, 1997b). Task conflict has been labelled as substantive conflict (Rahim, 2001); real conflict (Harvey, 1974, 1977); issue conflict (Hammer & Organ, 1978); cognitive conflict (Amason, 1996; Cosier & Rose, 1977; Holzworth, 1983); resource-based or interest based conflict (Himes, 1980; Katz, 1964;

Rothman, 1997). Relationship conflict, on the other hand, focuses on affective aspect of the conflict and it happens when: people realize that their emotions and feelings on certain issues are incompatible while they try to solve the problem together (Amason, 1996; Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954); group members have interpersonal clashes characterized by anger, frustration and other negative feelings (Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999). Relationship conflict has been labelled as affective conflict (Rahim, 2001); phony conflict (Harvey, 1974, 1977); interpersonal conflict (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy & Bourgeois, 1997), psychological conflict (Ross & Ross, 1989); emotional conflict (Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999); value-based or identity based conflict (Cavey, 2000; Hicks, 2001; Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003).

Such classification of conflict (task or relationship) prompts some researchers to advocate the importance to distinguish between task and relationship conflict (Burke, 2006, 2011; Harvey, 1974, 1977; Holahan, Mooney & Paul, 2011) so as to focus on ‘real’ problem instead of ‘phony’ problem:

At this [interpersonal] level in the organization it is important first to distinguish between real and phony conflict ... real conflict [task conflict] involves real, substantive difference ... phony conflict [relationship conflict] consist of the hostile, negative blaming behaviour that occurs when agreement is mismanaged (Burke, 2006, p. 785).

The desire to separation task and relationship conflict is motivated by the evidence that task conflict is generally constructive while relationship conflict is generally destructive for team decision making and organizational effectiveness (Amason, 1996; Cosier & Rose, 1997; De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Duffy, Shaw & Stark, 2000; Friedman et al., 2000; Jehn, 1994, 1995, 1997a, 1997b; Pelled, 1996; Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999; Shah & Jehn, 1993).

Therefore the main objective for conflict management is simple: maintain task conflict and

avoid affective conflict (Amason & Sapienza, 1997; Holahan, Mooney & Paul, 2011). However, it is difficult to separate task and relationship conflict (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy & Bourgeois, 1997; Jehn, 1994, 1995; Simons & Peterson, 2000), as task conflict often lead to relationship conflict (Mooney, Holahan & Amason, 2007) due to fundamental attribution error (see Section 2.5.3 for more details on fundamental attribution error) (Holahan, Mooney & Paul, 2011). However individuals with high level of trust (see Section 2.6.1 for more details on trust) would be less likely to make negative attributions concerning the intent of those engaging in task conflict, and would respond constructively, accepting stated disagreements at face value rather than responding as if having been attacked; when trust is low, individuals are likely to interpret the ambiguous behaviour of others negatively and infer relationship conflict as a plausible explanation for the behaviour (Simons & Peterson, 2000; Tidd, McIntyre & Friedman, 2004).

Nonetheless, conflict within organizations can also be studied in terms of relationship with others: boss-subordinate; peer-peer; intergroup (Burke, 2006). 70% of employees in any organization reported that the worst and most stressful aspect of their job was related to their immediate supervisor (Hogan, Curphy & Hogan, 1994; Horgan, Raskin & Fazzini, 1990). Many employees feel their bosses do anything but lead (McFarlin & Sweeney, 2010). The better bosses are at supervising employees, the less stress there is: lack of control tends to induce stress and workers with bad bosses are more likely to report symptoms of dysfunctional stress (Lussier, 2008). Some of the things bad bosses do to create stress for their subordinates include: impose unreasonable demands and overwhelming workloads; do not allow people to have a say in how they do their work; create perpetual doubt about how well employees are performing; refuse to get involved in conflicts between employees and let them work it out; fail to give praise and credit for employees' contribution and achievements; keep people guessing about what is expected of them; bully and harass people to keep them

on their toes; don't allow people to form community and tell them work isn't a social club (Daft & Marcic, 2012).

Peer-peer (between and among peers) conflict takes the form of competition, competing for resources, attention, recognition and competing for best way to accomplish a task, and organizational politics (such as attempt to curry favour with some influential person in the organization to obtain what one may want, forming an informal coalition to defeat some intended action, or spreading negative opinions about someone to lessen his/her influence and status) (Burke, 2006). Stereotype (for example Americans supposedly confront conflict directly but there are some Americans who prefer to avoid conflict) is common in peer-peer conflict and to avoid stereotyping (see Section 2.2.2 for more details on stereotype), it is important to bear in mind that fundamental individual differences are not just based on cross-cultural differences, it can also be based on personality or overlapping roles and responsibilities (Burke, 2006). Another type of individual difference (that contributes to the greatest communication problem between two people) is being a sensing and intuitive type: people with strong preference for sensing in how they take in information want facts, specific, concrete information and rely on what they see, hear, smell (what they sense) to then make up their mind and decision; intuitive types prefer ideas, images, patterns and rely on their hunches (intuition) to make up their mind and decision (Burke, 2006; Jung, 1923).

Intergroup conflict takes the form of poorly managed differences between departments or between factions within the same unit, resulting in animosity, low morale, low motivation and low productivity (Fisher, 2006). Contributing factors to intergroup conflict include economic, value and power differences: economic conflict is competition over resources; value conflict involves differences in what the groups believe in, and value here varies across cultures; power conflict happens when each group wishes to maximise its

influence and control in the relationship with the other group, akin to a struggle for dominance, where it is often distinguished by the use of negative power through behaviours of threat, deception or manipulation (Fisher, 2006; Katz, 1965). Nevertheless, intergroup conflict is not simply a matter of misperception or misunderstanding, but is based in real differences between groups in terms of social power, access to resources, important life values or other significant incompatibilities, and many conflicts are mixtures of the preceding sources rather than pure types (Fisher, 2006). However this does not rule out misperception and miscommunication as potential sources of conflict, or to deny misperception and miscommunication can lead to behaviours that give rise to serious conflict, but it is unlikely that serious intergroup conflict can be sustained by itself for any period of time based solely on these subjective aspects because destructive conflict is typically over real differences, poorly managed, where destructive conflict is defined as perceived incompatibility in goals or values between two or more parties, attempts by the parties to control one another, and antagonistic feelings toward each other (Fisher, 1990, 2006). Likewise, poorly managed intergroup conflict can lead to in-group favouritism, discrimination, ethnocentrism (see Section 2.4.2 for more details on ethnocentrism), stereotype (see Section 2.2.2 for more details on stereotype) and fundamental distribution error (see Section 2.5.3 for more details on fundamental distribution error) (Fisher, 2006).

2.5.2 Cultural Variability and Conflict: How Different Cultures See Conflict

The need for better understanding and communication among people from different cultures is crucial in this world of the global village, and in order to facilitate communication and problem solving among people from different cultural backgrounds, one needs to understand the basic cultural differences and create communalities/micro-cultures (Kimmel, 2006). Kimmel (2006, p. 625) refers micro-cultures as “communalities in meanings, norms of

communication and behavior, the shared perceptions and expectations, the roles and relationships that can develop among individuals from different cultural backgrounds as they interact over time”. Culture shapes one’s view of reality and it is the shared culture (micro-culture) that allows people to believe that they share the same reality, and when people from different cultures come together, communication will breakdown when people fail to realize that they essentially occupy different realities (Kimmel, 2006).

Since different cultures have different mindsets and realities, each culture will also have different views of conflict or different assumptions about conflict (Gudykunst, 2004). People from individualistic cultures are “more likely to perceive conflict as instrumental rather than expressive in nature”, while people from collectivistic cultures are “more likely to perceive conflict as expressive rather than instrumental in nature” (Ting-Toomey, 1985, p. 78), whereby expressive conflicts are caused by hostile feelings and desire to release tension, and instrumental conflicts are caused by difference in goals or practices (Gudykunst, 2004; Olsen, 1978). In other words, people from individualistic cultures can often separate conflict issue from the person with whom they are having conflict, and people from collectivistic cultures generally mix up the conflict issue with the person of whom they are having conflict and do not make any distinction (Ting-Toomey, 1985). For example, Japanese take criticism and objection to ideas they express as personal attack (Nishiyama, 1971). In addition, individualistic cultures tend to take a short term view of managing conflict, as they are more concerned with the immediate conflict situation; collectivistic cultures tend to take a long term view of managing conflict, as they are more focus on the long term relationship with the other person, whether they can trust and depend on that person over the long term (Ting-Toomey, 1994a, 1994b). Hence members of collectivistic cultures use relational, process-oriented conflict strategies more than members of individualistic cultures; members of individualistic cultures tend to use more substantive, outcome-oriented conflict strategies

than members of collectivistic cultures (Gudykunst & Lee, 2002; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Most people in the world (predominantly Asian cultures) do not place a high value on direct, face-to-face confrontation to solve a conflict, because such directness is considered crude, harsh, uncultured and disrespectful and cruel, and very much prefer to approach conflict indirectly, circuitously, obliquely (Elmer, 1993). People from individualistic cultures are most likely to possess a “confrontational, direct attitude toward conflicts” (Ting-Toomey, 1985, p. 81), due to independent self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1998), and use of linear logic, while people from collectivistic cultures are more likely to possess a “non-confrontational, indirect attitude toward conflicts” (Ting-Toomey, 1985, p. 81), because of their interdependent self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1998), their strong desire for group harmony, and indirect forms of communication (Ting-Toomey, 1985). Self-construal is individual’s self-image and it is composed of an independent self and an interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1998). Members of individualistic cultures tend to deal with conflict based on independent self-construals, meaning individualists think only of themselves and the specific person with whom they have a conflict, during situation of conflict; members of collectivistic cultures tend to deal with conflict based on interdependent self-construals, meaning collectivists think about themselves and the members of their ingroups, during situation of conflict (Ting-Toomey, 1994a, 1994b).

The cultural high/low context (Hall, 1976) also plays a part in how people from different cultures enter into conflict (Becker, 1986; Chua & Gudykunst, 1987; Chung, 1996; Hsu, 1953; Lindon, 1974; Ma, 1992; Nomura & Barnlund, 1983; Ting-Toomey, Trubisky & Nishida, 1989). People from individualistic cultures, having low context, tend to enter into conflict when their individuals’ normative expectations are violated, and people from

collectivistic cultures, having high context, tend to enter into conflict when their group's normative expectations are violated (Ting-Toomey, 1985). Similarly, individualistic cultures (low context) placing emphasis on individuals' goals over group goals (Hofstede 1980, 1983; Triandis, 1988, 1995), will enter into conflict if they experience difficulty in achieving individuals' goals (Ting-Toomey, 1985), and in collectivistic cultures (high context), group goals have precedence over individuals' goals (Hofstede 1980, 1983; Triandis, 1988, 1995), will enter into conflict if they experience difficulty in achieving group's goals (Ting-Toomey, 1985).

Ting-Toomey (Ting-Toomey, 1994a, 1994b, 2004; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000) observes that members of collectivistic cultures prefer to use mediators (informal) to manage conflict more than the members of individualistic cultures. Having a mediator or a third party help, allow collectivist to avoid direct confrontation and helps to maintain group harmony (Elmer, 1993; Ting-Toomey, 1985). Power distance is taken into consideration when collectivists seek mediator for help, as the third-party mediator (perceived by collectivists) is usually someone who occupies high status position, has credible reputation and has good relationship with both conflict parties (Ting-Toomey, 2004). Thus collectivists look up to such mediator (due to high power distance) and willing to make concessions in the name of honouring the high-status mediator's face (and so saving their own face too) (Ting-Toomey, 2004).

In trying to establish a cultural identity, Kimmel (2006) illuminate the relationship between culture and conflict:

All people believe that their ways of thinking about and doing things are the best ways. They learn to evaluate other ways of thinking about and doing things that differ from theirs as unusual, wrong or inferior. Unless

they have had mediated experiences with everyday life in other common cultures, they seldom become aware of the roots or uniqueness of their own and other peoples' realities. Without such awareness, they are likely to misunderstand those from other cultures in face-to-face meetings due to basic differences in cultural identities. To question the universality of your own reality or mindsets or to acknowledge that the reality or mindsets of others may fundamentally differ from your own is disorienting. It is easier to believe that all participants in an international meeting, for instance, will use one's own established approaches. Contemplating the existence of a variety of approaches to and assumptions about negotiating is daunting and uncomfortable. If you are negotiating within your own common culture or with those from similar common cultures, your expectations of communality will often be met. When those from dissimilar common cultures are involved, there will be surprises (p. 629).

2.5.3 Bias: Fundamental Attribution Error

Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE) is the tendency to underestimate the impact of situational factors and to overestimate the role of dispositional factors in controlling behavior (Ross, 1977). In other words, one tends to prejudge others automatically and unfavorably by ascribing their perceived negative behavior to their internal characters, rather than to external environment. Sometimes it is compared with actor-observer bias (Fiske & Taylor, 1984) and correspondence bias (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Jones, 1979).

People (observer) usually perceive and think in terms of the more familiar patterns of their subjective cultures (Triandis, 1972). While it is difficult for people to fully understand others (actors) whose mindsets are different and inconsistent with their own, they are most

likely to assume that their mindset is the one that makes sense in any given situation, and when the communications and behaviors of ‘foreigners’ (unfamiliar person) are not agreeable by this mindset, they will usually attribute these communications and behaviors to undesirable character traits and label the foreigners as ‘misbehaving’ or ‘unreasonable’, rather than attributing the ‘inappropriate’ acts and message to other possible situational reasons (Glenn, 1962; Kimmel, 2006). In addition, the perceiver tends to pay more attention to actor’s behavior than the surrounding circumstances as actor’s behavior is more ‘attention grabbing’ (Heider, 1958):

If a person is behaving maliciously, we conclude he is a nasty person.

Factors that might have brought on this nastiness are not easily available or accessible to us, so it is easy, even natural, to disregard or slight them.

Thus, we readily fall into the fundamental attribution error (Bordens, & Horowitz, 2002, p. 85).

However, the theory of fundamental attribution error originated from a Western perspective, and Western culture emphasizes on personal responsibility and the salience of behavior:

Western culture expect individuals to take responsibility for their behavior; expect to be in control of their own fates, own behavior; expect others to have control as well; tend to look down on those who make excuses for their behavior (Bordens, & Horowitz, 2002; Gilbert & Malone, 1995). Therefore Western culture perceives internal rather than external causes to be primary in explaining behavior (Forgas, Furnham & Frey, 1990). On the other hand, studies have shown that Asians make more contextual references and fewer dispositional references than Europeans or Americans (Choi, Nisbett & Norenzayan, 1999; Miller, 1984). Such differences in attribution may be explained by the different thinking styles between Asian and Western cultures: Westerners use analytic thinking, paying attention primarily to the object,

categorizing it on the basis of its attributes, and attributing causality to the object based on rules about its category memberships; Asians perceive and reason holistically, attending to the field in which objects are embedded and attributing causality to interactions between the object and field (Choi, Nisbett & Norenzayan, 1999; Laufer & Lee, 2004; Lloyd, 1990).

Hence, individualistic cultures are more likely to encounter fundamental attribution error, while collectivistic cultures in contrast are less likely to encounter fundamental attribution error because they emphasize situational causes of behavior to a greater extent than individualistic cultures and they see behavior as more dynamic and driven by contextual factors (Morris & Peng, 1994; Stephan & Stephan, 2002). Such cognitive bias leads collectivistic cultures to expect positive behaviors from others to a greater degree than do people from individualistic culture (Stephan & Stephan, 2002; Ybarra & Stephan, 1999). From social identity perspective, people tend to blame out-group members more than in-group members for negative behaviors, and tend to give more credit for positive behaviors to in-group than out-group members (Fisher, 2006; Hewstone & Jaspars, 1982; Pettigrew, 1979; Stephan & Stephan, 2002). Nonetheless, fundamental attribution error perpetuates and strengthens stereotype and mirror images and also fuels hostility between conflicting groups as each hold the other largely responsible for the shared mess they are in (Fisher, 2006). But organization can leverage on this ‘shared mess’ and develop this into a superordinate goal (goal of resolving conflict) for conflicting groups to work together (see Section 2.6.2 for more details on superordinate goal).

2.5.4 E-Mail Flaming

Communication in the workplace has been revolutionized by providing employees with individual access to networked computers where Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) empowers staffs to interact electronically with one another within the organization

(Cecez-Kecmanovic & Busuttil, 2000), with e-mail (electronic mail) being one of the most familiar and widely used forms of CMC in the office (Baruch, 2005; Berghel, 1997; Derks & Bakker, 2010; Friedman & Currall, 2003; Gruz, 2011; Hughes & Wearing, 2007). E-mail flattens organization structures by enabling greater information exchange and enhancing socialization (Hampton & Wellman, 1999; Spence, 2002; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986; Turnage, 2007). On the other hand, the depersonalized nature of e-mail reduces social cues, and it is more prompt to negative exchanges, leading to conflict of disrespectful behavior that escalates anger and reduces productivity (Friedman & Currall, 2003; Harrison & Falvey, 2001; Landry, 2000; Markus, 1994; Moore et al., 1999; O'Sullivan & Flanagan, 2003; Turnage, 2007). Such negative e-mail exchange is often known as 'e-mail flaming' (Baruch, 2005; Cleary & Freeman, 2005; Flynn & Flynn, 2003; Landry, 2000; Markus, 1994; McGuire, Kiesler & Siegel, 1987; Siegel et al., 1986).

Flaming can be described as verbal aggression, blunt disclosure and nonconforming behavior (Parks & Floyd, 1996); obscenities and inappropriate comments intended to offend others (Aiken & Waller, 2000); sarcastic (Kayany, 1998; Thompsen, 1994); a concept emerged from popular discourse surrounding the online community to describe aggressive, hostile, profanity-laced interactions (O'Sullivan & Flanagan, 2003); speaking rapidly or incessantly on an uninteresting topic or having a patently ridiculous attitude (Steele, 1983); unfriendly (Jensen, 2003; Yerxa & Moll, 1994); uninhibited and aggressive communication (Landry, 2000); intimidation and insults (Baruch, 2005); verbal attacks intended to offend either persons or organizations (Reinig & Mejias, 2004); perceived aggression or screaming at the recipient when sender uses all capital letters in his/her email (Cleary & Freeman, 2005; Extejt, 1998; Geffner, 2007; Thompson, 2012; Wallace, 1999); perceived swearing at the recipient when sender colors his/her text in red (Cleary & Freeman, 2005); excessive use of

exclamation and question marks (Extejt, 1989; Halio, 1998; Reinking, 2007; Turnage, 2007; Wallace, 1999).

As a whole, e-mail flaming can cause an increase in stress-related illness and harassment, which has a severe negative impact on people's attitude and behavior (Baruch, 2005). Therefore the negative and emotional tone of email flaming creates and aggravates conflict within organization (Baruch, 2005; Cleary & Freeman, 2005; Friedman & Currall, 2003; Landry, 2000; Markus, 1994):

The occurrence of flaming in organizations is linked to a diverse set of triggers, such as the informality of the communication medium, the absence of a buffering 'time lag' that might moderate response, and a lack of nonverbal feedback that might moderate and augment the interpretation. Researchers theorize that email encourages uninhibited and aggressive communications because emailers are less influenced by social norms in this environment (Landry, 2000, p. 139).

One of the most common underlying foundations of e-mail flaming is misunderstanding, often produced by depersonalized communication and lack of social cues (facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures) found in face-to-face communication (Alonzo & Aiken, 2004; Landry, 2000; O'Sullivan & Flanagan, 2003; Walther, 1995). Misunderstanding, having less interpersonal rapport to cushion its perceived negative and aggressive effect, can lead to a downward spiral of mistrust and eventual impasse (Moore et al., 1999), and a negative and aggressive response bringing possible change in attitudes (Friedman & Currall, 2003):

The other is often seen as less moral than oneself, different than previously thought, untrustworthy, and perhaps an 'enemy' (Friedman & Currall, 2003, p. 13).

Nevertheless, misunderstanding can be explained by second-guessing theory (evaluation of messages is closely linked to the receiver's evaluation of the sender), where people believe e-mail messages are biased, so they 'second-guess' sender's intentions to try to get a truer version of the communication (Franco et al., 1995). Hence second-guessing leads to misunderstanding which can lead to e-mail flaming, and the end results can bring low morale and stress among employees and damage to organizational productivity (Turnage, 2007).

As organizational cultures have become less formal and relaxed, they have also become 'less civil' and 'more aggressive' even with minor transgressions such as not saying "thank you" or "please" (Turnage, 2007):

The business world has started to reflect the casualness of society at large. Scholars have cited employee diversity, re-engineering, downsizing, budget cuts, continually increasing pressures for productivity, autocratic work environment, the use of part-time employees, and contingent labor for the increase of uncivil and aggressive workplace behavior (Vardi & Weitz, 2004, p. 62).

This creates a 'lawless' environment conducive for e-mail flaming, where employees are perceived to be less respectful to one another, when even a slight digression from polite behavior can be considered uncivil and aggressive and thus leads to conflict (Turnage, 2007):

It [e-mail flaming] poses a serious threat to business engaged in electronic commerce as the exponential growth of the internet has transferred enormous power to individuals who are able to express themselves freely in a medium that has few or no laws governing such behavior (Alonzo & Aiken, 2004, p. 205).

On the other hand, uncivility itself can also be manifestation of possible work alienation and environmental conditions:

Both of these antecedent factors involve disconnection from fundamental aspects of the workplace (the work itself, the physical setting) and may lead employees to behave in rude, discourteous ways (Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004, p. 480).

Such isolation and disconnection couple with e-mail as a communication channel, allow people alternative way to vent and express aggression and hostility, especially when there is lack of social cues and proximity between communicators, and it does not take much for conflict to escalate (Friedman & Currall, 2003):

Although we expect that the absolute number of incidents that any one person experiences will be modest, the implications are still important, just a few incidents of conflict escalation for most people can create enormous problems and, as the number of workplace relationships managed by email increases, the implications of email escalation will grow exponentially (p. 1327).

Furthermore, people can fire off an email without thinking about the consequences in a ‘shoot from the hip’ style (Baruch, 2005), as email is fundamentally more ‘asocial’ than other forms of communication because people often forget that there is another human being at the other end (Friedman & Currall, 2003):

Emails are typically received and written while the writer is in isolation, staring at a computer screen, perhaps for hours at a time, so that awareness of the humanness of the counterpart may be diminished (p. 1329).

Nonetheless, how e-mail flaming will affect employees in organization will depend very much on the organization's culture (Aiken & Waller, 2000; Hobman et al., 2002; Mantovani, 1994). Majority of the messages in an organization are understood within the framework of its specific norms and culture, and if an email is misunderstood, it could be due to the issues within the organization's culture that are contributing to the problem (O'Sullivan & Flanagan, 2003). For instance someone working in an organization with high degree of ongoing tension may take offence to e-mails more easily than someone working in an organization with a more positive culture (Turnage, 2007).

2.5.5 Practices in Handling Conflict with Diverse Cultures

2.5.5.1 Giving Face: Face Negotiation Theory

Ting-Toomey (1985, 1988, 2005) draw on the works of Goffman (1955, 1967) and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) to develop her face negotiation theory to explain how different cultures manage conflict:

To understand the intercultural conflict negotiation process, we have to first understand cross-cultural diverse approaches that people bring with them in expressing their different values, norms, face-saving orientations, goal emphasis and conflict styles in handling a conflict episode (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002, p. 143).

Face negotiation theory attempts to provide the conceptual linkage between cultural variability (individualism-collectivism and self-construal) and conflict styles (dominating, integrating, obliging, avoiding, compromising) and face concerns (self-face concerns and other-face concerns) (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). Ting-Toomey (1985, 1988) argues that conflict is a face negotiation process whereby individuals engaged in conflict have their situated identities or 'face' threatened or questioned. In the context of face negotiation theory,

‘face’ is the projected and the claimed sense of self-image and self-respect in a relational situation (Ting-Toomey, 1985, 1988; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991) or the claimed sense of favourable social self-worth and the estimated other-worth in an interpersonal situation (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). And ‘facework’ is the set of interaction strategies to mitigate face threatening and/or face honouring situations between two or more parties (Ting-Toomey, 1985, 1988) or the combinations of communication strategies used to uphold, support and challenge self-face and other’s face (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Facework is employed to resolve a conflict, exacerbate a conflict, avoid a conflict, threaten or challenge another person’s position, protect a person’s image, as part of the process of maintaining and upholding face (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002). However, Ting-Toomey makes a clear distinction between facework and conflict styles, such that facework is not equivalent to conflict styles, as conflict styles mainly focus on resolving substantive goals (according to most existing American conflict literature), while facework focus on management of identity, relational and substantive conflict goals:

In sum, facework can be distinguished from conflict style in that the former [facework] involves specific behaviors that focus on a person’s (others’) claimed image as it relates to identity, relational and substantive goals above and beyond the conflict situation. The latter [conflict styles] involves a general pattern of behaviour during a conflict encounter with attempts to address and resolve substantive issues as a key priority (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002, p. 147).

According to Ting-Toomey, facework can occur during or after the conflict to manage identity image issues, and conflict management styles can include a variety of facework behaviors:

For example, the integrating conflict style reflects a need for solution closure in conflict and involves both parties working together to substantively resolve the issue. Facework behaviors that are consistent with the integrating style may include (but are not limited to) listening to the other person, respecting the feelings of the other, and sharing personal viewpoints in a face-sensitive manner (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002, p. 147).

Cultural values (as mentioned in Section 2.2.3), in particular individualism-collectivism, have both direct and indirect effect on facework behaviors that are mediated through individual-level factors and one of the key individual-level factor is self-construal (Gudykunst, Guzley & Hammer, 1996; Kim et al., 1996). Individualism-collectivism and self-construals are the predominant variables to explain cross cultural differences in face concerns (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002). Self-construal focuses on individual variation within and between cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Both dimensions of self (independent, interdependent) exist within each individual, regardless of cultural identity (individualist or collectivist) (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002):

In individualistic cultures, there may be more communication situations that evoke the need for independent-based decision and behaviors. In group-based cultures, there may be more situations that demand the sensitivity for interdependent-based decisions and actions. The manner in which individuals conceive of their self-images, independent versus interdependent selves, in a particular conflict situation should have a profound influence on what types of facework behaviors and conflict styles they would use in a conflict episode. In addition the interpretations or appraisals they engage in, in attributing their

conflict opponents' identity motivations in particular conflict scenes, should cast a strong influence on the face-related conflict negotiation process (p. 145).

In place of Goffman's (1967) two foci of face (self-face and other-face) mentioned in Section 2.5.5.1, Ting-Toomey re-phrases it as 'face concern', whereby 'self-face' is the concern for one's own image and 'other-face' is the concern for other's image (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002). Ting-Toomey claims that members of collectivistic cultures (interdependent self-construals) use more other-face saving strategies (using avoiding/obliging conflict styles and relational conflict resolution modes) and verbally indirect facework strategies (example, indirect questioning, relational pressuring) than the members of individualistic cultures; members of individualistic cultures (independent self-construals) use more self-face saving strategies (using dominating/competing conflict styles and substantive conflict resolution modes) and verbally direct facework strategies (example, criticism, reprimands) than the members of collectivistic cultures (Gudykunst & Lee, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 2005; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

2.5.5.2 Conflict Handling Styles

Conflict handling styles are general tendencies or modes of patterned responses to conflict in a variety of antagonistic interactive situations (Putnam & Poole 1987; Sternberg & Soriano, 1984; Ting-Toomey, 1997; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002). Hence conflict handling styles provide an overall picture of a person's general communication toward conflict, and are integrative combinations of traits (such as cultural background) and states (such as situational factors on ingroup-outgroup conflict) (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, 2002). In 1925, Follett (1925) made a significant presentation on her paper 'Constructive Conflict' during the conference by Bureau of Personnel

Administration that marked the beginning of the very first concept on organizational conflict management:

I wish to consider in this paper the most fruitful way of dealing with conflict.

At the outset I should like to ask you to agree for the moment to think of conflict as neither good nor bad; to consider it without ethical pre-judgment; to think of it not as warfare, but as the appearance of difference, difference of opinions, of interests. For that is what conflict means - difference ... As conflict - difference is here in the world, as we cannot avoid it, we should, I think use it. Instead of condemning it, we should set it to work for us (Graham, 2003, p. 67).

Her ideas on conflict analysis and resolution have become some of the basic premises and principles of the field in conflict management (Brech, Thomson & Wilson, 2010; Montana & Charnov, 2008; Mosley, Pietri & Mosley, 2010; Yehuda, 2010). According to Follett, there are three fruitful ways to respond to conflict (conflict handling styles): dominance, compromise and integration (Follett, 1925). Dominance means “victory of one side over the other ... easiest way of dealing with conflict ... but not usually successful in the long run” (Graham, 2003, p. 68); compromise means “each side gives up a little in order to have peace” (Graham, 2003, p. 68), but “conflict will come up again and again in some other form, for in compromise we give up part of our desire, and because we shall not be content to rest there, sometime we shall try to get the whole of our desire” (Graham, 2003, p. 72); integration means “a solution has been found in which both desires have found a place, that neither side has had to sacrifice” (Graham, 2003, p. 69) and “only integration really stabilizes” (p. 72).

Then Blake and Mouton (1970) introduce the first dual concerns model or two dimensional model of handling conflict (conflict grid), based on their managerial grid model

that is developed originally in 1964 to help managers to identify and improve their interpersonal management style (Blake & Mouton, 1964). The conflict grid assumes whenever a person meets a situation of conflict, he will have two basic considerations in mind: high/low concern for people and high/low concern for production of results (results here refer to getting a resolution to the disagreement) (Blake & Mouton, 1970). In other words, one's conflict handling style incorporates both concern for people and concern for production of results, in varying degrees, because the 'concern for' denotes the degree of emphasis in one's thinking that the person places on consideration for other people and getting results, and therefore it is the amount and kind of emphasis that one places on various combinations of each of these concerns that determine one's thinking in dealing with conflict (Blake & Mouton, 1970; Friedman et al., 2000). The conflict grid yields five conflict handling styles of withdrawal, smoothing, compromising, fighting and problem solving (Blake & Mouton, 1970). Among the 5 conflict handling styles, in the same accordance with Follett (1925), problem solving (collaborating or integrating styles) is most highly endorsed by Blake and Mouton (1970), as the 'fifth achievement' and is supposed to be the most constructive way of reacting to social discord (Blake & Mouton, 1970, p. 416):

The Fifth Achievement, then, is in the establishment of a problem-solving society where differences among men are subject to resolution through insights that permit protagonists themselves to identify and implement solutions to their differences upon the basis of committed agreement. That men ultimately will be able to work out, face to face, their differences is a hoped-for achievement of the future.

Building on the works of Blake and Mouton (1970), Thomas and Kilmann (1974) use two different dimensions (assertiveness and cooperativeness) instead, to develop their

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) model that depicts another 5 conflict handling styles of competing, avoiding, compromising, accommodating and collaborating. The dimension of assertiveness is the extent (how assertive/unassertive) to which one attempts to satisfy one's own concerns, while the dimension of cooperativeness is the extent (how cooperative/uncooperative) to which one attempts to satisfy others' concerns (Thomas, 1976; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). However, unlike Follett (1925), and Blake and Mouton (1964, 1970), Thomas and Kilmann do not single out any 'best' style to handle conflict, as they reason that there are different types of situation in which one particular conflict style is preferred over other styles: competing style is preferred when quick and decisive action is vital; avoiding style is preferred when issue is trivial; compromising style is preferred when goals are important but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes; accommodating style is preferred when you find you are wrong so to allow a better position to be heard; collaborating style is preferred to find an integrative solution when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised (Thomas, 1977).

Based on the theories of Follett (1925), Blake and Mouton (1964, 1970) and Thomas (Thomas, 1976; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974), Rahim and Bonoma (1979) differentiate the styles of handling conflict on another two different dimensions: concern for self and concern for others (Rahim & Psenicka, 2002). The dimension of 'concern for self' explains the degree (high/low) to which a person attempts to satisfy his/her own concern, and the dimension of 'concern for others' explains the degree (high/low) to which a person attempts to satisfy the concern of others (Rahim, 2001, Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Rahim & Psenicka, 2002). It can be seen from here that the Rahim's dimensions are similar to the dimensions of Thomas, which are all about concerns of one self and others. Rahim (2001, p. 28) argues that the dimension of concerns "portray the motivational orientations of a given individual during conflict", and usage of these dimensions are supported by studies made by Van De Vliert and

Kabanoff (1990) and Ruble and Thomas (1976). Likewise, Rahim combines the two dimensions and yields 5 specific styles of handling conflict: integrating; obliging; dominating; avoiding; compromising (Rahim, 2001; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). Taking the same stance as Thomas and Kilmann (1974), Rahim (2001) believes that “each of the five styles of handling interpersonal conflict may be appropriate depending on the situation” (p. 30): integrating style and compromising style (to some extent) are more effective on conflicts involving strategic or complex issues, the remaining styles (obliging, dominating, avoiding) are more effective on conflicts involving tactical, day to day, or routine problem. Each style is a “win-win style” to Rahim, as long as the style used can help to enhance individual, group and organizational effectiveness (Rahim, 2001, p. 30).

However, Ting-Toomey (1988, p. 221) criticizes that the “debate between three-style and five-styles approaches to conflict ... have failed to provide cross-cultural evidence for both ... theoretical and methodological claims over the various styles of conflict negotiation”. This is due to the existence of Western bias in most of the conflict management literatures (Kim & Leung, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1985, 1988, 1997; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002). For example in Western view, people who adopt conflict handling style of obliging and avoiding are considered having a ‘negative’ attitude (Ting-Toomey, 1988). Such indirect method of handling conflict is misinterpreted by Westerners (predominantly individualists) as lack of courage to confront the person in conflict, unwillingness to deal with the issue, lack of commitment to solve the problem and refusal to take responsibility for one’s action (Elmer, 1993). But such styles to non-Western people (predominantly collectivistic cultures) are mostly employed at all time to maintain mutual face interest and relational network interests (Ting-Toomey, 1988). Finding the 5 styles for “not covering the subtle nuances and variants in conflict management”, Ting-Toomey adds 3 other conflict styles (emotional expression, third-party help, neglect) to account for the “potentially rich areas of cultural and ethnic

differences in conflict” (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002, p. 159). Emotional expression refers to using one’s emotions to guide communication behaviour’s during conflict; third-party help involves using an outsider to mediate the conflict; neglect is characterized by using passive-aggressive responses to sidestep the conflict but at the same time get an indirect reaction from the other conflict party (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000).

At the same time, Ting-Toomey’s Face-Negotiation Theory (see Section 2.5.5.1 for more details on face-negotiation theory) posits that independent self-construal is associated positively with self-face concern, and interdependent self-construal is associated positively with other-face concern (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey 2003). The independent self emphasizes individual feeling, cognition, motivation, while interdependent self focuses on importance of relational or ingroup connectedness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1998; Ting-Toomey, 2004). Such association helps to view conflict handling styles in a cross-cultural perspective because independent-interdependent self-construal is equivalent to the cultural variability of individualism-collectivism (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Ting-Toomey, 2004). Independent self (or self-face concern) is predominantly associated with people of individualistic cultures, and interdependent self (or other-face concern) is predominantly associated with people of collectivistic cultures (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Oetzel, 1998; Ting-Toomey, 2004).

Nonetheless, because people from individualistic cultures tend to be concerned with individual images, task accomplishment and individual goals relative to the group’s interests, they also tend to exhibit more self-face saving conflict styles (see Section 2.5.5.1 for more details on face-negotiation theory), such as dominating; on the other hand, people from collectivistic cultures tend to see themselves as part of the group, place the group’s goals over the individual’s goals, and focus on maintaining harmony, and so they tend to display more of other-oriented types of face-saving styles, such as avoiding and obliging (Boonsathorn,

2007; Rahim, 1983). This is due to the coverage of individualistic conflict lens: outcome-focused; emphasis on factual details; content goal-oriented; emphasis on tangible resources; work at monochronic pace; use of personal equity norms; reliance on linear-inductive or deductive reasoning; facts and evidence are most important data; competitive or controlling behaviours; direct conflict styles; self-face concern; and emphasis on conflict effectiveness (Ting-Toomey, 1999). In contrast, the collectivistic conflict lens is more concerned with: process-focused; emphasis on holistic pictures; relational goal-oriented; emphasis on intangible resources; work at polychronic pace; use of communal or status-based norms; reliance on spiral and metaphorical reasoning; intuition and experience are most important data; avoiding and/or accommodating behaviours; indirect conflict styles; other-face concern; emphasis on conflict appropriateness (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The influences of individualism-collectivism on cross cultural conflict handling style is well-documented in a variety of settings and cultures, with majority of the empirical studies comparing collectivistic cultures with individualistic cultures (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002).

2.5.5.3 Cooperative Goal: Social Interdependence Theory

While Lewin (1935, 1948) suggests that mutual goals create an interdependence among group members, Deutsch (1949, 1962) extends Lewin's theory by positing that the tension systems of different people arising from their goals may be either positively or negatively interrelated, and develop a theory of cooperation and competition that serves as the heart of social interdependence theory (Coleman, 2011; Lovat et al., 2010). Deutsch (1949, 1962) conceptualizes two types of social interdependence: positive interdependence (cooperative goal structure) and negative interdependence (competitive goal structure). A cooperative goal structure is one where the goals of the separate individuals are so linked together that there is a positive correlation between their goal attainments; a competitive goal

structure is one where the goals of the separate individuals are not so linked together and there is a negative correlation between their goal attainments (Johnson & Johnson, 1974, 2005, 2009). According to Johnson and Johnson (1989, 2005), social interdependence exists when individuals share common goals, and each individual's goal (individual's outcomes) is affected by the actions of the others. The basic principle of social interdependence theory is that how participants' goals are structured (cooperative or competitive) determines how they interact (promotive or oppositional) and the interaction pattern determines the outcomes (high/low achievement and more/less positive social relationship) of the situation (Deutsch, 1949, 1962; Johnson, 1970; Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2005, 2009). In this principle, the cause and effect can go both ways and is best described by Deutsch's (1985, 2006) 'crude law of social relations'. This law predicts that if one behaves in a cooperative way toward another, the other person will behave in a cooperative manner too; likewise if one behaves in a competitive way toward another, the other person will behave in a competitive manner too (Deutsch, 2006). In brief, social interdependence theory states that how individual goal is structured (whether it is a cooperative or competitive goal), will predict the most likely interaction patterns (whether it is promotive or oppositional interaction) to be carried out by that individual, and in turn will also predict the mostly likely outcomes (whether it is high/low achievement or more/less positive social relationships) to be achieved by that individual (Deutsch, 1949, 1962; Johnson, 1970; Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2005, 2009).

Nevertheless, social interdependence theory plays a central role in conflict management (Deutsch, 1973; Johnson & Johnson, 2005; Tjosvold, 1991). In a situation of conflict, likewise, most people will have a mix of cooperative and competitive motives in their effort to settle the conflict, and whether the people involved have a cooperative orientation or a competitive orientation is decisive in determining its course and outcomes (Deutsch, 2006):

If one has systematic knowledge of the effects of cooperative and competitive processes, one has systematic knowledge of the conditions that typically give rise to such processes and, by extension, to the conditions that affect whether a conflict takes a constructive or destructive course (p.31).

In other words, a cooperative approach (with effective cooperative problem-solving processes) to conflict management will give rise to constructive conflict (where conflict is the mutual problem to be managed cooperatively); a competitive approach (with an ineffective competitive processes) to conflict management will give rise to destructive conflict (where conflict is in a win-lose situation) (Deutsch, 2006). The social interdependence theory serves here as a general intellectual framework for understanding what goes in conflicts and how to manage the conflict (Deutsch, 1973, 2006). Thus conflict management is about restoring cooperation among disputants and reducing competitive behavior (Deutsch, 1973, Johnson & Johnson, 2005). There have been numerous empirical studies on social interdependence being conducted in many countries (in North America, Asia, Southeast Asia, Middle East, Africa, Europe) and the findings consistently show working cooperatively creates far more positive relationships among culturally diverse participants than does working competitively or individually (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2005) and thus implies the cross-cultural effectiveness of the theory (Chen & Tjosvold, 2008; Chen, Tjosvold, & Fang, 2005; Tjosvold et al., 2003; Wong, Tjosvold & Lee, 1992).

Social interdependence theory on cooperation-competition is related to Thomas and Kilmann's (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974) 2 dimensions of assertiveness and cooperativeness (in Section 2.5.5.2) that are used to depict the 5 conflict styles. The dimension of assertiveness (extent to satisfy one's concerns) is the similar as being competitive in pursuing one's goal and the dimension of cooperativeness (extent to satisfy others' concerns) is equivalent to

pursing mutual goal. In terms of Hofstede's (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 2001) value dimensions (in Section 2.2.3), individualists (being more competitive) will place emphasis on individuals' goals over group goals and collectivists (being more cooperative) will focus on group goals that have precedence over individuals' goals. Social interdependence theory also finds its place in Ting-Toomey's (Ting-Toomey, 2005) face negotiation theory (in Section 2.5.5.1) where collectivists or interdependent self (being cooperative) are more concern of other face and use avoiding/obliging (cooperative in nature) conflict styles; individualists or independent self (being more competitive) are more concern of own face and use dominating/competing (competitive in nature) conflict styles.

2.6 Challenges in Handling Conflict with Diverse Cultures

2.6.1 Building Trust

When conflict happens in culturally diverse groups, there are often higher levels of distrust, often closely associated with miscommunication, stress, diminishing team work and productivity (Adler, 1991, 1997; Proehl, 1996). Even in the absence of conflict, developing and maintaining trust between different cultures is already a formidable challenge: people from different cultures often bring to relationship building efforts (see Section 2.3.5 for more details on building relationship) foreign and different values and beliefs, particular behaviors and incompatible assumptions, which can prevent successful interactions and fruitful collaboration (Ariño Martín, de la Torre & Ring, 2001; Branzei, Vertinsky & Camp II, 2007; Dietz, Gillespie & Chao, 2010; Farris, Senner & Butterfird, 1973; Thompson, 1996). Rousseau et al., (1998) provide a cross-disciplinary, convergent and integrative definition of trust as:

A psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability [to take risk] based upon positive expectations [accurate prediction] of the intentions or behavior of another (p. 395).

Trust as ‘positive expectations’ of others’ conduct, is based on perceived ability (the group of skills, competencies and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain), perceived benevolence (perception of a positive orientation of the trustee toward the trustor) and perceived integrity (perception that the trustee consistently adheres to a set of principles acceptable to the trustor such as honesty and fairness) (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). On the other hand, conditions required for trust to take place include risk and interdependence (Rousseau et al., 1998). Being vulnerable implies that there is something of importance to be lost and making oneself vulnerable is taking risk willingly (Boss, 1978; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; Zand, 1972). Risk creates an opportunity for trust, which leads to risk taking that supports a sense of trust when the expected behavior materializes (Coleman, 1990; Das & Teng, 1998; Rousseau et al., 1998;). Moreover, trust would not be needed if actions could be undertaken with complete certainty with no risk involved, where the source of risk is the uncertainty regarding whether other communicator intends to act appropriately (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Rousseau et al., 1998;).

Our views about trust are constantly being modified by our experiences.

One aspect of trust that we constantly modify is our accuracy in assessing the risks associated with trusting. Risk reminds us of our ignorance or uncertainty about other people’s behavior. To trust someone is to be able to make an accurate prediction that his behavior will be cooperative. We perceive a situation as bearing risk if entering this situation might lead to negative consequences and if we are not able to control the occurrence of

these consequences. The degree of risk is perceived to be higher the more negative the consequences are and the less we can control them. Trust allows us to engage in risk-taking. The assessment of risk is a process by which we keep ourselves open to evidence, acting as if the other person can be trusted. Risk taking is highly dependent upon a person's sense of his own worth. The deeper one's doubts about oneself, the greater the fear of rejection, and the less likely one is to take risk that he cannot control. A person brings his past [experiences] to each situation, which is also key in assessing risk (Bruhn, 2001, p. 25).

As for interdependence, it is the second condition of trust where the interests of one party cannot be achieved without dependence upon another person: as interdependence increases, trust also increases (Maoz, 2011; Rousseau et al., 1998; Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). This also punctuates the importance of trust in cooperative goal, where identification with the organization's goals leads individuals to trust the organization and share a presumptive trust of others within it (see Section 2.5.5.3 for more details on cooperative goals and social interdependence theory) (Adair & Brett, 2004; Adams, Carlson & Hamm, 1990; Deutsch, 1964; Kramer, 2001):

The connection between trust and perceived vulnerability tells us to focus on developing cooperative environments that reduce the vulnerability connected to extending and rewarding trust. The objective is to create cooperative engagements [cooperative goal] that engender a transformation from distrust ... to robust and widespread trust (Lenard, 1975, p. 142).

The level of intensity of risk involved determines the level of trust that will be experienced. When risks are shared and perceived to be equal, the likelihood of trust is greater ... people are more likely to trust one another if they have a shared goal [cooperative goal] they can both realize (Bruhn, 2001, p. 25).

Nevertheless, the above description establishes the association between trust and expectation: trust concerns expectations of things hoped for (Lewicki, McAllister & Bies, 1998). This infers that level of trust is low when expectations are violated (negative expectation) (see Section 2.2.5.4 for more details on expectation violation) (Kasperson & Kasperson, 2005; Kramer & Cook, 2004). Trust is also associated with communication facilitation (Butler, Cantrell & Flick, 1999; Zand, 1972):

Individuals who trust one another may not communicate accurately, but this doesn't need to be an impediment to getting something done! Because they trust, they feel that it is not absolutely necessary to figure out precisely what the other is trying to say (Deal & Kennedy, 2000, p. 164).

Such communication facilitation could be explained by the nature of trust in reducing complexity, as compared to distrust that demands the need for evidence, verification and so results in more complexity (Marsh & Dibben, 2005):

Trust reduces social complexity by going beyond available information and generalizing expectations of behavior in that it replaces missing information with an internally guaranteed security (Luhmann, 1979, p. 93).

Reducing complexity means reducing uncertainty, and this highlights the possible role of trust in managing anxiety and uncertainty during the adaptation process when communicating with diverse cultures (see Section 2.2.5.3 for more details on anxiety and uncertainty management). Likewise, there is link between trust and problem solving (Butler, Cantrell & Flick, 1999; Zand, 1972):

A trusting environment is not an environment that is in unanimity or uniformity or where agreement is easy to come by, but instead it is where individuals feel a sense of comfort in knowing the intentions of their colleagues are not designed to harm them but rather to achieve the objectives of the organization, and also where conflict is seen as an opportunity for creative problem solving (Notter & Blair, 2004).

Nonetheless, trust is built on perceive similarities (see Section 2.3.5 for more details on perceived similarities) (Brake, 2006; Haslam et al., 2001):

Trust is dependent on shared values and common personal experiences. Conversely, a lack of similarities heightens suspicions and intensifies remoteness. Changing speech from the ‘I’ habit to the ‘we’ paradigm and focusing on common goals increase the perception of similarities and promote trust (Kiser, 2010, p. 393).

Because of perceived similarities, attributions are made ‘favorably’ to other ‘similar’ people even when in situation of conflict (see Section 2.3.5 and 2.5.3 for more details on perceived similarities and fundamental attribution error) (Lewicki, 2006; Miller & Rempel, 2004):

When high trusting parties engage in conflict, they tend to see the best in their partner’s motives because they make different attributions about the

conflict compared to low trusting parties. The determinant of whether relationships maintain or dissolve in a conflict may be due to the attributions parties make about the other's motives, determined by the existing level of trust (Lewicki, 2006, p. 96).

The connection between trust and conflict is an obvious one, where trust is like the 'glue' that holds a relationship together: if individuals trust each other, they can work through conflict relatively easily; if they do not trust each other, conflict often becomes destructive and resolution is more difficult (Lewicki, 2006). When trust is violated (obtained information does not conform to one's expectation of others' behavior) it can lead to undesirable consequences: reduction in subsequent trust and cooperation (Deutsch, 1958; 1973; Kramer, 1996; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Morrison & Robinson, 1997); stifling of mutual support and information sharing (Bies & Tripp, 1996); reduction in level of organizational citizenship behavior and job performance (Robinson, 1996); low employee morale (Berry, 1999).

2.6.2 Working as a Team: Superordinate (Common) Goal, Common Ground

The optimistic view on diversity within a global organization holds that diversity will lead to increased variety of perspectives and approaches to problem and to knowledge sharing and hence lead to higher team performance (Bassett-Jones & Lloyd, 2005; Brannen & Salk, 2000; Cox & Blake, 1991; Ferdman, 2014; Moss-Kanter, 1983; Stahl et al., 2010; Williams, 1998). However, contradicting evidences favor a more pessimistic view that diversity creates social division which in turn creates negative team performance (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Ferdman, 2014; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Jackson & Joshi, 2011; Kochan et al., 2003; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Northcraft et al., 1995; Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; William & O'Reilly, 1998). Within a global organization, employees are departmentized with different responsibilities and goals: such structure results in competing

goals that can lead to conflict (Webber, 2002). For example, Research and Development (R&D) is rewarded for creating new products, marketing is rewarded for creating and maintaining markets and satisfied customers, while manufacturing is charged with efficient utilization of resources; therefore, marketing wants broad product lines, manufacturing wants narrower product lines and R&D wants to develop revolutionary new products (Song, Montoya-Weiss & Schmidt, 1997). The greater the diversity, the less cohesiveness there is in the work team because of divergent views and values, unfamiliar language, difficulty in communication, and all these produce increased conflict within the team, resulting in less integration (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Smith et al., 1994; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). Nonetheless, in order to realize the full potential and positive impact of such diversity, organizational (or management) intervention is required to facilitate cooperation and build a climate of trust within the organization (see Section 2.6.1 for more details on trust) (Griffin & Hauser, 1996; Hackman & Morris, 1975; Sethi, 2000; Webber, 2002; Webber & Dohanue, 2001). Cooperation through cooperative goal was mentioned in Section 2.5.5.3. This Section will look at cooperation through superordinate goal.

Superordinate goals are common goals that are compelling and highly appealing to members of two or more groups in conflict but which cannot be attained by the resources and energies of the groups separately, and they are goals attained only when groups pull together (Sherif, 1958). The presence of superordinate goals allows recategorization (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Miller, 2002; Wilder, 1986) to occur, where recategorization is one of the strategies to prevent conflicts, especially those that are identity-based (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2007). A recategorization strategy reduces the emphasis on boundaries between groups, and encourages group-level thinking rather than nation: old boundaries between groups are deconstructed and a new inclusive group is formed or emphasized where it is within such group that both in-group and out-group share the same higher-order identity (Brown &

Turner, 1981; Doise, 1978; Ferguson & Porter, 2013; Gaertner et al., 1993; Sherif et al., 1961). Such ‘new higher-order identity’ or ‘dual-identity’ (Dovidio, Kawakami & Gaertner, 2000; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Gaertner et al., 1996) is similar to the ‘new cross-cultural identity’ in Section 2.2.5.1 developed during adaptation. Such recategorization of a person as an in-group member rather than as an out-group member has been demonstrated to produce greater perception of shared beliefs, to facilitate empathy, to reduce blame for negative outcomes, and to reduce bias by extending the benefits of in-group favoritism to former out-group members (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2007; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Gaertner et al., 1996). Very often, organizational goal is used as superordinate goal that is more important to both parties in conflict than their individual/group goals (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2007; Griffin & Moorhead, 2012; Keyton, 2011;). In doing so, implies the need to increase the salience, relevance and importance of belonging to the organization as a social category for all organizational members and so the organization itself becomes the all-inclusive identity group (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2007; Tsui & Gutek, 1999). Therefore to resolve conflict effectively is to appeal to a superordinate goal, to focus the parties on a larger issue on which they both agree, and this helps them realize their similarities rather than their differences (Nelson & Quick, 2013).

Finding common ground often means establishing a superordinate (common) goal (Elliott, Gray & Lewicki, 2003). However common ground is not just about superordinate (common) goal only, it is about finding commonalities among the differences, about shared knowledge and beliefs, or similar ways of reasoning and thinking or common interest or common enemy (Carnevale, 2006; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Devlin, 1999; LeBaron & Pillay, 2006; McMahon, 2009; McTear & King, 1991; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Common ground can also be viewed as common needs as defined by Maslow’s (1943, 1954, 1971) hierarchy of needs, ranging from the most basic physiological needs (less defined by

culture and so contain more of what could be considered areas of common ground) to higher socio-psychological needs (more cultural and value laden and less likely to be the starting points for finding common ground) (González, 2009):

At its most basic, common ground consists of those things all humans share because they are part of our most basic needs. Even groups with deep seated antagonisms place high priority on satisfying similar things: food and water, caring for children, sleep, fresh air, and so on. From these basics we can move up the ladder of human endeavors to those that are more nuanced by culture and therefore by differences in viewpoints. In many cases of conflict, common ground consists of things that are not part of the conflict and are shared by all sides. As a result, they are not in dispute (p. 74).

Finding common ground between two groups in situation of conflict can lead to a reduction in conflict (Cohen & Insko, 2008; Gaertner et al., 1999; Sanderson, 2010; Slavin & Madden, 1979; Swaab et al., 2007). When there is common ground, group members perceive there is something in common: the attractiveness of out-group members increases while biases and discrimination decreases resulting in greater cooperation and forgiveness (Sanderson, 2010; Sherif, 1966). Nevertheless, finding common ground is often used in several conflict management strategies: collaborative dialogue (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001); interest-based negotiation (Fisher & Ury, 1981); reconciliation (Trompenaars, 1993); problem solving (Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003); double-swing model (Yoshikawa, 1987).

2.6.3 Emotional Self-Regulation: Emotional Intelligence, Reframing, Reflection

Conflict is fundamentally emotionally created and driven process (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). It is a daunting challenge to nurture positive emotions (such as hope,

confidence, respect and warmth) and limit negative emotions (such as fear, anger, humiliation, guilt and shame) in conflict situations (Lindner, 2006).

Fear causes tunnel vision, reducing the range of one's perceptions, thoughts and choices, putting one at risk in making suboptimal decisions, and operates malignly in conflict situation; anger happens when one infer/believe that he/she was treated with disrespect, often due to fundamental distribution error (see Section 2.5.3 for more details on fundamental distribution error), and this may lead each side to overestimate the other's hostility as well as one's own benignity; humiliation makes one feels unwanted and degraded, creates rifts, rage or aggression, destroy trust, and making cooperation difficult in conflict situation; guilt and shame are often associated with face saving in Asian culture (see face saving in Section 2.5.5.1), can lead to destructive conflict if left unchecked (Allred, 2000; Lindner, 2006; Steinberg, 1996). In contrast, hope as a learned adaptation and constructive optimism, models conflict as challenge where it entails continuous search for solution and beneficial framing; confidence is not just making a correct guess of others' behavior but more of the assurance, curiosity, courage and patience one have when facing uncertainty by not holding on to assumed certainties; respect and warmth promote solidarity and integration, and frame conflict benignly (Lindner, 2006; Snyder, 2002; Yoshikawa, 1987).

Emotion management often concerns about regulating one's emotion and the benefits of self-regulation are undeniable when dealing with conflict in culturally diverse situation (Chang, 2008; Henry, 2011; Lindner, 2006; Mischel, DeSmet & Kross, 2006; Raines, 2013;). Section 2.2.5.1 mentioned the importance of self-regulation (emotion regulation) for successful cross-cultural adjustment. Researchers have also found that individuals control their emotional response by the activation of their own cognitions: the bodily response to changes in the environment and to threatening stimuli is simply activation (Barna, 1994;

Brown, 1980; Keating, 1979; Schachter & Singer, 1962; Ursin, 1978). This implies that if a person expects something to be exciting rather than stressful/frightening, he/she is more likely to interpret the somatic changes that he/she feels in his/her body as excitement/challenge: feeling challenged (good stress) facilitates functioning as opposed to a person who feels 'threatened' (Barna, 1994; Lazarus, 1979; Selye, 1978). Such 'positive thinking' (Cardwell & Flanagan, 2005; McCraty & Tomasino, 2006) and 'willpower' (Mischel, DeSmet & Kross, 2006) may help to reduce the physiological problems (caused by culture shock or stress) mentioned in Section 2.2.1 and 2.3.3. Nevertheless regulating one's emotions is difficult in the heat of conflict: people may have attempt to control the hot, emotional responses that intensify conflict and damage relationships, they often find that their good intentions are not enough to refrain from blowing up, making personal attacks or doing what they may later regret (Mischel, DeSmet & Kross, 2006). Possible guidelines for managing emotions during conflict situations include: allow oneself and others to slow down and cool down; down-regulate negative feelings to avoid tunnel vision and blissful ignorance; up-regulate positive feelings by invoking positive long term vision (superordinate goal); forging an cooperative environment; creating a learning culture where people learn from mistakes made through task-oriented learning-mastery orientation; having compassion; offering and accepting apologies (Deutsch, 1999; Lazare, 2004; Lindner, 2006; Pearce, 2005; Weingarten, 2003).

The process of emotional self-regulation often involves Emotional Intelligence (EI), reframing and reflection (Chang, 2008; Fairhurst, 2011; Henry, 2011; Lindner, 2006; Lynn, 2007; Mischel, DeSmet & Kross, 2006; Raines, 2013). Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify, integrate, understand and reflectively manage one's own and other people's feelings, and it covers 5 dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill (Goleman, 1995, 1998; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Several studies on emotional

intelligence and conflict management demonstrate that: higher EI leads to more problem solving and less bargaining strategies of handling conflict (Rahim, 2002); EI is positively associated with managerial effectiveness in handling conflict (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003; Jassawalla, Truglia & Garvey, 2004; Polychroniou, 2009; Shipper et al., 2003); higher IE implies better social skill in handling conflict (Rahim & Psenicka, 2005).

Framing refers to the way a conflict is described or a proposal is worded; reframing is the process of changing the way a thought is presented so that it maintains its fundamental meaning but is more likely to support resolution efforts (Mayer, 2000). Reframing also means consciously reinterpreting a situation in a more positive light (Goleman, 1996) or to maintain the conflict in all its richness but to help people look at it in a more open-minded and hopeful way (similar to ‘positive thinking’ mentioned earlier in this Section) (Mayer, 2000). Hence the ultimate goal of reframing is to create a common definition of the problem acceptable to both parties and increase the potential for more collaborative and integrative solutions (Spangler, 2003). The presence of reframing activities typifies a learning organization (Kochan & Useem, 1992; Kofman & Senge, 1993; McGill & Slocum, 1993; Mitroff & Linstead, 1993; Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Senge, 1990; Torbert, 1985; Winter, Sarros & Tanewski, 1997). To reframe, one has to learn to unlearn outdated assumptions and attitudes and generate several interpretations and understandings of the conflict situation (Bolman & Deal, 1991; De Geus, 1988; McGill & Slocum, 1993; Mitroff & Linstead, 1993; Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984; Torbert, 1985; Weick, 1979; Winter, Sarros & Tanewski, 1997). Therefore it is a challenge to most people where most of them are likely to adopt defensive attitude and refrain from actively searching for information that contradicts with current framing of the conflict situation, and thus contradicts past experiences, accepted beliefs and existing power relationships (Mitroff & Linstead, 1993; Winter, Sarros & Tanewski, 1997). Nonetheless, it is easier to reframe interest conflict than value conflict (see Section 2.5.2 for more details on

interested based and value based conflict) (Spangler, 2003). Possible techniques of reframing value conflict include: translating value disputes into interest disputes with common grounds (see Section 2.6.2 for more details on common ground); identifying larger superordinate goals with which all parties can identify (see Section 2.6.2 for more details on superordinate goal); avoiding identifying or responding to the value-based issues directly, or by reframing the situation so that parties agree to disagree (Moore, 2003).

Reflection is defined as an intentional process, where social context and experience are acknowledged, in which learners are active individuals, wholly present, engaging with others, open to challenge, and the outcome involves transformation as well as improvement for both individuals and their organization (Brockbank, McGill & Beech, 2002). Such definition is different from the traditional intrapersonal reflection (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Boyd & Fales, 1983), it is interpersonal reflection:

Providing for interpersonal reflection in reflective dialogue-with-another, in a mentoring, coaching or supervisory relationship, guarantees that learners are challenged, that double loop learning is an option and that the transformational learning which results from dialogue is a real potential outcome (Brockbank & McGill, 2012, p. 46).

Hence, reflection promotes more double loop learning (Brockbank & McGill, 2012). Double loop learning reconsiders the way in which the problem has been framed, and it is a deeper level of analysis on assumptions, values, beliefs or norms that influence action; single loop learning is changing of tactics when things go wrong (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1978). On the other hand, constructive conflict management often engages more double loop learning (or learning to learn) than single loop learning (Blackard, 2000; Rahim, 2001, 2002; Ranson, 1998; Rothman & Friedman, 2001). Therefore, reflection serves to facilitate more

constructive conflict resolution through double loop learning, by: becoming more self-aware (similar to self-awareness dimension of emotional intelligence mentioned earlier in this Section); comparing their own behavior to important goals (see superordinate goals in Section 2.6.2); paying attention to other person's perspectives (see empathy in this Section and Section 2.4.2, 2.6.2) (Mischel, DeSmet & Kross, 2006). A person who succeed in adaptively reflecting on their own current thoughts, feelings, goals, and behaviors are more likely to see themselves accurately and to act consistently with goals (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Mischel, DeSmet & Kross, 2006; Wicklund, 1979).

2.7 Proficiency in Handling Conflict with Diverse Cultures

There is limited literature on competence of conflict management with diverse cultures. Most literature is related to communication competence, in cross-cultural context (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Connerley & Pedersen, 2005; DOM, 2010, 2011; DTUI, 2008; Gudykunst, 2004; Pedersen, 2006; Sue, 2001; Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992; Ting-Toomey, 2004; Wiseman, 2002). Nevertheless, most cross-cultural communication is characterized by conflict (Gudykunst, 2004; Stephan & Stephan, 2002). Therefore, since communication competence with diverse cultures leads to effective and appropriate cross-cultural communication (and thus minimizing cross-cultural conflict), this implies that the proficiency of cross-cultural communication (see Section 2.4) can be applied to the proficiency of cross-cultural conflict management.

2.8 Summary: Conceptual Framework and Research Questions

The findings of this literature review establish the experiences in handling communication with diverse cultures: possible encounters consisting of culture shock, stereotypes, cultural difference by value and communication (please refer to Section 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3 and 2.2.4); possible practices involving adjustment, adaptation (by coping with

stress, learning to change behavior, developing new identity), accommodation (by convergence), mindful regulation of anxiety and uncertainty, and negotiation of violated expectation (please refer to Section 2.2.5., 2.2.5.2, 2.2.5.3 and 2.2.5.4). The literature review also highlights the experiences in handling conflict with diverse cultures: possible encounters consisting of different types of conflict, different cultural perspectives on conflict, bias due to attribution error, and e-mail flaming (please refer to Section 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3 and 2.5.4); possible practices involving giving face, different conflict handling styles and cooperation through cooperative goal (please refer to Section 2.5.5.1, 2.5.5.2 and 2.5.5.3). The summary of the above provides an overall view of experiences in managing communication and conflict with diverse cultures, as shown below:

Experiences		
	Communication with Diverse Cultures	Conflict with Diverse Cultures
Encounters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture Shock. • Stereotypes. • Cultural Difference Based on Value. • Cultural Difference Based on Communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task/Relationship Conflict. • Cultural Perspective on Conflict. • Attribution Error. • E-Mail Flaming.
Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustment. • Adaptation. • Accommodation. • Mindful Regulation of Anxiety & Uncertainty. • Negotiation of Violated Expectation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation through Cooperative Goal. • Direct/Indirect Conflict Handling Style. • Giving Face.

Source: Researcher's Construct.

The challenges faced in handling communication with diverse cultures include reducing ethnocentric minimization, minimizing stereotype or prejudice or discrimination, overcoming stress, language barrier, and building relationship (please refer to Section 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4 and 2.3.5); the challenges faced in handling conflict with diverse cultures include building trust, establishing common goal, and regulation of emotion (please refer to Section

2.6.1, 2.6.2 and 2.6.3). Nevertheless, the competence to build confidence in handling communication and conflict with diverse cultures share the same dimensions of awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills (please refer to Section 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.7). How confident an individual feel they are to handle communication and conflict with diverse cultures depend very much on his/her own level of capability, amount of diversity training given, level of trust, and level of organizational support (please refer to Section 2.4.3). The summary of the above provides an overall view of challenges and confidence in managing communication and conflict with diverse cultures, as shown below:

	Challenges	Confidence
Communication with Diverse Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Relationship. • Overcoming Language Barrier. • Reducing Ethnocentric Minimization. • Minimising Stereotype/Prejudice/Discrimination. • Overcoming Stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Competence of Awareness, Attitude, Knowledge & Skills. • Develop Capability. • Diversity Training. • Trust at Workplace. • Supportive Working Environment.
Conflict with Diverse Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Trust. • Establishing Common Goal. • Regulation of Emotion. 	

Source: Researcher's Construct.

Putting all together, a conceptual framework for this study, based on the literature review, is established as follow:

<u>Conceptual Framework</u>		
	Experiences	
	Communication with Diverse Cultures	Conflict with Diverse Cultures
Encounters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture Shock. • Stereotypes. • Cultural Difference Based on Value. • Cultural Difference Based on Communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task/Relationship Conflict. • Cultural Perspective on Conflict. • Attribution Error. • E-Mail Flaming.
Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustment. • Adaptation. • Accommodation. • Mindful Regulation of Anxiety & Uncertainty. • Negotiation of Violated Expectation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation through Cooperative Goal. • Direct/Indirect Conflict Handling Style. • Giving Face.
	Challenges	Confidence
Communication with Diverse Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Relationship. • Overcoming Language Barrier. • Reducing Ethnocentric Minimization. • Minimising Stereotype/Prejudice/Discrimination. • Overcoming Stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Competence of Awareness, Attitude, Knowledge & Skills. • Develop Capability. • Diversity Training. • Trust at Workplace. • Supportive Working Environment.
Conflict with Diverse Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Trust. • Establishing Common Goal. • Regulation of Emotion. 	

Source: Researcher's Construct.

The research questions for this study are as follow:

1. What are the experiences of leaders, positioned in a culturally diverse company, in handling communication and conflict among diverse cultural groups?
2. What are the challenges the leaders face and how well equipped do they feel they are to handle communication and conflict as part of their leadership role in culturally diverse settings?

The first box of the conceptual framework is positioned with reference to the research question 1. The second box of the conceptual framework is positioned with reference to the research question 2. These two boxes are separated and independent as the researcher of this study does not intend to explore the relationship between experiences, challenges and confidence.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter provides a review of literature in various perspectives of communication and conflict management at the workplace of a global organization. This chapter will discuss key aspects of my interpretive paradigm and how they have shaped the design of this research by framing the choice of methodology and method, with considerations for trustworthiness of this study, in the following Sections: Section 3.2 will describe my interpretive paradigm, subjective ontology and interpretive epistemology towards this study; Section 3.3.1 will present the justification for applying qualitative research methodology using qualitative description; Section 3.3.2 will present the justification for using the interview method; Section 3.4 will describe the research design of this study; Section 3.5 will outline the research method in selecting, sourcing, recruiting, inviting and interviewing the participants; Section 3.6 will talk about the ethical aspect of trustworthiness in this study, and the eight steps to address ethical issues; Section 3.7 will demonstrate how the analysis using qualitative content analysis through generation of codes, categories and themes was conducted; Section 3.8 will discuss about the competency aspect of trustworthiness in this study, and what steps have been taken to address the issues of credibility, dependability and confirmability.

3.2 Interpretive Research Paradigm

This exploratory research draws on an interpretive paradigm, with the aim to “explain the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social action” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 7). To genuinely appreciate such a perspective, an appropriate definition of the paradigm is essential. Paradigm, in this study is described as “all-encompassing systems of interrelated practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their

enquiry along three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology” whereby “ontology specifies the nature of reality that is to be studied, and what can be known about it”, while “epistemology specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher (knower) and what can be known”, and “methodology specifies how researchers may go about practically studying whatever they believe can be known” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 6). Hence research paradigms act as “perspectives that provide a rationale for the research” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 40), and will govern how the research is going to be conducted as “paradigms guide research by direct modelling as well as through abstracted rules” (Kuhn, 1996, p. 47). Therefore, an interpretive paradigm involves “taking people’s subjective experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them (ontology), making sense of people’s experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they tell us (epistemology) and making use of qualitative research techniques to collect and analyze information (methodology)” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 273). For that reason, an interpretive paradigm “does not focus on isolating and controlling variables, but on harnessing and extending the power of ordinary language and expression to help us understand the social world we live in” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 273). In other words, the interpretive paradigm emphasises the “subjective understandings and experiences of individuals”, and treat people as though they are the “origin of their thoughts, feelings and experiences” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 278). As a whole, my study explores the subjective understandings and experiences of people dealing with communication and conflict, in particular organizational leaders’ experiences, and their perception of challenges faced and confidence in handling communication and conflict among diverse cultural groups in the workplace.

3.2.1 Subjectivist Ontology and Interpretive Epistemology

In my working experience, I have had the opportunity to work with managers, and encounter and experience the way they lead and manage their communication and conflict in culturally diverse organization. Miscommunication is often responded to with modified flow charts. When there is a conflict, new rules and structures will be set up to counter that conflict. However new conflict may occur and this cycle of setting up another set of new rules and structures will be repeated. It has come to my attention that, despite having well spelled out rules and established structures, cross-cultural miscommunication and conflict still happen no matter what, and the official managerial position that one holds does not necessary guarantee foolproof leadership in such situations. This has motivated me to move away from objectivist ontology, and prompts me to view social realities not as objects but as personal experience, which might have provided a better insight into my research problem and thus better answer my research questions. Ontology in this study is the “nature of social reality” (Blaikie, 2010, p. 92) and “what’s out there to know” (Hay, 2002, p. 64) for me as a researcher. With this understanding, my subjectivist ontology “assumes that what we take as reality as an output of human cognitive process” (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p. 180), and thus provides better understanding on the “processes of human sense making” (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004, p. 465). I believe that the reality to be studied consist of “people’s subjective experience of the external world” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 7), which includes leaders’ experiences, and their perception of challenges faced and confidence in handling communication and conflict in culturally diverse settings. Nevertheless, the idea that there could be many different ontological assumptions, implies that my subjectivist ontology is just one of the many positions out there, that needs to be established, understood, acknowledged and defended (Grix, 2002; Mason, 2002). Hence my

subjectivity ontological assumption will be “impossible to refute empirically” (Grix, 2002, p. 177), as there is no such thing as right or wrong ontology.

On the other hand, interpretive epistemology is highly suitable for my research on effective and appropriate communication and conflict management in culturally diverse settings, as situations concerned are often complex and unique. My research epistemology in this study is outlined as “possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality” (Grix, 2002, p. 177) and “how can we know” (Hay, 2002, p. 64) as a researcher. When I position myself as a researcher interpretively, my epistemology will focus on the “differences between people and the objects of natural sciences” and the “subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman, 2001, p. 12). Another way to look at it, my interpretive epistemology advocates understanding on the “differences between humans in our role as social actors” (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007, p. 106). My own working involvements require me to manage communication and disputes frequently among culturally diverse teams. The challenge I faced is to work alongside with them, making sense, drawing meaning and create my own subjective social realities, with the aim to understand their view points. And for me to do so, I will need to understand the meanings and interpretation of disputed team’s (social actors’) behavior. My study views individuals as “social actors” (using the metaphor of theatre), who play a part on the stage of social life, just like actors who play a part which they interpret and act out their role according to their interpretation (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007, p. 106). Hence, we interpret our daily social roles according to the meanings we give to these roles, and likewise, we interpret others’ social roles according to our own set of meanings (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). For my research, cross-cultural conflict happens most probably as a result of miss-interpretation as every culturally diverse group will have its own cultures (meanings). And how a leader (social actor) can be effective in this situation depends if the acts of a leader (social actor) can be interpreted in a meaningful manner or if it makes

any sense at all. Therefore, a positivist view is limited in my research in providing the means to satisfactorily study individual feelings, emotion and values in a cross-cultural context. This is because individual feelings, emotion and values are not easy to quantify.

3.3 Qualitative Research Methodology using Qualitative Description

3.3.1 Justification for Choosing Qualitative Methodology

From the literature review in Chapter 2, ‘what has been found’ by other researchers, established that my areas of study involves interpretation, the nature of my study is complex, and there is a need for in-depth understanding for my study. The methodological implication of this for my study is to design it in such a way that allows me to explore this interpretation, complexity and in-depth understanding, and hence a qualitative approach will be most suitable for my study. A qualitative approach is “an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (Van Maanen, 1983, p. 9). Such an approach attempts to understand and explain social phenomenon (Carcary, 2009). It relies on logical inference and is sensitive to the human situations (Carcary, 2009; Hinton, Mieczkowska, & Barnes, 2003; Kvale, 1996).

Qualitative methodology is relevant to my study if the purpose of my study is to: “learn from the participants in a setting or process the way they experience it, the meanings they put on it and how they interpret what they experience”, as it provides methods that will allow the researcher to “discover and do justice to their [participants’] perceptions and the complexity of their interpretation”; “make sense of complex situations”, as it provides ways of “simplifying and managing data without destroying complexity and context”; “understand phenomena deeply and in detail”, as it provide methods for “discovery of central themes and analysis of core concerns” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 28). Similarly, a qualitative approach

to methodology is most useful when the researcher focuses on the dynamics of the process and requires a deeper understanding of behavior and the meaning and context of complex phenomena (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Carcary, 2009; Snape & Spencer, 2003).

Therefore the characteristic of qualitative research on ‘interpreting what participants experience’ and ‘understanding of meaning and context’ will address the first feature of my study that calls for interpretation. ‘Making sense of the complex situations’ and ‘focusing on dynamic processes’ from qualitative research will manage the complex nature of my study. Lastly the ‘in detail’ and ‘deeper understanding’ requirement of qualitative research compliments the in-depth understanding of my study.

In terms of research questions, the ‘making sense of the complex situations’ and ‘focusing on dynamic processes’ from qualitative research will help to answer my research question 1, in illuminating the ‘complex’ experiences and the ‘dynamic process’ of handling communication and conflict among diverse cultural groups. The ‘interpreting what participants experience’ and ‘understanding of meaning and context’ aspect of qualitative research also provide some insights to my research question 1 by interpreting leaders’ experiences in handling communication and conflict among diverse cultural groups, and trying to understand the meaning and context of the experiences. My research question 2 may be approached by the ‘in detail’ and ‘deeper understanding’ requirement of qualitative research, by exploring the in-depth knowledge, skills and attitude needed to face the challenges, and also in the detail representation and explanation on leaders’ feelings of competency.

The preference for qualitative methodology is further reinforced by my interpretive research paradigm. Interpretivist focuses on the “subjective understandings and experiences of individual” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 278). This will involve

interpreting leaders' experiences in handling communication and conflict among diverse cultural groups, and trying to understand the meaning and context of the experiences. My interpretive paradigm will also require me to "adopt an empathetic stance", and to "enter the social world of our research subjects [participants] and understand their world from their point of view" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007, p. 107). This means that when I am utilizing empathy, I will be able to make sense of the 'complex' experiences and appreciate the 'dynamic processes' of handling communication and conflict among diverse cultural groups. Similarly, I need to "understand differences between humans in our role as social actors" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007, p. 106). This will involve 'in detail' and 'deep understanding' of different values and norms across cultures.

In summary, I have put forth the comparison of characteristics from areas of my study (implied by 'what has been found' by other researchers from the literature review in Chapter 2) with characteristics from qualitative methodology, together with considerations of the interpretive research paradigm, and have demonstrated that qualitative methodology can provide better answers to my research questions.

From the arrays of different types of qualitative methodologies, this study adopted the qualitative description as described by Sandelowski (2000, 2010) who was inspired by the insightful discussion on interpretive description, made by Thorne, Kirkham, and MacDonald-Emes (1997). Qualitative description allows a researcher to "capture all of the elements of an event that come together to make it the event that it is" and offers this study a "comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms [language] of those events" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336), that compliments the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) employed in this study during the interview (see Section 3.3.3), to provide a clear description of the critical incidents/events between the participants and their overseas

colleagues/bosses in culturally diverse settings. In addition, the research questions of this study (What are the experiences? What are the challenges faced? How well equipped do they feel?) are better answered by qualitative description:

Qualitative description is especially amenable to obtaining straight and largely unadorned ... answers to questions of special relevance to practitioners and policy makers. Examples of such questions include: What are the concerns of people about an event? What are people's response (e.g., thoughts, feelings, attitudes) towards an event (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 337)?

The design of a qualitative description study supports a combination of purposeful sampling with maximum variation, data collection with interview, and data analysis using qualitative content analysis (Neergaard et al., 2009; Sandelowski, 2000, 2010; Wilson, Talsma, & Martyn, 2011).

3.3.2 Justification for Choosing Interview Method

The empirical studies found during the literature review provide information of 'how was it done' by other researchers in related areas of this study. Most of these empirical studies are quantitative in nature. At first sight, this may suggest that the 'most frequently' used method (quantitative method) is the 'best method' for my study. However, more exploration is required before any conclusion is reached on this matter. The analysis on 'how was it done' by other researchers should not be only an attempt to investigate the actual methods used, the results obtained or the accuracy of the results. Instead the analysis should focus also on the limitations of the methods. While quantitative methods are good and useful in quantifying and measuring the conflict level and conflict style, nonetheless questionnaires and surveys have limitations in understanding how people interpret cross-cultural communication and conflict. The standardization of questionnaires and surveys tends to limit

testing to predetermined hypotheses, whereby questionnaires and surveys have participants react to specific question and answer list created by the researcher and some potentially interesting spontaneous responses may be missed or excluded, resulting in the quantitative method not always being the best choice for exploratory research (Grossnickle & Raskin, 2001). Quantitative methods may yield a lack of subjective data about human interactions (required to establish human emotions, perceptions or experiences) that would be necessary to answer research questions pertaining to social or holistic phenomena (Terry, 2012).

The appropriateness and use of a method is determined by the researchers' orientation (paradigm) and the phenomena being studied (Belk, 2006), and the choice of methods will also be influenced by the research methodology chosen (Gray, 2009). This is because methods are specific techniques that undergird methodology as a philosophical foundation of qualitative research (Klenke, 2008). Hence methodology provides a rationale for the choice of methods used in a study (Swanwick, 2010). Since the chosen research methodology for this study is qualitative methodology, it makes obvious sense that a set of qualitative methods are utilized in the study. My interpretive paradigm needs to ascertain the meaning that participants make on cross-cultural communication and conflict, and what they understand about cross-cultural communication and conflict, as I am making assumptions that the nature of knowledge is subject to interpretation, and there is a range of possible influences that shape people's understanding and meaning making. In order to achieve this, I will need qualitative data to elicit participants' meaning making and understanding, and aspects that shape them, by engaging the participants in purposeful conversation that will probe deep and get insights through layers of participants' thinking. Hence the qualitative method of interview is most suitable to gather such data. Incidentally, most of the qualitative empirical studies found during the literature review utilized the method of interviews.

Interview fits well with the interpretive approach to research because it is a more natural form of interacting with participants than making them fill out a questionnaire, do a test or perform some experimental task, as it provides opportunity to get to know participants well so that the researcher can understand how participants think and feel (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). Interview furthermore allows participants to describe in their own words what is meaningful or important to them (Klenke, 2008), and this is important to my study as I seek to explore the meaning of conflict and issues that are important during disagreement across cultures. An interpretive approach sees the interviews as a means to an end, namely to try to find out how participants really feel about or experience particular things and will try to create an environment of openness and trust within which the interviewee (participant) is able to express herself/himself authentically (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). Interview also provides high credibility and face validity and allows researchers the flexibility of applying their knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills to explore interesting or unexpected ideas or themes raised by the participants (Klenke, 2008). One important aspect of the interview is the element of respect and acknowledgment being displayed to the participants. My targeted participants for my study are holding high managerial positions and “key persons preferred a face-to-face encounter to a non-personal survey” (Peterson, 2004, p. 35).

Taking quantitative method out of the consideration, what is left to justify is mixed method. Nonetheless, mixing quantitative and qualitative methods in mixed method is neither a good nor best choice for my research study for several reasons. When qualitative data are quantified, there is a loss of depth and flexibility (Driscoll et al., 2007). Furthermore, qualitative data are multidimensional, where they can provide insights into a host of interrelated themes, and can be revisited during analysis in an iterative analytic process to allow for the recognition of emergent themes; quantified data, on the other hand, are fixed

and one-dimensional, where they are composed of a single set of responses representing a category that is pre-determined before data collection, and they cannot change in response to new insights during analysis (Bazeley, 2004; Driscoll et al., 2007). Quantified data will show record of whether an issue has been raised or feeling being discussed, without indication of how it was dealt with or perceived (Bazeley, 2004). Henceforth such loss of depth and flexibility contradicts to the nature of my qualitative methodology and interpretive paradigm. Furthermore, researchers who believe that there are strong associations between paradigm, methodology and methods will consequently consider different methodologies and methods to be philosophically incompatible, and so making the combination (of qualitative and quantitative methodology) logically impossible (Bazeley, 2004). Nevertheless, there is a strong association of pragmatic paradigm with mixed methods approaches, where the perceived benefits of mixing methods in ‘getting research done’ come to be seen as outweighing the importance of the philosophical difficulties in their use (Bazeley, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morgan, 2007). Such a pragmatic paradigm will be in contrast to my interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology.

3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interview

The analysis on ‘how was it done’ by other researchers established that the qualitative method of interview is the most appropriate method for my study. Further analysis on how these interviews are implemented revealed four observations: semi-structured interview is commonly used, instruction (explaining the background of study and clarifying certain definitions) is given to participants prior to interview, interview questions will involve recalling certain conflict experiences (known as critical incidents according to critical incident theory), and content analysis is mostly used to analyze the generated codes. Details on data analysis using content analysis will be elaborated in Section 3.7.

Semi-structured interviews depend on a certain set of questions which try to guide the conversation to remain more relaxed, to flow more naturally, making room for the conversation to go in unexpected directions on those questions, and yet at the same time allow participants some latitude and freedom to talk about what is of interest or importance to them (Hesse-Biber, & Leavy, 2011). Participants often have information or knowledge that may not have been thought of in advance by the researcher and when such knowledge emerges, the semi-structured interview will allow the conversation to develop and new topics relevant to the participants will be explored (Hesse-Biber, & Leavy, 2011). Hence, the semi-structured interview is an adaptable technique enabling probing of specific themes taking account of each participant's particular experiences and this in turn makes it a flexible technique because as data collection progresses and new ideas relevant to understanding the research topic emerge, interview schedules can be refined to reflect these insights (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004).

An instruction, together with an explanatory statement (see Appendix 3) and consent form (see Appendix 5) will be given to the participants prior to the interview, to explain the objective of the study, a broad definition of terms to be used during the interview, and the required preparation before the interview. Please refer to Appendix 4 for a sample of instruction.

One of the most common interview questions commonly asked, from the observation made on the analysis of empirical studies found during literature review that employ interview as qualitative research method, is to ask participants to describe their experiences of conflict events, with further elaboration on occurrences, interaction, consequences. This method is known as the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954, p. 1):

The critical incident technique consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles. The critical incident technique outlines procedures for collecting observed incidents having special significance and meeting systematically defined criteria. By an incident is meant any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects.

However, an interview schedule needs more than just raising a critical incident to answer the research questions. As mentioned earlier on, the semi-structured interview is meant to collect qualitative data that helps to answer the research questions, and the critical incident focus is just one of them. Thus the interview schedule should be designed in a manner to capture these qualitative data that helps to elicit participants' meaning making and understanding, and aspects that shape them, and qualitative data that helps to answer the research questions.

Please see Appendix 1 for the design of interview schedule and Appendix 2 for the interview schedule.

In order to perform this study in depth, two interviews were conducted for each participant. The first interview focused on research question 1 and the second interview focused on research question 2. The two interviews were spaced one day apart. Selected participants are managers and this study treats the roles of manager and leaders similarly, and does not seek to emphasize the differences between manager and leaders. Even though there

are differences between management and leadership (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Bryman, 1986; Kotter, 1990; Rost, 1991; Zaleznik, 1977), the two constructs overlap: when managers are influencing a group to meet its goals, they are involved in leadership, and when leaders are doing planning, organizing, staffing and controlling, they are involved in management (Northouse, 2010).

3.3.4 Research Quality

The term “trustworthiness” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290) is used in this study to represent the overall quality of this research. Trustworthiness is about how competently and ethically is the research being conducted (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This study addresses the competency aspect of trustworthiness by taking “credibility”, “dependability” and “conformability” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 219) into consideration. Establishing credibility, dependability and conformability seek to answer the following concerns respectively (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290):

“Truth value”: How can one establish confidence in the “truth” of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?

Consistency: How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subjects (respondents) in the same (or similar) context?

Neutrality: How can one establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects (respondents) and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer?

The execution to establish competency aspects of trustworthiness is shown in Section 3.8.

The ethical aspects of trustworthiness are attended to in Section 3.6.

3.4 Research Design

This study was initiated with a literature review to establish a conceptual framework and to underpin and frame the research questions. The literature review (see Chapter 2) draws on: communication management theories to frame discussions of culture shock, stereotypes, cultural differences by value and communication, challenges faced, and practices of adjustment, adaptation, accommodation, anxiety and uncertainty regulation, and negotiation of violated expectations; conflict management theories to frame discussions of conflict sources, perspectives on conflict, attribution error, e-mail flaming, challenges faced and practices of face giving, different conflict handling styles and cooperation; theories on confidence management to frame discussions of competence of awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills, capability development, training, trust and supportiveness of working environment. A conceptual framework (see Section 2.8) and the research questions (see Section 2.8) were formulated based on the literature review. Both the framework and the research questions, helped to guide the coding of the data collected (interview transcript). The literature review produced awareness of ‘what has been found’ and ‘how was it done’. ‘What has been found’ revealed the nature of this study that helped to justify the choice of qualitative methodology using qualitative description (see Section 3.3.1). ‘How was it done’ demonstrated the methods used before in similar studies, that helped to justify the choice of interview method (see Section 3.3.2), and frame the questions which become part of the semi-structured interview (see Section 3.3.3). 15 manager participants from the same organization (who can speak/read English, with minimum age of 30 years old and minimum 3 years of working experiences in current organization) were purposively selected from

various countries (see Section 3.5.1 for selection criteria, Section 3.5.2 for sourcing, Section 3.5.3 for recruitment and invitation). The field work for this study was undertaken in 10 countries (China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand and United States of America) over a period of 12 months between 2012 and 2013. The investigation employed the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) during the interview, to collect data on critical incidents perceived as conflict experienced by the participants when they communicate with other nationalities at the workplace. Two interviews were conducted for each participant (a total of 30 interviews were carried out). The fifteen participants were meant to represent a pool of different voices and silences from a wide range of variation of cultural perspectives. Cultural diversity was significant to this study because the study focused on communication and conflict management across cultures. The study seeks to conceptualize ways in which a manager can better manage communication and conflict in a culturally diverse workplace, by drawing out the participants' experiences, and their perception on challenges faced and confidence in handling issues of communication and conflict during the 'critical incident' in the interview. The interview sought out description of events, feelings and thoughts during the 'critical incident' which could be considered as holding key insights into the subjective meanings associated with the events, that shape the perceptions and interpretations, and how these varies across cultures, resulting in different feelings and thoughts in response to the same critical incident. The data generated from the interview were transcribed and the transcripts were given to the participants for verification. The transcripts were then later reduced into codes, categories and themes, and later displayed in a manner to reveal trends and patterns (see Section 3.7 for data analysis). Early findings were submitted to the participants for their endorsement. A final version of the findings and discussions are reported in this study (see Chapter 4 & 5 respectively). The findings are presented in the form of direct quotes by participants, to highlight the different voices and

silences of participants across cultures, to provide a realistic feel of the conversation, and to allow the reader to judge the interpretation made and the conclusions drawn from the data.

3.5 Research Method

3.5.1 Selection Criteria for Participants

This study looks for participants who are currently holding managerial positions. Non-managers are excluded because this study explores and describes the managers' subjective experiences, perception of challenges and confidence in handling communication and conflict in cultural diverse settings. Therefore, the job functions of the participants must include some levels of interaction with someone from different cultural backgrounds within the organization. The minimum age of participants required for this study is 30. This request is to ensure that the participants are mature enough and have prior working experiences that can help to enrich the experiences he/she has in handling communication and conflict in their current organization. Hence this study seeks seasoned managers. Furthermore, the participants must have worked for a minimum of 3 years in the current organization. This is to ensure that the participants have spent long enough time within the organization to experience a sufficient number of events of perceived miscommunication and conflict. Nevertheless the participants must be able to converse in and read English. This is to make certain there is a certain level of proficiency in English, for the participants to read and understand the explanatory statement, interview instruction and consent form in English. In addition, participants are expected to verify the interview transcripts in English and endorsed the early findings of this study in English. Finally, the pool of participants come from different countries of China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand and United States of America. This is to apply purposeful sampling with maximum variation in this study, in order to identify information-rich cases, by looking at a wide range

of variation across the sample (Patton, 2002). Therefore this study ‘purposefully’ picks on seasoned managers, from various countries to represent a ‘wide range of variation’ of cultures, so that their ways of handling communication and conflict can be studied in depth.

3.5.2 Sourcing for Participants

Participants are sourced from the same organization of a particular industry, rather than from different organizations coming from different industries. The benefit of sourcing participants from the same organization of a particular industry is that it allows the researcher not only to explore and describe individuals’ experiences, perception of challenges faced and confidence in handling cross-cultural conflict, it also allows the researcher to illuminate the different subjective meanings across cultures that shape the perceptions/interpretations over the same critical incident, resulting in different perceptions/interpretations and ways in handling conflict. The targeted organization must be multinational in nature and have presence in at least Asia, Europe and North America. As mentioned in Section 3.5.1, the selected participants must represent a ‘wide range of variation’ of cultures according to purposeful sampling with maximum variation. To make certain that the organization under study is sizable with rich history in operation, it should have annual sales turnover of minimum US\$100 million per year for the past 10 years. Another feature to include is that the subsidiaries of the organization must be dependent on one another to a certain extent. This allows the researcher to study the interaction between subsidiaries from various countries, the miscommunication and conflict that arises from it, and the different responses across cultures.

3.5.3 Recruiting and Inviting the Participants

Based on the above criteria in Section 3.5.2, one organization was identified for this study. Please see Appendix 6 for the profile of the organization under study. A letter was sent to the Chief Executive Officer for approval to conduct research within the organization. The

letter included: explanation of what this study was about; highlights of the value of this study that could bring to the organization; conditions for participant's selection; reminder that participation in this study was purely voluntary and participants had the right to opt out; and measures to address confidentiality and anonymity. A list of potential participants was drawn up by the organization representative, and handled over to the researcher. The researcher made the selection from the given list, and informed the organization representative with the list of preferred participants. The organization representative then made contact with the preferred participants on behalf of the researcher, by sending them an invitation email (including the explanatory statement, interview instruction, consent form and researcher contact details) to explain the background and aim of the study. They were asked to email the researcher if they were willing to participate in the study. Interested participants contacted the researcher and they made arrangement for the interviews. Please see Appendix 7 for the profile of participants taking part in this study. 2 interviews were arranged for each participant, with a minimum 1 day apart between the two dates. Please see Appendix 8 for the number of participants taking part and the interviews conducted.

3.5.4 Interviewing the Participants

The interview was conducted in a meeting room in a hotel's business center. The room was well ventilated and lighted, and quiet, with beverages supplied. Before the interview got started, the researcher presented the explanatory statement, interview instructions and consent form to the participant and explained the purpose of the interview, the benefits and issues of confidentiality. The researcher was to remind each participant that the interview would be audio recorded and that the recorder was placed on the table visible to the participant. The researcher asked the participant to sign the consent form when there were no further questions from the participant. Then researcher began the first interview. Upon the

completion of the first interview, the researcher made arrangement with each participant for the second interview, on a date with minimum 1 day apart from the first interview.

3.6 Ethical Aspect of Trustworthiness: Research Ethics

This study used Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter's (2006) adaptation of Emanuel et al.'s (2004) eight principles framework to address research ethics. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter (2006, p. 68):

... its [Emanuel et al.'s (2004) 8 principles framework] key components are relevant and useful to social science researchers ... their framework ... is structured to match the process of research design, implementation, and reporting, and furthermore embeds within it the four principles [four widely accepted philosophical principles (autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons; non-maleficence; beneficence; justice) from Beauchamp and Childress (2001)] and their operational implications ... These broad principles [Emanuel et al.'s (2004) 8 principles] if considered carefully and applied together, are likely to enhance the ethical standing, and, probably the ... value of research.

Consideration and thoughtful implementation of these eight practical principles (as shown in the following Section 3.6.1 to 3.6.8) had increased the likelihood that this research was ethical and that knowledge was gained without "avoidable harms to participants, without whom knowledge cannot be created" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 73).

3.6.1 Developing Collaborative Partnership with the Organization under Study

This research was developed in collaboration with the management team of the organization under study, whereby a partnership was established and they endorsed me to

initiate a research program to study their intercompany cohesiveness. A permission letter from the Chief Executive Officer of the organization under study was submitted together with the application form for ethical approval to MUHREC (Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee) for ethics clearance (see Section 3.6.6 for more details on MUHREC). The organization under study was challenged by inadequate communication, conflict escalation, little cooperation and low productivity among the offices, and the research was driven towards the need to study and explore what could be done to improve the situation. The research design and interview schedule were formulated and discussed together with the management team of the organization under study, taking organization's "values", "cultural traditions" and "practices" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 69) into consideration. At the end of the research, a report "benefits of the research" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 69), on findings and recommendations, was given to the participants and management of the organization under study indicating the possible causes and suggesting applicable approaches to address the challenges faced within the organization.

3.6.2 Stating the Benefits of Study to Participants

The explanatory statement (see Appendix 3) was given to the participants prior to the interview stating the benefits of the study as: beneficiaries are the company, managers and rest of employees; direct benefit is higher productivity; indirect benefit is better team work with stress free work place; the knowledge gained can be of value to participants in terms of better handling of cross-cultural conflict. As mentioned in Section 3.6.1, a report "benefits of the research" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 69), with findings and recommendations, was given to the participants after the completion of the study. This was planned to lead to "knowledge and/or interventions" that would be of "value to the participants" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 69).

3.6.3 Ensuring Validity of Study

Section 3.8 described the measures taken by this study to ensure the competency aspect of trustworthiness for this study. The research design, methodology and data analysis as shown in Section 3.4, 3.3, 3.7 respectively, demonstrated that they were “rigorous”, “systematic”, “justifiable”, “appropriate” and “feasible” and would lead to valid answers to the research questions (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 70). Therefore there was no unnecessary wastage of resources or participant’s time in this study.

3.6.4 Having a Fair Selection of Participants

Section 3.5.3 described the process of recruiting and inviting participants. Appendix 7 described the profile of participants taking part in this study. From the profile of the participants taking part in this study, it could be seen that there was a reasonably fair proportion and representation of population coming from Asia, Europe and North America. The population selected for the study were “those to whom the research question applies” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 71), and in this case, the selected participants represent a culturally diverse group applicable to the research questions.

3.6.5 Offering Participants a Favorable Risk-Benefit Ratio

This study was a ‘low risk research’ according to MUHREC (Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee). Please see Appendix 9 for MUHREC’s human ethics certificate of approval for this study. The harms were identified as ‘inconvenience/discomfort’ in the explanatory statement (see Appendix 3) as:

- There is a need for you to take time off (during or after office hours) to take part in this interview.

- The interview will take place outside office premises (example: restaurant, coffee shop).
- Interview will be confidential and anonymous.

Measures (see explanatory statement in Appendix 3) were taken to minimise ‘inconvenience/discomfort’:

- Management has given approval for this interview to be conducted during or after working hours.
- You can choose where and when to take part in this interview, according to your preference and convenience.
- All reasonable steps will be taken by the researcher to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms and codes will be used so that any reader of the report will not be able to identify the interviewees.

Benefits to organization and participants were mentioned in Section 3.6.1 and 3.6.2 respectively. In addition, there was negligible cost involved in this study. On the whole, the “risk/benefit ratio” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 71) in this study was favourable, with means to minimise risks and means to maximise benefit to organization and participants.

3.6.6 Having an Independent Ethical Review

The research proposal was submitted to MUHREC (Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee) for approval, prior to commencement of data collection (What is human research, 2014):

The Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) reviews all research involving human participants at the University and primarily considers issues that constitute integrity, respect for persons, beneficence, justice, consent, research merit and safety. The primary role of

MUHREC is to protect the welfare and the rights of participants in research and the primary responsibility of each member is to decide, independently, whether, in his or her opinion, the conduct of each research proposal will so protect participants. All staff and students must be aware of their responsibilities and comply with all policies and government requirements. All research at Monash University must be:

- designed and conducted in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007; and
- ethically reviewed and monitored in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007

The project number of the MUHREC approval is CF12/2204-2012001184. A copy of the MUHREC's human ethics certificate of approval can be seen in Appendix 9.

3.6.7 Acquiring Participants' Informed Consent

A consent form (see Appendix 5) together with explanatory statement (see Appendix 3) and interview instruction (see Appendix 4) were given to the participants. The given consent form, explanatory statement and interview instruction jointly provided participants with "clear, detailed and factual information about the study, its methods, its risks and benefits, along with assurances of the voluntary nature of participation and the freedom to refuse or withdraw without penalties" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 72).

3.6.8 Showing Respect to the Participants

This study treated participants with respect by informing them issues of 'inconvenience/discomfort' which included concerns for keeping participant's information confidential and anonymous, and measures to address these confidentiality and anonymity as declared in the given explanatory statement (see Appendix 3). Interview transcripts and early

findings were also given to participants to verify and to endorse respectively. At the end of the research, a report (on the findings and recommendations) in a format that is “relevant and appropriate” was given to the management and participants, to “empower” the readers with the collected knowledge (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 73).

3.7 Data Analysis using Qualitative Content Analysis

It was mentioned in Section 3.3.2 that the design of a qualitative description study supports data analysis using qualitative content analysis. This study followed the general phases of preparation, organizing and reporting of qualitative content analysis described by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) to analyze the data. Qualitative content analysis in this study was meant for “subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). During the preparation phases, the unit of analysis was the whole interviews, as they were “large enough to be considered a whole and small enough to be possible to keep in mind as a context for the meaning unit, during the analysis process” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 106), and the researcher attempted to make sense of the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Morse & Field 1995) and obtain a sense of whole (Burnard, 1991; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Tesch, 1990). During the organizing phase, the study asked the same interview questions (see Appendix 2 for interview schedule) to each participant. All the participants’ responses related to the same question were grouped together (see Appendix 10 for an extract). The researcher then familiarized himself with the grouped data and immersed himself into the grouped data, by reading them many times over. A summary of the grouped data (see Appendix 11) was made after reading. The researcher performed coding on the grouped data. The coding was done with reference to the developed conceptual framework and the research questions. Both the conceptual framework and research questions guided the researcher to frame the coding

around experiences, perception of challenges faced and confidence in handling communication and conflict in culturally diverse settings. The coding was done question by question and was displayed (see Appendix 12 for a sample of coding table) using Miles and Hubermans' (1994) matrix format, where different codes to same question from all participants were displayed in table format for easy identification of the patterns. During the reporting phase, a list of categories and themes were generated (after coding) to formulate general description relevant to the research questions. Such description was a "straight descriptive summary of the informational contents of data organized in a way that best fits the data" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338) as described by the qualitative description approach. In this study, the 'descriptive summary' was arranged by interview questions, where the summary reflected all the given answers from the participants pertaining to one particular question. See Appendix 13 for an example of descriptive summary of codes, categories and themes to this study.

3.8 Competency Aspect of Trustworthiness

As mentioned in Section 3.3.4, the researcher will address the competency aspects of trustworthiness in this study, by taking "credibility", "dependability" and "conformability" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 189) into consideration. The execution to establish competency aspects of trustworthiness was shown in the following Section 3.8.1 to 3.8.3.

3.8.1 Getting Participants to Verify My Study to Address Credibility

Participants were requested to view the interview transcripts and early findings of the study, and were asked to comment on the accuracy of the transcript, if the categories/themes made sense, whether the categories/themes were developed with sufficient evidence and whether the overall account was realist and accurate. Such procedure helped to determine the credibility of the study. Many researchers advocate the return to the participants to verify the

research findings (Ashworth, 1993; Brink, 1991; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Leininger, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Turner, 1981). Fielding and Fielding (1986, p. 12) highlight that “whether the data collected are quantifiable or qualitative, the issue of the warrant for their inferences must be confronted”. One of the ways for qualitative researchers to demonstrate that they have a “warrant for their inferences” and that their work is “valid” is through the method of participant validation, whereby researchers bring back their findings to the participants for verification (Silverman, 2001, p. 233). Nolan and Behi (1995, p. 589) maintain that “all criteria developed for use in qualitative studies rely heavily on presenting the results to those who were studied and asking them to verify whether or not they agree with them”. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314) use a different term ‘member check’ and describe it as the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility in a study”, as it consists of “taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account”. However, some researchers may argue that it is quite possible that some participants will not recognize some of the emerging categories/themes, but this can be addressed by using the actual words of the participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Melia, 1982; Turner, 1981) because if the emerging categories/themes captured the essence of the situation under study, then the participants are likely to respond and recognise themselves in it as it will have specific meaning for them and this is more likely to occur if the participants can recognize their own words (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999).

3.8.2 Getting Peers to Review My Study to Address Credibility

A monthly meeting was conducted with fellow research peers to take turns to review each other’s work, and ideas were exchanged on how to improve individual writings. Other channel to engage other research peers was through seminar workshops conducted by

lecturers from Monash University, where each individual submitted their works for group review. Through such seminar workshops, other research peers provided feedback on my work, helped to highlight any issues that I might have missed, and allowed me to explain my thinking behind choices made. Such processes had assisted me towards a “more reasoned and complete interpretation” (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999, p. 377). Furthermore, we had to undergo 3 panel reviews of PhD candidature confirmation, mid-term review and final-term review, during which our works were subjected to peer review again. All these reviews helped to define the credibility of my study. When researchers are generating patterns or themes from qualitative data, they can enhance credibility of the categorization method and guard against researchers’ bias by enlisting help from peer researchers (Appleton, 1995; Burnard, 1991). Such action is known as peer review, whereby the reviewer is someone familiar with the research or situation being explored (Creswell & Miller, 2000). A peer review provides support, challenges the researchers’ assumptions, asking hard questions about methods and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Again, such act is not to achieve any perfect patterns/themes, but to seek for an agreed patterns/themes sufficient enough for the task on hand (Silverman, 2001).

3.8.3 Maintaining Audit Trail to Address Dependability and Confirmability

This study maintained a list of records as an audit trail (see Appendix 14). The records were developed based on the readings on Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Schwandt and Halpern (1988). The audit trail served as supporting evidences for dependability and confirmability audit that helped to address the issue of dependability and confirmability of this study, where dependability audit examined the process by which the records were kept, and confirmability audit examined the records and assessed if findings were grounded in data, and if interpretations were coherent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt & Halpern, 1988). This

study did not seek to implement exhaustively and faithfully all the steps needed to conduct dependability and confirmability audit as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Schwandt and Halpern (1988). However this study demonstrated the attempt and effort in maintaining the audit trail, which would be made available to the relevant person who might wish to conduct an audit. Nonetheless, it was the opinion of the researcher of this study that maintaining an audit trail was something fundamental and necessary in any kind of research work even in the absence of a need to conduct an audit; the records would have been useful for the participant review, peer review and panel review. The audit trail shown in Appendix 14 included: records of raw data; data reduction products; data display, findings, and analysis products; process notes; materials relating to intentions and dispositions; and instrument development information.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that the study was conducted in an ethical and competent manner. The chosen methodology and method were justified for their appropriateness in this study in accordance to research paradigm, research questions, ‘what has been found’ and ‘how was it done’ by other researchers in similar fields of study. The research design provided a clear description of the overall plan specifying the methods and procedures to collect and analyze data, and unambiguously confirmed that the collected data facilitated the researcher in answering the research questions of this study. The analysis of data was carried out in a manner supported by the research paradigm, and ‘how was it done’ by other researchers in similar fields of study, that allowed transformation of collected data into new knowledge pertaining to effective and appropriate communication and conflict management in global organization. The 8 practical steps to address ethical issue and 3 operational steps to address issues of credibility, dependability and confirmability,

established the overall quality of this study and thus the trustworthiness of this study. The next chapter will present the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter described the methodology of this study that included the researcher's orientation, research design, research method, and considerations for ethics and trustworthiness. As most cultural communication and conflict studies were culturally specific on interactions between two cultural groups only, it was believed by the researcher that the interpretative nature of the qualitative description approach conducted in this study would shed some light on a more effective and appropriate communication and conflict management and benefit the profession of managers working with global teams that were often made up of several cultural groups. This Chapter will look at the findings for themes in regard to the research questions supported with extracts of interview transcripts. Section 4.2 on 'Experiences' describes the findings relevant to the themes that emerged from the data analysis with regard to research question one (What are the experiences of leaders, positioned in a culturally diverse company, in handling communication and conflict among diverse cultural groups?). This Section is further broken down into 'Encounters' (Section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2) and 'Practices' (Section 4.2.3 and 4.2.4). Section 4.3 on 'Challenges' and Section 4.4 on 'Confidence' describe the findings relevant to the themes that emerged from the data analysis with regard to research question two (What are the challenges the leaders face and how well equipped do they feel they are to handle communication and conflict as part of their leadership role in culturally diverse settings?).

4.2 Experiences

4.2.1 Encounters of Handling Communication among Diverse Cultures

4.2.1.1 E-Shock: Culture Shock-Like Manifestation in Electronic Mail Format

Being located in different countries, participants seldom saw each other face-to-face. Such geographical isolation and time difference rendered e-mail as the main and common mode of communication among the participants.

I work directly with ... many different nationalities, including Chinese from Mainland China, Chinese from Thailand, Korean from Korea, Indians from India ... Germans and Swiss as well. [P4]

And most of the communication I, I have is, is done through email ... so I sent emails during the day and East Coast Time and usually get response back later ... later that night from the Asian folks or ... the next day from the European folks. [P7]

A lot of communication is through email, mainly through email. [P4]

Despite the lack of direct interaction in a virtual setting, most participants experienced emotional symptoms similar to negative indicators of culture shock at the first stage, while communicating with other nationalities through e-mail. The words used by the participants to describe their feelings towards perceived differences during e-mail communication included: “shocked”, “frustrated”, “stressed”, “uncomfortable”, “doubtful”, “emotional”, “confused”, “annoyed”, “sad”, “worried”, “guilty”, “disappointed”, “isolated”, “disrespected” and “upset”.

At first I will be shocked because the people in the different country they react totally different attitude in a different way, and I am confused, not sure how I should react back. [P1]

Feeling is that ... I feel that we have a different culture, different thinking, different way of life. Sometimes I feel very ... shocked or uncomfortable. [P9]

Initially I feel surprise, not so comfortable ... when I talk [e-mail] to them, I find they have different thinking. Especially when they are too frank, straight-forward, too aggressive ... I feel they do not consider our feelings, do not respect us. [P10]

However, participants who demonstrated some levels of capability to learn reflectively from such e-shock experiences were able to empower themselves to take a more positive perspectives. The more optimistic participants would experience: calmness, challenges, hope, enthusiasm and curiosity to learn, less negative feeling, good feeling to learn, and respect. They were able to put themselves in a better, clearer and new position to handle problem differently.

I think ... it's about experience. Of course in the beginning, you know, my, my work in this company ... was different that time. Maybe more emotional ... that time [first time], I was ... not really happy ... This got to do with experience. Because if this is your first job or your first encounter with different nationality, for sure you think, "Wow! How come this person is different from me?" You get emotional, not sure what to do. But after some time, once you understand this is cultural difference, you will think this is normal. You see things calmly, objectively, not emotionally ... I think when I experience such difference, I only try to understand, you know, from both sides. Try to think over then, you know, take your time to make decision, don't rush ... So ... now I can think about this objectively, do and see things differently,

something new ... I think this is a big change now for me. So this really helps ... you know, different way to solve problem, maybe better, ok now I know what to do. [P3]

The reflective learning from experiences during the e-shock also helped participants to identify with their own cultures and to become more aware of how their own cultures shaped the way they think with reference to other cultures; participants have different worldviews after e-shock.

I have learnt many things from this [e-shock] experience ... with Germans. I used to think that the way Japanese worked was the best in the world. But I found out that was not true. The way we Japanese work is no longer the world standard. We are kind of 'out of standard'. [P8]

People in ... our kind ... suffered in history, so they changed in this way ... this is my understanding. You look at history, China was invaded by Eight-Nation Alliance [Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States] ... for a long time in history Chinese survived by tolerating ... inevitably this influence the nationality spirit. They want to rebel, maybe they think "Am I too weak for this?" ... Maybe the parents educate their kids, "Don't be a hero. Learn to protect yourself" If you look at Western culture, their history was always invading other countries. So when they [Westerners] educate their kids, they teach "I want to be the strongest" That's America education ... "I must dare to voice out" ... Their history was always invade, invade and invade other countries. Of course I different now ... no more "wow" [e-shock] ... I learn to be a bit outspoken, that sometimes may be good for me, not all times, but sometimes. Chinese can be confident. [P3]

I feel pretty shocked, in total disbelief ... When I was younger and living in Switzerland, I thought that many other people from other countries they must admire Switzerland, because it's a rich country, it's a tiny, neat, everything clean. No political issue, good economy, no war. With more and more encounter with other nationalities, I realize that actually the picture we have, we were taught in Switzerland to have, is completely different to what other people think of Switzerland ... Exposure to other nationalities makes you get a more realistic picture about your national identity. [P13]

4.2.1.2 Impression Formation: Person Perception through Pre-Determined Categories.

Participants displayed some forms of pre-determined categorization (in various degrees) of other cultures.

Americans are ... very open minded and very direct ... Asians ... are very closed, they're not very open minded. [European P11]

It is a general term, everybody knows ... that the Germans feel that they are much superior. [Asian P6]

Such pre-determined categorization not only helped to explain behavior of other cultures but also established a subtle and unconscious expectation of how other cultures would have behaved.

The Japanese [being categorized as 'hardworking'], typical Asians, they, they tend to work very hard ... they value hard work, they find things to do to keep themselves stay back after, you know, after until 8 to 9 o'clock [American P2].

The Germans [being categorized as 'rule abiding'], they ... think rule is everything, and they need to follow the rule. They are not flexible. They will never think about the situation. They may only tell you ... this is the standard what they can do because of the rule. [Asian P1]

You always think of German is being very precise, and you know, documenting everything, the things you expect them to do and that is not the case ... some of them can be very sloppy in some respects. [American P2's expectation of Germans]

I am Thai and she is Chinese ... Asian must same thinking, like to have closely relationship, cooperative teamwork. But I don't want to complain. We are working for the same company. Yeah, I not like her reply, I not like her style of reaction back to me, not polite, not helpful, not keep the relationship [Asian P5's expectation of Asians].

Their categorizations of other cultures were informed by their limited knowledge and experiences. Most of the knowledge gained was from reading books and media exposure.

There are so many books outside there ... guidebook ... on business etiquette rules in different country ... how to handle people in other countries, and there are a lot of don'ts, things that you should avoid. [P13]

The Americans they are absolutely different from us, in economic thinking. They just think quarterly, they don't care about the future, they do as they like ... they just want to be heroes like in Hollywood movies. [P14]

For me, when I want to know more about the people outside china ... I rely on internet ... internet is well developed, I will try to get information from the main

stream foreign news from the internet, for example BBC, CNBC ... because official media always portray foreigners negatively. [P12]

Participants also gained experiences through working with other cultures in past jobs. And from the past working experiences, they had a rough idea how other cultures would have behaved.

Basically I have been working for German companies for more than 16 years ... So this is my experience in foreign companies ... So I deal mostly with the Germans ... their attitude is very ... simple. They have a good product. So they chose to ... to be ... treat it as the only good point, and so they just ignore all other factors ... they just think, 'Good product can be sold anywhere.' This is their basic thinking from my experience. [P9]

My ... experience ... that's been colored by previous ... experiences in previous companies. So the two previous companies that I was with, I have ... interaction with people from other cultures ... French, Asian, German, Dutch ... in Germany being very socialist ... and being unionized ... and, and French to a large degree are the same way ... The Japanese, they, they tend to work very hard. [P2]

Such pre-defined categorizations of other cultures were often hidden and not exposed, serving as a guide for participants to form an impression of others and to learn how to adapt in new situations with other cultures.

I don't ... one thing that ... that I try not to ... you know, stereotype, but what you learn about others in general, maybe from ... books ... reading or personal encounters, kind of, of ... helps to lead you to understand better ... understand why others are different, or their backgrounds ... so ... what you know before in mind help you, or

should I say, prepare you to have an idea who that person is ... what to do next when you are, are dealing with same or maybe similar cultures in new circumstances ... how to blend in, like ink to a fountain pen, what you've learned in the past fill you up with knowhow, then you are better prepared. [P2]

However, pre-determined categorizations might end up as a negative stereotype about individuals from other cultures and were often easily identifiable by the negative words used in a situation of emotional outburst.

However, after I tell him about the forecast, he is so angry because he thinks ... the forecast is so low, and the forecast is not big enough to push the factory to develop new product, is not workable after all. So he is very mad at me about my proposal and my feedback. He says "why you Asian ... are not so confident to give a very strong forecast? You should be the one to give a very good, very big forecast, and then try to push the factory." [P1]

A situation of emotional outburst could also take place when new experiences contradicted with pre-determined categorizations, causing a mismatch in expectation that might result in shock. If the feeling of shock was left unmanaged, an emotional outburst might result.

You always think of German is being very precise, and you know, documenting everything, the things you expect them to do and that is not the case ... some of them can be very sloppy in some respects. And, and that, you know, I, I, I worked for a German company before I came to Company1 [current German company] and, I was shocked, you know, I, I, I gotten shock at Company1 [current German company] ... and it is ... different in how they, how they manufacture, how they do this ... you know, it, it , the, the shock soon turns, soon turns to ... you know, "What the hell are you thinking? Why are you doing it this way?" [P2]

However, participants who demonstrated reflective learning during such stressful situations were able to calm down and avoid making careless and inaccurate judgments on other cultures. Through reflective learning, participants adjusted their expectation (re-categorization) to reflect a more accurate perception of the person concerned, showing empathy, trying to look at the situation from different perspectives.

Yeah, I've been shocked ... on, on certain business process in Germany ... where you, you just look at them and go "You do what?" ... there have been instances where I have been shocked and ... thinking the Germans here is different from those I worked before ... I think different companies have different way of doing things, even if both of them are German companies. Do I get it wrong what's typically German? Or maybe he is not typical German to begin with? His character perhaps? What's his problem? Other reasons? So there is a difference [to expectation], deal with it, got to, got to ... change ... thinking, anticipation, find out what's typical and ... and what's atypical, you know what I mean? This is like meditation to me, you know, process of checking, checking out slow you down, I mean sort of delay your response, makes you think first before saying something you may regret later ... yeah I am cool after this, no problem ... cool man. [P2]

4.2.1.3 Perceived Differences on What Matters Most: Different People Value Different Things

There was a distinct difference in priority of having personal time outside work among the participants in this study. The Germans were often perceived by the Asians to place greater value on spending times with families, in their hobbies or doing personal things that were of interest to them.

I think Taiwanese ... spend a lot of time in the working ... compared to the Germans, they will try to make the life better including the job, the family and also maybe like the ... their interest. Maybe they will take a long vacation just to fish, or something, but Taiwanese we usually spent a lot of time just in order to make sure the job can be done more well ... and we usually ... can ... accept to spent more time in working if the boss they want the employee to work at the night ... we will think is acceptable because we want to meet the expectation of the company or the expectation of the boss. But I don't think the people in Germany they will follow this way. [P1 from Taiwan]

The Germans in this study were perceived to have a better work-life balance than their Asian colleagues, and they did separate work and personal life clearly. Despite the availability of advanced technology that allowed them to access their work well beyond the physical boundaries of their offices when they were away at home or on vacation, they chose to make the decision not to read/respond to any work email and/or make/answer phone calls for work related issues. And for them to make such a decision was something very normal to do and they did not feel guilty about it.

I think ... typically the different ... nationalities ... treating work and treating their work-life balancing quite differently. I think typically most of the Singaporeans are ... treating work as ... high priority. And typically they will treat family as much lower priority than ... their work, working life. So ... sometimes we could see that some of the ... colleagues ... in overseas, especially the Germans ... you know, if they go on leave, they are out of office, then they will not read the email, they will not ... reply your email, until, you know ... they come back from their leave or vacation. Whereby most of ... the Singaporeans probably will still, you know, read their email, even reply

their email during their vacation or during their leave. So that is quite a ... big difference and also big expectation difference between nationalities. [P4 from Singapore]

The basic difference I found from ... my experience working with the Germans, basically they prioritize the personal life rather than the job they expected to do. So ... for families, for his personal matters come first and job comes later. But in general, the way Japanese work, here in Japan, the other way round. Sometimes we too much prioritize job, so in other words, sometimes we victimized our family members for certain occasions. This is the big, big difference that I found in 2 different countries' culture. [P8 from Japan]

A little bit on value, I think Chinese place emphasis on work, and so spent more time on work than at home. To the Germans, I feel they value life and family, or personal enjoyment, these are number 1 position, and work is second position in priority. For example, before Chinese go for leave, we will do our best to clear our job before we have a peace of mind and go for our leave. But for the Germans, they can put down everything at work and go for leave, even if the work is not finished. [P12 from China]

The Asian participants placed a higher value on work so much so that they had a strong sense of completing their job at the workplace, and if they were not able to complete their work during office hours, they would not hesitate to stay back to finish their work. They were therefore often perceived by other nationalities as 'hardworking', and this was in direct contrast to other nationalities [predominantly the Europeans in this study] who could drop everything even if their job was not completed and go back home.

I think Taiwanese ... spend a lot of time in the working ... compared to the people in Europe, they will try to make the life better including the job, the family and also maybe like the ... their interest. Maybe they will take a long vacation just to fish, or something, but Taiwanese we usually spent a lot of time just in order to make sure the job can be done more well ... and we usually ... can ... accept to spent more time in working if the boss they want the employee to work at the night ... we will think is acceptable because we want to meet the expectation of the company or the expectation of the boss. But I don't think the people in Europe they will follow this way. [P1 from Taiwan]

P6: Something like ... working style means they [Germans] follow their working hours. It is very difficult to get them after office hours, if you want some urgent reply from them. So they always follow their ... working period, working time. And after that it is very difficult, after that it is very difficult to catch them, so that is the way they work. While here we [Indians] try to ... do the work as if it is required, we follow flexibility here. So ... that is one example how they work actually.

R: Does this mean that in India, people tend to stay late in the office?

P6: Yes, we ... we give importance to the work done as soon as possible, and if it is important one, it has to be done in time, so that is what we do. [P6 from India]

And French to a large degree are the same way, it's, you know, "Here are my work hours, and here is what I do during those work hours, and ... after work hours ... don't, don't call me, don't bother me, you know, if I'm off, if I'm on vacation. I don't care if the factory burn down, don't contact me." [P2 from America]

However, such 'hardworking' behavior had a peer pressure connotation: 'hardworking' was a collective norm, and if any member from an Asian culture did not stay back after work, that member was considered 'lazy'.

But sometimes I feel pressurized, if I just go [home on time], my coworker will think I am lazy ...that, that I don't stay back to help out ... but, but actually there is nothing to help out, just because everyone is staying back late, so you have to stay late too ... just to fit in the team. [P1 from Taiwan]

Hence if that member wished to continue to be identified as belonging to his/her cultural group and be accepted by the other members, he/she would conform to the image of 'hardworking' by staying back.

The Japanese, they, they tend to work very hard ... although I find that ... because they value hard work, they find things to do to keep themselves at the after, you know, at the after until 8 to 9 o'clock ... things that I don't really considered to be high value ... yeah you know, you only do things that are of relevance and importance to your culture ... Again Japanese value you know, hard work, so, you know, I used to ask them "what are you doing?" and, and "Oh, we are doing this report for the 4th time" instead of going home to their family, you know. But if you go home before 8 o'clock at night, and you know in japan, you will not consider to be an important valuable employee. [P2 from America]

Another dissimilarity being identified was the different preference to work alone or in a team, that was illuminated by participants' value towards individual and group interest. Asian participants in this study displayed a strong desire to work in groups while others (predominantly the Americans and Germans in this study) embraced individualism.

And the working style is totally different, they [Germans] are kind of independent. Like ... it is kind of individuality ... they, they believe in individuality, like ... they would not like to be observed or followed by others. They just want to do their own things. And ... their bring out discussion is also different, their ... their selection of words during the talk is different ... their understanding of a particular issue is different. So ... is, is kind of ... very different ... being of ... doing the things for them as compared to our India colleagues ... And ... we [Indians], we believe in ... like ... relationship, like ... here [in India] you will not find ... more of ... individualistic people. They [Indians] always try to gather in a group and do some certain things and all, so it's kind of collectiveness that we have, togetherness. [P6 from India]

Ok usually for the Taiwanese, we will not like to tell the others or tell the coworkers or the boss, "these things are done by me ... only done by myself". We usually will say "is the team work, everybody has also contributed for this thing or for this project", because actually we will need everybody in this group or in this company, we can contribute something. But for maybe like the Americans ... by my experience, they will try to tell the coworker or the boss, "I am special, I am doing very good, and this all done by my abilities ... I make these things happen". They will try to tell the other they are very good, and the boss should appreciate their effort. I think this is not very normal in Taiwan, for Taiwanese people. [P1 from Taiwan]

The concept of time varied across countries and different nationalities used time differently. Participants found other nationalities to have a different sense of urgency reflected through their response time. Some (predominantly the Asians from Taiwan, Thailand, China, Japan in this study) were very prompt in response, and expected the rest to respond accordingly. And some (predominantly the Germans in this study) took longer time to respond.

And even for ... about the ... reply [response] to each other, for example, maybe some countries ... the people they may think [to] wait for a few days is ok to reply another person, but in Taiwan we usually need to reply customer or coworker very soon maybe within the same day ... she [German] always said it is in order, that she is doing other stuff before coming to me, not to worry ... this makes me feel, feel like queue number ... like first come first serve, no priority given to more important things ... everything is in order, in line. This is not efficient in Taiwan, we usually handle many things same time, this is how we work. [P1 from Taiwan]

So there is always conflict in this case that I am expecting my counterpart in Germany to do by when ... 'by when' means when is the day I specify but well, I should say that it's quite difficult for me to get such response on time ... most of the case. We always start, how can I get back to my customer here in Japan? While my customer is Japanese of course, expecting me to get back to them on time. So this is the hardest part of dealing with the day to day ... matters between customers and my head office in Germany. They are too slow ... you can never expect anything from them if they are on something. They don't like to be rushed, they do one thing at a time. [P8 from Japan]

When it came to authority, participants' views were mixed where some (predominantly Asians in this study) preferred to keep a distance from their boss and some (predominantly Westerners in this study) preferred a smaller boss-subordinate gap.

The people in Asia are mainly collaborators of me, I mean from the hierarchy they are subordinate, but I don't like this word ... Then if I talk about working with Asians, I think that ... in general I would say that Asian is probably more ... believe more in hierarchy. Maybe this coming from, like the, Confucian style in China that they pay

more respect towards the higher guy in the hierarchy and therefore don't dare to express opinions ... With the Asians, there are too much respect, they don't handle me as a colleague, that's sometimes I would prefer that way, try to speak more on the same level. When I try to exchange ideas with them, they see me more of a boss, not tell the boss everything, keep a big secret, be careful when you say your opinion, the boss might have a different opinion ... it's difficult to get the people speaking out.

[P13, boss from Switzerland]

Maybe this is because if you tend to have such private conversation, I think the manager [former Japanese boss] may think that those people tend to make many mistakes. Something like that. Well to be honest with you, this is something I really cannot accept [that Germans talk too much in office]. Because this is matter of discipline. Yeah. I am not saying I am disciplined, but I have been, I should say I have been trained or raised in this kind of working environment here in Japan, and my Japanese boss, the former boss, I should say, I have several Japanese bosses in my past career, all of them are very disciplined and they never allowed any of the office staff to have such private conversation. We are very afraid when they [bosses] are around, and fear to make mistakes ... this is unthinkable. [P8 from Japan]

4.2.1.4 Perceived Differences on Communication Style: Different People Communicate Differently

As for communicating with other nationalities, most participants felt the different levels of directness in their verbal and written expression. Participants perceived most Asians to be more indirect in their communication and most Westerners to be more direct in their communication.

In terms of communication, you know, I, I think that ... most cultures tend to being not as straight forward and open as the American culture ... American tend to say what they think, if, if American think we need to do this, we going back and say “We need to do this!” and ... “If you are not buying into it, why not?”. Whereas Asian culture ... you know ... tends to ... kind of do the “Yeah we think about it” type thing ... We rarely, you know, if ever hear the Japanese person say “No” or even the Chinese person, they will never just say “No”, and, and, and have a direct, you know, “No I don’t agree with that and here is why” [if you ask] "Ok we are going to do this right?" ... [And Asian reply] “Yeah ok" and you wonder in 3 months why it hasn’t been done ... so, so those are some of the ... some of the differences. [P2 from America]

Some people from the USA or some western countries maybe they will more straight forward, and in Taiwan or in some Asia country people, we may think but we may not talk, so it is different way to express ourselves. [P1 from Taiwan]

On the other hand, participants found it easier to communicate with other nationalities with similar cultural background than those nationalities who were culturally very ‘different’. Participants were more familiar and accustomed to the communication norms of nationalities with similar cultures, and despite the slight differences, it was still within their tolerance range. If the unfamiliarity became greater, in the case of communicating with nationalities of great cultural dissimilarity, the experiences were less tolerable.

So it’s ... still manageable, probably with the Germans ... With the Asians, to me is most difficult to communicate, is ... sometimes is not very easy to interact with them, because they are very closed, they're not very open minded, and when they start discussion with you, they just ... sometimes you feel they are waiting, have to give

them some strict instruction, and they follow just this instruction, and might be ... doesn't look like very proactive. So I think from the cultural difference, the Asian is probably the biggest cultural difference from the Swiss point of view. Germans are pretty close, of course because they are geographically also quite close to Switzerland. [P11 from Switzerland]

But I have a feeling the Germans ... they talk direct, straight to your face ... I feel their tone is more a threatening tone. Maybe that's their style, but to Chinese we try not to use such 'threatening' words & attitudes used by the Germans. For Taiwanese and Singaporeans, they have similar culture with us, so the difference is not so big. Is easier to work with them. [P12 from China]

When asked what does communication meant to them, most participants (both Asians and Westerners) acknowledged the importance of relationship building over just getting the job done. They saw good relationships as key to learning about others and getting the current and future job done.

Not everybody ... is interested in establishing personal relationship, whether they be an American or Swiss or German or French, they just ... you know, do business and, and, and move on ... but you don't do business with corporate issue, you do, you do business with people. And ... and therefore personal relationship I, I find it to be pretty important. [P2 from America]

I think business is only ... a small part of communication. Most important, I mean for me most important is ... having good relationship. [P3 from China]

I mean it's not really always 100% just for getting things done, good relationship is more important. Without good relationship, you can only go this far in doing your job.

But if you have good relationship, it is a lot easier to get help and support and do your job more efficiently ... and you find it interesting and it increases your knowledge about the people and other cultures. [P13 from Switzerland]

When you have good relationship ... I personally learn from different people, from different culture. These are main points ... Also increase own knowledge, for example this people, that people how you interact with them. China needs relationship. No matter if this is good for work now or not, there may be chance to help you at other situations ... I think these are good things of communication. [P3 from China]

However, some Asian participants preferred to do 'business talk' only even though they like to do 'personal talk' for relationship building, due to their limited English proficiency. These participants found it easier to communicate in English on technical work issues than to communicate in English on personal issues. Limiting themselves to 'business talk' might serve as a cover up for the lack in English proficiency and hence prevent the possibility of losing face to others.

For me, I prefer to go straight to work, and talk about work first. You know, my English is not so good. It's hard for me to discuss some personal stuff in English to have good relationship ... Talk about work is easy, because it is always numbers and technical ... only need few English words to make other people understand ... but personal stuff, you need more English words. So my discussions with other Nationalities are limited within business topics. [P12 from China]

P9: Communication is ... basically for information, to get my job done ... so communication usually means to get the information for, for my ... job performance.

R: Is there anything else?

P9: Yes, I want to be friendly, more friendly [build good relationship] ... but I feel shame my English not good ... so, so of course I keep quiet, and only talk business ... business is simple, we are sales, we just meet targets then no problem. I don't look bad. [P9 from South Korea]

4.2.2 Encounters of Handling Conflict among Diverse Cultures

4.2.2.1 History of Unresolved Conflict: Accumulation Leading to Escalation

Most of the critical incidents started off predominantly as task conflicts in this study, comprising of conflict over delivery issues, quality concerns, distribution planning, visit arrangement and other events. When task conflicts were mismanaged, they became personal and escalated quickly to relationship conflicts, resulting in negative outcomes of emotional outburst and a messy situation where it was difficult to distinguish personal issues from business issues.

When she cannot help me in delivery, I tell boss this issue for help, she reacts by complains, why I report this to boss. I thinking I asking for help, not complaints, she cannot help. Anything we can solve ... we should do. I do not understand, why she angry. I feel ... confused ... I cannot ... cannot know exactly if she not like my English because every time I talk [email] she use angry words, or she thinks answer she gave ... customer can accept her solution. [P5 from Thailand]

Yes, I think a lot of time they become mixed together and it is hard to separate personal and business issue. What started off as innocent intention of solving the territorial problem I faced, end up she suspects me for trying to steal their business. [P7 from America]

Attempts to separate personal and business issues were observed among experienced participants where they try to regulate their emotion, postulate reflectively in their minds all possible reasons and solutions, and learn from such experiences.

I have learned that it's always good to have a solution oriented and back to earth and based on facts, and not getting very emotional mindset. You have to be ... very cool, you have to be very ... to take your time, to analyze it ... I was thinking what's going on? So what's up now? What's the problem? And then I took sometimes to re-think, is this a personal problem with me? Do they not trust me? Or they afraid that I give the information away? Is this the general problem they have? Is it possible to get it by then if no, why not? Can we solve it by another solution?' Always try to find solution.
[P11]

Findings on all the critical events revealed that communication breakdown was the main contributor to such deterioration from task to relationship conflict. Breakdown in communication was predominantly due to mismatched expectation, lack of information and misunderstanding.

Previously he has been working in the Korean company and Japanese company. Japanese company and Korean company is a little bit similar company culture. So Person22 expect even he is working now in German company, the company culture might be the similar but ... he faced many things in this company, is ... totally different from what he expected ... he feels ... very difficult to do something for work.
[P9, mismatched expectation]

But the answer that I got from him, is not clearly [clear] instruction, and not clearly [clear] schedule when we can pay? Or when we can decide pay or not pay for this customer? I cannot get any detail from him. This is make me ... feeling ... I, I feeling

is we are [This makes me feel that] ... I'm lost, lost the trust from [I have lost the trust at] ... feeling is not clearly working [This makes me feel that we are not working professionally]. [P5, lack of information]

So somehow he said something like, "Ok if you want to do this, I just don't want the points. Why are you so troublesome, want to say so many questions? What else do you want? Do you want to give the points or not?" So ... at that time I feel very discomfort and I don't understand why they need to put the things so harsh, because I am not the one who wants to ask so many questions. [P15, misunderstanding]

Breakdown in communication was most prominent in cases where participants had little or no personal relationship with the disputants. Of all those participants who described a breakdown in communication with their disputants, when asked how much did they know about their disputants and if they knew anything they had in common with the disputants, responded with little knowledge of others and had nothing much in common with others.

I do not know him personally, I have not met him anytime personally, but we have communicated through emails in the past. No, not much. I do not know him at a personal level ... I do not know, if we have anything common between us. [P6]

On the other hand, peer-peer, boss-subordinate and intergroup conflicts were manifestations of action and inaction of top management. The action often involved power struggles, campaigning followers to fight with opponents, mistrust and competitive goals. And these actions were reflected in policy, rules and regulations that permeated down along the hierarchy chain. Inaction involved denial of conflict (of its existence), and reluctance to intervene.

Most cases the person who has the power is responsible for the conflict. Because I think the conflict usually come from the order from the person who have the power. Conflict always happen between human being ... but the person who has power is responsible to resolve it in many cases ... so this is management problem and he has the power to take action, but he didn't take action ... he [Person2] just let departments to continue fighting with one another ... actually the problem comes from Person2 himself ... because he doesn't trust us ... he is the one who control, set up rules and regulations ... to control us ... and funny things is ... Person2 doesn't know, he doesn't know he is the one who causes Person22 to resign. [P9]

The whole organization of the group was actually the root cause for this conflict. Because there was also the power vacuum, from the group management, there was no effective group management there. And the Germans try to get into this power position ... I have to fight ... so not to be totally exploited. And so actually conflict arrived, and sometimes conflict accumulated, and escalated. [P13]

He asked me to fight with the Germans and escalate to their boss. But I don't ... want to do that. I have no problem with Germans. Just working together, so I don't like to damage the relationship with Germans. But he thinks we are exploited, Germans take advantage. I think he ... real reason is between him and German boss, always fighting. I don't like to involve. I am not comfortable. [P1]

However, all conflicts had history. What triggered off the conflict was not due to a one-off event, but was due to an accumulation of past unresolved events stacking up on top of one another that led to the escalation of conflict.

Maybe that was probably some more than just the reaction on those jokes. That's probably was also the whole conflict we had in the past couple of years ... so there

was a total misunderstanding ... this incident was only the tip of the ice berg ... a lot of conflict was already there ... among the companies within the group that erupted in one evening, because maybe they interpreted that I was at that evening striking back. For everything what happened to the 2, 3 years before, so the event cannot be considered totally isolated. If we have a very good relationship before, I think they will not react so harsh. [P13]

Maybe there was some past misunderstanding between me and him. Probably he suspected that I might have complaint about him behind his back ... and get so pissed suddenly. [P4]

4.2.2.2 Respect Perspective on Conflict: Perception of One's Capability

Most participants were not comfortable to talk about conflict and unless it was necessary, they would prefer to avoid conflict and not to confront it.

I am not too comfortable to talk about the conflict. I don't want the conflict to happen actually. I try to avoid any conflict happen between I and other people. [P10 from China]

No. I, I am definitely not the type of person who, who seeks out conflict. I try to avoid it. [P7 from America]

However, most participants acknowledged that conflict was something that was unavoidable while working within in an organization, and they accepted that they had to confront it and attempt to solve it at some stages of their working time.

I think ... not comfortable talking conflict ... not really 100%. But I can accept conflict because it's normal on working. Because we are working [at work] because

we, we have to solve conflict, we have to solve the problem, we have to settle many many issues. This is normal on working [at work]. We have to face everyday conflict, everyday problem, we have to solve it. This is normal on working [at work]. [P5 from Thailand]

I think that it's very rare you find people who say "I enjoy conflict". I am not the guy who likes to get around conflict. Sometimes we have to go through conflict, and we have to address them, talk about it and find a solution and therefore ... this is actually a manager daily duty that probably certain part of his job, if he want to do the job as a manager, you also have to do it. It's not the thing you enjoy but it's the thing you have to deal with it. [P13 from Switzerland]

Experienced participants saw conflict management as a form of reflective learning, despite the presence of discomfort in handling conflict.

I think nobody like talking about conflict, but, but you can really learn from conflict handling. It is, cannot, you know ... you cannot learn that from some, you know, training books ... you can feel the headache but the stress forces you to think ... why this happen? Who can help? What choices I have? You know ... study ... then new solution, new thinking ... new way to see things. [P3]

Because ... out of conflict you learn ... it's tough, never easy, with conflict with person, you can change your mentality, try to get rid of 'I can't change', 'I don't want to change' mindset. Trying to find solution, carefully evaluate all options you have. [P14]

Nevertheless, conflict to most participants was a matter of violation to perceived respect. Such perceived respect was an expression of self-confidence on one's capability. Most

conflicts in this study occurred in situations where participants perceived their capabilities were undermined. When others casted doubts on a participant's capabilities to perform their job, participants perceived such acts as disrespectful, and this led to conflict with others. Situations of disrespect included: being singled out as the person responsible for the problem or mistake; being ignored and not appreciated; being bypassed in authority.

When he pick on me ... blame me for not aggressive to take direct business and let distributor handle the customer, I feel very angry, like he do not respect how I manage distribution channels. I told him we benefit if this go through distributor as we cannot do door-to-door delivery, he just keep saying "You lose out your own profit!" ... he don't consider how much profit I brought into this company in the past, not respect ... I am the boss in this region, he don't respect my decision as boss. [P10, being singled out as the person responsible for the problem or mistake]

So then I find out that I'm not invited to the meeting with Company4 ... and ... that, you know, that, was, and that was Person6's [German] decision. ... and that upset me because ... well that ... and that was one of the few instances where ... I felt as though I was being disrespected ... and it was also a ... it also ... in my mind was "Ok, how dumb are you? You guys, none of you people have done anything with Company4" When I was with Company3 [former company], I was ... a very important part of getting Company4 sign [contract] with Company3 [former company]. So ... I kind of did the "Ok everybody who is going to this meeting, who've done business with Company4 before raise your hand" ... "Oh geez, nobody is raising your hand". So I, I felt as though I was being disrespected. [P2, being ignored and not appreciated]

She was very angry with me when I escalate the problem to boss ... after, after long time I see no solution from her ... Why do you tell boss about this? Am I not doing

my job? Do you think I am not good enough to help you? [P5, being bypassed in authority]

4.2.2.3 Anger Attribution: Tendency to Attribute Causes of Conflict to Dispositional Factors due to Lack of Personal Relationship

When participants were asked to explain why other nationalities within their organization had different working behaviors, most of the participants attributed this to cultural differences (situational factors). However, in a conflict situation, when participants were asked for possible reasons for the conflict to happen, most participants attributed the reasons to disputants' personal characters (dispositional factors). This was more so for participants who had little knowledge of the disputants and had nothing much in common with the disputants.

P1: I think is because...the attitude of the Person1 ... because ... she always use the ... very similar attitude to handle such issue ... Every time while we have any delivery issue, and we talk to her, she always gives us the same response, that "I'm sorry, that belongs to other department, not my department, I cannot do anything" or ... she can always give me the same reasons, but I think is not the truth. So I think the conflict happened is because of her attitude. She didn't treat you as an important ... colleague or she didn't think ... she has to help you just because we are in the same company.

R: I would like to know, how much do you know about her? Do you know her at a personal level?

P1: I know little of her in person.

R: Do you think ... you have anything in common with Person1?

P1: I don't think so. [P1 from Taiwan]

P2: I think ... a lot of it has to do with, with ... personality. So ... Person6's [German's] personality to begin with is not one that back down ... He did not have the experience to understand ... what the value, you know, what value ... going forward with Company4. And again it's Person6's [German's] personality, I think ... I think that, that everything was communicated ... as well as to be accepted ... expected although ... clearly Person6 [German] didn't seem to be interested in, you know, "Here are the good things that Company4 brings to the table" ... So, and, and quite honestly, I don't think Person6 [German] is a very smart guy. He, he ... he can't look at the big picture ... So, I, I, I think there are a lot of reasons ... ultimately I think it came down to personality and, and ... personal issues in terms of not wanting to loss face, not wanting to concede power.

R: For the person whom you had conflict with, how much do you know him? Do you know him at a personal level?

P2: No, I don't. And ... that, I, I think is ... you know, it's, it's certainly a shame ... to a certain degree. But it's also ... it's also has a lot to do with he doesn't want to get to know me on a personal level ... you know, we, we are on different continents ... so, there is not much opportunity ... you know, there, there is minimum opportunity to, to interact ... yeah on email, and from what I understand, he doesn't even do his own email ... so, no, I mean there, you know ... I, I don't know him at personal level and ... that ... I, I, and I think he was fine with that.

R: So I reckon you do not have anything in common with him?

P2: I, I ... I don't know, I mean I, I don't, I don't know if there are or not? ... Because we have such, you know, such little ... interaction beyond him being a jerk to me ...

[P2 from America]

Participants who had some levels of personal relationship with the disputants, displayed some knowledge of the disputants, and had something in common with the disputants, attributed possible reasons for the conflict to happen to situational factors.

R: What could be the possible reasons for the conflict to happen in the first place?

P3: I think ... in my opinion ... a lot of reasons. Maybe in that time Company6 [customer] has very high expectation, you know. They expect Company1 [current company] have same response as other suppliers. I think this is big reason. Of course you can say it's the miss-communication ... also cultural difference, I mean, they has a different working style.

R: For the person whom you had conflict with, how much do you know him? Do you know him at a personal level?

P3: We meet, you know, couple times. Sometimes in China. He visit I think 3 or, maybe 2 or 3 times ... to see us, then I met him also 2 times in Germany. We have couple of times face to face talk. Of course he, he told me some ... things, his ... situation in his Quality department ... He want to change ... the, the working style of the colleagues, but ... it's not ... easy, according to what he talked to me. Because they have shortage in manpower in department. Also ... you know, some staff, even could not write in English. So, yeah, I think he, he met difficulties, I understood. He also mentioned he, he could not get support from his boss. In the higher management in Germany, his department not really important.

R: Can you tell me something you have in common with that person you had conflict with?

P3: I can only remember ... he's very ... sporting guy. He join a lot of activities running, marathon ... hiking ... everything. These [activities] also I like.

R: Do you talk with him about these activities?

P3: Yes. I have a talk with him every visit us. Because ... the only way ... we can talk a lot of time, [is when] we have dinner together. [Participant P3 from China]

R: What could be the possible reasons for the conflict to happen in the first place?

P7: Could very well be that ... she just felt we didn't need to know about the situation, they had it under controlled. It could be that ... she had the power and they don't need my interaction, or could just be ... a simple miscommunication of somebody didn't want us to send too many persons from the States. Could also be that I completely misinterpreted the issue.

R: For the person whom you had conflict with, how much do you know her? Do you know her at a personal level?

P7: I have worked together with her for 12 years, there is some personal level of engagement, over the many years, we have been to many sales meeting together at the same time, and, you know, done skiing, done canoeing, and doing other activities outside of work. So there are some levels of personal engagement there ... I mean I do know something about her personal life, married, doesn't have kids those sort of things.

R: Can you tell me something you have in common with that person you had conflict with?

P7: Yeah, I think we are both very loyal to our company and she work with Company1 for 20 some years and Company1 is somewhere that I work for since I graduated from college, so I think we are both very loyal to our jobs. She loves to ski and she is very good at it. And I like to ski but I am not very good at it. We do have a common interest in doing that. [P7 from America]

4.2.2.4 Angry E-Mail: Reflection of a Stressful Organization

Lack of cooperation among offices, fueled by top management power struggles, was evident within the organization under study. The fight within the top management triggered off interoffice rivalry, where bosses rallied their own staff to work in a competitive and win/lose manner that was detrimental to other offices. The working environment concerned was riddled with excessive conformity, where any acts that deviated away from top management's power struggle agenda would be bombarded with angry e-mails. Much time, energy, creativity and productivity were taken away just to respond to such angry e-mails from the top management. Participants became stressed-out, less motivated and resentful towards top management.

Why should I ... try to lie to my ... coworkers in the factory? Why should I do that? And I don't like to try to do that, just because he [boss] ... want to ... push the factory to get ... some [personal] goals, but I don't think is the good way to communicate with the factory. He want me to use strong words in e-mail, to challenge the factory. And I feel stressed and try to reason with him ... he don't listen and give me many capital letters [in the e-mail]. My morale is low whenever he loses his temper, because

he loses face when he thinks we are weak in front of Germans, and then he throws his anger in e-mail. [P1]

4.2.3 Practices in Handling Communication among Diverse Cultures

4.2.3.1 Adjusting to Adapt: Learning from Experiences

In attempts to adapt to cultural differences while communicating with other nationalities, participants, overtime, made adjustment on what they knew, how they saw and how they felt about other cultures. The degree of adjustment depended on how experienced participants were, with less experienced participants requiring more adjustment to be made as compared to those experienced participants. As participants gained and learnt more from experience, they made better adjustment. In this study, the working experiences were often associated with number of working years, where participants with many years of working experiences would mostly be perceived to be a better adapter than those who had less working experiences. However, some participants with lesser working experiences could adapt reasonably well as compared to those experienced ones.

Of course first when I came into this kind of challenge, I feel a bit stressed and discomfort, at the initial stage. But when time goes by, I try to adapt myself ... I would say that I'm still very green in this area. And there's still a lot for me to learn and change. [P15 from Malaysia]

In where I grew up, the number of people who had spoken with some body, from other countries, not very many of them. So, I get to do something new. Back then more adjustment is needed ... now I've got 15 years of experience working with multiple cultures ... I'm become accustomed to ... working with people of the other cultures ... think because I've been working with, you know, multinational

corporations for so long, ... you know, I, I, I just automatically do [things] ... with ... less adjustment I say, as oppose to 'someone who is just starting to figure this out' ... But not ... not to be too generalized ... I know some here that may not have worked longer than me ... are, are not too bad communicators themselves ... they can almost adapt themselves easily with any other cultures. [P2 from America]

The adjustment on knowing more of other cultures was evident by the transformation of participants from mere knowledge gathering to true understanding of issues that matter most to other cultures. Such understanding was a reflection of appreciation of other cultures' 'unfamiliar' values and mindfulness of their importance to other cultures even if participants did not agree with such values.

I think ... what I need to know, I, I should learning to know about different culture, of the different nationalities, to reading, and surfing more ... I, I sometimes I try to looking ... research on the website about culture and the way to talk with the Germany, or the way to talk in Chinese ... Because of Thai people thinking and another nationality thinking is ... different ... I do not understand [them] ... this make me some very misunderstanding. But after ... often [frequent] communication ... ok, after that I understand ... I learn many things ... from my experience. The first is ... I can understand ... different culture of different nationalities that I have to cooperate with them ... I can understand different culture working maybe stressing different thinking. [P5 from Thailand]

And then there was also the ... the learning of other culture, and, and understanding how they, how they interact with each other? How they ... how they, they do business? ... Yeah you know, you begin to learn, you know, you can, you can read a book first on, you know, don't do certain things in Japan because its offensive, you

know, don't do certain things in Germany because, you know ... that kind of things ... It's ... it's something that, you know, you, you just learn as, as you go ... Maybe you don't really understand what the books are, are trying to say ... you just take it, know what I mean? When in terms of actual interaction, and how you, how you work with folks, you learn from experience ... then slowly you begin to understand ... you have to, you have to experience it for yourself ... The Japanese, typical Asians, they, they tend to work very hard ... although I find that ... because they value hard work, they find things to do to keep themselves stay back after, you know, after until 8 to 9 o'clock ... things that I don't really considered to be high value ... yeah you know, you only do things that are of relevance and importance to your culture. [P2 from America]

Upon fully understanding other cultures better, participants further transformed from rejection of 'unfamiliar' values to acceptance, resulting in higher perceived similarities. Here participants accepted the fact that others could be different from themselves, and they agreed to disagree. It was a move from sympathy to empathy, where participants were more open minded and could see different perspectives to a given situation.

Yes, after these years of growing and learning, people you think are different, maybe not so different from you ... I learn 求同存异, 有容乃大 [to put aside differences so as to seek common ground, and greatness lies in accepting the differences] Qiu Tong Cun Yi, You Rong Nai Da, meaning putting difference aside to seek common grounds. Common ground where both parties agree on. At the same time, I can agree to disagree with you as we both have our differences, but I respect and accept your difference, your different opinions. Also to respect the norms, culture of other nationalities. ... and tolerance is a virtue ... also ... jumping out of your position, out

of the circle that you draw around you ... learn to 换位思考 [empathy, think of others' side] Huan Wei Si Kao. This means changing your position and look at the other person's perspective. [P12 from China]

You know when I first interacting with folks from other culture ... being ... being the stereotypical American, we ... we kind of, you know, we ... we look at ... at ... at our experience, and it's ... it's American, you know, they ... they ... they are 'them', and we are 'American', and ... and ... and that's all I knew. Now ... if you're not ... if you're not accepting the other culture, and you're not ... willing to adapt ... and do things that ... are ... flat out dumb, to reach a common goal, then ... the more you're going to fail ... You and I may never agree on ... we, we never going to see eye to eye, but we still respect each other ... then I ... try to gain consensus, you know, ok you and I disagree ... "Here is here's my stuff" and ... there are times when you need to compromise, "Ok, I still don't agree with you on this, but if you're willing to give me this, I can live with that ... you know, it's, it's just having an open mind, and, and be willing to ... to go "Ok, what's really going on here? How can I get to a situation that works for both of us?" [P2 from America]

The desensitization of others' values from being 'unfamiliar' to 'familiar' rendered participants to transform from the initial emotional behavior to a more task focus behavior. Emotions were more regulated as participants continued to learn from experiences.

I think ... it's about experience. Of course in the beginning ... maybe more emotional ... that time [first time], I was ... not really happy ... you get emotional ... But after some time, once you understand this is cultural difference, you will think this is normal. You see things calmly, objectively, not emotionally ... I think when I experience such difference, I only try to understand ... So ... now I can think about

this objectively ... I think this is a big change now for me. So this really helps ... you know, different way to solve problem, maybe better, ok now I know what to do. [P3 from China]

I was pretty surprise [back then] ... nasty surprise because I didn't expect ... and angry ... And of course ... you ... need some time to learn, and you need to get some experience, because that's the only way I think you can in long run is possible to handle or to avoid any problem ... I have so far ... I have learned that if you bring it down, based it on facts, don't be emotional, listen to the others as well, try to understand the other one and come out with a proper solution which the other one doesn't lose his head or his face. But you also do not lose your head or your face. So just find some compromise way. [P11 from Switzerland]

Participants who adapted well experienced less stress during adjustment with greater growth, as they viewed difficulties faced during adjustment as challenges and part of a learning process. Successful adaptation also transformed participants to be better communicators, where participants were able to communicate effectively and appropriately with other cultures and had no problem of fitting in among other cultures, and formed personal relationship with them.

P2: I've been doing ... business internationally for so many years ... and, and don't have much problem communicating with others ... I'm not going to say I don't get frustrated [stressed], but I don't lost sleep over it ... I try not to let that [frustration] interfere with ... the actual, the actual interaction [communication] ... But, I think, just, you know, again, by virtue of me doing business internationally and, and just doing business for so many years ... you learn, you learn how to get things done ... to get people ... to do things for you and ... So, you, you get pretty good at working through

... and, and gaining consensus ... find ways to work around this cultural barrier ... So these people see you as part of their team, not 'us' and 'them'. So this is a challenge, interesting one ... to make them on your side and they treat you like a 'bro' [brother], even, even I'm American and they are Asians or Germans.

R: So do you see yourself differently now as compared to last time?

P2: To a certain extent, yes, you know, I, I used to get frustrated easily ... I go "Listen you stupid shit! What's the hell wrong with you?" ... I'm ... the child [in the family] for being blunt and open ... and, and ... that's me ... you know a blatant American. So ... now ... I try to put those aside and that's, you know why typically if I, If I'm really pissed off ... or frustrated over a situation, I just, I just let it cool, you know, sleep on it whatever let myself kind of "ok, how should I feel here?" and, and then try to address the situation.

R: So there is some progress right there, in communicating with others?

P2: Yes, definitely. [P2]

4.2.3.2 Facilitating Easy Communication: Accommodative Exchange between Native and Non-Native English Speakers

Native English speaking participants tended to accommodate non-native English speakers by speaking slowly and using simple English words. They perceived such acts as helping others to understand them better.

P7: I sometimes have the feeling that ... some people who I speak to ... let us say an Asian, would, you say something and they nod their head and they, they say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah" but I, I don't think they actually understand what I'm saying, and saying,

"Yes, yes, yes" maybe just a cover up also, "I don't know what you're saying, and I will just agree with you and then move on." So I worry, is the person actually understanding what I'm saying? Do they understand what it means and what the implications are? So I tend to slow down what I, how I speak, when I speak to people of different nationalities. And to those coming from America, I speak much faster, and ... when I speak to people of different nationalities, I, I measure what I am going to say much more than I would to the Americans. So I have to ... I think about trying to use smaller words, trying to slow down my speech, trying to ... make sure they understand what I'm I am saying.

R: What do you mean by 'smaller words'?

P7: I mean using more common words that more people may understand, for example use the word 'rude' instead of 'petulant'. [P7 from America]

Most participants adopted 'small talk' to explore commonalities with others. Commonalities usually concerned families and hobbies. The motivation behind such 'small talk' was to reduce perceived dissimilarities between the two parties with the recognition that there was something in common (same joy, problem) and the realization that the other person was not so much different after all. Such perceived similarities provided participants a sense of belonging and togetherness.

I like to have some chatters ... I try to get some understanding of ... what's, what's this person all about? You know, does he have a wife, kids? What are their interests? ... Try to, try to ... to find some sort of commonality ... There are a few folks that are, are big formula one fans, just like myself and I shot them and then from time to time, "Hey you know formula one, you know ... tatatatata [and so on]" ... Even if English is not their native language, it doesn't take much to understand each other, on the same

issues on ... you know ... kids problems, taking care of family or the knowhow of fly fishing ... that is if, if both of us do fly fishing. Eventually they feel you are their pals or, or buddy, and when they do so, business talk for the rest of it is, is easy going. [P2 from America]

P3: I think informal talk would help to have a good communication with him. We talk activities running, marathon ... hiking ... activities that both of us like.

R: Are you able to express yourself well enough in such talk? In English I mean.

P3: I think for English, there is no other way for me, I have to keep talking and learning. So I practice my English over dinner with him. But we understand common words [lingo] like 'carbo-loading', 'pacing', so easy for two of us to understand each other.

R: So what happen next?

P3: He is more helpful. I think he realize maybe we different offices but actually working same company. We want the company to do well. [P3 from China]

4.2.3.3 Managing Uncertainty and Anxiety: Moderating its Negative Effects through Reflective Learning, Relationship Building and Trust

Participants seeked information to clarify uncertainty they had by asking more questions (either through e-mail or face-to-face). When the gathered information did not meet their expectation and did not clarify the uncertainty they had, the situation often led to anxiety.

I ... call her a few times ... sometimes e-mail ... ask her "Why? What is the reason behind this? What happened? You should give me more details and then I can explain

to my customer”. Then she cannot give me anything ... she cannot give me any feedback, she cannot give me any reasons. She just said “sorry ... it cannot be canceled” ... I feel ... angry and I am ... not satisfied with ... [her] feedback ... I am confused, why she cannot give better explanation. [P1]

However, participants who adopted reflective learning, build relationship and had a trusting attitude during the information gathering process experienced moderated uncertainty and anxiety. They were able to demonstrate openness, empathy by considering all different perspectives, and knowledge to make an informed opinion of the situation.

There are times when you can only guess what they are talking. You can only base on your experience and your understanding to guess what they meant. When ... you have personal time with them, have lunch together, to talk about life experience, frustration, what happen recently ... you build up more understanding from there, it helps to learn more about that person, to open your mind ... with more viewpoints and you can make guess more correctly. But trust must be there, that others are genuine in getting to know each other, that others are mostly truthful in what they said. So with this type of contact time, eventually if you encounter some problems or some misunderstandings or doubts, you could probably link back and have better understanding, that oh actually because they have this experience or they have this feeling or they have this explanation for certain things before ... you might be able to link them together. And probably explain why they said such a thing or why they react in such a way. So you are not as angry or in doubt as compared to if you have not had this understanding through relationship. So that’s why I said that face-to-face time or personal time is important because only through such time can extensive

trusting relationship be established, then you understand more, and this will help to verify what other people actually meant. [P4]

Lack of trust could distort and hinder reflective learning, provoking a less productive learning experience among the participants and erode any possible relationships. Information gathering without trust was limited in its means, and often some people resorted to brute interrogations, causing further anxiety to all parties concerned. Participants in this situation often experienced unfairness, uncomfortableness and avoidance.

He challenges me for this many many times, not 2 or 3 times, many, many times. Every time he asked me, "Why you let your distributor handled your direct business as a forwarder? Why don't you go to other shipping forwarder companies? Then I have to explain to him, some business because of the customers' request to be handled by the distributor because they don't want to import themselves. They required door-to-door shipment. And then boss challenges me, "You let your distributor enjoy the profit. You lose out your own profit." I am very angry about this. Because the distributor didn't enjoy a good margin, sometimes they even lose money, when they help us to handle distribution business. I even show evidence to Person2, he still doesn't trust me, so I am very angry about his such, such attitude ... This ... makes me very angry and I feel upset when he challenges me for this case. I think he didn't trust me, and his unbelief in me in what I do. And I think maybe he even thinks I, I get profit from the distributor. That's very very upset to me. He never treat others fairly, because he always believe people are lazy and always trying to cheat. I never want to talk to him if not for work. Last time I brought him to dinner after work. Now I left him at hotel after work. I don't feel easy with him. [P10]

4.2.3.4 Buffering against Violated Expectation: Increasing Familiarity through Relationship Building

Most participants recognized that different people had different ways of doing things that might not meet others' expectations of how things should be done. Participants with lesser experiences perceived such violated expectation as others 'lacking in understanding' and responded with disappointment. These participants often based such violation on their norms or limited view of others. They would impose their expectation on others and expected others to reciprocate in manner to fulfill their expectation.

P1: For the Taiwanese company, we need to feedback ... in a very short time, maybe within one day ... but many in the Germany they can wait for three days is ok for them to get the answer, so people in Germany they cannot understand why Taiwanese is so urgent to know the result, so urgent to know the reply, they cannot understand, so I would say the challenge people faced in different countries is ... they don't understand why you act like that, they didn't know your needs because they cannot understand ... they don't know why you ... act like that ... I will still have to let the people outside Taiwan ... know about my expectation, I will try to tell them , try to let them understand about my expectation and hope they can react like the way I want.

R: How do you feel when they behave in such manner that does not meet your expectation?

P1: I feel disappointed, and upset. [P1]

Participants with more experiences focused on building relationships with others to overcome any communication barrier. A bond akin to friendship was nurtured during the process of relationship building. Participants got to know others in a deeper manner and this helped to

increase familiarities and likings. Expectations were realigned, based on the personalized knowledge of others. Others' 'unfamiliar' acts once perceived to violate expectation in the past were now 'familiar' acts within expectations, even if participants did not agree to such acts. Such new expectation was the manifestation of acceptance that others were different and the agreement to disagree. The realignment of expectation empowered participants to regulate their emotions and focused on solving the problem on hand.

P2: But in general ... I, I have always kind of thought "Ok if I can build a relationship with this person" ... a, a genuine, you know, and, and not only a professional level, but also a personal level, of showing ... "Ok, you may not agree with me, but, but let me proof to you that I bring value ... and I understand what, what needs to be done", then ... a lot of those cultural barriers can be broken down ... Because I, I knew, I knew with my Tokyo Company³ [previous company], I did things that, that completely freak them out from a cultural perspective ... There was a Japanese Product Manager that, that I walked up to and, and he wasn't keeping me informed on, on some neat new products. I walked up to him, I grabbed him by the shoulder and I said, "You need to keep me informed of this, I am your friend!" ... You know what that is ... you don't do that [to a Japanese], but I get away with this because ... he, he, you know, he and I have a great personal relationship, we have an excellent perfect relationship. So, so it, you know, you can build those personal relationship and, and get beyond some of the cultural barriers.

R: Does this mean he will mostly agree with you on work issues?

P2: Now this doesn't mean we know each other as friends we will agree on everything, it, it only means he accept my crazy behavior and I accept his behaviors which sometimes I still cannot agree on after so many years. So, so we agree to

disagree like gentlemen and try to work things around, you know, compromise, where, we try, try ... see how we can best do the job. [P2]

4.2.4 Practices in Handling Conflict among Diverse Cultures

4.2.4.1 Giving Face: Showing Respect by Highlighting Strength and De-Emphasizing Weakness

Most participants displayed concern for their own ‘face’ and attempted to save/defend their faces in situations of perceived conflict. Face was a reflection of how much participants were accepted to function competently in their current positions within the organization. Participants perceived a loss of face when others did not show respect for their capability to perform their job.

It definitely ... it definitely hurt my relationship at Company4 because ... there, there is that loss of face [for not able to close a business deal], there's that you know "Yeah this guy [Participant P2] couldn't make this happen" and, and really they looked at us where as though we wasted their time ... ultimately Company4 wouldn't ever return my phone call anymore. I was calling people that I knew and they wouldn't call me back ... so, yeah I mean, it, it impacted me on a personal professional level ... doubted in my capability ... in that it hurts all my business relationship. [P2 from America]

R: What makes you lose face?

P9: Sometimes they don't give flexibility over the kind of ... ‘right’ [authority]. I can say ‘right’. They just want to give us a duty and responsibility, but don't give the flexibility and the ‘right’ to make and achieve the goal.

R: So your 'right' is the authority, and the lack of authority over your own job make you lose face?

P9: Yeah, yeah. I have no authority. I am manager. But I have no authority. They don't believe I can do my job as manager. They don't trust me. [P9 from South Korea]

Most participants experienced emotions such as anger, unhappiness, stress and embarrassment when they lost face. Some participants (predominately Westerners) expressed such emotions openly, while other participants (predominantly Asians) suppressed such emotions inwardly.

P9: I feel I'm ... I'm small, I've no power, I've no right to make any decision and someday I have to leave this company too. When he pick on me ... I feel like sales engineer, not sales manager ... I am humiliated. So in such cases, it makes me angry, or sad or lose face, something like that.

R: When you feel this way, do you let anyone know? Or did you tell anyone?

P9: No. I keep inside me. [P9 from South Korea]

I remember another case, one German visited china. And he had internal meeting with our distributors, and after that, he said, "How can Chinese guy teach us what to do?" ... I think this is also respect issue. Actually there isn't much, the distributor was just telling the German the China market, how to open the market, how to find customers, because the German is not familiar with China market. But I think when German hears this, he doesn't think of issues on China market, but he is thinking, "You are Chinese, how can you teach me what to do?" I think this is face issue where the German feels that the Chinese do not respect him by 'teaching' him what to do in

China market. You know it is common to have conflict when people talk about opening market, but the German comment came from, “You are Chinese. What rights do you have to teach me?” When I hear his comment, I am not comfortable. [P3 on German losing face]

Participants with experience tended not to take their own faces as seriously in situations of conflict. Even in situations where they lost face, they attempted to overcome the negative emotions associated with losing face quickly. They were more concerned about others’ faces, and were mindful of not doing things that might make others lost face. Experienced participants gave face by respecting others’ viewpoints even if they disagreed with these views and would not reject them forthrightly, instantly and abruptly. They showed respect by giving recognition to others’ capability: highlighting others’ strengths and de-emphasizing others’ weaknesses.

P12: Don’t put too much emphasis on your face. Because the more you hold on to your face, try to protect your face, the more you are unwilling to let it go, this will result limited space for you to solve the problem and less flexibility in problem solving ... If you think of bigger picture, you are less angry even when you lose face. To solve the problem, you must cool down your emotion fast ... To encourage others to solve this problem together with you, you have to give face to them. If not they are not motivated to help you.

R: May I know how you give face to others?

P12: You have to respect their expertise, even at times you do not agree with the person, but you cannot put him 100% down because of what he is weak at. You have to find what he is good at and show respect to that. If you reject him hastily in public

where everyone is watching, you cannot expect to draw out anything good from him later on.

4.2.4.2 Cultivating a Problem Solving Environment by Depersonalizing Conflict: Direct on Task, Indirect on Disposition

Superficial conflicts appeared to be ‘solved’ temporarily by dominating or avoiding conflict handling style, where there was a lack of mutual respect and cooperation to solve the problem. The real conflicts remained masked, hidden and unresolved, waiting to be escalated in future.

This is not the first time ... I try to avoid conflict with him. I do not voice out because I know it will not change the situation, he will not listen ... I'm always the one that ... kind of 'I'm almost defeated by him' ... and I feel if I voice out it may just leave an ill feeling for both of us, me myself, he himself. I always respect good relationship for better teamwork. So I better keep quiet but I am not happy with this particular matter. But again this is not only with one time ... we face similar situation many many times. And many times I avoid and more ill feelings accumulate inside me. But this time ... this critical incident happened because he does not share same respect I have to customer, and he is not helpful to customer and this time I standby customer and go against him. [P8]

Experienced participants employed mostly problem solving conflict handling style. Problem solving depersonalized conflict by being direct on task and indirect on disposition of other parties. The process of problem solving considered all different concerns, and sought to discover the best solution acceptable by all parties in a cooperatively and respectful manner.

To get to win-win situation is important, everyone just trying to solve the problem in good manner and not emotional or personal about conflict ... when cooperation is strong, many heads put together consider all angles and come out with best answer.

[P12]

To me ... you know, the win-win situation is ... is actually essential to overcome conflict ... by showing respect, first of all you don't belittle the other party, you don't ... make remarks that, "This is stupid way of doing things." ... put down the emotion, and the feeling. And then think of what to do, be more rational, and make it less personal. So I try to detach myself from the negative feeling ... eventually ... you need to make the decision with different opinions and different solutions. Somehow, you need to make the decision that, which is the best solution, and which is the best opinion at that time. [P4]

One of the experienced participants, related the problem solving process to his MBA (Master of Business Administration) classroom's session, where students from different nationalities came together for a common goal (to graduate from the course), brainstorming for a creative solution for a given case study. Such a learning environment encouraged openness, exchange of ideas, respect and cooperation. Students in the class agreed to disagree, and yet still respected each other for their various professional backgrounds, and contributed constructively without any fear of being marginalized for any office political reasons.

I recall problem solving in my previous MBA class, where everyone is relaxed ... there, there is no office politics or worries about saying the wrong things to offend or impress people ... everyone behave like a student, trying to learn and I enjoyed this environment. We can argue openly, exchange ideas, trying to solve problem in case study ... we have inputs from engineers, accountants ... sales, and no matter how

crazy the ideas sound, we don't put them down. We respect their ideas ... and, and we are still good friends at the end of class. [P4]

4.2.4.3 Working as a Team: Relating more to Common Goal than Cooperative Goal

In situation of conflicts, participants made initial attempts to urge all parties to work together.

So when we have conflict ... as a team of this company ... I still believe we should work ... together and ... and that's what we should try to do. [P1 from Taipei]

Ok, this is nothing personal, I don't like when you do this, we have to work together, and I wouldn't want it to get any worst. [P2 from America]

Some participants initiated a cooperative approach in trying to get others to work with them and expect others to respond in cooperative manner. However, others might not reciprocate accordingly.

P6: I try to work accordingly ... to, to cooperate with them, to reach a win-win situation, hopefully they can understand me better and work together. So I expect the same thing from them, like this kind of win-win situation. They should also come down on a certain level and I also have to come down on a certain level, so that, that kind of thing I feel.

R: So do the others respond back in a cooperative manner and work with you to solve the conflict?

P6: No. It doesn't work sometimes. Even after I try to put my efforts to match their expectations, and, and try to work together with them, sometimes they still show the same inflexibility and refuse to work together. [P6 from India]

Trust me, I'm, I'm one of those people that ... when something goes wrong ... I'm, I'm my own worst critic, and ... and I try to learn from my mistakes and go "Ok, was there anything I could have done different?" and ... honestly in this situation ... in order to not cause more conflict, yeah I could just rolled over and gone "Ok whatever you want". I try to accommodate and work with them ... it can make you very angry because you are, you know, "This is something that needs to be done, this is very important!" and ... and, and you get push back to where, you know, "No, we are not going to do that, that doesn't work for us" [response from Germans], and that, that becomes very frustrating. [P2 from America]

Other participants used the company goal to rally for cooperation but with limited success. The contributing factor for such shortfall in this study was the dilution of intended cooperativeness with competitive individual goals when the organization operationalized its company goals.

P1: So when we have conflict ... as a team of this company, even we have different job functions, I am the sales, and she is the contact window of the factory, but ... I still believe we should work ... together and ... try to achieve the goal of the company ... and that's what we should try to do. So I told her we should work as a team for company goal. But she said there is nothing she can do to help. She is not putting extra effort.

R: When you say company goal, what does it means to you?

P1: Company goal means helping company earn more money. She and me, we are working for the same company ... As a team ... we ... all ... we try to do is, try to ... make this company earn money, and that's why we can have salary from the company.

R: Do you know why she doesn't want to help you so that the company can make more money? Does this mean she sees company goal in different way?

P1: I think is management problem. Every office is supposed to work as team, together to make more sales for the Group. But her boss and my boss are fighting [competing] to find fault, to, to blame one another. So maybe her goal from her boss is to make more money for their own office only ... and she is not to help other offices to make more money. Same problem here, when I try to help other offices sometimes, I got scolding from my boss, "Why you are helping them? It's their problem." [P1]

Experienced participants used common goals instead to remind each other of the commonalities. They perceived common goals as aspirations that most people could identify, accept and relate to. Such aspiration motivated others to cooperate.

P1: Getting everyone to work together, you need common goal ... Here are the things that we need to be doing as a team, to, to ... accomplish common goals.

R: What do you mean by common goal? Is this the company goal?

P1: Yes it can be company goal, as it rightfully should ... but very often company goal is distorted by the 3 different regional CEOs. It becomes more like 3 different goals now with their own personal agenda, you know what I mean? So it becomes nothing common to pull everyone together. I prefer to use the word common ...

common means there is something everyone have in common. Only, when, when we have the same ... shared aspiration, problem, and, and ... even in conflict, people will look at the common goal and put aside the differences, and, and work together. And common goal is not something printed only on annual report, this is something ... yeah ... you need to remind everyone again and again, this is powerful, especially when there is conflict, to make everyone agree to disagree, putting aside differences, and cooperate you know. [P2]

4.3 Challenges

4.3.1 Challenges in Handling Communication among Diverse Cultures

4.3.1.1 Superiority Complex and Recognition of Minority Voices

The majority of the staff working for the organization under study were Europeans and the minority of the staffs were from outside Europe. The minority groups within the organization perceived the majority group's behaviors as proud, imposing and dominating in certain situations that posed a challenge to effective and appropriate communication.

Working with the Germans ... over the years, I find that ... they have a great deal of nationalistic pride, so ... you know, the, the Germans think that anything that's was done outside the Germany, is crap ... dealing with the Germans ... so, that's, that's where your challenge becomes a little bit greater, and that's where the frustration comes in ... But you know the German is a little tougher because ... if it comes from the USA, it must be a stupid idea. [P2]

They [Germans] cannot understand why Chinese are so 'rude'. They [Germans] always like to stand by their positions [have their viewpoints] when considering things. But sometimes, you have to understand customer don't just deal with your

company only. In one day customer may deal with 5 to 6 suppliers over the same matter. Of course customer will have their opinions and attitude over this matter. So it is difficult for German to request Chinese to behave like German according to German's expectation, in the opposite Chinese also cannot request German to behave like Chinese according to Chinese's expectation ... this is not practical. [P3]

Their [Germans] communication style I feel kind of an authoritative, like ... they try to put ... what you can say, like ... they try to ask us to do what they are saying, so it is, it is kind of authoritative manner, so ... that's what, they are not more accommodating of ... request. [P6]

Such superior attitudes from the majority groups put the minority groups in a helpless situation and there was a risk of missing out the minorities' voices, where the minority group might be too afraid to speak out against the majority group.

Well initially I thought this should not be the way that we should work. But of course this is the deep rooted culture, mindset, and eventually I found out they [Germans] will never change ... So since I'm working for Germans, and I know they will not, they will not change their mindset, so the only way we work together is that, I should adapt the way they work. So now I know, how I should behave, how I should associate with them. I have no choice, since I am the only Japanese working in this German company. Sometimes I try to speak out, to make suggestion, but the German don't listen. It does not make any difference to what I think or do, I just need to follow their way and their thinking ... Definitely I have no authority to make any changes, make any decision ... That was the time I feel like ... a bit of uneasy about my job security. If I insist too much, I think I may end up losing my job ... I have my colleague here in Japan who couldn't accept the way they work. He is no longer with

us. He was fired for not doing the German way. So this is important, as I do not want to lose my job ... That was ... what the feeling that I felt. [P8]

4.3.1.2 Objectiveness, Tolerance and Fairness

Participants faced challenges in being objective as they had made assumptions of how others would have behaved to a certain extent, and such belief often derailed participants from communicating in an unbiased manner and prevented participants from getting to know others truly.

P7: So some of the things are cultural, I think with the Germans, I think they are very technical and very ... structured, and they are very strict ... serious. Mode of communication like say, to Person13, you know, he is very ... I would say old school German in that you ... you don't address him by his first name, you don't call him Person13, you call him Mr Person13 ... you know, it's not the first name basis. I think there are some cultural things there. If he was to ever think you are on the same level as him, then he would say, "You can call me Person13." [P7 making inaccurate assumption that most Germans are serious].

P2: I, I say that my, my skillset is, is ... above average ... and, and compare my experience to someone like Participant P7 [same P7 as above] who, you know, he's ... quite a little bit younger than me ... he ... you know his background is an engineer, so he, I think he tends to get intimidated by people from other cultures ... I, I think that he ... and, and that, that is to his detriment sometimes ... not too hard upon Participant P7, but an excellent example ... and, and I think ... and because of his age, experience sometimes he get treated that way ... and just a quick example ... Person13 [German] ... so before I met him [German], Participant P7, you know, he keep saying about Mr Person13 [German], Mr Person13 [German] ... right, I say "Why you keep calling

him Mr?"... "Well he prefers that, and he has never told me otherwise" ... so I went to ... my first meeting in Germany ... and I was thinking "Man this guy is an ass hole, this Person13 [German] guy he must not be of much fun " ... well ... he go walking up to me, and put his hand [forward] and go "Hi I'm Person13 [German]". And afterwards I asked Participant P7 "He wouldn't let you call him Person13 [German], he only want to be referred to as Mr Person13 [German]?" and he goes "Yea" ... "Well, he just came up to me and introduce himself as Person13 [German]" ... So ... Participant P7 ... tends to be more intimidated especially with people from other cultures. [P2 found out not all Germans are serious]

Participants also described that it was not easy to tolerate others by changing their normal way of thinking to accept others' different behaviors. The changing process often involved some extent of internal struggle to come to terms with encountered differences.

It can be a challenge to accept others, it can be frustrating ... battle of mind to, to trying to make sense ... You can't reason like you always do because it will never make sense why, why ... he's doing this. You gotta be him, inside him ... to know his real reasons for doing so, even if it doesn't make any sense to you, but as long it makes sense to him, you gotta accept this. [P2]

P3: You must have open mind, it is very important. You need to think from position of others. The challenge for me is to adjust myself and think in a different way.

R: How do you feel when you adjust?

P3: Stressful. I have to learn to overcome my unhappy emotion when other ... behaving not to my expectations, I have to forget [unlearn] what I like and what I don't like and find [learn] my new likes and new dislikes. [P3]

On the other hand, giving fair perception about others' capabilities regardless of their English proficiency posed a challenge that required one to look beyond associated stereotypes and to focus only on the written or spoken content of the message. Participants (predominately non-native English speaker) perceived that their capabilities were unfairly judged on the basis of how well they wrote or spoke English.

P12: I feel I am not treated fairly, I am feeling wronged by others ... because I have already done my best [to explain] and Person14 does not understand my situation. Person14 did not consider my perspective when handling this critical incident.

R: What makes you say so?

P12: He just said "I simply cannot understand" ... I think my English is not good, my speaking and writing words may look strange and confuse him, but he should have confident on me, when... even when, if ... I don't express well in English. [P12 from China]

P2: There have been instances that I have been on the phone with you know with, with folks in china, and they're speaking English that I have no clue what they are saying, you know, the accent is very heavy and, and, and they are not comfortable with English ... their English is arhhhh [grouching] ... and, and you know working hard through their e-mails was as difficult.

R: What runs through your mind when you encounter this?

P2: Well ... I'll be honest, any bad English is going to make you look bad in the company, you know ... English is the only way you can try to communicate with everyone here. So if you don't speak or write well in English, it's kinda hard for you to, to perform well. [P2 from America]

4.3.1.3 **Constructive Stress Relief**

Stress was apparent when participants faced different behaviors from other nationalities and/or when they faced uncertainties while communicating with other nationalities where there was little information to guide them to make an informed decision.

I am feeling that I ... meet another nationality ... I feel ... stressed ... strange ... because ... the working style different. [P5 from Thailand]

I try to control the situation and I try to find out what's really going on. I don't like to be in a position where I don't know anything. Not knowing worried me ... with Asians especially. [P13 from Switzerland]

To relieve stress constructively was perceived to be a challenge to the participants (mostly for those with less experience). In some cases, stress was relieved destructively that inhibited effective and appropriate communication with other nationalities.

P13: With Asians especially ... you have to ... ask many questions to find out more ... A lot is unsaid in words ... not tell ... everything, keep ... big secret ... They will never tell you if you don't ask ... It's probably sometimes difficult for people [Asians] who play games with me, sooner or later I will find out ... I probably sometimes lack of empathy and patience towards the people who have different opinion, different needs. Maybe sometimes too straight forward. But if I don't push, nothing will happen, people [Asians] just wait and wait. [P13 from Switzerland, describe his opinion on Asians]

P10: He [P13] asks many times, he doesn't just ask one time. If he trusts me, then he shouldn't have asked me so times, so many questions. He has very bad temper, he get stressed easily when he don't understand what I told him, he just scold me. I think, not because he don't understand, just he don't trust and accept what I've said ... I think, all Asians in his mind, are lazy and try to cheat. He never says it loud but from his actions, I can tell. His way is, is to interrogate you like criminal suspect, and, and push you like a slave ... Then I think, this is getting nowhere. The more he treat us this way, the more I avoid him. I want nothing to do with him. I hope I don't even need to talk to him at all. [P10 from China, perceived P13 to have stereotyped Asians and described how P13 relieved his stress through asking questions and pushing at work]

4.3.1.4 English Use, Representation and Interpretation

English was the only common language used between the participants and the rest of the nationalities within the organization under study. However, participants demonstrated various levels of English proficiency.

You wind up with a range of barrier in terms of language ... the range is any way from, 'you got somebody that barely speak a word in English', to 'somebody has a really heavy accent' ... to ... 'somebody that kind of mix it up words and communicate in different structure of English', to 'somebody who speak English like almost as well as their native tongue'. [P2]

English was not native to most participants and communicating in English could be a challenging task to them. Despite many years of working in an English speaking environment, some non-native English speaking participants still found it hard to further improve their English proficiency.

I think challenge to me ... I often have to use English to communication with another nationalities. Even in email, or personal talking or phone call. So I need to improve my language because the Thai is ... our ... official language, not English. And English challenge me. I need to improve my English language myself. [P5 from Thailand]

I have been working for more than 20 years, using English, still I think I ... I face a barrier of communication, when I try to communicate with Americans or Germans. I know the importance of English in work so you can work well with other English speaking colleagues. But I think I don't have the talent for language. I know some [non-native English speakers] are good in picking up English, but, but, hey there aren't really many of them realistically. [P9 from South Korea]

Most non-native English speaking participants often struggled with the right words to use to express their thoughts due to limited vocabulary.

The most difficulty is to make them understand what I trying to say. Since my English language, is not so very well. Sometimes I find it hard to describe, express my ... thoughts clearly, make them understand my meaning. [P10 from China]

Likewise, they found it hard to convey complexity at the workplace.

I think for me ... maybe big challenge is my language skill. You know for some cases are complicate, you cannot explain in simple sentence. So sometimes if I want to make deep explanation, for example for my boss or colleague, I feel a little ... difficult. So ... it's big challenge for me. [P3 from China]

Different levels of English proficiency often led to misrepresentation and/or misinterpretation of what the participants truly intended to communicate to other nationalities and/or what the

other nationalities truly intended to communicate to the participants. The same word might mean different things to different people, or might be used in different context.

P5: Then I, I feel 'boring'. And I feel annoying as I do not understand ... our colleague, why we not focus on company benefit, to be, to be the same goal. Because we are working in the same team. So we, we should have the company goal the same.

R: What you do mean by 'boring'?

P5: Boring meaning not happy, when I have to do something that I do not want to do.

[P5 from Thailand, the word 'boring' can also mean 'not happy' in Thai context]

In Korea, we only use the word respect between teacher [senior] and student [junior].

[P9 from South Korea, the word 'respect' is used in context of senior-junior relationship]

Even for other participants who were more proficient in English, they still pondered ways to represent their intention accurately so that other nationalities would not misunderstand them.

What are the ... correct ways to communicate? What are the correct words to use?

What is the effect of different styles of communication?Different ways will... have different outcomes. So a lot of time I experience and experiment different ways of communication. [P4 from Singapore]

When participants communicated with other nationalities, they would interpret other nationalities' behavior and responses according to their expectations, which were shaped and defined by their respective cultures. If other nationalities did not behave or react according to participants' expectation, there was a mismatch in expectation and participants would interpret such behavior or response as undesirable. In one case when a Thai participant

received a short reply from other nationalities, he interpreted it as ‘not nice and polite’. As a Thai, he was expected to go great length to explain to another Thai and to provide much more information.

Other nationalities may be using ‘short wording’ is normal for them, for example, ‘sorry it cannot be done’. But to Thai it is not nice and polite. We Thai will try to make it more nicely and polite by saying, ‘I already check with our company and we try to support you but unfortunately we are not able to meet your requirement, because of this reason or that reason’. We Thai will try to use more wordings and give background history to give reasons and explain why we cannot ... ‘Short wording’ is not polite to Thais. [P5 from Thailand]

In another case, a South Korean participant interpreted the word ‘you’ used by someone whom he considered not to have any close relationship, to be ‘rude’.

I also learn that foreigners have difficult to understand us. They want everything to be simple, but things are not as simple as they like ... sometimes things are complicated, for example human relationship is not simple here in Korea, but the many foreign companies ignore such local culture. Koreans are influenced by Confucianism. For example, we have a lot of way of talking expressing polite and impolite. Many foreigners have difficulties in learning Korean due to this. For example, we never say to the others ‘You’. You can use the word ‘You’ only possible between close friends. If somebody [stranger] says to anybody, ‘You’, it will create fighting. [P9 from South Korea]

Misrepresentation and misinterpretation often led to misunderstanding between participants and other nationalities.

The challenge maybe is misunderstanding, sometimes we have different language, the wording issue or some expression issues will lead to some misunderstanding. [P12 from China]

Nearly most of all the problems are not problems, they are misunderstanding. It's ... how do people express. Each express different ways ... but many times words are mistaken, taken out of context and cause confusion ... and this confusion is greater when everyone speak English differently. [P14 from Switzerland]

4.3.1.5 Trust Development through Relationship Building

The geographic spread of the organization under study offered less face-to-face interaction among the participants who were located in various countries. This challenged much of the possible trust development through relationship building.

Working with overseas staff, ok, I think the challenge is because you don't have too much face-to-face time. So it end up ... a lot of communication are through email, which is faceless. So to build up ... personal relationship, it becomes quite difficult. If there is no relationship, it's even harder to trust them or for them to trust me. [P4]

Most participants cited trust as the major concern when they knew little of other nationalities, and they were less confident if others would behave according to their expectations. In this situation, participants often perceived more differences than similarities with others.

P1: maybe because ... we just communicate by phone by email, we are not face to face to talk, and, and there is little I know about her. I am not sure if she will help me, and do things my way. She gave me some reasons for not doing what I want her to do but I still don't trust the reason is the truth.

R: Why don't you trust her?

P1: She is German ... Germans ... they have very little understanding about the culture in Asia, in my opinion. They don't know the people ... the working style of ... about how people job's here ... maybe they don't know anything about that, so they cannot understand why this issue is so important for Taiwanese. They are different.

[P1]

However, most participants recognized the trust gap within the organization and perceived that top management was responsible to some extent for such a divide. Common reasons for causing trust deficit included untrusting top management and interoffice competition induced by top management.

I think he [top-management] should be more trusting ... couldn't understand ... why someone so high in position micromanages small things like 3 pcs or 5pcs samples, that maybe worth less than US\$20. He didn't trust me [as a manager] to handle such small things. [P3, perceived lack of trust due to micromanagement]

Because he asks many times, he doesn't just ask one time. If he trusts me, then he shouldn't have asked me so times, so many questions. [P10, perceived lack of trust when being asked too many questions]

I have no authority. I am manager. But I have no authority. They [top management] don't believe I can do my job as manager. They don't trust me. [P9, perceived lack of trust due to lack of empowerment]

Well, I think the bosses are competing, they don't trust each other ... and they expect their subordinates to follow them to compete too with other country offices. To be honest, when management is behaving this way, how can there be trust with my

overseas co-workers? There is no teamwork. But again this is something as employee I feel like I cannot do anything. [P8, perceived lack of trust among peers due to management competition]

4.3.2 Challenges in Handling Conflict among Diverse Cultures

4.3.2.1 Respect

In situations of perceived conflict, some participants engaged in behavior that illustrated lack of respect. Showing respect was a challenge in such circumstances when one's capabilities were being disregarded and discredited causing everyone to be in a defensive mode. Even an act of respect from one side did not necessarily guarantee a reciprocal respect from the other parties.

I think that conflict is kind of one of those things where ... it's, it's so wasted ... emotional and wasted activities because ... If ... emotion ... come into it, well you know, you know, you, you being dismissive about my skill, my, my view point ... you know, you, you just ignoring what I'm saying, that would be, that would be ... that would generate conflict ... People tend to be uptight ... defensive when their reputation [capability] is at stake, they are less respectful to one another. [P2]

I realize in conflict I need to show respect to the other party. So if you show respect to the other party, typically they will repay you ... with respect. But sometimes they may not give you the respect you want, even you show them first the respect. [P4]

Nonetheless, competitiveness and blame culture within the organization under study did not make it any easier for participants to show respect in situation of conflict. Participants perceived such difficulty to be caused primarily by the little effort put in by top management to foster collaboration and problem solving.

That our bosses are at odds, opposing with each other, force us to disregard [disrespect] our fellow peers, in, in our own competing manner, causing more conflict ... truth cooperation never seems to happen within the company. [P8]

P12: Respect is difficult ... when there is conflict, problem solving is missing ... we are afraid to take blame. Most of us avoid blame for fear of punishment from management, but some shift blame to others and becomes ... rude. I think if management is more in control, this would not have happened.

R: What do you mean by 'more in control'?

P12: Management should stop blaming and show more respect in problem solving.
[P12]

4.3.2.2 Common Goal

In situations of conflict, there was little teamwork. Participants did not recognize any common goals with other nationalities. They perceived others as having different goals and acting in a competitive manner. Such perception often led to negative team performance and further escalation of conflict.

My challenge is, I think ... to handle this incident [conflict] ... is to ... cooperate with other nationalities colleagues ... I feel annoying as I do not understand ... our colleague, why we not focus on company benefit, to be, to be the same goal. Because we are working in the same team. So we, we should have the company goal the same. But we fighting many times because different goals ... It is not easy to work together for good cooperation and not easy to get good results [positive team performance] together as a team when we have conflict. [P5]

So this person talk and talk for his goal, and other person try to over talk for his goal ... then attempt to fight for each goals often cause misunderstanding ... and poor productivity [negative team performance]. However, goals may be different, but many do not see the higher cause, the mission ... all goals add up for common good for company, the company as whole will benefit. So the biggest challenge is to let them see that common good [goal], that they may see [recategorize] each other doing different things, but ... they all are contributing ... to the company ... as a whole. That's one of the biggest problem you have to convince them. [P14]

The failure to recognize any common goals emerged from the inactions of top management to establish and push for common goals in the first place. Participants were less successful in recategorizing their mindset towards conflict when there was absence of a common goal.

P2: I, I think probably one of my biggest frustrations that came out of it, in terms of how it [conflict] was handled was ... from Person5 [from top management], who sat there and ... and ... just went "Oh geez isn't there anything that we can do, without me having to sort out this conflict?" ... and, and that was frustrating because ... you know, "You are in charge! You are the boss! Everybody else is below you on the organization chart!" ... his inactions are killing all of us ... Everyone is fighting for his own selfish agenda, and he, he just sitting there doing nothing, you know, trying to be Mr Nice guy ...

R: What do you think he should have done?

P2: He should, in fact ... stop all these [conflict] immediately and remind everyone of the high ... higher common goal of this company, where, where people can put aside differences to agree on something common to work on as a team. But what the heck, he, he didn't even come out with any common goal in the first place, nothing! So, so

he has nothing and has done nothing to unite us. So ... it was not handled well, and yeah, I mean ... as much as I like Person5, he screwed up. [P2]

I don't think we ever have a company goal ... I have my department goal ... he has his department goal, the goal in different offices are different. I feel, making ... this making conflict happen easily. And management don't care, they don't care how we struggle to get job done, because people just will not look beyond their current goal ... we don't have common goal to change [recategorise] our thinking about 'me' and 'you' ... to 'we' thinking, so, so we always fighting about my goal versus your goal. [P1]

Finding common ground could be a difficult task to some participants. During the critical incidents, participants facing problems to manage conflict effectively and appropriately described that they did not have anything in common with other nationalities.

P10: I think this critical incident is handled ineffectively. His challenging tone affects this conflict handling being ineffective, "Why you do this? Why don't you do that?" I think Person2 should not talk with a challenging tone, right? You can just ask me, resolve problem with me, we can talk about it in a calm tone. You tell me what I should do right? If you don't like me do this, I will try to change. Try to improve the bad way to handle the business. But he didn't talk to me, how should we handle in a good way? He challenges me and I explained over and over again. I think I sometimes lose my patience. I am tired to explain again and again. Sometimes I don't explain the details. So sometimes I just ask, "How should I do? You tell me, and I will do that." So for my side, I don't have a good patience.

R: For the person whom you had conflict with, how much do you know him? Do you know him at a personal level?

P10: I don't know too much about him. I don't know him at a personal level.

R: Can you tell me something you have in common with that person you had conflict with?

P10: I think we are quite different in outlook and value. We don't have anything in common. [P10]

4.3.2.3 Emotion Control

Keeping a rational mind was a challenge in situations of conflict. Most participants described their experiences of handling conflict as emotionally draining. Participants attempted to think positive in such a situation but were limited by negative emotional outbursts at times. The difficulties to stay positive emotionally were further challenged by the lack of cooperation, and common goals within the organization under study.

When I am emotional and angry, I can make many wrong decisions. So to prevent such negative feelings, I will intentionally cool myself down, by putting the issue aside, and take no action, no phone call, no email and think positive. Then after one day, after I cool down, after the negative feelings are gone, I will look at the issue objectively, and then make decision. Maybe this way will be better. As much as I like to control bad emotion, I may lose my control one day or sometimes. So it is challenging to me, to keep cool when I have conflict with others, conflict makes you mentally exhausting, so it is not easy to keep cool, especially when interoffices compete with one another ... everyone do not share same common goal. [P12]

Some participants lacked self and others awareness, where they did not see themselves accurately in relation to others. Such mismatched perception created inappropriate expression of emotion (negative emotion in most cases) that did not help in situations of conflict.

Participants might have the perception that they were ‘expert’ in handling conflict with other nationalities and that their expressed behaviors to others were always appropriate and respectful. But contrary to such perception, others might perceive such expressed behavior as ‘inappropriate’ and ‘disrespectful’.

Well first of all you have to respect the cultural background they come from. That was the way they were thinking all their life. And you cannot change this 180 degree in the other direction ... So what we need to try to do is to ... respect the difference, and slightly try to minimize the negative impact that such a situation has ... And having living in Asia most of time, I would qualify my own capability for meeting such challenges as ... over average. I am confident in meeting these challenges. I am more culturally sensitive and know what to do in each culture, maybe an expert in areas as of this ... since I have been traveling to many countries for the past years ... you have to take more time to understand the situation, ask many questions to find out more. You have to also look on the non-verbal communication. And also I mean, what kind of feeling you get about the other person? What they think? A lot is unsaid in words. [P13 from Switzerland, perceived himself as ‘cultural expert’]

His [P13] way of working, even if he claimed to understand the local culture, but actually he doesn’t understand at all. At least from his action I don’t see or sense that he understand local culture ... he keep insisting in doing his way because he is the ‘expert’ just because he has stayed in Asia for many years ... he never listen ... and never realize his way has offended many people including [Korean] customers. [P9 from South Korea, perceive P13 as disrespectful]

The lack of active learning culture within the organization under study also inhibited more double loop learning among some participants to better manage their emotions. Some

participants found it difficult to unlearn past assumptions and to look at all perspectives of the problem on hand for solution. When any different opinion was given it was perceived as a challenge to the authority. Top management did not explore further into the root cause of the problem and were seen to only offer quick fix ideas by changing rules and regulations to curb conflict.

Many staffs here are old timers, you know what I mean? They can't forget what they know, they can't see further what they had known, they are just stubborn, I don't think they can learn anything new ... innovation is never a passion in this company, people don't question what was established ... and this really limit ... the kind of attitude ... concerns needed to solve the problem caused by conflict. [P2]

Yeah, I don't see real problem solving, management has been telling us to do things their way, yeah, the monotonous one way and somehow we are accustomed to it, knowing somehow the same way is not going to help the conflict, but yet we act in the way they want, aggressively or at least act aggressively towards the Germans, you know ... challenging them or fight with them when there're conflict, but yet if we try other ways ... to be cooperative, or understanding, we will be put down as 'weaklings'. [P2]

Sometimes I feel we are firefighting. He [top management] just knows how to settle conflict with rules and regulation ... when new conflict comes out ... new rules and regulation got implemented. And I have lost count, so many rules ... don't do this and that and yet conflict happen again and again and we never learn the lesson. There is no change, just stagnant progress, no real improvement to the situation ... like a volcano, waiting for the next conflict to erupt. He doesn't understand the real problem ... I feel boxed [confined], that I cannot think out of the box working with him. [P15]

4.4 Confidence

4.4.1 Exposures to Cross-Cultural Experiences Provided a Sense of Confidence

Participants built up confidence through their years of working experiences with other nationalities within current and past companies. They used what they had learnt from past experience as a reference to interpret and reinterpret newly encountered experiences. Each successful experience that led to effective and appropriate results, added a bit more of confidence to the participants.

So ... so over the past 15 years working, working with so many cultures, your experiences just add up ... and so is your confidence. You learn from past experiences, in, in how to handle certain conflict or better communicate with certain cultures ... and ... next time ... pop out a new situation, you gotta think is this similar situation like last time, or different, or possible for me to apply old solution or try something different? Yeah, you know, you gotta read the situation accurately and re-read again to kinda prevent misunderstanding or to, to ... have full understanding ... end up a richer experience. This richness of experience is what you made out of the situation, to kinda inform you your next action to take, and, and it's better to be something right thing to do and also in a, a respectful manner. [P2 from America]

P5: I think ... previously ... I join this [company] last 3 or 4 years ago, I, I do not have the experience. I, I do not have capabilities to learn communication and working with the another nationality ... or handle conflict. But after that ... until now 3 or 4 years later, I have learning from experience, I have met many nationalities colleague in our global company. I have to improve my capability. I, I think I can handle ... this kind of the differences ... cooperate with another nationality. I am more confident now.

R: May I ask how do you learn from your experience?

P5: Because Thai style and other styles many different, so I thinking a lot, cannot think Thai way but think other different Thai ways. One issue one meaning to Thai but maybe has many other meanings to non-Thai. So I thinking a lot, and learn. [P5 from Thailand]

From their experiences, participants gained competence ranging from awareness of acceptance and adaptation, attitude of open mindedness, respect and empathy, to knowledge of other cultures, skills of finding common ground and communication skills. Among all these, non-native English speaking participants described communication skills (ability to speak and write English in fluent manner that can be understood by others) as the main competence that made them feel more confident when trying to communicate and managing conflict with other nationalities.

P1: I think the ... language is one of the issue, because ... I have to speak English with my colleague in Germany, and even my English has improved over the years ... is not very easy for me to ... express about all my thoughts or ... to let them understand about anything happen here, so one thing is about the language ... if I have a better ... ability in English speaking, maybe I can have a better confidence to communicate with them ... and to solve this conflict.

R: If a good command in English makes you feel confident, how about other abilities? Will they make you confident too?

P1: I think language is a very direct ... or first skill you use when you're dealing with people outside Taiwan ... they can see, or read or listen ... your language skill has direct impact on them ... maybe almost immediate ... and the confidence you get is

almost immediate. But, but ... other skills, or abilities will not have such direct impact, maybe you see the impact later ... and your confidence comes later too. [P1 from Taiwan]

Most participants described that they changed their views and developed new perspectives as they accumulate working experiences with other nationalities. Such new understandings put them in a better position to appreciate cultural differences and empowered them to behave in an effective and appropriate manner.

So you have problem because of different perspectives [worldviews]. Of course, if you ... go further to your experience, your culture, your education [learning], these bring you into a particular perspective [worldview]. The more experiences [with other nationalities] you have, the more you're exposed to different cultures, and more education [learning] you have, you will have more different perspectives [worldviews] ... pertaining to the same thing. This change in perspective equips you with the right sensitivity to do the right thing on others' perspectives [worldviews]. [P4]

P3: I think ... it's about experience. Of course in the beginning ... maybe more emotional ... that time [first time], I was ... not really happy ... you get emotional ... But after some time [with more experiences], once you understand this is cultural difference, you will think this is normal. You see things calmly, objectively, not emotionally ... I think when I experience such difference, I only try to understand ... So ... now I can think about this objectively ... I think this is a big change now for me. So this really helps ... you know, different way to solve problem, maybe better, ok now I know what to do.

R: Can you elaborate why you were emotional last time?

P3: Maybe that time I, I thinking why he is different, I reject his ways of doing things, so more emotional when I deal with the German. Now I accept their different ways of doing things. [P3, changes from denial to acceptance]

4.4.2 Ability to Perform Helped to Strengthen Confidence

Most participants felt confident when they could perform in the workplace. They saw performance as getting their job done by cooperation with other colleagues. They described the importance of having good relationships and well managed conflict with their colleagues before any cooperation can take place.

P7: ... this incident is critical for me ... it's, it's about my performance ... as I want to get my job done.

R: Can you elaborate a little bit more on getting your job done? I mean the feeling and thoughts you may have?

P7: I feel confident when I get my job done. It means I am capable to perform my job function. It's sort of respect you make for yourself that you know your worth or value within the company as you can deliver. But it's easier said than done.

R: Why is that so?

P7: Because getting your job done is dependent on others, your, your colleagues in Germany, Asia ... you need resources from them ... their help ... their full cooperation to help you out. But as you can see from this critical incident, it is not easy ... there is lack of cooperation. Cooperation is impossible with current conflict that time ... when people are not in good terms [relationship] with me. [P7 from America]

P3: I think my job is requesting team work [cooperation], so ... really I need support from them [German] to get work done ... This [incident] is critical as ... my ... performance ... will not be good ... I ... lost my confidence that time, thinking if I am capable to handle ... I thought I have the capability and experience to solve this problem, but it is ... appear to be beyond my control. So I no confidence.

R: What makes you think this is beyond your control?

P3: Because I cannot make everyone work together ... when boss here and boss there fighting with another [conflict] ... I cannot get the German to help me if my boss is scolding him ... this way ... hard for me to have good relationship with him, and I don't think he will be willing to give me full support ... so, so in this global company like ours where we do our job with others' support ... if, if no teamwork, your job is not easy ... you understand? [P3 from China]

Participants also saw workplace performance as a reflection of their capability to manage their own learning and to apply what they had learnt from experiences. Participants perceived that confidence from good work performance defined one's self-worth or self-respect.

To do your job well, being educated on the job is important, it is more than the normal 'on job training' we always have ... it is about the journey you take, the experiences to learn ... learning how to learn by yourself ... because people are too busy to teach you, so learning on the job is your own responsibility. This makes you a better person to perform by applying what you learned from the experiences ... My growing and learning from experience strengthen my capability ... After walking through this journey, I ... think the experience I had helps me a lot, now I have more confidence to face challenge. [P12 from China]

I, I had never had any cultural sensitivity training ... not here. Company doesn't teach you how to handle conflict or how to work better with other cultures. But to do your job well, you have to learn all these by yourself, find ways to learn and apply ... It's ... it's something that, you know, you, you just learn as, as you go. [P2 from America]

I feel confident when I get my job done. It means I am capable to perform my job function. It's sort of respect your make for yourself that you know your worth or value within the company as you can deliver. [P7 from America]

You know Chinese culture, 'face' [respect] is important ... Person14 will never understand ... I feel confident when I am respected for the work that I've done ... making someone lose face in this critical incident is the same as doubting the capability of that person to do a good job. [P12 from China]

Participants also provided feedback about the struggle they faced when they embarked on their journey of learning within the organization under study: learning was stifled by lack of an innovative climate; micromanagement which limited participants to perform beyond what was dictated; a blame culture which discouraged participants' power of judgment.

Many staffs here are old timers, you know what I mean? They can't forget what they know, they can't see further what they had known, they are just stubborn, I don't think they can learn anything new ... innovation is never a passion in this company, people don't question what was established ... and this really limit ... the kind of attitude ... concerns needed to solve the problem caused by conflict. [P2]

Couldn't understand ... why someone so high in position [big boss] micromanage small things like 3 pcs or 5pcs samples, that maybe worth less than US\$20. He didn't trust me [as a manager] to handle such small things ... so this is management problem

... I think there is no hope in this company. I cannot learn or do much but to follow orders. [P9]

When there is conflict, problem solving is missing ... we are afraid to take blame. Most of us avoid blame for fear of punishment from management ... So everyone become passive and keep quiet, never dare to voice out ideas. [P12]

Most participants agreed that the barrier to learning had a negative impact to their confidence. They saw deficiency of learning as a loss of opportunity to develop their own capabilities which in turn resulted in less optimal work performance.

When it comes to learning, this is something that is lagging ... in this company. You know, me being curious ... inquisitive ... I like to learn. It's ... It's an opportunity to improve your capability if you're in kinda supportive working environment. But here ... no ... Sorry we can't do this ... We can't do that ... We have our rules. Even I might have confidence in the, the beginning, I get discouraged pretty soon by what I see ... So instead of performing ... you know, you get drown in this negative whirlpool. [P2 from America]

R: Do you see the company as a learning organization?

P9: I don't get to learn much ... learning is difficult ... even I learn, I do not have the authority to do what I want ... you can learn a lot but no power to execute, is same as not learning ... is useless ... no use. Management ... the boss don't care about the process, they care only results. So, when you learn something and try ... try it out and fail, boss scold you. So, now you see all the managers, any new ideas? No! They just follow orders and avoid doing something different that may, may risk getting scolded. So, I don't see is learning organization when everyone keep quiet. It is different ...

very different in my previous company, same European company but different culture. Everyone brainstorms, giving ideas and learn from each other, everyone is open and shows respect ... knowing ... brainstorm improves your work.

R: How do you feel in such situation?

P9: I, I feel no power. I am manager but I have no power. I got no confidence to be real manager. [P9 from South Korea]

4.4.3 Justification of True Confidence based on Trust and General Consensus

While working with other nationalities, most participants preferred to base their confidence initially on trust. They perceived trust as belief that others would cooperate to help them to get the job done if they first trusted and respected others. Such belief drove participants to engage in relationship building activities and behaved in a cooperative manner with other nationalities. Participants were confident that such a trusting approach could better manage communication and conflict with other nationalities.

P7: I do try to bring some relationship building into the communication, just to get, you know, kind of build up the rapport with them ... I think when I do get it to conflict situation, I'm certain [confident] that we're able to ... eventually get to the problem and solve the problem and in most cases, there is not a long term ... hatred or resentment.

R: So relationship building helps in a way when you are having communication and conflict with others?

P7: Yes, pretty much so ... trust comes with relationship building ... where you take a leap of faith ... believing that when you first show trust ... respect to others, others

will trust ... respect you in return and they'll try to help you. You're more confident that ... we can come to a conclusion that ... we are able to resolve miscommunication or conflict without getting to a fist fight or getting, you know, where people's feelings are hurt to a point where they are not able to work with each other in the future. So we're able to have a relationship after the conflict is over, and I think that's a good thing ... with trust ... respect ... people get their job done at the end. [P7 from America]

P3: You know Chinese word for confidence is 信心 [Xin Xin]. The character 信 [Xin] means trust and the character 心 [Xin] means heart. So confidence to Chinese means trusting heart or having trust in others.

R: So do you feel confident to meet these challenges when you have trust in others?

P3: Yes, when I trust, I am able to ... have good relationship ... you need trust in relationship, you know, to show respect ... relationship with no trust is no respect ... and ... especially China needs relationship ... Asians like to build relationship whether it is for work or not ... definitely get you somewhere to ... solving your problem or your challenges and finish your work smoothly. In China you are a capable man if you have good network of relationships to solve problem ... but of course trust comes first to create these good relationships. Working with other nationalities maybe slightly different with working with local Chinese ... but again trust in relationship is fundamentals to human ... I think ... is, is common concerns among all nationalities, whether you are Chinese or not .. is something more or less relevant to all. [P3 from China]

On the other hand, a few participants based their confidence on evidence. They perceived evidence as undeniable truth that minimize bias and errors in human judgment. Such belief drove them to engage in evidence finding activities (such as asking questions) and to behave in a kind of objective manner with other nationalities. These participants perceived such a focus on accountability was easier to manage than to handle any cultural sensitivity issues arising from communication or conflict with other nationalities. These participants were confident that people within the organization under study would overlook or downplay any concerns related to communication and conflict with other nationalities, and looked towards the more 'important' objectives and work 'willingly' together to help these participants to get their jobs done.

P13: You need to ... get a lot of information. It's like a puzzle, you have to get information of what they say, and don't take it at the surface [take their word for it] but keep asking them lots of questions to clarify ... I try to control the situation and I try to find out what's really going on. I don't like to be in a position where I don't know anything. Not knowing worried me ... I feel more confident when I have all the information on hand and I know everything.

R: How do you think this can help to handle challenges of communication and conflict with other nationalities?

P13: I think sometimes people are too sensitive about cultural difference and it is used conveniently as an excuse for not getting your things done. I once fired an American plant manager for not meeting his objectives just because he was so caught up with all these cross-cultural differences and never enforce anything to the plant operators. The objectives are clear and simple and everyone should know this, facts are facts ... and there're no human error about this. This is important in global company because

everyone should follow company objectives, they are paid to do so, there is no doubt about this, and they're to support each other ... whether you have problem talking to others or people don't like each other, nothing is ... more important [than the objectives]. If you enforce this way, it is a lot easier than, than to waste too much time trying to figure out all the messy cultural sensitivity issues. [P13]

However, over emphasis on such an objective approach was often perceived by others within the organization under study as 'untrusting' and 'disrespectful' causing poor relationship and conflict escalation.

We think the whole work process, not just the figure. He [P13] just sees the figures and the outcome. He doesn't see people's working process in the whole year, their hard work. He doesn't care ... he asks many times, he doesn't just ask one time. If he trusts me, then he shouldn't have asked me so times, so many questions ... I think this incident is hurting my feeling ... Every time when this incident happens, boss challenges me [asking many questions], which makes me have a bad emotion.

Sometimes bad emotion will last some time. You know when I feel I'm untrusted, unbelieve, I think for me that's personal attack. So I sometimes feel really unhappy, angry about this ... I try to do things very good, but to get such treatment that makes me bad emotion. Not like I didn't work hard. I was doubted. [P10, comment on P13]

I think he [P13] don't trust me because he keep asking me many questions. And even I tell him the answer to each question, he do not believe and instead ask more questions. This can make ... me upset ... He keep asking questions, so many questions ... I did not do anything wrong ... I am not a criminal, why ask me so many times. Sometimes I told him the answer before. Then he will pretend to forget and ask again. If I answer differently, he will jump "You are lying!" ... So are we police and thief?

Or are we boss and subordinate working in same company? ... So in such cases, it makes me angry, or sad or lose face [disrespect] ... when I first saw him [P13] I thought that he is a little bit open mind and listen to me, listen to others, his management is flexible something like this. So I don't have any conflict with him. But later I found this is totally different. Now I think no ... way to communicate with him, because he is actually not open mind, don't want to listen to others. He just have his own way, and just want to go his own way, and other opinions he just ignore, never listen to other persons' opinion I think. [P9, comment on P13]

Most participants believed that true confidence should not be self-proclaimed but should be generally accepted and agreed by others in a positive way. One case was identified when one participant who claimed himself to have many years of cross-cultural experiences and to be confident enough to handle most communication and conflict issues with other nationalities, behaved in an ineffective and inappropriate manner that was not consistent with his claimed capabilities.

And having living in Asia most of time, I would qualify my own capability for meeting such challenges as ... over average. I am confident in meeting these challenges. I am more culturally sensitive and know what to do in each culture, maybe an expert in areas as of this ... since I have been traveling to many countries for the past years. [P13, confident of his own capability]

His [P13] way of working, even if he claimed to understand the local culture, but actually he doesn't understand at all. At least from his action I don't see or sense that he understand local culture ... he keep insisting in doing his way because he is the 'expert' just because he has stayed in Asia for many years ... he never listen ... and

never realize his way has offended many people including [Korean] customers. [P9, comment on P13 contradicts with P13 self-proclaimed confidence]

Sometimes ... I hear from P13, he often gives some bad mouth about my [Chinese] government. Of course my government didn't do a good job, but sometimes his comment is not comfortable, it's little bit western way, you know. For example, one case we could not get visa for him, he gave a very big complaint about our government ... I think Person2 is just venting his anger as emotional release. I believe the government don't just pick on him one person ... beside he is nobody, not important person at all. Most funny thing is that he threatened to close down all offices in China if he cannot get visa. So I think inside him, he don't respect, this is an issue of respect. So what happen if he closed down offices? Has he ever given any considerations to the employees? If he doesn't respect the country government, he also doesn't respect his employees. [P3, comment on P13 contradicts with P13 self-proclaimed confidence]

But instead he [P13] wants me to lie to factory. Why should I ... try to lie to my ... coworkers in the factory? Why should I do that? And I don't like to try to do that, just because P13 ... want to ... push the factory to get ... some [personal] goals, but I don't think is the good way to communicate with the factory. He [P13] want me to use strong words in e-mail, to challenge the factory. And I feel stressed and try to reason with him ... he don't listen and give me many capital letters [in the e-mail]. My morale is low whenever he loses his temper, because he loses face when he thinks we are weak in front of Germans, and then he throws his anger in e-mail. [P1, comment on P13 contradicts with P13 self-proclaimed confidence]

4.4.4 Non-Supportive Top Management Discouraged Confidence Building

Most participants expressed genuine interest to learn more about other cultures and how better to handle communication and conflict with other nationalities.

R: Does the company provide any training on managing communication or conflict with your overseas colleague?

P6: Company does not provide any training on this ... though I think it is something good to have, at least to have some knowledge ... awareness to prepare ... our confidence when we encounter one such event. But, they [top management] only ask us to communicate directly as much as possible with ... our ... other colleagues, or someone more experienced and learn as much as possible. [P6, from India]

R: Does the company provide you with any training in handling such challenges?

P2: I, I had never had any culture sensitivity training ... not here. Company doesn't teach you how to handle conflict or how to work better with other cultures. But to do your job well, you have to learn all these by yourself, find ways to learn and apply. But again if company can provide such training, it can be good to the staff, especially the junior one who has little experiences. Even for me with experiences, I'm interested to learn more too. Yeah ... I think it's something beneficial. You can't rely solely on training or solely on experiences to boost your confidence ... heck! Some people I know work many years but still doesn't have any confidence at all. But training gives you the theory, like a book you know, don't do this or that in certain countries because it's offensive, you know, an awareness for you to be sensitive ... to guide and help you when you encounter the real thing, then learning from experience take over ... so, so you need both training and experiences ... yeah no matter what,

you need to begin [to learn] somewhere ... it's better than not doing anything at all.

[P2, from America]

Most participants agreed that training could better equip them to some extent to handle challenging situations that concern communication and conflict with other nationalities.

R: What can the company do, to help to equip you to handle such challenges?

P15: Introduce more soft skill training. We have too much hard training on product technology, and it is all facts and figures. But we are dealing with people ... and facts and figures cannot help to promote better communication or solve conflict. Company should put this high in agenda ... at least for me I think soft skill training is refreshing and can better prepared me to build more confidence for, for the challenges. [P15]

R: Do you think you will be more confident to handle these challenges if company provides some sort of cultural training?

P8: Yes of course. I think it has been taken for granted that such things are common sense and if you work long enough ... you can learn such skills ... but some of us may know, or know not in right way ... this is what training are for ... to find out what you know or don't know to, to better your competence. [P8]

However, top management of the organization under study did not think that it was practical to implement such training as they perceived these soft skills were hard to learn through classroom training, and that if implemented might even cause detrimental outcomes. The top management concerned did not support or provide any relevant training and decided that such skill could not be taught and had to be 'picked up along the way'.

R: Do you think it is a good idea for the company to provide some sort of training to handle such challenges?

P13: I don't agree that such things can really be taught in training ... no point at all. Just like books ... many books on business etiquette in different countries ... how to handle people in other countries, and there are a lot of dos and don'ts ... and things that you should avoid ... or what to do in conflict or how to talk to other cultures. And I think in general such advices from books or training in are much too simple ... and these ... are sometimes generalization that are not correct ... It's very difficult to teach cross-cultural skills in classroom ... whether it's on conflict or communication. Because it always end up in very simple recipe which will be more harmful than beneficial. It is better to learn from the job, from real experiences, where people learn ... it can only be picked up along the way. That's the reason why I didn't approve such training ... I think it is a waste of time ... [try to] refrain from using too simple receipt or too simple ways. Usually such conflict or communication problem is always very complex ... can have many causes and many things that play into the ... situation, and not always one thing is the root cause and one thing is the outcome. It's a very complex system that many things influence each other. And if you think too much in a too simple way, you will not get to a good solution to the problem ... conflict and communication solution training can be very complex and also for a lot of people, it's very difficult to understand the basic on such thing. Maybe short ... training could even have contradicting effect for the people get some very simple recipe and they try to use them in real situation, and this could be totally could have a lot of negative effect. [P13, from top management]

On the other hand, most participants perceived the organization they worked for as bureaucratic in nature with too many rules to prevent them from carrying out their job function confidently.

She always gives us the same response, that “I’m sorry, that belongs to other department, not my department, I cannot do anything.” [P1, describing the bureaucratic workplace]

They always insist on their view point, strongly stand by their principles, and follow strictly to company's rules and regulations. They are not flexible to work around the rules. To them, rules are rules and cannot be broken. [P12, describing the bureaucratic workplace]

When it comes to learning, this is something that is lagging ... in this company. You know, me being curious ... inquisitive ... I like to learn. It’s ... It’s an opportunity to improve your capability if you’re in kinda supportive working environment. But here ... no ... Sorry we can’t do this ... We can’t do that ... We have our rules. Even I might have confidence in the, the beginning, I get depressed [lose confidence] pretty soon by what I see ... So instead of performing ... you know, you get drown in this negative whirlpool. [P2]

The whole working culture here has too many red tapes [bureaucracy] ... and rules ... too many suffocating rules ... I felt upset ... and discouraged [lose confidence] on why they are not able to be more flexible to accommodate ... [my] ... request. [P6]

A number of participants reported being discouraged by the micromanagement style of tight control and lack of authority to make decisions within the organization under study. Some

participants felt that their abilities to handle the challenges were hindered by the inflexibility and lack of innovation at the workplace.

I have no choice, since I am the only Japanese working in this German company.

Sometimes I try to speak out, to make suggestion, but the German don't listen. It does not make any difference to what I think or do, I just need to follow their way and their thinking ... Definitely I have no authority to make any changes, make any decision ...

That was the time I feel like ... a bit of uneasy [fearful] about my job security. If I insist too much, I think I may end up losing my job ... I have my colleague here in Japan who couldn't accept the way they work. He is no longer with us. He was fired for not doing the German way. So this is important, as I do not want to lose my job ...

That was ... what the feeling that I felt. [P8]

Company also doesn't give much power, or control power or flexibility and right [authority of manager] ... those things. So ... in many cases I cannot ... do it myself freely ... I cannot do my job as manager confidently ... I have to seek approval all the time ... Couldn't understand ... why someone so high in position [big boss] micromanage small things like 3 pcs or 5pcs samples, that maybe worth less than US\$20. He didn't trust me [as a manager] to handle such small things ... so this is management problem. [P9]

They always insist on their view point, strongly stand by their principles, and follow strictly to company's rules and regulations. They are not flexible to work around the rules. To them, rules are rules and cannot be broken ... I ... feel stressed as they are not supportive ... they are not flexible enough ... this stubbornness prevent me from dealing with the challenges to the ... best of my ability. [P12]

Many staffs here are old timers, you know what I mean? They can't forget what they know, they can't see further what they had known, they are just stubborn, I don't think they can learn anything new ... innovation is never a passion in this company, people don't question what was established ... and this really limit ... the kind of attitude ... concerns needed to solve the problem ... Despite my success stories in past companies, I can't use my skills here ... I can't apply it for this critical incident ... it makes me ... I feel like ... held up ... and it's real frustrating. [P2]

The reward system within the organization under study was based on individual performance in the absence of cooperation. Such a reward system often encouraged competition among the offices. Most participants perceived a lack of a common goal within the organization under study, where each office appeared to be fighting with other offices for their own goals. Conflicts caused by interoffice competition were fixed by the top management concerned with newly set up rules and regulations. However, this did not solve the hidden problems triggered by the apparent lack of cooperation, nor seemed to be addressing the root causes. Nevertheless, most participants recognized the difficulties they faced when they try to build up their confidence at the workplace where it lacked in team cooperation.

I think ... also our reward system is grounded on individual performance. The objectives did not cover ... how much you get rewarded by helping other regional offices or what happen if the business moves out of your territory and goes into others' territories ... there is no team reward, and, and this is damaging to the Group performance. You end up people are concerning more for their own performance and this, this's ... how competition starts. [P2]

I think is management problem. Every office is supposed to work as team, together to make more sales for the Group. But her boss and my boss are fighting [competing] to

find fault, to, to blame one another. So maybe her goal from her boss is to make more money for their own office only ... and she is not to help other offices to make more money. Same problem here, when I try to help other offices sometimes, I got scolding from my boss, “Why you are helping them? It’s their problem.” [P1]

My challenge is, I think ... to handle this incident [conflict] ... is to ... cooperate with other nationalities colleagues ... I feel annoying as I do not understand ... our colleague, why we not focus on company benefit, to be, to be the same goal [common goal], because we are working in the same team. So we, we should have the company goal the same. But we fighting many times because different goals ... It is not easy to work together for good cooperation and not easy to get good results [positive team performance] together as a team when we have conflict. [P5]

Sometimes I feel we are firefighting. He [top management] just knows how to settle conflict with rules and regulation ... when new conflict comes out ... new rules and regulation got implemented [by the top management]. And I have lost count, so many rules ... don’t do this and that and yet conflict happen again and again and we never learn the lesson. There is no change, just stagnant progress, no real improvement to the situation ... like a volcano, waiting for the next conflict to erupt. He doesn’t understand the real problem ... that conflicts mostly caused by our own internal rivalries ... I feel boxed [confined], that I cannot think out of the box working with him. [P15]

P7: I feel confident when I get my job done. It means I am capable to perform my job function. It’s sort of respect your make for yourself that you know your worth or value within the company as you can deliver. But it’s easier said than done.

R: Why is that so?

P7: Because getting your job done is dependent on others, your, your colleagues in Germany, Asia ... you need resources from them ... their help ... their full cooperation to help you out. But as you can see from this critical incident, it is not easy ... there is lack of cooperation. Cooperation is impossible with current conflict that time ... when people are not in good terms [relationship] with me. [P7 from America]

P3: I think my job is requesting team work [cooperation], so ... really I need support from them [German] to get work done ... This [incident] is critical as ... my ... performance ... will not be good ... I ... lost my confidence that time, thinking if I am capable to handle ... I thought I have the capability and experience to solve this problem, but it is ... appear to be beyond my control. So I no confidence.

R: What makes you think this is beyond your control?

P3: Because I cannot make everyone work together ... when boss here and boss there fighting with another [conflict] ... I cannot get the German to help me if my boss is scolding him ... this way ... hard for me to have good relationship with him, and I don't think he will be willing to give me full support ... so, so in this global company like ours where we do our job with others' support ... if, if no teamwork, your job is not easy ... you understand? [P3 from China]

4.5 Summary

This Chapter had described explicitly the experiences of participants in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities. The participants shared their encounters of perceived differences when communicating with other nationalities. The perception of such differences could come in forms of value, communication preferences

and/or other factors such as family upbringing, education, personality, society, environment, work function, history, geography and experiences. The participants' attitude towards these perceived differences was dependent on their level of stereotypes, which varied according to their working experiences. An inaccurate stereotype often manifested as e-shock in e-mail because most of the communication was done over a virtual setting. Most participants who learned reflectively through their working experiences were able to moderate such shock and transformed it into a learning experience to provide a more accurate generalization of other nationalities, through actions of adjustment, adaptation, accommodation, and anxiety, uncertainty and violated expectation management. Nevertheless, when communication was not managed effectively and appropriately, it often led to miscommunication due to misinterpretation of others' behavior. Such communication breakdown might result in conflict. Most participants entered into conflict when they had the perception that others were having doubts in their capability to perform at workplace. The conflict could take the form of task conflict initially and later escalated to relationship conflict. When conflict escalated, most participants were vulnerable to fundamental attribution error that caused further miscommunication. Such escalation became more noticeable when communication became hostile and emotional in forms of e-mail flaming. In response to the encounters experienced by the participants when they were having conflict with other nationalities, most participants who learned reflectively through their working experiences demonstrated regulation of their own emotions to a certain extent while seeking to manage the conflict through actions of showing respect, problem solving and cooperation through common goals.

This Chapter had also covered extensively the different types of challenges perceived by the participants as a need to be dealt with when handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities. Participants perceived ethnocentrism, stereotype, stress, language and building trust as challenges to effective and appropriate communication

management. Ethnocentrism masked out minority voices with superior, proud, dominating and imposing attitude towards others perceived to be different. Stereotype on the other hand, deprived participants from engaging a true and fair communication with other nationalities. Therefore, participants might feel stressed in trying to adapt to perceived dissimilarity and unfamiliarity caused by ethnocentrism and stereotypes. As for non-native English speaking participants, being proficient in English language was perceived to be a challenge to them. Nevertheless, participants might subject themselves to possible misrepresentation and misinterpretation (thus leading to misunderstanding) while communicating with others with different levels of English proficiency. Furthermore, the virtual office setting with less face-to-face interaction was not making communication any easier at the workplace, especially when there was limited personal relationship with little trust among the participants and other nationalities. In times of conflict, participants perceived finding common goal, controlling emotion and showing respect as challenges to effective and appropriate conflict management. The cooperative goal was not common enough to unit participants and other nationalities to work together to overcome the conflict on hand. The search for a common goal instead, was also not easy when there was lesser trust and personal relationship with other nationalities in a virtual office setting with less face-to-face interaction. When there was a lack of cooperation and common goal, participants found it hard to control their emotions (maximizing positive emotions and minimizing negative emotions) when they were having conflict with other nationalities. Even with emotional intelligence, participants might not be able to sustain their positive emotions when they became less motivated in a competitive workplace. Nevertheless, conflict was often emotionally based, and in the heat of the moment, participants and/or other nationalities often adopted disrespectful behavior that disregarded, discredited others' work capabilities. Showing respect was further hindered in a competitive working environment that lacked active learning.

In addition, this Chapter had taken an in-depth study on the confidence level of participants in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities. Participants felt more confident in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities when they had more working experiences. Competence of awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills were presumably acquired through learning from working experiences. The sense of confidence derived from competence might be explained by the perceived capability in applying these competences at the workplace, which heightened their self-worth and self-respect. Hence a capable participant was confident to apply what he/she had learned from the acquired competence. Nevertheless, participant also felt more confident when there was better cooperation at the workplace as there was certain level of interdependence among the participants and other nationalities. These participants displayed more trust on other nationalities with the perception that others would be willing to solve the problem on hand together. However, competition at workplace eroded cooperation and trust, and most participants felt top management might have been responsible for the working culture of the organization. On the other hand, a few participants based their confidence on evidence of performance, but such a trustless approach appeared to generate more unfavorable responses in most situations.

In the next chapter, this study will further explore these findings to show the importance of trust and respect in effective and appropriate communication and conflict management respectively.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the findings obtained through interviews of fifteen participants. Having interviewed and analyzed their data, the researcher for this study found himself to be in a privilege position to reflect upon their experiences, challenges faced and confidence in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities. The qualitative description approach allowed the researcher of this study to “capture all of the elements of an event that come together to make it the event that it is” and offered this study a “comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms [language] of those events” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). This chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of the Findings Chapter and bring together the description of experiences, challenges faced and confidence in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities that are evident and missing from the literature, and seek to illuminate the concerns of the participants that may provide a better vision towards effective and appropriate communication and conflict management in a culturally diverse organization.

5.2 Vulnerability to Stereotype

This Section and next (Section 5.3 and 5.4) discuss some of the encounters when participants were communicating with other nationalities. The findings showed that most participants stereotyped to a certain extent. They expected other nationalities to behave differently from them most of the time (more on such differences in Section 5.3) and they also had an expectation about how other nationalities should behave based on their limited knowledge. When other nationalities did not behave according to their expectations, participants might experience a feeling of shock (more on such shock in Section 5.4). The ‘expectation’ here was similar to the “useful set of expectations” as described by Zapf (1991,

p. 105). It was evident from the findings that learning played an important role in moderating feelings of shock and reframing stereotypes into a more accurate generalization of other nationalities, where participants showed understanding and respect towards other nationalities' different behaviors. Identical to Lippmann's (2007) adjustment-adaptation-understand learning approach to stereotype, the 'understanding' achieved by participants in the findings was transformed from gained knowledge through a process of adjustment and adaptation (to be discussed further in Section 5.5), where the initial expectation was modified, giving way to new expectation. This implied that participants kept changing their stereotypes towards a different and possibly more accurate cultural understanding as they learned more. The learning that took place also coincided with the characteristics of reflection (Brockbank, McGill & Beech, 2002) and double loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1978). On the other hand, a few cases of stereotype without learning, defined by Jones (1972, 1997) as 'negative stereotype' were found where participants and other nationalities encountered disrespect when feelings of either parties went from shock to anger. This would suggest that a lack of learning to guide the participants away from the stereotypic view could lead to possible communication breakdown and conflict escalation.

5.3 Multiple Perspectives to Perceived Differences

Most participants were able to describe several ways where other nationalities were different from them, in terms of values and communication styles. The results might appear to support the notion that such perceived differences were 'cultural' in nature, when many of these perceived differences 'matched' with the common cultural patterns defined by Hall (1976, 1983, 1989) and Hofstede's (1980, 1983, 2001) dimensions on national culture, especially on the dimensions of individualism-collectivism and power distance. However, this was not conclusive enough to define all perceived differences encountered by the

participants while communicating with other nationalities as ‘cultural’ in nature. Evidence in contrast to Hall’s (1976, 1983, 1989) and Hofstede’s (1980, 1983, 2001) definition of cultural differences included: both American P2 and P7 displaying different behavior with P2 being assertive and P7 being non-assertive; most participants viewed communication with other nationalities as relationship building on top of getting their job done. In addition when asked to explain why other nationalities behaved differently, most participants mindfully cited other reasons in addition to cultural differences. Other reasons included family upbringing, education, personality, society, environment, work function, history, geography and experiences. This implied that perceived differences were not limited to the cultural aspect but also had other non-cultural perspectives. The ability of those participants to see different perspectives to perceived differences was one of the key characteristics of reflection (Brockbank, McGill & Beech, 2002) and double loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1978).

5.4 E-Shock in Virtual Organization

The studies done by Oberg (1960) and other researchers (Adler & Gundersen, 2008; Irwin, 2007; Lewenson & Truglio-Londrigan, 2008) on culture shock were mostly on experiences of sojourners, having a face-to-face communication with other different nationalities. However, the findings of this study showed that it was possible to encounter culture shock-like symptoms even through electronic mail (e-mail). The researcher of this study named this shock over email as ‘e-shock’. Similar to culture shock, the e-shock happened when other nationalities did not behave according to participants’ expectations. As the findings indicated most of the communication was done through e-mail in the virtual organizational setting, this suggested the importance of writing skills in avoiding miscommunication that might lead to possible conflicts. On the other hand, Oberg (1960) and

other researchers (Berry, 1985; Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Zwingmann & Gunn, 1983) saw the first stage of culture shock as a ‘honeymoon’ stage, and the U-curve model (Lysgaard, 1955) and W-curve model (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) were used to describe the process of culture shock. The results of this study revealed that most participants experienced stress during the initial stage of e-shock. Therefore the findings were in agreement with those researchers (Church 1982; Kohls, 1979, 1984a, 1984b; La Brack, 2010; Ward et al., 1998) who were against the U and W-curve models. In conjunction with other researchers (Gebart-Eaglemont, 1994; Kim, 1989, 1977; Ruben, 1983; Ruben & Kealey, 1979; Van Oudenhoven & Eisses, 1998), the findings would also strongly support the notion that Kim’s (1988, 1995, 2001, 2002) stress-adaptation-growth model could better describe the process of culture shock, as compared to the U and W-curve models. Nevertheless, Weaver (1993) saw breakdown in communication due to culture shock as a breakthrough to new ways of interacting with others that resulted in different ways of thinking and doing things. Such learning opportunity was supported in the findings where participants demonstrated new perspectives about themselves and other nationalities and developed new approaches to solve the problems. This coping with e-shock was also evident when participants displayed transformation in their emotions from symptoms of culture shock to symptoms of adjustment, where Zapf (1991) defined culture shock symptoms as ‘negative’ emotions and adjustment symptoms as ‘positive’ emotions.

5.5 Transformation in Adjustment and Adaptation

The above Section 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 discussed some of the encounters when participants were communicating with other nationalities. This Section and the next (Section 5.6) will discuss their responses to these encounters. This Section focuses on the adjustment made to adaptation. As discussed earlier, initial stress was inevitable whenever participants

perceived differences during the communication with other nationalities. This would imply that the initial learning of something new was stressful according to Kim's (1988, 1995, 2001, 2002) stress-adaptation-growth model. Results showed that participants were able to make adjustment to adapt to encountered stress in various degrees according to their learning from past experiences. Such learning from past experiences was advocated by Matsumoto and colleagues (Matsumoto, Hirayama & LeRoux, 2006). The several adaptation models that focused on learning such as Kim's (1988, 1995, 2001, 2002) Stress-Adaptation-Growth Model and Bennett's (1986, 1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) seemed to suggest that learning from experiences would take place automatically as time went by, under the assumption that adaptation took place successfully. Other researchers (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Moodian, 2009) were also in agreement along similar thinking that time was needed to learn from experience and that by default successful adaptation would happen if one spent enough time. This was supported by the evidence that more experienced participants (who had worked in the organization for many years) who had adjusted to adapt themselves easily and better than those who had fewer working years of experiences. However, there were some participants with few working years compared to others showing more successful adaptation. This finding established that length of time alone did not necessarily guarantee successful learning. This might suggest more studies were needed to be done in aspects of quality and intensity of time spent. Likewise P13 who had been working many years was perceived by others to display ineffective and inappropriate communication and conflict handling style. The possible explanation for this scenario could be due to the reason that P13 was a "fluent fool" (Bennett, 2004, p.69), one who knew a lot but failed to understand, who always rejected perceived differences and was unable to accept some of the necessary learning. This implied a lack of reflection (Brockbank, McGill & Beech, 2002) and double loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1978) because there was no transformation

taking place in P13. This further established the importance of reflective learning for successful adaptation.

Nevertheless, the results did address to some extent two (learning, emotion) out of three aspects (learning, identity, emotion) of Ward's (2001) approach to adaptation. Findings showed that participants made adjustment to what they know about, how they saw and what they felt about other nationalities in order to adapt to perceived differences while communicating with them. Participants showed transformation of learning when the knowledge gained was changed to true understanding of the motivation behind other nationalities' different behaviors. The transformation was an indication of 'growth' and learning in Kim's (1988, 1995, 2001, 2002) stress-adaptation-growth model.

Participants also demonstrated transformation of worldview from initial rejection of perceived differences to acceptance, resulting in higher perceived similarities. This evidence should support Bennett's (1986, 1993) DMIS where learning from experience led participants to change from an ethnocentric worldview to a more ethnorelative worldview. Nonetheless, this evidence did indicate to a lesser extent how participants perceived differences in reference to other nationalities, might possibly establish the existence of in-group and out-group defined by the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Most of the social identity theories (Adler, 1975; Berry, 1997; Berry et al., 1989; Yoshikawa, 1987, 1988) advocated identity change and creation. But there was no evidence to show the changes in identities or creation of new identities among the participants in this study. The possible explanation to this could be due to the reason that most of the social identity theories were based on prolonged face-to-face experiences and the communication context of this study was mostly through e-mail. On the other hand, the development of a new identity was culture

specific and might work only in a situation between a participant and one cultural group. It might not be pragmatic in situations between participants and many cultural groups.

In addition, the findings showed that emotions were more regulated when participants displayed transformation of emotions from initial emotional behavior to a more task focused behavior. This result supported Matsumoto and colleagues' (Matsumoto, Hirayama & LeRoux, 2006) emphasis on emotion regulation, where a clear thinking mind, coupled with learning of others perspectives and intentions, was more conducive to successful adaptation. This reinforced the notion that emotion regulation was needed to engage learning. Likewise one of the theories used to explain the affective components of adaptation process through stress and coping, Kim's (1988, 1995, 2001, 2002) stress-adaptation-growth model, was also useful to explain the learning behavior in the adaptation process as discussed above. Hence in brief, what had been discussed in this Section had shown that the essence of adjustment-adaptation process was the activity of reflective learning.

5.6 Managing Dissimilarity, Unfamiliarity and Violated Expectation

The finding that supported the communication convergence strategy of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Coupland et al., 1988; Gallois et al., 1988, 1995; Giles et al., 1987) was the accommodating act of native English speaking participants towards non-native English speaking participants, where they spoke slowly and used simple English. Though the act was meant to make others understand better, it did reduce dissimilarities in communication features (speech rate, vocabulary) as most non-native English speaking participants in this study tended to speak English slowly and used less complex English structures and words. In addition, instead of creating similarities by modifying the speech and language use, participants could produce a similar sense of similarities during communication by 'small talks'. Results showed that 'small talks'

allowed participants to explore commonalities with other nationalities on shared matters concerning families or hobbies, which in turn facilitated communication despite different levels of English proficiency. This implied the importance of building personal relationships to overcome perceived differences to facilitate communication. This was supported by the evidence that participants who found it a challenge to communicate with other nationalities were usually those who did not have any personal relationship with the other nationalities.

Similarly, some participants perceived that working with other nationalities within the same organization was akin to working with a “stranger” (Gudykunst, 2005a, p.285) whom they do not know well due to the lack of personal relationship.

She may be my overseas colleagues but I feel sometimes I’m working with a stranger because I don’t know her well in person. [P1]

Such unfamiliarity due to lack of a personal relationship caused uncertainty and anxiety among the participants as they communicated with other nationalities. This situation resonated with Gudykunst’s (1998a, 2002, 2005a) Anxiety and Uncertainty Management (AUM) theory where he posited a need to mindfully manage uncertainty and anxiety in such similar circumstances in order to have an outcome of effective communication. This was supported in the findings where communication broke down when uncertainty was not clarified leading to anxiety. On the other hand, the moderating component of ‘mindfulness’ in managing uncertainty and anxiety in AUM shared similar features of reflection (Brockbank, McGill & Beech, 2002) and double loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1978). Though the findings did reflect some levels of reflective learning engaged in by some participants, resulting in moderated uncertainty and anxiety and better communication, the results also indicated that lack of trust could hinder and distort learning and reflection. In the case of P13, attempts to manage uncertainty and anxiety was often limited to mindless grilling of others

because he could not accept given information at face value even though he might involve some degrees of reflection trying to comprehend the situation. In the absence of trust, the reflection within P13 might concern if others were telling the truth or trying to hide the truth from him.

It's probably sometimes difficult for people [Asians] who play games with me, sooner or later I will find out, because I try to control the situation and I try to find out what's really going on. I don't like to be in a position where I don't know anything. Not knowing worried me ... with Asians especially. [P13]

However, trust was not included as a moderator of uncertainty and anxiety in AUM even though Gudykunst (2005a) agreed that managing anxiety over time was associated with developing trust. The findings therefore highlighted the significance of having trust and reflective learning in moderating uncertainty and anxiety if effective and appropriate communication was expected.

On the other hand, if uncertainty and anxiety were not moderated effectively and appropriately, participants would fall back to negative stereotypes (as discussed in Section 5.2) to predict and interpret other nationalities' behaviors during communication. Stereotyping was a form of informed expectation on others and if others did not behave according to expectation, uncertainty and anxiety might increase in the absence of trust and reflective learning, leading to communication breakdown. This established possible relationship between AUM and Expectancy Violations Theory (EVT) (Burgoon, 1983, 1993). The findings showed that participants with less experience were disappointed with their perceived violated expectations in most cases. Such disappointment could be explained by Langer's (1989a, 1989b) definition of 'mindlessness', where these participants stereotyped

inaccurately basing such on broad categories, and were less open to new information and had limited perspectives. This also implied a lack of reflective learning among these participants.

Nevertheless, EVT advocated better communication with expectations based on personalized knowledge of others as compared to those expectations that were based on norms or stereotypes (Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005; Hamilton, Shermon & Ruvolo, 1990). This implied the need for personal relationships in order to gain personalized knowledge of other nationalities. This was supported by the findings that despite behaving in perceived different manner, P2 was able to overcome communication barriers with his Japanese colleague when both of them were friends. Another significance of this finding was that P2 could ‘get away’ with his behavior that initially had violated his friend’s expectation. This could be explained by the reason that P2’s friend might see P2 as a “rewarding” violator (Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005, p.155) and that there was trust in the personal relationship (friendship) (Burgoon, 1993; Jongste, 2013). This implied that when participants developed personal relationship with other nationalities, they were more ‘forgiving’ for any ‘unexpected’ behaviors from the other nationalities during communication. Hence in summary, personal relationships between workers empowered participants to have more accurate expectations of other nationalities by realigning the expectations they had before through personalized knowledge of the person concerned. Knowing other nationalities in person also increased familiarities and similarities that helped to establish trust and transform participants to be more tolerable towards any unexpected behavior of the person concerned.

5.7 Conflict Accumulation and Respect

This section and next (Section 5.8) discussed some of the encounters when participants were having conflict with other nationalities. The findings, were in agreement with Mooney and colleagues (Mooney, Holahan & Amason, 2007), which showed that most

mismanaged critical incidents began as a task conflict that often escalated to a relationship conflict. This might confirm the inseparable link between task and relationship conflict established by the literature (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy & Bourgeois, 1997; Jehn, 1994, 1995; Simons & Peterson, 2000). However, the results also highlighted that most relationship conflict was triggered by an accumulation of past unresolved events that became outwardly noticeable when emotions were less regulated. The accumulation of such unresolved events was similar to the cumulative effects of daily hassles described by De Benedittis and Lorenzetti (1992). This reinforced the possible role of emotion regulation and reflective learning (as discussed in Section 5.5) in handling conflict. This was supported when more experienced participants demonstrated regulated emotion and reflective learning in attempts to separate task from relationship conflict. This too distinguished along with other researchers (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Duffy, Shaw & Stark, 2000; Friedman et al., 2000) that the nature of relationship conflict as being less constructive as compared to task conflict in problem solving. The findings on conflict accumulation also suggested that conflict was not a one-off event but involved possibly several historical backgrounds. This showed that there was a time period of tolerance towards perceived conflict beyond which emotion regulation would be a challenge to the participants. This might propose any intended intervention was best to be carried out during this period of time before conflict got out of hand. On the other hand, the findings showed communication breakdown as the major cause for task conflict to be escalated to relationship conflict, more so when participants had little personal relationship with their disputants. This supported what has been discussed earlier on (Section 5.6) that personal relationship facilitates communication and a lack of it could cause possible breakdown in communication. This also indicated the close relationship between communication and conflict where ineffective and inappropriate communication could lead to possible conflict. Holahan, Mooney and Paul (2011) described fundamental attribution error

as the reason behind such communication-conflict relationship where participants (having less tolerance) tended to make negative attribution to those of whom they had little personal relationship. This was in agreement with other researchers (Simons & Peterson, 2000; Tidd, McIntyre & Friedman, 2004) who advocated trust to reduce such fundamental attribution error and to minimize possible conflict escalation. Nevertheless Burke (2006) saw conflict stemming from relationships with superior, peers or intergroup. However, the findings attributed these as manifestations of action and inaction of management. Participants perceived management to be the main cause of conflict at all levels of relationships defined by Burke (2006) because they felt that management had the authority to take any action and thus the responsibility to play a bigger role in handling conflict. This might position management in stronger accountability for any conflict and so created demand and expectation for better conflict management within the organization.

In addition, Ting-Toomey (1985) postulated that different cultures would display different perspectives on conflict (confrontational versus non-confrontational or direct versus indirect) based on Hofstede's (1980, 1983) and Hall's (1976) definitions of cultural difference. Nevertheless, the findings in this study made no such distinction. The results showed that most participants preferred to avoid conflict and not to confront it unless it was necessary. One of the possible explanations for this outcome might be most participants learned from their experiences that conflict was something ranging from discomfort to stressful and they were aware that handling conflict was time consuming and emotionally demanding. P2 reflected that conflict was 'avoidable' if communication was based on personal relationship.

Conflict ... in my mind ... is usually something that ... it's avoidable ... it's usually the result of misunderstanding ... in general I think that conflict is kind of one of

those things where ... it's, it's so wasted ... emotional and wasted activities because ... I, I see conflict as something that can be avoided ... you know ... if there is personal relationship, there's less misunderstanding. [P2]

This posited the building of a personal relationship during communication (as discussed in Section 5.6) as a preemptive measure to minimize conflict escalation. However, most participants were mindful that conflict was something they had to handle at some stages of their working life in the organization. The findings showed experienced participants approached conflict in a reflective learning manner when they were finding ways to handle conflict effectively and appropriately. This was similar to the concept of stress-motivated learning in Kim's (1988, 1995, 2001, 2002) stress-adaptation-growth model (as discussed in Section 5.5), where in this case the motivator was conflict. This was in line with Rahim (2001, 2002) that constructive conflict management might engage some forms of reflective double loop learning. Yet participants in this study did not enter into conflict because of violation of individual/group expectations or a failure to achieve individual/group goals as predicted by Ting-Toomey (1985). Results showed that participants entered into conflict when they perceived other nationalities did not respect them in terms of having doubts in their capability to perform their job. Such perspective suggested the importance of showing respect to other's capability during situations of conflict at the workplace.

5.8 Inaccurate Attribution and E-Mail Flaming

Stephan and Stephan (2002), and Morris and Peng (1994) argued that Ross's (1977) Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE) could be culture specific, even though the theory originated from a Western perspective. They proposed that Westerners are more likely to make FAE than Asians. However, the findings showed participants attributed other nationalities' different behaviors mostly to cultural differences (situational factors) at first

response even though they were aware of other possible reasons. But during critical events (during which most participants experienced emotional outburst), they attribute other nationalities' 'difficult' behaviors mostly to personal characteristics (dispositional factors) especially in cases where participants did not have much personal relationship with the person concerned. The results could not substantiate the views of Stephan and Stephan (2002), and Morris and Peng (1994), as most among both Western and Asian participants made similar FAE during critical incidents, and this implied that most participants might be vulnerable to FAE. This shifted the initial focus from a cultural perspective to an emotional point of view, and strengthened the importance of emotion control in situations of conflict. As discussed in Section 5.5, a clear thinking mind needed emotion regulation before learning could take place (Matsumoto, Hirayama & LeRoux, 2006). In addition, a personal relationship reduced the chances of participants making FAE indicated that the gained knowledge of the person concerned might lead to developed trust and better communication and thus possibly minimize conflict escalation. Such a view conformed to the ideas made by other researchers (Holahan, Mooney & Paul, 2011; Simons & Peterson, 2000; Tidd, McIntyre & Friedman, 2004) as discussed in Section 5.7.

Beside possible inaccurate attribution, participants also experienced electronic mail (e-mail) flaming that could escalate to possible conflict. Such encounters signified the challenges of working in isolation within a virtual office setting, where there was no face-to-face interaction, especially in cases where participants did not have much personal relationship with the person concerned. Such disconnection could contribute to conflict due to misunderstanding as observed by some researchers (O'Sullivan & Flanagan, 2003; Turnage, 2007). This was supported by evidence shown earlier in Section 5.6 and 5.7 where little personal relationship could lead to miscommunication that escalated into conflict. Franco and colleagues (1995) reasoned that people have to 'second guess' other's intention in

e-mail when they have little knowledge of the person and therefore created opportunity for misinterpretation or misunderstanding. However, the results showed that the catalyst to e-mail flaming was not just misunderstanding but also mainly due to interoffice competition accompanied with excessive bureaucratic conformity. This showed that management concerned was responsible for creating a stressful working environment for the participants. This echoed what other researchers (Aiken & Waller, 2000; Hobman et al., 2002) had said about the relationship between organization culture and e-mail flaming where high levels of e-mail flaming reflected a negative organization culture. Careful study on the findings further revealed that participants from top management engaged more in e-mail flaming than those from middle management. The middle management participants were mostly 'forced' by their superiors to engage in e-mail flaming with other overseas colleagues from another office due to interoffice competition. Their expressed reluctance in engaging such negative activities was in contrast with the 'lawlessness' and 'uncivility' described by Turnage (2007) and Vardi and Weitz (2004). This could be due to the emotion regulation acquired as participants learned from their experiences. Though the higher management participants might fit the description of 'lawlessness' and 'uncivility', it was more than just misunderstanding or interoffice competition. It was the possible sense of no fear of any negative repercussion for their actions since they were the bosses and there was no one higher that could do anything to them. This indicated the lack of reflective learning of the management concerned where they were not aware and mindful of their actions and the impact of their actions on other people. This was in line with what was discussed in Section 5.7 where conflict was caused mainly by action and inaction of management.

5.9 Giving Face to Show Respect

The above Section 5.7 and 5.8 discussed some of the encounters when participants were having conflict with other nationalities. This Section and the next (Section 5.10) will discuss their responses to these encounters. Ting-Toomey (2005) proposed that collectivistic cultures (predominantly Asians) were more concerned about others' faces while individualistic cultures (predominantly Westerners) were more concerned about their own faces during situations of conflict, where giving/saving face was equivalent to showing/defending respect respectively. However, the findings did not show evidence to support this claim. The findings showed that most participants (both Asians and Westerners) were concerned about saving/defending their own faces in situation of conflict. Most participants expected other nationalities to give face or to show respect to them, especially in relation to job performance. This was in agreement with what was discussed in Section 5.7, where the results showed that participants entered into conflict when they perceived other nationalities did not respect them in terms of having doubts about their capability to perform their job. This was in contrast to giving/saving face in relation to identity, relational and substantive issues put up by Ting-Toomey (2005). The results established that giving/saving face in this study was more in relation to one's capability at the workplace. The results also highlighted participants' reluctance to acknowledge publicly that they were accountable for the perceived problem. The perception of being doubted as incapable was bad enough with generated guilt within but the perception of other people knowing his/her incapability was shameful enough to escalate conflict. Another possible reason why the findings differ from Ting-Toomey's (2005) position on face concerns were culture specific might be that participants had different preferences of expressing their views. Results supported that participants (predominantly Westerners) tended to express their dissatisfaction openly while others (predominantly Asians) tended to hide their dissatisfaction within. Participants who

did not speak out did not mean they did not care about their own face when they perceived others were showing disrespect towards them. Therefore all these suggested a respectful approach to conflict was preferred in this study by being indirect on the others' performance shortfall: focusing on better ways to solve the problem instead of finding and/or criticizing the person responsible for the problem. The findings also showed that experienced participants tended not to take their face seriously as compared to less experienced ones, and were able to downplay the negative emotions when other nationalities were less respectful towards them. This again emphasized the point that an experienced participant who possessed better emotion regulation (as discussed in Section 5.5) might better position himself/herself to handle conflict effectively and appropriately (as discussed in Section 5.7). Nevertheless, these experienced participants still showed respect to others in situations of conflict by highlighting others' strengths and de-emphasizing others' weaknesses. This supported earlier discussion about indirectness on performance shortfall. Such an approach also had a depersonalizing effect on conflict, where participants could agree to disagree more openly in a respectful manner while trying to solve the problem on hand. At this stage, the problem would be perceived to be more of a task conflict than a relationship conflict.

5.10 'Classroom Problem Solving' and Cooperation through Common Goal

The findings showed that conflicts emerging from a lack of respect and cooperation were superficially and temporarily 'solved' by dominating and/or avoiding conflict handling styles. Those researchers (Rahim, 2001; Thomas and Kilmann, 1974; Ting-Toomey, 1988) might argue that each of the various conflict handling styles (including dominating and avoiding) had its own usefulness in a particular situation but the findings showed that dominating and avoiding conflict handling styles might work in the short term but was not sustainable for the long term because the real problem was unsolved and suppressed within. It

was a matter of time before the problem resurfaced in another different form again. The results also showed that problem solving handling conflict style was much preferred by experienced participants. This resonated with strong support for problem solving as the ‘best’ conflict handling style by Follett (1925), and Blake and Mouton (1970). Problem solving conflict handling style appeared to allow participants to focus more on Burke’s (2006) definition of real conflict than phony conflict, thus separating task from relationship conflict. The nature of problem solving was to depersonalize conflict, as discussed in Section 5.9, was part of the process of showing respect by not putting a personal face or accountability on the problem. Instead the focus was on gathering different opinions and finding among these the best solution to the problem faced in a cooperative and respectful manner. The researcher of this study named this as ‘Classroom Problem Solving’ as some participants related such response to their learning experiences in MBA (Master of Business Administration) classroom where students agreed to disagree to brainstorm a given case study. The highlight of such ‘Classroom Problem Solving’ was that participants were genuinely open to learning under such apolitical circumstances and viewed the problem as challenge to be solved. Disagreements were accepted as alternative ways of doing things rather than personal attacks. As discussed in Section 5.7, reflective double loop learning facilitated constructive conflict management (Rahim, 2001, 2002).

The findings showed that in situations of conflict, participants were aware of the importance of cooperation in making everyone to work together to overcome the problem on hand in order to get their jobs done. This might appear to describe the positive interdependence (cooperative goal) in Deutsch’s (1985, 2006) social interdependence theory. However, the ‘cause and effect’ of Deutsch’s (1985, 2006) social interdependence theory predicted that cooperative approach would induce cooperation among the participants. But the results showed that other nationalities did not reciprocate accordingly even when some

participants tried to cooperate with them. The situation remained competitive and uncooperative. This might be due to the reason that the organizational goal was not cooperative enough during operation. The organizational goal was intended to be cooperative, or at least at a higher level. When it was operationalized to the ground level, most workers could only see the different departmental goals but fail to see the higher cooperative goal. The dilution of cooperation during daily operation could mean a lack of sense of a common goal. Positive interdependence happened when everyone shared the same common goal (Deutsch, 1962, 2006; Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2005). When the results showed that participants perceived different goals from each office, this implied the lack of commonness (or common goal). This advocated the need to design an overall organizational goal with common goals that were easily understood at different organizational levels. The findings also defined a common goal to be something that everyone could identify, accept and relate to. Such characteristics of a common goal were critical in situations of conflict in pulling everyone with different opinions to work together for a higher common cause and to find the best solution to the problem on hand. This implied that a common goal was fundamental to problem solving (as discussed earlier on) in keeping everyone to stay focus on solving the problem. Therefore setting a common goal as the organizational goal might encourage more cooperation in situations of conflict than setting a cooperative goal as organizational goal. The realization of implementing a common goal to promote more cooperation would also call for more managerial support since the results showed that most competition within the organization (as discussed in Section 5.8) was caused by the management team themselves. In addition, another possible reason why a cooperative goal might have limited effects in the findings could be due to lack of trust (to be discussed in Section 5.13). A cooperative goal functioned well in a trusting working environment (Adair & Brett, 2004; Bruhn, 2001; Lenard, 1975). A competitive working environment, due to

interoffice rivalry (as discussed in Section 5.8), would reasonably be lacking in trust between the offices. This might dilute the level of cooperation in daily operation.

5.11 Communication Challenges of Minimizing Ethnocentrism and Stereotypes

This Section and the next (Section 5.12 and 5.13) discusses some of the challenges faced when participants were communicating with other nationalities. The findings showed that the majority (predominantly the Germans) within the organization in this study made decisions based on their norms and values and often at times ignored the voices of the minority (predominantly staff from outside Germany). The minority perceived such behavior as being superior, proud, dominating and imposing, similar to the ethnocentric situation described by Bennett (1986). This might be due to mindless managing of anxiety and uncertainty (as discussed in Section 5.6) on the side of the majority, as a form of self-protection to minimize their discomfort due to perceived cultural differences during communication (Barna, 1994). Such perceived ethnocentric attitude and behavior would pose a likely barrier to communication as evidence had showed that minority participants were less forthright and some even expressed fear of speaking out. This would inevitably hinder any possible personal relationship building and learning during the process of communication. Since trust was essential in personal relationship building (as discussed in Section 5.13), this would suggest that building trust during communication was another challenge to be faced (more discussion in Section 5.13). In addition, this perception of ethnocentrism might pose difficulties to cultivate an inclusive working environment and therefore might miss out in realizing the full potential of diversity within the organization. When participants were less receptive to cultural differences by being more ethnocentric, this led to another challenge of facing stereotype during communication.

Section 5.2 discussed about the participants' experiences of being vulnerable to stereotype, and established that most of them stereotyped to various degrees. This might be one of the reasons why some researchers (Barna, 1994; Schmidt et al., 2007) considered stereotype as one of the challenges to be faced during communication with other nationalities. This was supported by the findings that the stereotypes of some participants interfered with their objective assessment of others' behavior. This was because stereotypes were not easy to overcome when they became firmly established realities to the participants (Barna, 1994). Thus changing was difficult. This point was reinforced by results showing the internal struggle experienced by participants when they attempt to accept others' different behavior by making changes to their predetermined assumptions. Nevertheless, this deprived the participants from engaging in a true and fair communication with other nationalities. However, discussion in Section 5.2 emphasized that reflective learning displayed by experienced participants helped to reframe stereotypes into a more accurate generalization. This might suggest that reflective learning was one of the possible channels to overcome stereotype but learning itself was not easy as demonstrated in the case of P13 (as discussed in Section 5.5), a very knowledgeable person but perceived by other participants as 'lacking in understanding and empathy'. This implied that learning is a daunting task itself if participants did not undergo transformation themselves. Schmidt and colleagues (2007) described prejudice and discrimination as manifestation of stereotypes, with prejudice being the 'attitude' and discrimination as the 'action'. Hence stereotypes were often hidden, but prejudice and discrimination could possibly be felt outwardly. Even though the findings did not establish any cases of incident due to prejudice and discrimination, but the cases of perception that non-native English speaking participants were less 'capable' at work due to their lower level of fluency in English would certainly seem to be exacerbated by prejudice and discrimination. Schiffman (2002) described similar mistreatment towards people with

‘limited’ English proficiency, where they were often perceived by others to be intellectually ‘deprived’. The significance of language proficiency as a challenge during communication will be discussed in the next Section 5.12. Moreover, stereotypes often took place when participants knew little of other nationalities. Such lack of personal relationships across the nationalities could suggest a potential problem for participants to trust other nationalities. Building trust as a challenge during communication will be discussed in next Section 5.13.

5.12 Communication Challenges of Overcoming Stress and Language Barrier

Earlier discussions in Section 5.5 and 5.6 had highlighted that stress was experienced during the initial stage of the adaptation process (as discussed in Section 5.5) to perceived cultural differences and could exist in forms of anxiety and uncertainty (as discussed in Section 5.6). The discussions so far had assumed participants would somehow manage their stress if they managed to build personal relationships and trust and adopt reflective learning. However, the process of overcoming stress was not without challenge as posited by Barna (1994). Ethnocentrism and stereotypes (as discussed in Section 5.11) were forms of defense mechanism against stress of adaptation to perceived dissimilarity and unfamiliarity (Barna, 1994). Though the results did not establish any underlying relationship between stress and ethnocentrism and stereotypes, there were a few cases where stress experienced by participants might have been compounded by other’s ethnocentrism and stereotype. This implied that if stress was not well managed (relieved constructively), it could cause stress to others and thus impede any effective and appropriate communication. Results also showed that participants with less working experiences suffered more from stress and found it a challenge to relieve stress constructively than those experienced participants. This garnered the support that managerial intervention was critical to nurture a stress-free working

environment in order to facilitate open communication among workers. Physiological reactions were also observed among the participants when they experienced stress.

My blood pressure started to go up, I could feel myself, my heart beat faster. My body did even make physical changes to it that, that ... I can feel myself getting frustrated. [P7]

This gives me a lot of stress. I have dropped too much hair, I get more wrinkles on my face, this is caused by stress. [P12]

Such reactions were deemed to be natural human response (Oken, 1974; Toffler, 1970; Ursin, 1978). But if left un-moderated, this could lead to further physical body ailments (Barna, 1983). This could have an impact on their psychological health (Kim, 2001) needed for adaptation during communication. This might have limited the capacity of participants to communicate effectively and appropriately.

Nevertheless, the other challenge faced during communication was language, in particular English proficiency. In agreement with the literature (Katsiolouides & Hadjidakis, 2007; Neelankavil & Rai, 2009; Schaffer, Agusti & Earle, 2009), the findings showed that English was the common language used within the organization. Even within the same English language, it might be represented and interpreted differently among the participants and other nationalities due to various language characteristics described by Schmidt and his colleagues (2007). Some of these variations could be observed in the findings when the same word could mean differently to different participants, or when participants were being expressive or reserved, or when they were being direct or indirect. The situation was further complicated when participants displayed various levels of English proficiency as some participants were non-native English speakers. In addition, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

(Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956;) explained that past experiences on certain situations helped to form certain thoughts on these situations. This also suggested that the way a person thinks (or perceived) is influenced by his/her native language. Since different nationalities had different experiences of their own native language, they might misrepresent and misinterpret (thus leading to misunderstanding) even when all of them were using the same common English language. This notion was supported by the results that most of the less experienced participants would determine if the spoken or written English words from other nationalities were appropriate based on their respective norms and values. This would imply limited perspectives in their interpretation of others during communication using English. Even though this study did not establish any concrete evidence that experience participants were better off in representing themselves in English or interpreting others' English as compared to those less experienced participants, the results did indicate that experienced participants who learnt reflectively did not limit themselves to just one perspective in their interpretation during the communication. Such multiple perspectives might position them to be a better communicator. Nonetheless, many literatures (Babiker et al., 1980; Kamal & Maruyama, 1990; Matsumoto, Hirayama & LeRoux, 2006; Oberg, 1960) advocated study of language to overcome this communication challenge, on the notion that if one learnt more about the language, he/she would communicate better. However, the results showed that some participants still struggled with English after many years of learning at the workplace. This might mean that not every participant had the talent for language where they could master English easily. This further implied that language study might not be a pragmatic solution for every participant to improve their communication with other nationalities.

5.13 Building Trust as Main Communication Challenge

Building relationships was deemed to be a challenge in cross-cultural communication (Abrams, O'Connor & Giles, 2002; Barner & Barner, 2012; Rabotin, 2011). Even though most participants understood the importance of relationship building to facilitate communication (as discussed in Section 5.6), their concerns were more than just relationship building. The results showed it was trust instead of relationship building, that most participants found as a challenge during communication with other nationalities. However, trust was initially positioned by the literature (Adler, 1991, 1997; Proehl, 1996) as one of the challenges faced when participants were having conflict with other nationalities. This might be due to the reason that relationship building was based on perceived similarities (Schmidt et al., 2007) or "personal liking for each other" (Chen, 2002, p. 243), and trust, similar to relationship building, was also built on perceived similarities (Brake, 2006; Haslam et al., 2001; Kiser, 2010). Many researchers (Earle, Siegrist, & Gutscher, 2007; Grossmann, Prammer & Neugebauer, 2011; Saunders et al., 2010) also established the inseparable link between relationship building and trust. This was supported when the results showed that participants attempted to build trust through personal relationship building when communicating with other nationalities. The challenges in developing trust through personal relationship building came in different forms. First, the lack of face-to-face interaction through e-mail in virtual office setting limited the opportunities to build real personal relationships. This implied the need for managerial intervention to create a more caring working environment that encouraged informal gatherings or opportunities for workers to build personal relationship with other nationalities. However, the actions of the management concerned in this study were not supportive of true personal relationship building: the only opportunity for staff to gather and meet face-to-face during the bi-yearly meeting was deprived of any personal time for staff to socialize around, when the program was jam packed

by the management with workshops. Also, management distrusted and discouraged personal communication during work hours. The evidence below clearly indicated the necessity for the management concerned to recognize reflectively the influence they might have on the working culture within the organization, and how company policy or decision making might have obstructed better communication among the workers.

P13: We have workshops during the meeting ... I think it's ... a waste of time if people come together and do nothing ... it's wasting money. A full day program will make the money worthwhile. And they can spend more time together in meeting to know each other better.

R: Is there any time for the staff to mingle informally around during the meeting?

P13: Yes. They can mingle during dinner time. [Top management's perspective]

R: Did you get to know your overseas colleague better during the meeting?

P3: Well it's a pity ... opportunities were there but ... there was no personal time. We rushed from meeting to meeting, workshop to workshop, by the time we finished, it was 7pm and we got to rush for dinner. We sort of look forward to this meeting but in the end we didn't really get to know anyone in person well enough.

R: Well at least you can talk to your colleagues during dinner time.

P3: There was little interaction, I mean ... no real conversation ... we were just hungry by then and just ate and ate. When dinner was over, we rushed back to hotel. So no time. [Staff's perspective]

Second, the presence of perceived differences (as discussed in Section 5.3), and dissimilarity, uncertainty and violated expectation (as discussed in Section 5.6) complicated the building of personal relationships and trust, that were based on perceived similarities. Third, trust being also based on interdependence (Rousseau et al., 1998) implied the need for cooperation through cooperative goal (as discussed in Section 5.10) to build trust during communication. However, the presence of interoffice competition (as discussed in Section 5.8) might have diluted any cooperative effort. This suggested a need for managerial intervention again to push for a more cooperative working environment.

In addition, among all the communication challenges described above in Section 5.11 and 5.12, the difficult task of building trust would appear to be the central challenge to effective and appropriate communication management. This implied that the underlying root causes of other communication challenges (barriers due to ethnocentrism, stereotype, stress, language proficiency) might have been due to problems of trust, and it might be possible to better manage these challenges if the issues of trust could be improved. This was under the assumption that participants who established trust with other nationalities would maintain a certain level of personal relationship (friendship) with them. Discussions in Section 5.6 had showed that personal relationships might help to lower any ethnocentrism, stereotypes and stress (due to anxiety and uncertainty). In the findings, P4 was able to make an ‘accurate guess’ of what others (of different English proficiency) were trying to mean during communication because he had a close personal relationship with them. This implied that having a close personal relationship with other nationalities might help to overcome the language barrier despite differences in English proficiency. This was explained by the literatures (Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Luhmann, 1979; Marsh & Dibben, 2005) that even if the person whom the participant knew well did not communicate accurately, the participant was able to fill the gap with what he/she knew about the person from the established personal

relationship because there was a certain level of trust between the participant and the person concerned.

5.14 Conflict Challenge of Finding Common Goal

This Section and next (Section 5.15 and 5.16) discusses some of the challenges faced when participants were having conflict with other nationalities. Getting everyone to work together as a team in a culturally diverse organization was a difficult task because of communication problems (as discussed in Section 5.11, 5.12 and 5.13) that might easily lead to situations of conflict (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Smith et al., 1994; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). Deutsch's (1949, 1962) cooperative goal was meant to be one of the possible solutions to such a situation in getting everyone in disputes to cooperate together (Deutsch, 1973; Johnson & Johnson, 2005; Tjosvold, 1991). However, the discussion in Section 5.10 showed that participants responded (cooperated) better to a common goal than a cooperative goal in situations of conflict. Common goal was based on common grounds (Elliott, Gray & Lewicki, 2003) or perceived similarities (Sanderson, 2010; Sherif, 1966). Since trust/personal relationship building were also based on perceived similarities, the challenges faced in trust/personal relationship building (as discussed in Section 5.13) might possibly be relevant in the same way to a common goal. This was further supported by the findings that participants having difficulties in managing conflict with other nationalities often did not have anything in common (no common grounds or perceived similarities) and did not have any personal relationship with those nationalities concerned. Since perceived similarities were being concerned mainly in communication with other nationalities (as discussed in Section 5.13), the notion that common goal (being engaged when participants were having conflict with other nationalities), was also based on perceived similarities, might imply that miscommunication could possibly lead to conflict. Nevertheless, the main challenge of

finding a common goal was to create awareness among the participants. The findings showed that most participants were not able to identify any common goal with other nationalities within the organization in situations of conflict. The results suggested that this might be due to lack of managerial intervention to create such awareness. In the absence of common goal awareness, interoffice competition continued as participants and other nationalities were less successful in reframing their mindset. Such reframing was similar to the recategorization process described by the literatures (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2007; Ferguson & Porter, 2013; Miller, 2002). The lack of common goal awareness also implied the importance of managerial intervention during conflict situations, such that the management concerned did not merely create common goal awareness, but were also required to operationalize it within the organization in an effective and appropriate manner. This was in agreement with the literatures (Sethi, 2000; Webber, 2002; Webber & Dohanue, 2001) that encouraged managerial intervention to realize full potential and positive impact of diversity within the organization, by building more trust and cooperation (through a common goal). The implication of these recommended actions from the literatures was that managerial intervention might have a positive influence in managing communication (as discussed in Sections 5.12 and 5.13) and conflict (as discussed in this Section) challenges.

5.15 Conflict Challenge of Controlling Emotion

Emotion regulation was discussed in Sections 5.5, 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9. This implied the importance of emotion regulation during communication and situations of conflict with other nationalities. However, emotion regulation appeared to have a higher significance during situations of conflict than communication with other nationalities, as it was highlighted more often during the discussion on conflict (as discussed in Section 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9). A possible explanation to such a situation was given by the literature (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001;

Lindner, 2006) that conflict was emotionally based, and one of the possible difficult tasks to do during situations of conflict was to maximize positive emotions and minimize negative emotions. Most participants shared similar concerns where they described their conflict experiences as ‘emotionally draining’. The findings showed that most participants initially experienced emotions that were considered to be negative by Lindner (2006). As predicted by Ursin (1978), when participants experienced negative emotion, they might also experience some physiological problems (as discussed in Section 5.12). Only some experienced participants displayed ‘will power’ (Mischel, DeSmet & Kross, 2006) to cool down intentionally and/or ‘positive thinking’ (McCraty & Tomasino, 2006) to be more tolerant, where the emotions experienced by them were considered to be positive by Lindner (2006). This might be due to the reflection and double loop learning that was often associated with successful emotion regulation as discussed in Section 5.5. But such regulation might not be sustainable in a working environment that was lacking in cooperation and common goals. The experienced participants described that it was ‘not easy to keep cool’ when offices were competing with one another. This reinforced the role of managerial intervention (as discussed in Section 5.12, 5.13 and 5.14) in maintaining a positive emotional atmosphere at the workplace. Even though the research literature (Deutsch, 1999; Lazare, 2004; Lindner, 2006; Pearce, 2005; Weingarton, 2003) associated better emotion regulation to common goal (as discussed in Section 5.14), the findings were not able to establish this relationship conclusively because a common goal was lacking within the organization under study. Yet the lack of a common goal resulting in situations of emotional conflict, the desire of most participants to cooperate instead of competing, and the expected positive feelings from established trust and personal relationship, should suggest a more encouraging relationship between better emotion regulation and common goal.

Furthermore, participants who demonstrated reflective learning (predominantly the experienced ones) displayed certain levels of emotion regulation (as discussed in Section 5.5 and 5.7). In the findings, they appeared to be better communicators, problem solving orientated and thoughtful in many ways. Such depictions seemed to fit the descriptions of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995, 1998) needed during emotion regulation (Fairhurst, 2011; Henry, 2011; Raines, 2013): being better communicators would imply having better social skills to communicate and interact with others; problem solving approach required self-regulation to maintain a 'clear thinking mind' (as discussed in Section 5.5); and thoughtfulness with different perspectives (as discussed in Section 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 and 5.12) encompassed self-awareness and empathy. However, the work motivation aspect of emotional intelligence was not so apparent in the findings. This might imply low morale among the participants at the workplace during interview. The 'lack of motivation' could be due to interoffice competition (as discussed in Section 5.8) and lack of a learning culture within the organization (to be discussed later in this Section), that served as possible obstacles to greater motivation at the workplace.

Reframing was also part of the process of emotion regulation (Fairhurst, 2011; Henry, 2011; Raines, 2013). Previously in Section 5.14, reframing was discussed as a form of recategorization. Such change in perspectives was similar to what was discussed in Section 5.9 and 5.10, where a shift in focus from relationship conflict to task conflict was needed to depersonalize the nature of the conflict. This was in agreement with Moore's (2003) techniques in reframing value conflict, by translating value disputes to interest disputes with common grounds/goals. Likewise this implied common goal could help to orient disputants towards a more problem solving mindset. This supported what was discussed in Section 5.10. However, the challenge of finding common goals was also highlighted in Section 5.14. The process of reframing involved changes, and the research literature (Mitroff & Linstead, 1993;

Winter, Sarros & Tanewski, 1997) considered such changes as contradictions with past experiences and accepted beliefs, which could lead people to adopt a defensive attitude towards changes. Therefore the challenges of overcoming ethnocentrism, stereotypes and stress were similarly relevant to reframing: when participants attempted to change their predetermined assumptions, they experienced ‘internal struggle’ (as discussed in Section 5.11 and 5.12).

The third consideration of emotion regulation was reflection (Fairhurst, 2011; Henry, 2011; Raines, 2013), where it was closely associated with double-loop learning (Brockbank, McGill, 2012). Both reflection and double-loop learning had shown their importance in participants’ experiences (as discussed in Section 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7, 5.8 and 5.10) and challenges (as discussed in Section 5.11, 5.12, 5.13 and 5.15) faced when participants were communicating and/or having conflict with other nationalities. The motivation of such reflective learning at the workplace should represent a learning organization. However, the findings showed that learning culture was not active within the organization under study. This might explain the reasons behind the lack of the motivational aspect of emotional intelligence at the workplace as mentioned earlier on. This could mean that participants might be motivated initially to learn reflectively, but an unsupportive working environment could diminish this motivation as participants work longer within the organization. Even experienced participants in such a working environment might not be able to implement their skills effectively and appropriately, and thus soon lost their motivation to perform. The focus from the management on changing rules and regulation when things went wrong signified single loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1978) instead of double-loop learning. This implied that the management was very much limited in finding the real problem and solving it with best solutions due to possibly lack of reflective learning. This was reinforced by the findings that the working environment reflected a negative organization culture with e-mail

flaming (as discussed in Section 5.8), which was not very conducive for reflective learning. Furthermore, other obstacles to reflective learning included overcoming of changes (as discussed earlier on reframing about changing perspectives), and overcoming of learning stress (as discussed in Section 5.4 and 5.5).

5.16 Showing Respect as Main Conflict Challenge

Trust was initially positioned by the research literature (Adler, 1991, 1997; Proehl, 1996) as one of the challenges faced when participants in an organization were having conflict with other nationalities. However, the findings showed that participants in this study considered respect to be more relevant in situations of conflict with other nationalities. This might be due to the reasons that when participants were having conflict with other nationalities, the most immediate concern was about maintaining respect before the conflict escalated. Though this was not to say that trust did not play a role in conflict management, most of the critical incidents in this study were caused by perceived disrespect (as discussed in Section 5.7 and 5.9) on one's capability to perform at the workplace. Therefore the actual challenge in this circumstance was to manage such perception of disrespect by behaving in a manner that was perceived to be respectful enough for all parties to accept and to cool things down. This challenge was further supported by the findings that showed in the heat of the moment, participants and/or other nationalities often adopted disrespectful behavior, disregarding and discrediting others' work capabilities, leading to more conflict. Nevertheless, it was not easy for some participants to show respect to others as shown in the findings, when others might not reciprocate with respect. All these aspects might be due to lack of reflective learning in the particular organization concerned as it did not encourage active learning at the workplace (as discussed in Section 5.15). The results showed blaming was a common response when conflict happened, indicating a lack of a problem solving

mindset. Furthermore, the lack of managerial intervention could be another possible obstacle to participants showing respect to colleagues at work as interoffice competition forced everyone to interact with one another in a competitive manner that was often perceived by others as disrespectful.

When [interoffice] competition gets ugly ... people don't respect each other ... we're forced to fight for support, sales and stock, without considering others' feeling ... I win, you lose ... that's what our bosses want. [P9]

Nonetheless, among all the conflict challenges described above in Section 5.14 and 5.15, the difficult task of showing respect would appear to be the central challenge to effective and appropriate conflict management. This implied that the underlying root causes of other conflict challenges (emotion control, common goal) might have been due to problems of respect, and it might be possible to better manage these challenges if the issues of respect could be improved. A respectful participant would have to behave in manner that was respectful to others. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that a respectful participant would control his/her emotions in order not to further antagonize the conflict situation. Being respectful would also imply being humble and open for more learning. Since emotion regulation involved reflective learning (as discussed in Section 5.5) the same learning process might link emotion regulation together with respect.

Showing respect is about being humble. Being humble keeps your ego and pride on check ... that is useful in conflict ... that you don't do things that is disrespectful to others ... because conflict is about losing face, hurting ego and pride. And if you humble yourself, you're less agitated [emotion regulation] ... your ego and pride is not a big deal after all ... you clear your mind, I mean a more open mind to learn more, you can find ways to solve problem. [P12]

This also indicated that for effective and appropriate problem solving (manifestation of emotion regulation and reflective learning) to take place, respect was crucial to permit agreement to disagreement to facilitate the search for best solutions for the problem on hand. Even though common goal (as discussed in Section 5.10) could be used to pull everyone in conflict together in a ‘Classroom Problem Solving’ setting, respect was needed to sustain and to prolong the process of problem solving. Without which, common goal would have been just a temporary motivation for cooperation.

So, so ... again, common goals get everyone together even though they don’t agree to one another during conflict ... but to keep them together in long run, I mean ... you gotta instill respect ... that they don’t do or say things that may hurt others, which can make things pretty ugly easily. Only with respect then can they sustain the togetherness during problem solving, you know. [P2]

5.17 Confidence and Real Experience Learning

This Section and next (Section 5.18 and 5.19) will discuss the sense of perceived confidence among the participants in handling communication and conflict with other nationalities. The research literature (Bennett, 1986, 1993, 2004; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003; Kelly, 1963; Stephenson, 1992, 2012) has indicated that learning from experiences took the form of interpretation of events that made up the experiences of a person, and accumulation of such experiences helped to increase his/her competence (leading to more confidence) in handling communication and conflict with other nationalities. The findings supported this by showing that participants felt more confident after building up their competence through past working experiences. Participants used what they had learned in past events that they experienced, and used it as a guide to interpret new events that they encountered. On the other hand, the literature might appear to suggest that confidence

building was only possible through the passage of time: the longer the length of working years, the more events a person would expect to encounter (thus resulting in more ‘complex’ interpretation/learning and ‘richer’ experiences), and the more confident the person would become. However, the findings were not able to ascertain the amount of time needed for ‘complex’ learning and ‘richer’ experiences to take place before a person could become more confident. But the findings (as discussed in Section 5.12) did support the element of the time factor to a certain extent when more experienced participants who had worked for many years demonstrated more ‘complex’ thinking with multiple perspectives, as compared to those who did not work long enough. This might suggest time was needed to build up experiences and therefore confidence too, under the assumptions that learning was automatic if the person spent enough time embarking down the journey of experiences. Nevertheless (as discussed in Section 5.5), there were some participants with fewer working years compared to others showing more successful adaptation (due to more reflective learning), and there was also the case of P13 having worked for many years with self-proclaimed confidence and yet perceived by others to display ineffective and inappropriate communication and conflict handling style due to possible lack of reflective learning. This again (as discussed in Section 5.5) might suggest more studies need to be done on aspects of quality and the intensity of time spent on learning before gathering real experiences and confidence. This advocacy for ‘real experience learning’, as named by the researcher of this study, where it was not just enough to learn from experiences is a key conclusion. A ‘real experience learning’ requires a person to be responsible for his/her own learning (Stephenson, 1992, 1998, 2012), and to adopt interpersonal reflection instead of intrapersonal reflection, and double loop learning instead of single loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1978; Brockbank & McGill, 2012; Brockbank, McGill & Beech, 2002).

Nonetheless, the competence of participants gained by learning from their working experiences, appeared to fit into Martin and Vaughn's (DOM, 2010) four components of competence in terms of awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills. The results showed awareness of acceptance and adaptation, attitude of open mindedness, respect and empathy, knowledge of other cultures, and skills of finding common grounds and communication skills. Even though the research literature (Bennett, 2004; DOM, 2010, 2011) laid equal importance on all four components of competence, any one component cannot function independently from others if effective and appropriate outcomes were to be desired, the findings showed that most non-native English speaking participants perceived proficiency in communication skill of writing and speaking in English would make them feel more confident, as compared to proficiency in other components of competence. This might be due to the reason that no matter how accepting, respectful or knowledgeable the participants were, it was useless if they were not able to convey their intended messages effectively and appropriately. P1 described communication skill to have a 'direct' impact on confidence because it is something that others could see, read or hear, and something that could 'impress' others almost immediately, thus implying that a good communicator gave the perception of being capable/confident at work. This gave support to what was discussed in Section 5.11 on the cases of perception that non-native English speaking participants were less 'capable' at work due to their lower level of fluency in English.

Nevertheless, communication skills was still one of the four components of competence (DOM, 2010), an outward reflection of what was the awareness inside the participants, a notion where Bennett (2004) posited skills, together with knowledge and attitude, to be manifestation of awareness. This highlighted the significant impact of awareness on the other components of competence. As discussed in Section 5.5, participants demonstrated transformation of a 'worldview' from initial rejection of perceived differences

to acceptance, leading to better adaptation that might indicate greater confidence in handling communication and conflict with other nationalities. Such a ‘worldview’, was similar to awareness according to Bennett (2004), and the transformation made in worldview/awareness would further transform attitude, knowledge and skills to achieve effective and appropriate outcomes. This was also in agreement with Bennett and Bennett’s (2004) effectiveness and appropriateness of a competent person. If there was no real experience learning, indicating a lack of reflective learning, there might not be any change in one’s awareness because the person was not able to experience different worldview as in the case of a “fluent fool” (Bennett, 2004, p. 69) that we had discussed in Section 5.5. This was supported by the discussion in Section 5.15 that learning from experiences required changes in one’s perspective (worldview/awareness).

5.18 Confidence and Respect of Capability at Workplace

The previous Section discussed how real experience learning built up competence of awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills, which lead to more confidence building. On the other hand, Stephenson (1992, 1998, 2001, 2012) made further distinction between competence and capability, where he viewed capability as not only encompassing competence but also as confidence in applying the gained competence in unfamiliar situations. Therefore being confident was similarly about developing one’s capability at the workplace, where a confident person at the workplace might also be a capable person. The findings showed that most participants felt confident when they could perform at the workplace. In this case, performance at work was a direct indication of the participants’ capability to function at the workplace, that included handling communication and conflict with other nationalities in the context of this study. In addition, the literatures (NCIHE, 1997; Stephenson, 2012) posited that developing such capability to realize personal potential might

associate with greater personal satisfaction and higher self-esteem. The findings showed that participants supported similar perspectives when they perceived confidence from good work performance (hence better work capability) defined their self-worth and self-respect. Since it was established in Section 5.7, that participant entered into conflict when they perceived other nationalities did not respect them in terms of having doubts in their capability to perform their job, this would imply the perception of having the capability to perform was a form of respect too. The confidence in applying the gained competence in unfamiliar situations might likewise imply the need for confidence to manage unfamiliarity due to anxiety and uncertainty (as discussed in Section 5.6). As highlighted in Section 5.6, trust (in addition to mindfulness/reflective learning) was one of the possible moderators of unfamiliarity due to anxiety and uncertainty. This indicated possible relationship between confidence and trust (to be discussed in next Section 5.19). Nonetheless, Stephenson (1992, 1998, 2001, 2012) described three characteristics of being confident as confidence in one's ability to learn, confidence in oneself, and confidence in one's judgment in times of uncertainty. The first description brought out the learning aspect of confidence and where learning was concerned, the findings in this study advocated reflective learning (as discussed in Section 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.11, 5.12, 5.15, 5.16, 5.17) for effective and appropriate outcomes. Therefore being confident was also confidence in one's ability to learn reflectively. However, the findings showed that the working environment of the organization under study was not conducive for learning (also as discussed in Section 5.15) and this in turn had a negative impact to a certain extent, to the participants' confidence to further develop their work capabilities, and so might result in less optimal work performance at later stage. The micromanagement and blame culture of the organization under study did not empower participants to make their own decision. This would also have negative impact on their confidence in their own power to perform and to judge. Therefore, a capable person

could be confident initially but an unsupportive working environment might drain this confidence away. This again suggested the need for managerial intervention (as discussed in Section 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 5.16) to nurture a supportive working environment for staff to be confident enough to apply their competence. More details on confidence and management will be discussed in Section 5.20. Though the findings did not address the positive aspect of the three characteristics of confidence, the results did point out the negative impact to confidence when there were obstacles for participants to learn, to perform and to judge at their workplace.

Moreover, the findings showed that some participants perceived performance at workplace as get the job done through cooperation, even though cooperation itself with others was a challenge (as discussed in Section 5.14). This implied that work performance was not only dependent on one's work capability within a supportive working environment, but also dependent on the external factor of cooperation with others at the workplace. This further suggested that confidence was influenced by both act of self-effort in developing one's work capability within a supportive working environment (as described earlier and as well in Section 5.17), and to a certain extent the level of successful cooperation with others at the workplace. The probable relationship between confidence and cooperation as discussed so far, was also in possible agreement with the Trust-Confidence-Cooperation (TCC) model (Earle, Siegrist & Gutscher, 2007; Siegrist, Gutscher & Earle, 2005), where this model explained the close relationship between trust, confidence and cooperation. The confidence-cooperation relationship might highlight the importance of the interpersonal aspect of work capability (in addition to communication skills as mentioned in Section 5.17), in comparison to intrapersonal competence. The researcher of this study viewed this 'interpersonal-ness' as interaction with others, similar to interdependence in Deutsch's (1949, 1962, 2006) social interdependence theory. In this aspect, the participants perceived the need to have

interpersonal capability of keeping good relationships and managing conflict before any cooperation could take place. Since earlier discussion was made that being confident was about confidence in learning reflectively, the ‘interpersonal-ness’ of one’s capability as discussed above, matched well with the concept of ‘interpersonal’ reflection (Brockbank & McGill, 2012) of reflective learning.

5.19 Confidence and Trust

The discussion so far has placed building trust as a possible main communication challenge (Section 5.13), where having trust might help to minimize ethnocentrism and stereotypes (Section 5.11), stress and language barriers (Section 5.12), and fundamental attribution error (Section 5.7 and 5.8), to make cooperative goals more functional (Section 5.10), and to moderate anxiety and uncertainty (Section 5.6). The Trust-Confidence-Cooperation (TCC) model (Earle, Siegrist & Gutscher, 2007; Siegrist, Gutscher & Earle, 2005) mentioned in Section 5.18, linked trust to confidence, where the model explained how trust led to confidence and later resulted in cooperation. Nevertheless, the close relationship between confidence and trust was also being studied in other research literature (Cook, Hardin & Levi, 2005; Dikken & Rose, 2010; Padua, 2012). The findings showed that most participants preferred to base their confidence in handling communication and conflict initially on trust. The participants perceived trust as belief that other nationalities will cooperate to help them to get the job done if they first trust and respect other nationalities. This confidence in others’ intention, words, actions to produce beneficial events, are similar to the description of Deutsch (1960), and Cook and Wall (1980) on confidence and trust. Such belief drove participants to engage in relationship building activities and behave in a cooperative manner with other nationalities. Participants were confident that such trusting approach could better manage communication and conflict with other nationalities. The

dependence on trust was similar to the perception of getting the job done through cooperation mentioned earlier in Section 5.18. Both highlighted the need to interact with other people, in similar context as ‘interpersonal-ness’ (as discussed in Section 5.18) or interdependence in Deutsch’s (1949, 1962, 2006) social interdependence theory. Where interaction with other people was concerned, relationship building is essential and the discussion so far has shown that trust could be achieved through relationship building (as discussed in Section 5.6 and 5.13). Therefore it was only natural for a trusting participant to engage in relationship building activities with other nationalities. Though the Trust-Confidence-Cooperation (TCC) model (Earle, Siegrist & Gutscher, 2007; Siegrist, Gutscher & Earle, 2005) explained how trust lead to cooperation, the findings did not establish enough evidence to substantiate the casual relationship between trust and cooperation. However, the findings did show cooperation cannot function well in an environment without trust (as discussed in Section 5.10). This notion was supported by other researchers (Adair & Brett, 2004; Bruhn, 2001; Lenard, 1975). Hence it could be inferred that trusting participant might normally also seek to cooperate with others as they build relationship with them. As discussed in Section 5.16, showing respect was a challenge in a competitive working environment. Hence, when trusting participants began to build relationships and cooperate with other nationalities, it would also be natural for the participants to show respect towards other nationalities. Such activities of trusting, relationship building, cooperation and showing respect were forms to reduce unfamiliarity (as discussed in Section 5.6) and this helped in building confidence when participants knew for certain what was going to be expected when they are more familiar with other nationalities. Again the competition within the organization (as discussed in Section 5.8, 5.10, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15 and 5.16) that eroded trust (as discussed in Section 5.13) called for managerial intervention to manage interoffice competition so that trust could be instilled for more cooperation among staff and inspired more confidence at the workplace.

Nonetheless, there were a few participants (predominantly from top management), who based their confidence more on evidence of performance and less on trust. These participants perceived evidence of performance as an undeniable truth that minimized bias and errors in human judgment. Similarly, the research literature (Marsh & Dibber, 2005; Smith, 2001) described confidence based on evidence of performance as concerns about establishing unambiguously predictable outcomes with objective and measurable information. Therefore this kind of confidence building was more likely to minimize any opportunity to exercise discretion about any events that happened during communication or situation of conflicts. In the findings, those participants who based their ideas on such a belief tended to engage in evidence finding activities (such as asking questions) and behave in an objective manner with other nationalities. These participants perceived that such a focus on responsibility was easier to manage than to handle any cultural sensitivity issues that arose from communication or conflict with other nationalities. Dibben and Rose (2010) described such responsibility as ‘accountability’ and ‘governance’ needed to limit the confidence within the intervals of a bell-curve normal distribution. However, this approach seemed to take the simplified (and perhaps possibly the easy) way out of the complicated nature of communication and conflict, and was in contrast to confidence gained by having real experience learning (as discussed in Section 5.17) where ‘complicated’ events/encounters led to ‘complex’ interpretation/learning and ‘richer’ experiences. Nonetheless, the findings showed these participants were confident that people within the organization under study would overlook or downplay any concerns related to communication and conflict with other nationalities, and looked towards the more ‘important’ objectives on hand and work ‘willingly’ together to help these participants to get their jobs done. This attitude was comparable to management by objectives, where given objectives had higher priority and anything else was less important. This situation was similar to what was discussed in Section

5.14 where cooperative goals were given in forms of objectives but the objectives were not common and cooperative in operation and failed to make their intended effects. Possible reasons could be due to the fact that the given objectives were top down and not mutually agreed, and management lacked, to some extent, reflective learning to be aware of the feelings of staff towards given objectives. Furthermore, confidence based on evidence of performance might appear to be in similar context to confidence based on performance mentioned earlier in Section 5.18. Still, there was a marked difference: the former concerned about facts and lacked learning, while the latter concerned capability to cooperate with others and involved learning. However, the findings showed that over emphasis on such an objective approach is often perceived by others within the organization under study as ‘untrusting’ and ‘disrespectful’ causing poor relationship and conflict escalation. This was in agreement with the literature (Chao & Moon, 2005; Davies & Mannion, 1999; Dibben & Rose, 2010; O’Neill, 2002; Smith, 2001) that described such evidence finding acts were often seen as ‘intrusive’, ‘interfering’ and ‘untrusting’, and had eroded the interpersonal trust between employees and managers necessary for effective professional relationships. Likewise, participants who focused on confidence based on evidence of performance might be akin to a person who had high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 2001) or who rely largely on explicit (numerical) measurement of individual performance to establish a degree of confidence (Davies & Nutley, 2000; Dibben & Rose, 2010; Smith, 2001) to minimize uncertainty in the absence of trust. In the discussion of the findings so far, the trustless confidence based on evidence of performance appeared to be less favorable among the participants. This confidence in the extreme case, might take a negative form of self-proclaimed confidence that was oblivious to others’ opinions. One case was identified in the findings when one participant, P13, who often built his confidence on trustless fact findings, claimed himself to have many years of cross-cultural experiences and was confident enough

to handle most communication and conflict issues with other nationalities, but behaved in an ineffective and inappropriate manner that was not consistent with his claimed capabilities. This was in contrast to the confidence discussed in Section 5.17 and 5.18 in achieving effective and appropriate outcomes with other colleagues at the workplace. This implied that true and justified confidence of a person should be recognized and acknowledged by his/her colleagues at the workplace.

5.20 Confidence and Top Management within the Organization

The discussion so far has highlighted the possible role of managerial intervention in facing communication and conflict challenges with other nationalities: nurturing a stress-free working environment to facilitate open communication among workers (Section 5.12), creating a more caring working environment that encouraged informal gatherings to build personal relationships (Section 5.13), pushing for a more cooperative working environment (Section 5.13), creating awareness of a common goal and operationalized it in an effective and appropriate manner (Section 5.14), maintaining a positive emotional atmosphere at the workplace (Section 5.15), and showing respect (Section 5.16). In relation to confidence, managerial intervention was called for to nurture a more supportive working environment for staff to be confident enough to apply their competence (Section 5.18) and to instill more cooperation so that more confidence could be inspired among the staff (Section 5.19). Similarly, the literature (Stephenson, 1992, 1998, 2012) encouraged a more supportive working environment for confidence development, where supportive working environment was akin to supportive organizational culture (Chairsakeo & Speece, 2004; Ouchi, 1981; Wallach, 1983; Williams & Attaway, 1996) that fell under the responsibilities of management. However, there was a need to distinguish the level of management concerned. Most of the participants who took part in this study were from middle and lower

management. From the discussion, the demand for managerial involvement was actually a call for attention from the top management. The discussion of the findings had showed that there was a limit to what a middle/lower manager could do confidently and beyond which most of the situations were controlled by top management. Similarly, some of the literature (Barnard, 1968; Morrill, 1991, 1995; Selznick, 1947) suggested that most studies on conflict management appeared to focus on middle and lower levels of management. Therefore, there was a possible need for top management in this organization to be more involved reflectively at the workplace, and to intervene wisely at the right time and place where everyone can confidently work towards effective and appropriate outcomes for the organization. However, the findings showed that most participants perceived the organization they worked for as bureaucratic and unsupportive in nature with too many rules to prevent them from carrying out their job function confidently. Under such circumstances, most participants were discouraged by the micromanagement style of tight control and lack of empowerment to make decisions within the organization under study. This might be explained by the grounding of confidence on evidence of performance (as discussed in Section 5.19) at the top management level. Besides asking many questions for evidence (as shown in the findings), the top management were also most likely to put their trust in themselves (not on others), as they deemed themselves to be more objective than others, and thus often exerted tight control over others and assigned lesser authority to others. As a result, participants felt that they were limited in their capabilities (and less confident) to handle the challenges, as they were hindered by perceived inflexibility and apparent lack of innovation at the workplace. The company policies of the organization under study were further reflection of the unsupportive top management, where most participants perceived the policies as competitive instead of cooperative. Participants often found themselves less confident in a competitive workplace. Such lack of confidence was not so much as fear of losing to others or unsureness to perform

better than others. As the findings showed that there was a certain level of interdependence among staff in terms of job function. This meant that participant might need to depend on other's help or cooperation to get his/her job done. Therefore in a competitive working environment, participants would perceive the environment as 'unsupportive' and hence less confident to gather the necessary help and resources to complete the job on hand. So, the discussion so far implied that a supportive working environment in general would need to encompass trust, cooperation (as discussed in this Section), and respect (because trusting others often led to showing respect as discussed in Section 5.16 and 5.19), before any person could further develop his/her confidence in facing communication and conflict challenges with other nationalities. Though the results did not show the positive impact to confidence from a supportive working environment, the findings did highlight the negative impact to staff confidence if top management created a less supportive working environment.

On the other hand, training was often the responsibility of top management within an organization, and the research literature (Haldeman, 2012; Phillips & Gully, 2014; Roberson, Kulik & Tan, 2013) positioned diversity training as something beneficial to confidence building when facing communication and conflict challenges among nationalities. Furthermore, the success of any diversity training was very much dependent on the enthusiastic support and involvement of top management (Phillips & Gully, 2014). However, the findings showed that the top management of the organization under study was less enthusiastic and did not support or provide any forms of diversity training. They perceived such training as 'impractical' and that it might even cause detrimental outcomes if implemented in too simple a manner. They believed that these soft skills were 'hard to learn and teach' through classroom settings, could only be 'picked up along the way', and most staff would be more interested in practical technical training on products. This attitude was similar to the description of a "fluent fool" (Bennett, 2004, p.69) as mentioned in Section 5.5

and 5.17, where the person thought he/she knew what was best to do in a given situation and limited himself/herself to his/her own perspectives and refused to accept any differing opinions. In contrast to this perspectives of the top management, the findings showed that most participants were in fact interested to learn more about other cultures and how better to handle communication and conflict with other nationalities. This reinforced the disconnection between the top management and the rest of the staff. Most participants perceived that diversity training could better equip them with the necessary soft skills to some extent, to face challenges of communication and conflict with other nationalities more confidently, and that any forms of such training was good enough to create at least some awareness so that what they had learnt might be of some practical use in future. This was in agreement with the need to develop competence of awareness and skills (as discussed in Section 5.17), and the capability to apply these skills (as discussed in Section 5.18) in confidence building. Though the results did not show any positive impact to confidence building from a given diversity training, the findings did highlight the strong desire among the participants to learn from diversity training and the participants' perception of being more confident if such diversity training was given. This would possibly suggest a positive relationship between diversity training and confidence in handling challenges of communication and conflict with other nationalities.

5.21 Summary

This chapter served three functions. The first function was the exploration of the experiences of managers working in a culturally diverse organization, in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities. The concern of trust was evident during the discussion of participants' experiences in handling issues of communication with other nationalities. According to the participants, trust was based on perceived similarities that

could be achieved through personal relationship building. Participants also likened personal relationship to friendship. The described encounters of e-shock, stereotypes and cultural differences when participants were communicating with other nationalities were manifestations of perceived differences. These were reflections of inadequate perceived similarities, as there were few opportunities for participants to communicate face-to-face to build more personal relationship. When there was a lack of perceived similarities, participants often resorted to their stereotypes, values and norms to interpret the behavior of other nationalities. Most of the described actions (adjustment, adaptation, accommodation) taken by the participants in response to what they had encountered when they were communicating with other nationalities were means to build more personal relationships and to elevate the level of perceived similarities. Such personal relationships would provide a personalized knowledge of other nationalities that allowed participants to make more accurate prediction of their behaviors (and thus lowering the anxiety and uncertainty). When participants were in a personal relationship with other nationalities, even at times when other nationalities behaved differently out of expectation (causing violated expectations), participants were more tolerant and thus more forgiving towards such 'misbehavior' because of trust and perceived similarities. On the other hand, the concern of respect was evident during the discussion of participants' experiences in handling issues of conflict with other nationalities. According to the participants, conflict was a reflection of disrespect when they had the perception that others were having doubts in their capability to perform at workplace. Participants were more vulnerable to such perception when they lack personal relationship with other nationalities, and thus more likely to misinterpret others' behaviors with fundamental attribution error on e-mail. When misunderstanding deepened, the perception of disrespect would heighten until a certain level of tolerance, before the perceived conflict became manifested in flaming e-mail. At that time, issues of the task on hand might become

highly personal and emotional. Attempts to regain respect were made more difficult in competitive working environment fueled by top management. Nevertheless, the described actions taken by the participants in response to what they had encountered when they were having conflict with other nationalities were means to regain respect. Participants in general agreed to two steps of restoring respect in situations of conflict with other nationalities. The first step was to pull everyone back together to cooperate through common goal. Such awareness of common goal was to create more perceived similarities to facilitate cooperation. The second step was coined by the researcher of this study as ‘Classroom Problem Solving’ that encompassed both the elements of showing respect and problem solving. The ‘Classroom Problem Solving’ depersonalized conflict by not putting a personal face or accountability on the problem, and focused on gathering different opinions and finding among these the best solution to the problem faced.

The second function of this chapter was to explore the challenges faced by managers in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities. The communication challenges described by the participant seemed to revolve around the concerns of trust. Despite the presence of other challenges, the difficult task of building trust would appear to be the central challenge to effective and appropriate communication management. This implied that the underlying root causes of other communication challenges (barriers due to ethnocentrism, stereotype, stress, language proficiency) might have been due to problems of trust, and it might be possible to better manage these challenges if the issues of trust could be improved. This was under the assumption that participants who established trust with other nationalities would maintain a certain level of personal relationship (friendship) with them. Personal relationships might help to lower any ethnocentrism, stereotypes and stress (due to anxiety and uncertainty). It also allowed participants to make possible ‘accurate guesses’ of what others (of different English proficiency) were trying to

mean during communication due to personalized knowledge of the person concerned. This might help to overcome the language proficiency barrier despite differences in English proficiency. On the other hand, the conflict challenges described by the participant seemed to revolve around the concerns of respect. Despite the presence of other challenges, the difficult task of showing respect would appear to be the central challenge to effective and appropriate conflict management. This implied that the underlying root causes of other conflict challenges (barriers due to emotion control, common goal) might have been due to problems of respect, and it might be possible to better manage these challenges if the issues of respect could be improved. A respectful participant would have to behave in manner that was respectful to others, and would also control his/her emotions in order not to further antagonize the conflict situation. Even though common goal could be used to pull everyone in conflict together in a 'Classroom Problem Solving' setting, respect was needed to sustain and to prolong the process of problem solving. Without which, common goal would have been just a temporary motivation for cooperation.

The third function of this chapter was to explore the confidence level of managers in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities. There were two aspects of being confident. One was getting respect at work, and the other was having trust at work. Participants perceived getting respect at work as being capable to apply confidently what he/she had learned from the acquired competences of awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills. Most participants accumulated their competences by learning reflective from working experiences. Participants perceived such capability to perform at the workplace as reflection of their self-worth and self-respect, where they might be able to realize their personal potential towards greater personal satisfaction and higher self-esteem. Therefore, participants were more confident when they were respected by other nationalities for what they were capable of doing at the workplace. On the other hand, participants perceived

having trust at work as the confidence that other nationalities would have the good intentions to cooperate with them to address the problems on hand for mutual beneficial outcomes. Confidence without trust that relied on evidence of performance, only focused on effectiveness of communication and conflict management, but often ignored the appropriateness of the approach taken, which might progress from mistrust to disrespect, and ended up with even more conflict escalation. Such two perspectives of confidence would imply the involvement of top management to nurture a supportive working environment within the organization. A supportive working environment would encompass trust, respect, cooperation and active learning. Any lesser support from the working environment might have a negative impact to the participants' confidence when competition eroded trust and respect at the workplace, and participants would be less motivated to learn more to further develop his/her capability to manage issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities.

The next Chapter, Conclusion, will outline the significance of the Findings, the overall contributions to the literatures, implications for the practices, limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of Study

This study has examined communication and conflict management as described by managers working in a culturally diverse organization. The focus was primarily on their experiences, challenges faced and confidence in handling issues of communication and conflict with their overseas colleagues. From the Literature Review Chapter, the research questions that guide this study are:

1. What are the experiences of leaders, positioned in a culturally diverse company, in handling communication and conflict among diverse cultural groups?
2. What are the challenges the leaders face and how well equipped do they feel they are to handle communication and conflict as part of their leadership role in culturally diverse settings?

The issues on communication and conflict management were often complex enough, let alone the cultural diversity with different values and norms. The majority of studies on cultural differences tended to be comparative, and attempted to classify the general population according to their individualistic or collectivistic worldviews that often framed their fundamental values and the way they communicate (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Hall, 1976, 1983; Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 2001; Ting-Toomey, 1985, 2005). It was therefore inevitable that any proposed communication strategies and/or conflict handling styles based on such classification would likely to be culture specific. Most of such studies (Andreason, 2003; Boonsathorn, 2007; Chen, Tjosvold, & Fang 2005; Selmer, 1995) were done in the context of sojourners' direct face-to-face experiences, which usually involved not more than two cultural groups (inclusive of the culture represented by the sojourners), describing situations

between foreign managers (sojourners) and the local employees. Hence it might be easier for the managers to apply one specific communication strategy and/or conflict handling style onto the local culture group. However, little research was done in the context of virtual diverse teams comprising of more than two cultural groups, which was a more realistic depiction of a typical global organization operating in various different countries. In the Methodology Chapter, semi-structured interviews using critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) were conducted on 15 managers from the same organization. These managers were local nationalities from 10 countries of the US, China, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Switzerland, Taiwan, and Thailand. This study was performed in depth, by having two interviews (spaced one day apart) per participant, with the first interview focusing on research question 1 and the second interview focusing on research question 2. The interpretive approach with qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010) sought to “make sense of complex situations”, to provide ways of “simplifying and managing data without destroying complexity and context”, and to understand “deeply and in detail”, so as to “learn from the participants in a setting or process the way they experience it, the meanings they put on it and how they interpret what they experience” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 28). As stated in the Introduction Chapter, this study seek to provide an educational and practical framework for managers working in a global organization to manage their communication and conflict with their overseas colleagues in a more effective and appropriate manner.

6.2 Significance of Findings

In the previous Chapter, a discussion of the findings was presented with the intention of answering the two main research questions. From the discussion on the experiences of participants in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities, it was contended in this study that trust in a friendship-like personal relationship and respect might

be able to minimize any negative influences of perceived differences and perceived conflict respectively. A personal relationship could facilitate effective and appropriate communication management with more accurate interpretation of others' behaviors, and higher tolerance towards others' occasional misbehaviors. In the absence of personal relationships, participants were likely to feel more vulnerable to miscommunication and conflict escalation was most likely to happen under such distrusting circumstances. In situations of conflict, regaining respect was of the utmost concern among the participants. Participants often entered into conflict feeling disrespected when they perceived others had doubt in their capabilities to perform at the workplace. Showing respect had a depersonalizing effect on conflict. It was needed to sustain the process of cooperation (through common goal) and problem solving.

The significance of the above findings with regard to research question 1 is important to effective and appropriate communication and conflict management. The findings showed that it may be possible to have a common approach acceptable by most people, to improve the situations of communication and conflict, without the need to know the kind of worldviews others were having. The findings have shed some light on the limitations of total reliance on professional relationships to ensure effective and appropriate communication at workplace. Managers are prompted to look beyond professional relationships and encouraged to invest more time and effort in building more personal relationship with their overseas counterparts within the organization, in getting to know others as a person, or as a friend, and not as a position being occupied by others. This significantly questions the common notion especially from the management perspectives that personal or informal time is a waste of business or working time, and any policy within the organization that discourages personal relationship building or friendship in favor for more professionalism. These findings do not seek to discourage any professionalism by promoting more personal relationship building to

facilitate better communication. The common goal that is more dominantly employed in situations of conflict in holding the team together, may also be used in normal situations when managers are communicating with their overseas counterparts, to serve as a reminder to everyone the desired behavior needed for effective and appropriate outcomes. This can possibly help to minimize any conflict of interest (or lack of professionalism) while engaging a personal relationship with others at the workplace. As communication and conflict are closely related, the suggested trust and respect may be used in both circumstances of communication and conflict. However, trust has a more prominent presence when managers were attempting to communicate effectively and appropriately with their overseas counterparts, and respect has a more prominent presence when participants were attempting to manage their conflict with their overseas counterparts effectively and appropriately. Furthermore, the findings on respect evoke more reflections from the managers to understand conflict more constructively, and to recognize it as mere differences in perception. Such deeper understanding might significantly empower managers to learn to be less emotional and more problem-solving in times of perceived conflict.

Nevertheless, from the discussion on the challenges faced by participants in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities, it was contended in this study that building trust and showing respect were perceived to be the main challenges respectively. Since trust and respect were the primary concerns in participants' experiences described above, it was expected that achieving them would be the main challenges above others. Moreover, other communication-related challenges (such as reducing ethnocentrism, minimizing stereotyping, overcoming stress and mastering English language) and other conflict-related challenges (such as establishing a common goal and regulating emotions) were possible manifestations of mistrust and disrespect. Therefore, when the challenges of trust and respect were under-controlled, other related challenges might be similarly dealt with

successfully and capably, and better managed when there was more trust and respect. In addition, from the discussion on the confidence level of participants in handling issues of communication and conflict with other nationalities, it was contended in this study that a participant's confidence was dependent upon his/her capability to apply learnt competence, and the working environment nurtured by the top management of the organization. Likewise, the concerns of trust and respect further exerted their influence on managers' perception of their confidence level in managing the situations, and the level of support from the working environment. Managers perceived confidence as getting respect at work and having trust at work. Respect was perceived as being capable of applying confidently what had been learned from acquired competences; trust was perceived as the confidence that others would have good intentions to cooperate together for mutual beneficial outcomes. Confidence with respect and trust might further thrive in a supportive working environment that was made up of trust, respect, cooperation and active learning.

The importance of the above findings with regard to research question 2 is important to a better understanding of the perception of challenges faced and confidence in facing these challenges during communication breakdown and situations of conflict. The findings tended to support the importance of reflective learning in both circumstance of challenges and confidence. The requirement to adjust and to adapt to the challenges faced, for confidence building, involves transformation (as part of process of reflective learning) and this inevitably demands changes to be made to pre-determined assumptions. An awareness and appreciation of such development may better prepare manager for changes, to learn to unlearn and to overcome perceived differences, dissimilarity, uncertainty and violated expectation. This may prompt managers to focus not so much on the duration of past experiences, and/or what they know, but on what they understand from 'Real Experience Learning'. This too helps managers to differentiate the difference between knowledge and wisdom as they embark into

their journey of learning. Besides accepting changes, humility may be another significant aspect for managers to learn more reflectively. Humility means being more open to new learning. Being humble is not contrasted with confidence, but instead further supportive of it with more openness to learning leading to more gained confidence. The findings also significantly evoked the role of top management in both circumstance of challenges and confidence. Top management was supposedly responsible for shaping the company culture, which involved intervening when communication and conflict was ineffectively and inappropriately managed among the managers, promoting more cooperation with awareness of common goals, and encouraging more active learning. This highlighted the need for top management to listen more to the voices among the managers. The level of perceived support in the working environment is an indirect gauge of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the leadership of the top management in shaping company culture which may have significant influences on company productivity and performances. The need to relook at the leadership role at top management level (and perhaps to some extent at middle/lower management level) appears to be a necessity in circumstances which demand better communication and conflict management. To significantly minimize bureaucracy at the workplace for more effective and appropriate handling of communication and conflict, top management needs to be reminded that they are in positions not to be served, but to serve, if they are to realize the full potential of the diversity at the workplace. Such meditation may inspire more top management involvement to build a better company culture which most employees can be proud of.

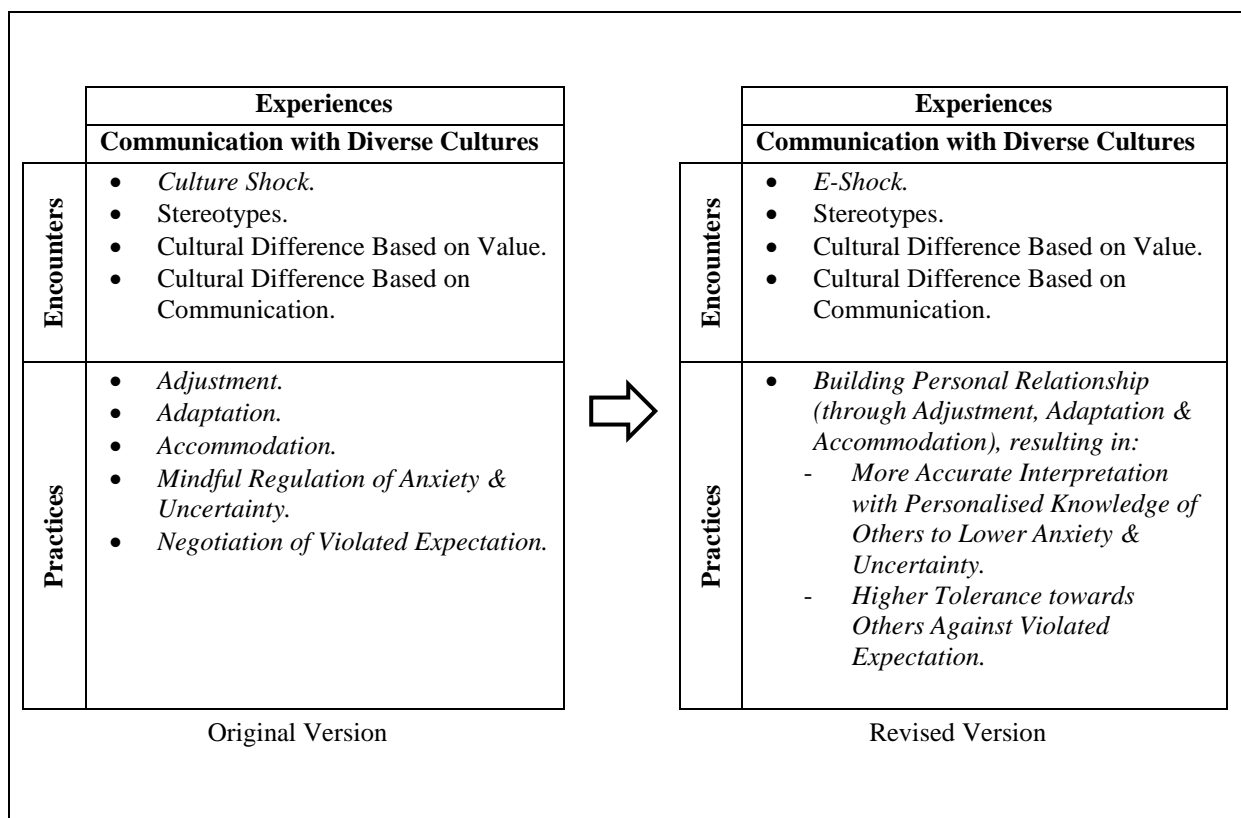
Nevertheless, the overall findings have captured some of the essence of the events and portray the event comprehensively. The study does indicate the concerns and suggestions that all managers have described richly and perceived as essential and useful for a global organization in typical challenging settings to manage communication and conflict effectively

and appropriately. With such an insightful and enriched appreciation of the complex handling of communication and conflict in the Discussion Chapter, the researcher of this study is in a better and informed position to revise the conceptual framework developed from the Literature Review, as shown below:

<u>Revised Conceptual Framework</u>		
	Experiences	
	Communication with Diverse Cultures	Conflict with Diverse Cultures
Encounters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Shock. • Stereotypes. • Cultural Difference Based on Value. • Cultural Difference Based on Communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task/Relationship Conflict. • Respect Perspective on Conflict. • Attribution Error. • E-Mail Flaming.
Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Personal Relationship (through Adjustment, Adaptation & Accommodation), resulting in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More Accurate Interpretation with Personalised Knowledge of Others to Lower Anxiety & Uncertainty. - Higher Tolerance towards Others Against Violated Expectation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation through Common Goal. • ‘Classroom Problem Solving’ Conflict Handling Style: Direct on Task, Indirect on Disposition. • Showing Respect to Sustain Cooperation & ‘Classroom Problem Solving’: Highlight Strength, De-Emphasize Weakness.
	Challenges	Confidence
Communication with Diverse Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Trust. • Mastering English language. • Reducing Ethnocentric Minimization. • Minimising Stereotypes/Prejudice/Discrimination. • Overcoming Stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Competence of Awareness, Attitude, Knowledge & Skills. • Developing Capability. • Top Management Intervention: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To Nurture a Supportive Company Culture, that Encourages More Trust, Respect, Cooperation & Active Learning (Including Diversity Training).
Conflict with Diverse Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing Respect. • Establishing Common Goal. • Regulating Emotion. 	

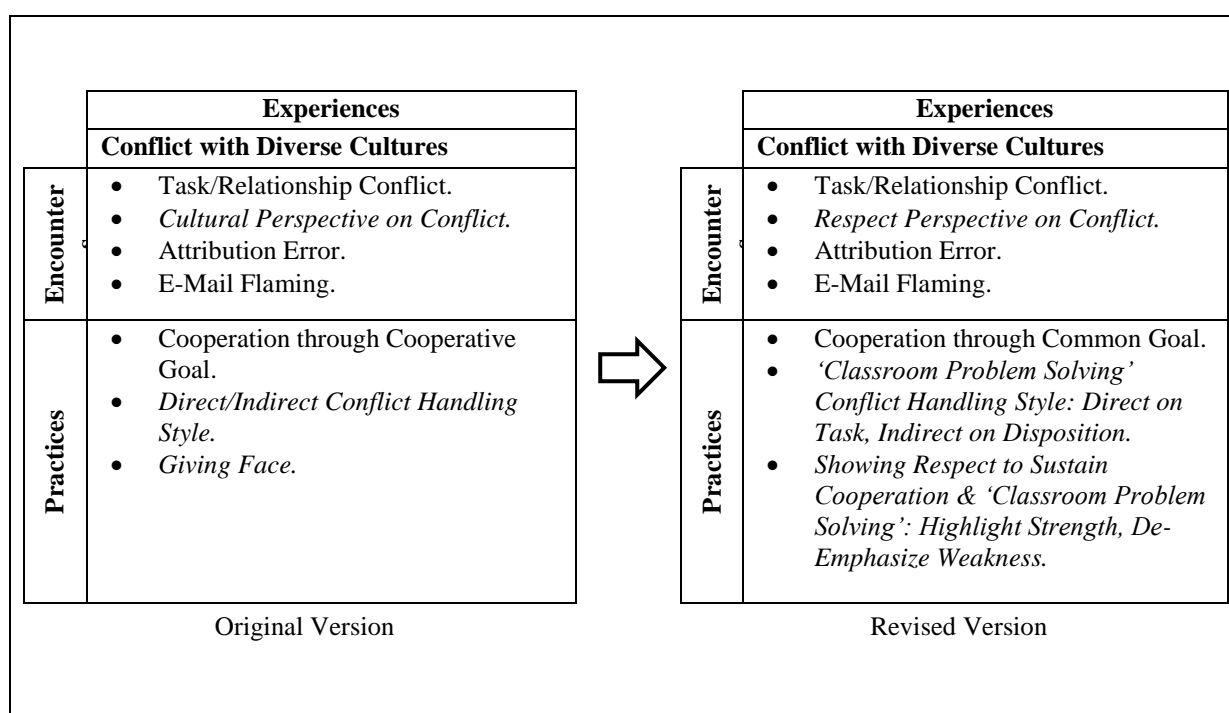
Source: Researcher's Construct.

The revised conceptual framework includes several changes from the original framework. The ‘culture shock’ encounters when managing communication is changed to ‘E-Shock’ as discussed earlier in Section 4.2.1.1 and 5.4. This is to depict a more accurate experience of feelings of shock in a virtual organization. The practices of adjustment, adaptation and accommodation when managing communication, as discussed in Section 4.2.3.1, 4.2.3.2, 4.2.3.3, 4.2.3.4, 5.5 and 5.6, are means to increase perceived similarities by building more personal relationship. ‘Mindful regulation of anxiety and uncertainty’, and ‘negotiation of violated expectation’ are ‘results’ of having personal relationship (please refer to Section 5.6 and 5.13), whereby a more accurate interpretation can lower anxiety and uncertainty, and higher tolerance can buffer against any expected behavior. The changes described above are summarized as follow:



Source: Researcher's Construct.

When managing conflict, the participants look at conflict not so much from a ‘cultural’ perspective, but from the perspective of ‘respect’. As discussed in Section 4.2.2.2 and 5.7, participants entered into conflict when they perceived other nationalities did not respect them in terms of having doubts in their capability to perform their job. In addition, the practice of ‘direct/indirect conflict Handling Style’ is changed to a conflict handling style with a more apolitical and brainstorming nature, that the researcher coined it as ‘Classroom Problem Solving’. As discussed in Section 4.2.4.2 and 5.10, a more problem solving approach is much preferred in a culturally diverse setting. On the other hand, this framework elevates ‘showing respect’ among the practices to emphasize its importance in sustaining other practices of ‘cooperation through common goal’ and ‘classroom problem solving’, as discussed in Section 4.2.4.1, 5.9 and 5.16. The modification also reflects the underlying intention of ‘giving face’, that is to show more respect. The changes described above are summarized as follow:



Source: Researcher’s Construct.

There are 2 changes in communication challenges and 1 change in conflict challenges. Under the communication challenges, ‘building relationship’ was replaced by ‘building trust’. This was discussed in Section 4.3.1.5 and 5.13, where the underlying intention of building relationship is to build trust. The theme of trust is also more dominant during the process of communication. Nevertheless, Section 4.3.1.4 and 5.12 show that English is the main language used within the organization under study. The change from ‘overcoming language barrier’ to ‘mastering English language’, is to narrow down the general concern of language to a more specific focus on English. During the process of managing conflict, the theme of respect is more dominant than trust, as shown in Section 4.3.2.1 and 5.16. This motivates the change from ‘building trust’ to ‘showing respect’ under the conflict challenges. The change in ‘diversity training’, ‘trust at workplace’ and ‘supportive working environment’ under confidence in managing communication and conflict, is to highlight the importance of top management intervention in creating a supportive company culture that encourages more trust, respect, cooperation and active learning at the workplace (please refer to Section 4.4.4 and 5.20). The changes described above are summarized as follow:

	Challenges	Confidence
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Building Relationship.</i> • <i>Overcoming Language Barrier.</i> • Reducing Ethnocentric Minimization. • Minimising Stereotype/Prejudice/Discrimination. • Overcoming Stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Competence of Awareness, Attitude, Knowledge & Skills. • Develop Capability. • <i>Diversity Training.</i> • <i>Trust at Workplace.</i> • <i>Supportive Working Environment.</i>
Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Building Trust.</i> • Establishing Common Goal. • Regulation of Emotion. 	

Original Version

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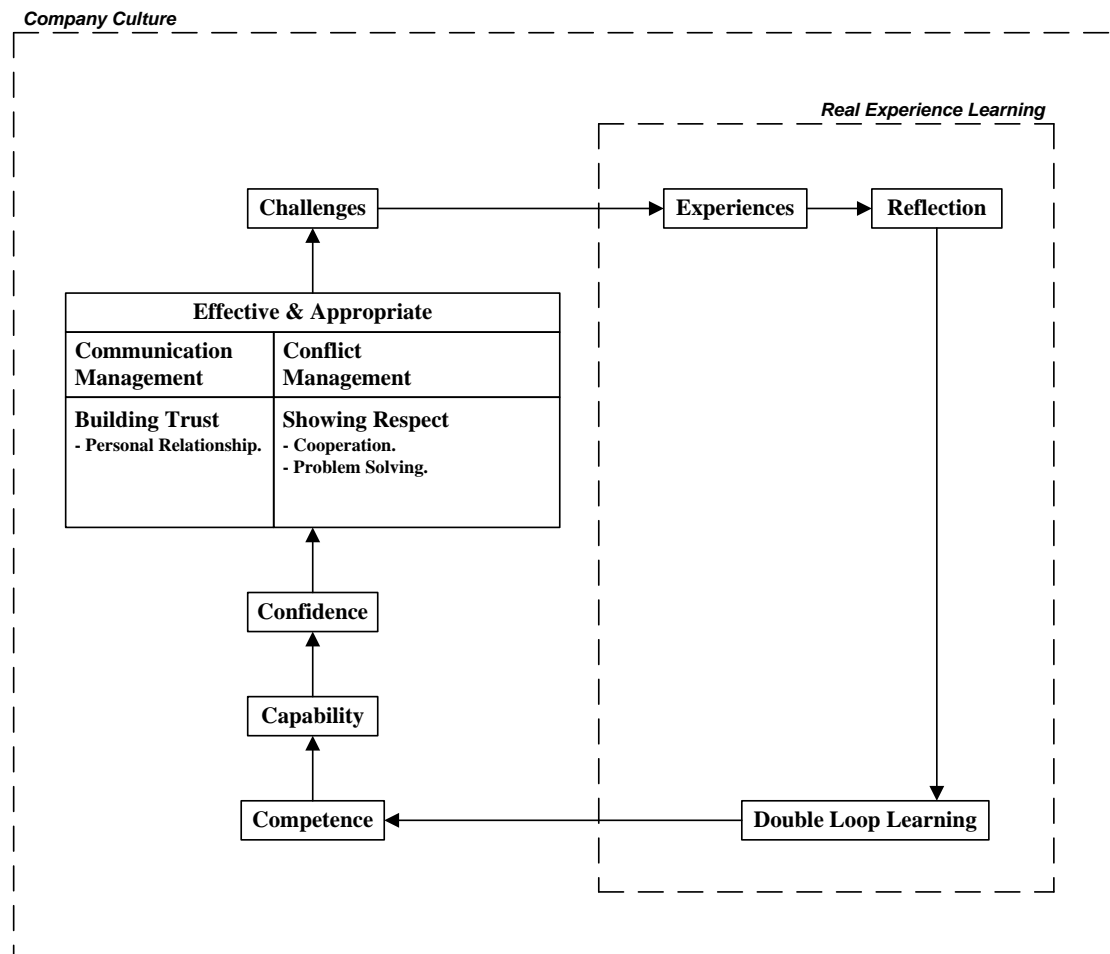
	Challenges	Confidence
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Building Trust.</i> • <i>Mastering English language.</i> • Reducing Ethnocentric Minimization. • Minimising Stereotypes/Prejudice/Discrimination. • Overcoming Stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Competence of Awareness, Attitude, Knowledge & Skills. • Developing Capability. • <i>Top Management Intervention:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To Nurture a Supportive Company Culture, that Encourages More Trust, Respect, Cooperation & Active Learning (Including Diversity Training).</i>
Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Showing Respect.</i> • Establishing Common Goal. • Regulating Emotion. 	

Revised Version

Source: Researcher's Construct.

Furthermore, the researcher of this study is also in a position to propose a model to better manage communication and conflict, shown in the diagram below. The proposed model would have met the aim of this study in guiding and educating managers working in a global organization to better manage their communication and conflict with other diverse cultural groups in a more effective and appropriate manner.

Proposed Model for Effective and Appropriate
Communication and Conflict Management in a Global Organization



Source: Researcher's Construct.

6.3 Contribution to the Literature

This research contributes new knowledge to the literature on communication and conflict management within culturally diverse settings in several ways. In the Findings Chapter 4, participants perceived building trust as the main challenge to communication. However, the theme of trust was more apparent among the literature of conflict than the literature of communication. This study has positioned trust in a preemptive role, suggesting that trust is needed even more during communication before conflict escalation. This preemptive role adds new understanding to the existing body of literatures that often portray the act of building trust as reactive move to conflict escalation. Nonetheless, the literatures of communication on culture shock were mostly about experiences of sojourners in the context of face-to-face communication with others. However, this study had shown that it was possible to encounter culture shock-like symptoms even through electronic mail (e-mail), where the feelings of shock often led to miscommunication followed by conflict escalation. This brings out the importance of writing skills that is lacking in current communication literature which puts more emphasis on face-to-face communication strategies. In addition, some of the communication adaptation models that focused on learning such as Kim's (1988, 1995, 2001, 2002) Stress-Adaptation-Growth Model and Bennett's (1986, 1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) seemed to suggest that learning from experiences would take place automatically as time went by, under the assumption that adaptation took place successfully. Similar thinking could be found in some literatures that time was needed to learn from experience and by default successful adaptation would happen if one spent enough time. This study contributes to these areas by establishing that length of time does not necessarily guarantee successful learning and different considerations may be needed in aspects of quality and intensity of time spent. Another contribution to the literature is with regards to Gudykunst's (1998a, 2002, 2005a) Anxiety and Uncertainty Management

(AUM) theory. Even when Gudykunst (2005a) agreed that managing anxiety over time was associated with developing trust, he only posited a moderating component of 'mindfulness' in managing uncertainty and anxiety in AUM. This study highlights the significance of having trust in addition to 'mindfulness' in moderating uncertainty and anxiety if effective and appropriate communication is to be expected. The study suggests that without trust, 'mindfulness' may be distorted into 'mindless' grilling of others because any given information may not be accepted at face value. Hence, an added trust may strengthen 'mindfulness' to moderate uncertainty and anxiety more effectively and appropriately. Nevertheless, trust is achieved through personal relationship building. Most literatures limited their discussion of personal relationship building within the context of personal liking, perceived similarity, and experiences of relationship closeness, commitment and satisfaction. This study adds a new context of friendship, where there are not many literatures that actually associate personal relationship building with workplace friendship. The study helps to reveal the possibility of overcoming cultural barriers due to insufficient knowledge, and/or communication barriers due to insufficient language proficiency through workplace friendship. On the other hand, the communication convergence strategy of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Coupland et al., 1988; Gallois et al., 1988, 1995; Giles et al., 1987) created similarities by modifying the speech and language used during communication. The study had shown that building personal relationship through 'small talks' can produce comparable sense of similarities during communication. This provides new and easier alternative approach to communication convergence strategy. Instead of building up proficiency in English, which is often a difficult task to achieve, non-English speaking managers may now find an easier and achievable way to facilitate communication through 'small talks' despite the language barriers.

Among the literatures of conflict, Ross's (1977) Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE) could be the cultural specific according to some researchers. But the study showed it was not so much of cultural backgrounds that made a person vulnerable to FAE. It was the emotion response of the person. This shifts the initial focus from a cultural perspective to an emotional point of view, and strengthened the importance of emotion control against FAE in situations of conflict to the current literatures. Similarly, the 'face' in Ting-Toomey's (1985, 1988, 2005) Face Negotiation Theory was originally described by Goffman (1955, p. 213) as "social value" and "image of self" that a person effectively claims for himself/herself. The study gives new perspective to FNT where 'face' to most participants is a matter of respect as a form of recognition for their capability to perform at the workplace, and it was less culturally influenced as FNT originally posited it. This study also helps to expand Deutsch's (1985, 2006) Social Interdependence Theory (SIT) into research settings of more than two cultural groups, whereas most of the past researches involved only two cultural groups. The study reinforces the importance of trust at workplace and awareness of a common goal for a cooperative goal to work. Trust is a new perspective to the literatures on SIT. Most of the literatures on SIT focused on cooperation based on a cooperative goal. Even though a cooperative goal of SIT was based on a common goal, the study showed that there was a risk for a cooperative goal to fail in practice when participants were not able to recognize the 'commonness' of the cooperative goal. This study provides a refresh proposal of the possibility to replace SIT's cooperative goal with a common goal for better upholding of the original fundamental intention of SIT.

On the other hand, most of the literatures picked middle and lower level managers as their study subjects, and appeared to allocate the responsibilities of better communication and conflict management to middle and lower level management. This study advocates more intervention from top management, as there is a limit to what a middle/lower level manager

can do confidently and beyond which most of the situations are controlled by top management. The study also allocates some responsibility to the top management in building up the managers' confidence in handling communication and conflict at the workplace. Most of the literature on confidence has focused on managers' self-effort to build confidence by developing capability to apply acquired competence learned from working experiences. However some literature has associated cooperation with confidence building, implying interdependence at the workplace, they did not bring out the stakeholders who actually had the authority to foster such a supportive working environment for cooperation. Therefore, this study adds a new perspective to the role of top management in confidence building at the workplace for effective and appropriate communication and conflict management. But then again, the working environment is less supportive when e-mail communication is perceived to be lawless and uncivil. Most literatures on e-mail flaming described the motivation behind such perception of lawless and uncivil behaviors were mostly results of misunderstanding, due to lack of social cues and proximity between communicators. Yet, the study showed that top management engaged more in e-mail flaming than those from middle/lower level management. This contributes new understanding to the literature on e-mail flaming, that the perception of such lawless and uncivil behaviors may possibly be due to abuse of power. It is the possible sense of no fear of any negative repercussion for the actions taken since the 'abusers' are the top management and there is no one higher in authority that can do anything to them. This directs the attention to the possible need for self-reflection among the top management to be more aware and mindful of their actions and the impact of their actions on other people. Furthermore, most communication and conflict literatures focused predominantly on perceived differences based mostly either on value or communication norms, and the corresponding different ways of communicating and handling conflict based on specific perceived difference. This study suggested that common approach of trust and

respect was possible with perceived similarities and common goals. This encourages the literatures not to ignore the possibility that cultural difference is less significant under a strong company culture.

6.4 Implications for Practice

This Section attempts to recommend possible proposals for future practices in communication and conflict management within a global organization. These recommendations are not based solely on the researcher's experiences but are based deeply on the experiences and actual practices of all participants who had shared their distinctive and rich responses without reserve, as reported and analyzed in this study.

6.4.1 Face-to-Face Gathering

Top management should organize more opportunities for face-to-face gathering. The gathering is not so much on business meeting but informal occasion for employees to mingle and to get to know each other at a personal level. Therefore, the gathering program should have a balanced mix of business meeting and informal socializing. The objective of such gathering is to promote real conversation leading among the employees who will not only know each other better at a personal level, but also create their own social networks that facilitate exchange of ideas, experiences, problems, and solutions. In the event that face-to-face is an expensive option, online forums and meetings could be another alternative. Social networks can also be fostered through social media such as Facebook or Twitter.

6.4.2 Policy for E-Mail Etiquette

Top management should establish written policy for e-mail etiquette, that includes all the do's and don'ts concerning the use of the company e-mail. The policy should be made known to all employees. Training should be conducted for the employees to understand fully

the importance of such policy. The implementation of the policy should be monitored to assess progress and proper counselling should be given to any concerned person when there is a shortcoming of the policy.

6.4.3 Strong and Functional Company Culture

Top management should identify and define the company culture that will best yield effective and appropriate behaviors and outcomes. They will need to minimize inhibitors to change, by looking at levels of dysfunction within the organization, such as bureaucracy, interoffice competition, mismatched expectations, distrust and disrespect. They will also need to align their beliefs and behaviors with the espoused values of the company culture, by walking the talk and operationalize the value accordingly and faithfully.

6.4.4 Diversity Training

Top management should support diversity training to equip employees to function better in a diverse workplace. The training is to gain knowledge and create awareness, and to change attitude and develop skills needed to manage a diversified workplace more effectively and appropriately. The diversity training should serve as a learning guide, and should not stereotype inaccurately, where further acquisition of personalized knowledge of others is encouraged. The diversity training should be monitored for the perceived level of equality, fairness and inclusiveness, trust, respect, communication and cooperation, positive working environment among the employees. The training program should be adjusted accordingly to compensate for any shortfall against the desired learning objectives.

6.4.5 English Writing Skills Training

Top management should support English writing skills training to promote clear and concise writing that can be understood effectively and appropriately in a diverse workplace.

The training should focus on using simple English words that most non-native English speakers can understand easily and do not find them offensive. The training should be assessed by the similarities and differences between intended and interpreted messages. The objective of the training is to maximize the similarities and to minimize the differences.

6.4.6 Operationalization of Common Goals

Top management should operationalize common goals that truly reflect company vision and mission statements. Even in situations where a company does not define its vision and mission statements, common goals are still the bare minimum requirement to motivate cooperation within the organization. Common goals should be clear, simple, easy to understand, operational at all levels and made known to all employees. Employees should be able to recognize and relate to the connection between their job functions and others' job functions in relation to successful achievement of common goals.

6.4.7 Top Managerial Intervention

Top management should intervene whenever communication and conflict management are less effective and appropriate. The intervention should be conducted in a respectful and problem solving manner. The objective of the intervention is to instill common goal and cooperation before trust deteriorates. Top management will have to be fair, just and righteous.

6.4.8 Communication and Conflict Management

When managing communication with others, executives at all levels should seek to establish personal relationship to gain personalized knowledge of each other and to build up more trust. The presence of trust will encourage more cooperation. At times of miscommunication resulting in potential conflict escalation, more cooperation is needed to

hold the team together through common goals. Conflict should be approached in a personalized manner by showing more respect and solving the problem. Showing respect refers to being indirect on conflict accountability and highlighting less on others' weakness and more on others' strength. Solving the problem refers to being focus on the task on hand.

6.4.9 Self-Reflection and Humility

Executives at all levels should engage in more activities to self-reflect on their leadership skills in the organization. Such self-reflection is to promote more self-awareness by having an honest and realistic assessment of their own capabilities and abilities, strengths and weaknesses, the impact of their actions on others, and the gaps that needed to be filled and improved on. However, successful self-reflection requires humility. Executives at all levels should be more humble. They should not feel that they are omnipotent. Humility is about realizing that one is not right all the time, and being humble requires executives at all levels to discover new perspectives beyond their own experiences. Such humbleness will lead to more learning, unlearning and wisdom.

6.4.10 Active Learning without Stress, Fear and Condemnation

Executives at all levels should support and practice active learning within the organization. This will include having the courage to overcome stress, fear and condemnation often associated with confronting disagreement, perceived differences and own weaknesses, and accepting changes and failure. It is through active learning from experiences that empowers executives at all levels to adjust to adapt better to the situations and further develops their capabilities in managing communication and conflict more effectively and appropriately.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

Despite the significance of the findings and the contribution to the literatures, this study may be limited in the following ways.

6.5.1 Sample Size

The sample size could have been expanded by including the Germans working in the organization. This study did not include any German participants as they declined to take part in the interviews, even though the Germans were the major stakeholders within the organization under study. This study could only reflect other minorities' perspectives towards the Germans. This study was not able to explore the Germans' perspectives towards other minorities within the organization. As the study employed critical incident technique for the interviews, the researcher attempt to gather perspectives from all participants related to the same incident. However, this might not be possible as some of the personnel related to the critical incidents were Germans. Out of the 15 participants, 10 participants were Asians while the other 5 participants were Americans/Swiss. A more balanced representation of race/ethnicity might have benefited the results of study.

6.5.2 Interviews

As all interviews were conducted in English, the accuracy of participants' descriptions of their perspectives was limited by the fluency of their English. As some participants are non-native English speakers, they may be limited with choice of English words to express their emotions and feelings accurately. During the interviews, participants from different countries spoke with different local vocalism which was unique to their own manner of speech in their local countries. This might limit the accuracy of transcription in projecting the true intended messages of the participants. On the other hand, engaging local interviewers to

conduct the interviews with the participants in their own native language and translators to translate the transcripts into English might have benefited the results of the study. Besides the limitations of finances to employ external interviewers and translators, and the time constraints of this study, the researcher had chosen to conduct the interview in English because the researcher sought to “capture all of the elements of an event that come together to make it the event that it is” according to the requirements of qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). All the participants communicate in English within the organization under study, and conducting the interviews in English would best bring out the possible “comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms [English language] of those events” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). However, during the interviews, the researcher had to take in whatever participants said at face value. Nonetheless, the data collected through interviews might be limited by: exaggeration; selective memory where participants remembered some experiences/events that occurred (mostly when they were right), and forgot others (mostly when they were wrong); attribution error; telescoping effect where participants might have a tendency to describe recent experiences/events as distant happenings and/or described distant experiences/events as recent happenings.

6.5.3 Representation of the Study

The findings represented the perspectives of managers (predominately from the sales department) from the same organization. The organization under study was a Swiss company operating in the market of manufacturing. The nature of the organization under study and the selection of 15 participants limit the generalizability of the study to other organizations of different nationalities, job functions and/or other organizations operating in different markets.

6.5.4 Effectiveness and Appropriateness of Best Practices

The participants selected were holding managerial positions. This was a deliberate choice made in this study because it aimed to explore the best practices for communication and conflict management at the managerial level. However, the study did not conduct interviews with non-managerial participants in response to those practices, to justify their levels of effectiveness and appropriateness. In addition, this study also did not look at the impact of such practices on organization performance. This study only looked at the best possible ways to manage communication and conflict in culturally diverse settings that might or might not have any influence on the performance of the organization.

6.6 Recommendations for Future Research

While the findings and discussions have added to the literatures of communication and conflict management, a number of opportunities for future research have surfaced from this study. Some of the recommendation for future research will also address part of the limitations of this study as discussed in Section 6.5.

6.6.1 Quality of Learning from Experience

Future research can study ways to improve the quality of learning from experience in managing communication and conflict within culturally diverse settings. Findings of this study had shown that passage through time did not necessarily guarantee that any learning will take place. More study is needed to explore the motivation needed for a person to reflect and to learn, the level of transformation needed before any significant growth is experienced, and the strategies to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

6.6.2 Relevance and Relatability of Corporate Goal

The challenge of instilling cooperation in a corporate goal was evident in the findings of this study. More research can be done to explore how corporate goal can be made relevant to the local goals at lower levels and to minimize the gap between these two goals. More studies can also be made to explore the motivations of employee to relate and identify themselves with the corporate goals.

6.6.3 Cross-Cultural Linguistic Study in English

Most of the communication that took place in this study happened through e-mail and the findings had showed that with different levels of fluency in English, certain words or writing styles might not be appropriate and might cause miscommunication leading to conflict escalation. Further research can be done through linguistic study on written English words to explore how different culture groups express themselves over the same intent, and how such intent can be expressed in a more neutral and appropriate manner acceptable across different culture groups.

6.6.4 Effective and Appropriate Communication and Conflict Management

Further research can reaffirm the effectiveness and appropriateness of using trust and respect in handling communication and conflict in culturally diverse settings, by conducting the study in several different organizations operating in different markets. The sample selection could include the employees, the managers and the top management from different nationalities, and should have a balanced mix of race/ethnicity, to cover all perspectives inclusively, and to better verify the relationships between these different perspectives.

6.6.5 Fostering Friendship at Workplace

The findings of this study had showed that friendship helped to overcome communication barriers and might act as preemptive response to minimize conflict escalation. Friendships develop naturally when a person attempt to build personal relationship with others. Though some studies and survey (Ellingwood, 2001; Riordan, 2013) indicate the benefits of workplace friendship to the employees, further research can explore the role of friendship in communication and conflict management with regards to organization performance in a culturally diverse settings. The research can focus on the relationship between friendship and respect, cooperation, productivity and company performance. Further study can also be done to ascertain how top management can integrate fostering of friendship into the company culture, to build better camaraderie, and/or stronger social support network among the culturally diverse teams.

6.7 Epilogue: Matters of the Heart

As the researcher closes this study, he has a deeper revelation on the role of leadership in managing communication and conflict in a culturally diverse organization, not just in the practicality of communication and conflict management, but also in the underlying emotions and feelings of each participant who have richly shared their experiences, challenges faced and perceptions on confidence. In this fast-paced world, the pursuit of figures and profit often lead leaders to neglect the appropriateness of their strategies, and to show less concern for the effort put in during the process. Leaders are more often concerned for the effectiveness of the strategies to achieve the targeted outcomes. When it comes to managing communication and conflict, it is more likely to be attended to with implementation of policies, rules and regulations, with the assumption that everyone will behave objectively accordingly to these guidelines, ignoring the basic human factor of trust and respect. However, the concerns for

communication and conflict, and the associated issues of trust and respect, are truly manifestations of something fundamental residing in the heart of every leader. It is the belief of the researcher that the underlying altruistic motivation for any person to take up the role of leadership comes from the heart. A leader with a righteous heart has the desire to show empathy, to connect, and to care for others. In return, they will benefit from deep trust, genuine respect and comrade-like friendship with their teams of different nationalities, and the ease of managing communication and conflict within the organization.

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APPENDIX 1: DESIGN OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research question	Qualitative data to be gathered	How qualitative data can help to answer the research question?	Interview questions	Probes
#1. What are the experiences of leaders, positioned in a culturally diverse company, in handling communication and conflict among diverse cultural groups?			Q1. Could you tell me something about your current role in the organization?	
	Communication management.	Explore participants' ways of communication with others.	Q2. Could you describe your experience working with people from different nationalities within your company?	P21. Perhaps you could tell me the different nationalities, currently working in your company? P22. What is your working relationship with them? P23. How do you communicate & how often you communicate with them? P24. Could you explain your need to communicate with them?
	Cultural differences.	Explore different types of cultural differentiation.	Q3. How would you compare this experience with the experience of working with people from same nationality as yours?	P31. In what ways do the other nationalities work differently from you? P32. How would you response or react to such differences (in their working behavior) at the workplace? P33. How would you explain for such

				differences (in their working behavior) at the workplace?
	Events leading to conflict situation.	Explore events that are effective or ineffective to conflict management.	<p>Q4. Could you describe 3 critical incidents where you had conflict with someone from different nationality in the workplace?</p> <p>Please include in your description the background, what happened during & after the critical incident, and the outcome.</p>	<p>P41. Please tell me how the conflict developed in this critical incident?</p> <p>P42. Could you describe to me the process by which the conflict was handled?</p> <p>P43. What was the outcome?</p>
			Given what you have just described, could you pick 1 out of the 3 critical incidents, that had the most impact on you?	
			<p>Since you have chosen this critical incident, we will use this as reference for our next interview.</p> <p>During the next interview, 2 days later, I will ask about your thoughts and feelings, and the rationale behind, in relation to your selected critical incident.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p>	
#2. What are the challenges the leaders face and			Before we begin the interview, I will recap some keys points that you	

how well equipped do they feel they are to handle communication and conflict as part of their leadership role in culturally diverse settings?			mentioned in your selected critical incident. Please let me know if I have missed out anything.	
	Feelings.	Explore participants' feeling in relation to the critical event.	Q5. Could you describe how you feel during the critical incident?	P51. Please tell me what was on your mind when you feel this way? P52. Could you tell me how you handle such feelings? P53. Was your feeling & thinking ever made known to the person whom you had conflict with? Could you elaborate more on that?
	Making sense of the feelings.	Explore how participants interpret their feelings.	Q6. In what ways was this incident critical for you?	P61. In your opinion, what do you think was the impact of this critical incident on you and on the company? P62. In what ways was this critical incident being handled effectively (or ineffectively)?
	Conflict management.	Explore participants' interpretation on conflict.	Q7. What could be the possible reasons for the conflict to happen in the first place?	P71. How could the communication with the person whom you had conflict with be made better? P72. What could be the motivation (if any) for you to continue working with the person whom you had conflict with?
	Challenges & competency.	Explore challenges faced in handling conflict.	Q8. What have you learned after going through such critical	P81. Given what you have learned, what do you think are the

		Explore any gap in competency in handling cross-cultural conflict, clarify the gap & explore possible ways to handle the gap.	incident?	<p>challenges in handling such critical incident?</p> <p>P82. Given what you have just said about challenges, how would you see your own capability in meeting these challenges?</p> <p>P83. Could you tell me what would you do if you are faced with a similar situation in future?</p>
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APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview questions	Probes
Q1. Could you tell me something about your current role in the organization?	
Q2. Could you describe your experience working with people from different nationalities within your company?	<p>P21. Perhaps you could tell me the different nationalities, currently working in your company?</p> <p>P22. What is your working relationship with them?</p> <p>P23. How do you communicate & how often you communicate with them?</p> <p>P24. Could you explain your need to communicate with them?</p>
Q3. How would you compare this experience with the experience of working with people from same nationality as yours?	<p>P31. In what ways do the other nationalities work differently from you?</p> <p>P32. How would you response or react to such differences (in their working behavior) at the workplace?</p> <p>P33. How would you explain for such differences (in their working behavior) at the workplace?</p>
Q4. Could you describe 3 critical incidents where you had conflict with someone from a different nationality in the workplace? Please include in your description the background, what happened during & after the critical incident, and the outcome.	<p>P41. Please tell me how the conflict developed in this critical incident?</p> <p>P42. Could you describe to me the process by which the conflict was handled?</p> <p>P43. What was the outcome?</p>
Given what you have just described, could you pick 1 out of the 3 critical incidents, that had the most impact on you?	
<p>Since you have chosen this critical incident, we will use this as reference for our next interview.</p> <p>During the next interview, 2 days later, I will ask about your thoughts and feelings, and the rationale behind, in relation to your selected critical incident.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p>	
Before we begin the interview, I will recap some keys points that you mentioned in your selected critical incident. Please let me know if I have missed out anything.	

<p>Q5. Could you describe how you feel during the critical incident?</p>	<p>P51. Please tell me what was on your mind when you felt this way?</p> <p>P52. Could you tell me how you handle such feelings?</p> <p>P53. Was your feeling & thinking ever made known to the person whom you had conflict with? Could you elaborate more on that?</p>
<p>Q6. In what ways was this incident critical for you?</p>	<p>P61. In your opinion, what do you think was the impact of this critical incident on you and on the company?</p> <p>P62. In what ways was this critical incident being handled effectively (or ineffectively)?</p>
<p>Q7. What could be the possible reasons for the conflict to happen in the first place?</p>	<p>P71. How could the communication with the person whom you had conflict with be made better?</p> <p>P72. What could be the motivation (if any) for you to continue working with the person whom you had conflict with?</p>
<p>Q8. What have you learned after going through such critical incident?</p>	<p>P81. Given what you have learned, what do you think are the challenges in handling such critical incident?</p> <p>P82. Given what you have just said about challenges, how would you see your own capability in meeting these challenges?</p> <p>P83. Could you tell me what would you do if you are faced with a similar situation in future?</p>

APPENDIX 3: EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

MONASH University



Explanatory Statement

Title: Effective leadership in cross-cultural conflict management

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Student research project

My name is Khor Aik Cheow and I am conducting a research project with Emeritus Professor Alan Lindsay towards a PhD at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis which is the equivalent of a 300 page book.

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before making a decision.

Why you are chosen as participant?

Your contact details are obtained from the Employer's Directory inside company's Lotus Notes Server. You are chosen as a participant because we are looking for a representative from your country and someone who are holding managerial position.

The aim of the research

The aim of this study is to formulate a framework for manager to manage cross-cultural conflict effectively.

Possible benefits

- Beneficiaries are the organization, managers and employees.
- Direct benefit is higher productivity within the organization.
- Indirect benefits are better team work, and a low stress work place.
- The knowledge gained can be of value to managers in terms of better handling of cross-cultural conflict.

What does the research involve?

The study involves audio recording and in-depth interviews.

How much time will the research take?

It takes 1 hour per interview.

Inconvenience/discomfort

- There is a need for you to take time off (during or after office hours) to take part in this interview.
- The interview will take place outside office premises (example: restaurant, coffee shop).
- Interview will be confidential and anonymous.

Measures to minimise inconvenience/discomfort

- Management has given approval for this interview to be conducted during or after working hours.
- You can choose where and when to take part in this interview, according to your preference and convenience.
- All reasonable steps will be taken by the researcher to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Pseudonyms and codes will be used so that any reader of the report will not be able to identify the interviewees.

Can I withdraw from the research?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do consent to participate, you may withdraw from further participation at any stage but you may only be able to withdraw data prior to your approval of the interview transcript.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and anonymity of the collected data will be managed by using pseudonyms and codes.

Storage of data

Data collected will be stored in accordance with Monash University regulations, kept on University premises, in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Use of data for other purposes

The data will only be used in this research. The data will not be used for other purposes.

Results

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact Khor Aik Cheow on +65-
[REDACTED] The findings are accessible for review in 2013.

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the supervisor:	If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research (MUHREC project number ??) is being conducted, please contact:
Dr. Alan Lindsay [REDACTED]	Executive Officer Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) Building 3e Room 111 Research Office Monash University VIC 3800 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Thank you.

[REDACTED]
Khor Aik Cheow

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW INSTRUCTION

Objective of study:

This study is to investigate how people handle conflict with someone from different nationality within the organization.

Definition of nationality:

This study defines nationality as people coming from same country, for example the Indians, Thais, and Taiwanese. Therefore when we refer to different nationality, we will talk about the interaction between two different nationalities, for example between the Germans and Indians.

Definition of conflict:

Conflict is a process where you perceive that your interests are being opposed or negatively affected, and can be in forms of incompatibility, disagreement, dissonance or discomfort. This study will focus on conflicts that you perceive arise from differences in national cultures or behaviors.

Definition of critical incident:

A critical incident is a significant event (of conflict situation) when action(s) taken by you or someone from different nationality whom you had conflict with within the organization, contributed to an effective or ineffective conflict management in a culturally diverse company.

It was often an event which:

- made you stop and think
- or raised questions for you
- or might have made you question an aspect of your beliefs, values, attitude or behavior.

Preparation before the interview:

- You will be asked to describe in detail recent critical incidents when you were in conflict with someone from different nationalities within the organization.
- The incidents could be one where the conflict was handled successfully or unsuccessfully.
- The description must include the setting, what happened, how you interact with the person in dispute and the consequences.
- If you do not wish to answer a particular question, you may say 'please move to the next question'.
- The interview will be audio taped.
- Refreshment water will be offered to you and please feel free to drink at any moment.

APPENDIX 5: CONSENT FORM

MONASH University

Consent Form

Consent Form - Participant's Name:

Title: Effective leadership in cross-cultural conflict management

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required ☐ Yes ☐ No

and/or

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

and/or

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

and/or

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

and/or

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

and/or

I understand that data from the interview/transcript/audio-tape will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name:

Signature:

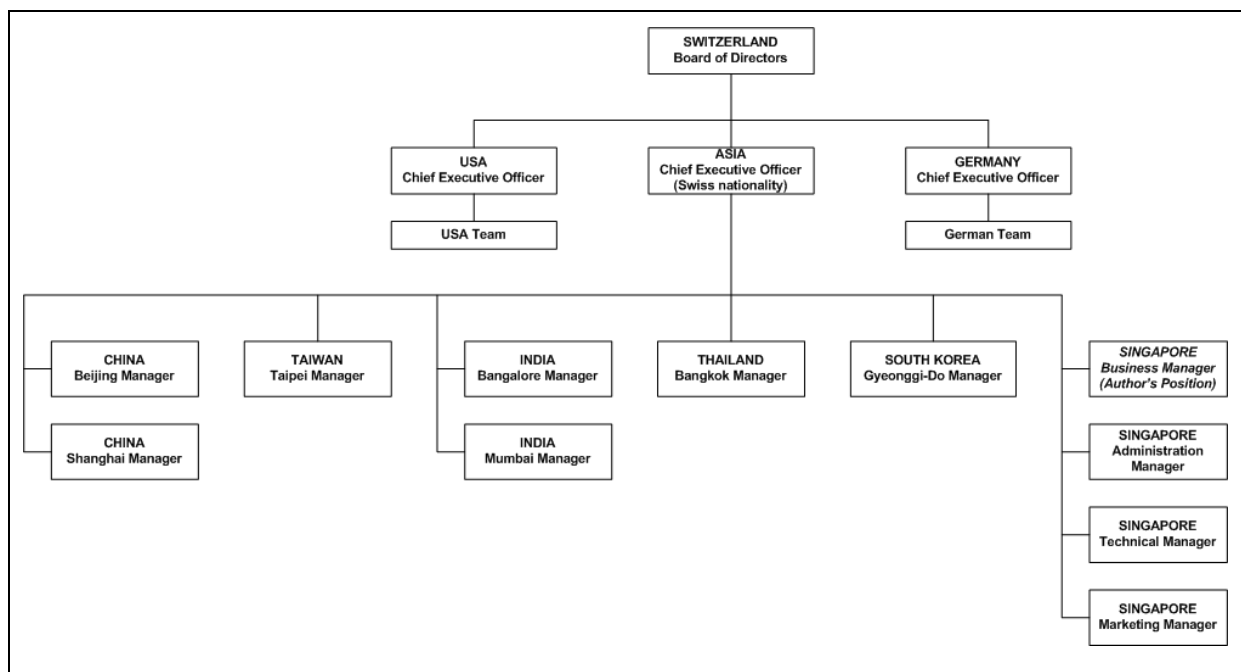
Date:

APPENDIX 6: PROFILE OF ORGANIZATION UNDER STUDY

The Swiss multi-national company is a manufacturer of high speed connectors, with factory located in Germany. Their connectors are used in a variety of products such as telecommunication, medical and industrial equipment. Their business nature is to work with the Research and Development (R&D) team of Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) to design in connectors into OEM's products, where the OEM in turn outsource the manufacturing to Contract Electronics Manufacturing (CEM), and CEM will then load order directly to the company.

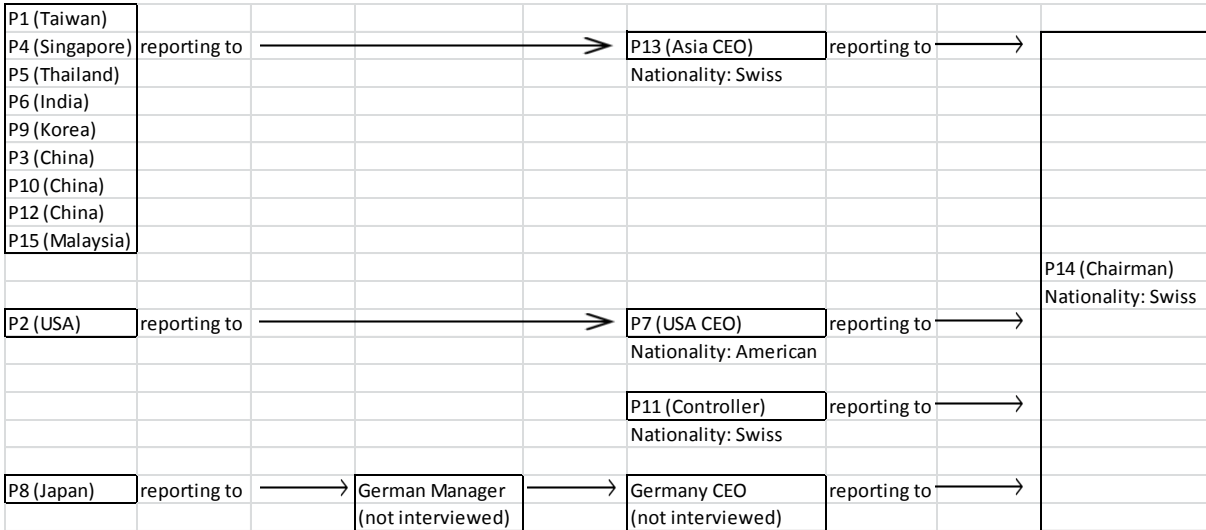
A typical design in project may take place in China and Taiwan, and occasionally in collaboration with USA or German team, as OEM customer's R&D team are scattered around globally. The success of the design project will depend on technical support (from technical team in Singapore & Germany), exchange of information (among various offices) and pricing and delivery support from the factory. Upon completion of design, the production site may go over to China, Thailand or India, and so it is critical for the site offices that do the design in to track the production and inform the respective offices to follow up.

Below is the company organization chart:



APPENDIX 7: PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

						Manage		Report to		Work with
No.	Participant	Gender	Age	Years in Company	Country	Local Team	Foreign Team	Local Boss	Foreign Boss	Foreign Colleague
1	P1	Male	35	2	Taiwan	x			x	x
2	P2	Male	46	2	USA	x		x		x
3	P3	Male	44	10	China	x	x		x	x
4	P4	Male	48	11	Singapore	x	x		x	x
5	P5	Male	35	3	Thailand	x	x		x	x
6	P6	Male	33	6	India	x			x	x
7	P7	Male	37	12	USA	x			x	x
8	P8	Male	58	6	Japan	x			x	x
9	P9	Male	52	3	Korea	x			x	x
10	P10	Male	35	6	China	x			x	x
11	P11	Male	35	4	Switzerland	x	x	x		x
12	P12	Male	38	5	China	x			x	x
13	P13	Male	55	11	Switzerland		x	x		x
14	P14	Male	62	20	Switzerland	x	x		20	
15	P15	Female	30	5	Malaysia	x			x	x



APPENDIX 8: NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS & INTERVIEWS

Country	Number of Participants	Number of interviews
USA	2	4 (2x2)
Switzerland	3	6 (3x2)
India	1	2
Japan	1	2
Malaysia	1	2
China	3	6 (3x2)
Thailand	1	2
Singapore	1	2
South Korea	1	2
Taiwan	1	2
	Total Participants: 15	Total Interviews: 30

APPENDIX 9: HUMAN ETHICS CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL



MONASH University

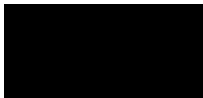
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date: 24 August 2012
Project Number: CF12/2204 – 2012001184
Project Title: Effective leadership in cross-cultural conflict management
Chief Investigator: Prof Alan Lindsay
Approved: From: 24 August 2012 To: 24 August 2017


Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.**
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.



Professor Ben Canny
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Mr Khor Aik Cheow

Postal – Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia
Building 3E, Room 111, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton
Facsimile +61 3 9905 3831
 www.monash.edu/research/ethics/human/index/html
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C

APPENDIX 10: GROUPING OF RESPONSES

Q2-P5. What are the challenges [or difficulties] you faced in handling such difference?

P1: The main challenge is the people may not understand your ... expectation or why you have such expectation. For example, as I mentioned before, for the Taiwanese company, we need to feedback ... in a very short time, maybe within one day ... but many in the Germany they can wait for three days is ok for them to get the answer, so people in Germany they cannot understand why Taiwanese is so urgent to know the result, so urgent to know the reply, they cannot understand, so I would say the challenge people faced in different countries is ... they don't understand why you act like that, they didn't know your needs because they cannot understand ... they don't know why you ... act like that ...

+++++

P2: Well, It's ... it's just, it's not getting things done, not accomplish the goals that you see as important ... and ... and that's probably another ... another little ... local issue ... because of how ... different culture market their product ... that, you know, that can be a barrier because, you know, the Japanese and the Germans for example ... their, their way of getting a product to market in making customer aware, are only to have a whole bunch of outside sales people, and they're going to see everybody personally. I don't care if that guy buys only two of our products a year, I'm going to stop by and I'm going to see him

+++++

P3: I think for me ... maybe big challenge is my language skill. You know for some cases are complicate, you cannot explain in simple sentence. So sometimes if I want to make deep explanation, for example for my boss or colleague, I feel a little ... difficult. So ... it's big challenge for me. I think ... for different nationalities, they have their fixed mindset. Sometimes it's difficult, you know, to persuade them. Maybe also your position in your company. Also you need to understand the different personalities of your colleagues from different nationalities, even same culture will have different personalities ...

+++++

P4: I think in terms of communication, we need to learn ... what are the ... correct way to communicate? What are the correct words to use? What is the effect of different styles of communication?Different ways will... have different outcomes. So a lot of time I experience and experiment different ways of communication ...

APPENDIX 11: SUMMARY OF GROUPED RESPONSES

A sample of ‘summary of grouped responses’ to interview question “What are the challenges you faced in handling such difference?”

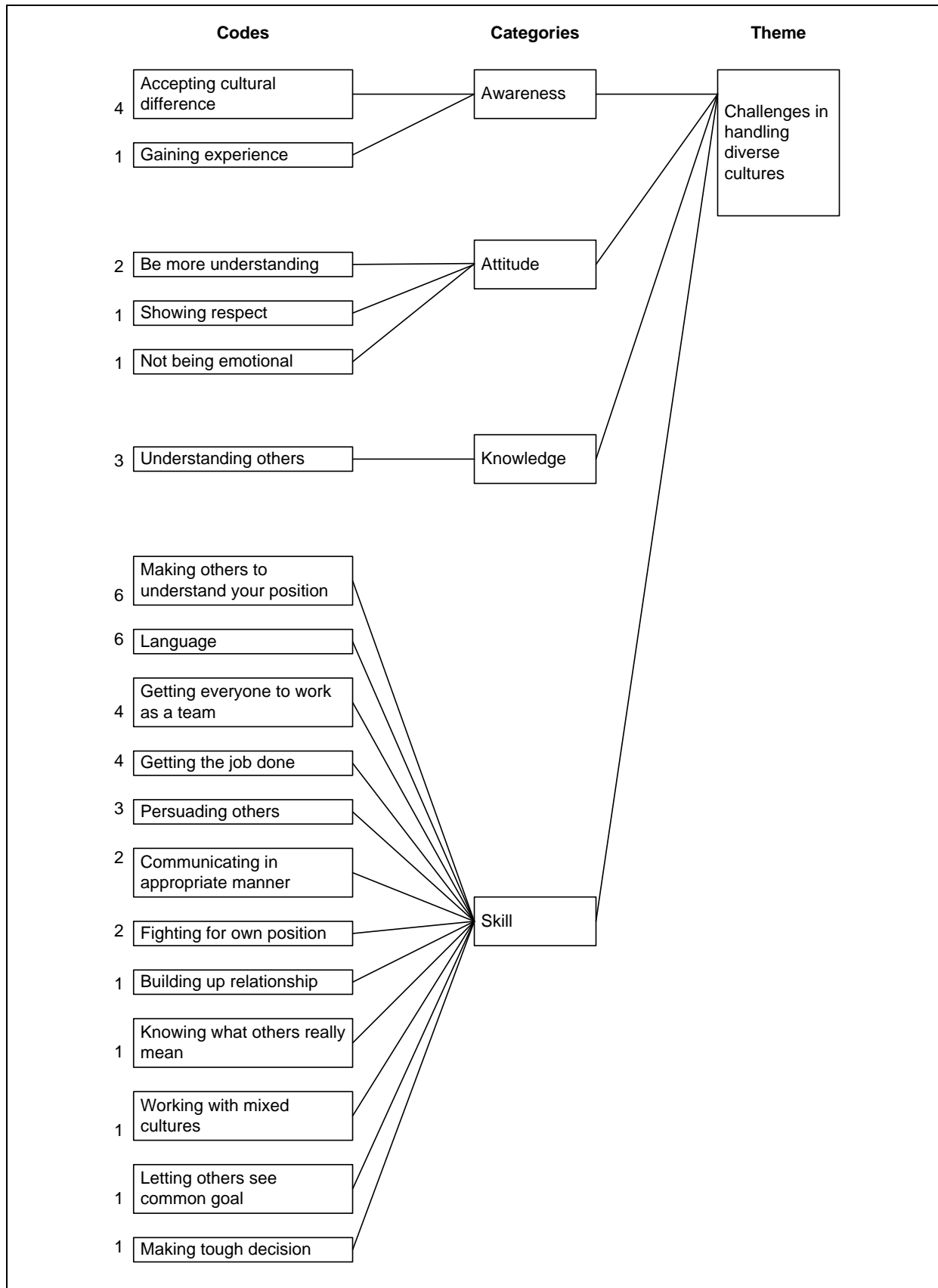
Participant	Challenge	Because of	Nature of the described challenge
P1 (Taiwan)	Making others to understand your position (expectation, why have this expectation, why you act like this, your needs).	Mismatched expectation.	Communication. Skill.
	Being treated like a leader. Getting everyone to work together as a team	Everyone has different job functions and at times competitive goals. Job function not well defined. Problem communicating with other nationality.	Leadership in creating common goal. Skill.
P2 (USA)	Getting the job done. Accomplishing the goal.	Different ways of working.	Realign value. Skill.
P3 (China)	Language	Difficult to express one’s view point	Communication. Skill.
	Persuading others.	Fixed mindset.	Changing perspectives. Realign value. Skill.
	Understand others	Different cultures, personalities.	Knowledge.
	Getting everyone to work together as a team	Everyone has different job functions and at times competitive goals	Leadership in creating common goal. Skill.
P4 (Singapore)	Communicating in appropriate manner	Different style and words used may cause miscommunication.	Communication. Skill.
	Building up relationship	Lack of face to face interaction.	Communication. Skill.
	Knowing what others really mean.	Lack of relationship & face to face interaction.	Communication. Skill.
.....

APPENDIX 12: CODING TABLE

	Q3-P5-C1	Q3-P5-C2	Q3-P5-C3	Q3-P5-C4	.....	Q3-P5-C8	Q3-P5-C9
	Making others to understand your position	Getting everyone to work together as a team	Getting the job done	Language	.....	Accepting cultural difference	Building up relationship
P1	X	X			.....	
P2			X		.....	
P3		X		X	.....	
P4					.....		X
P5		X		X	.....	X	
P6	X		X		.....	X	
P7					.....	
P8			X		.....	
P9	X			X	.....	
P10				X	.....	
P11			X		.....	
P12	X	X		X	.....	
P13					.....	X	
P14	X			X	.....	
P15	X				.....	X	
	6	4	4	6	.....	4	1

File: Q3-P5-Grouping.doc			
	Page	Line	Code Q3-P5-C2: Getting everyone to work together as a team
P1	1	16	some people maybe they have ... very good soft skill and they can let everyone treat him like a leader or they can let everyone think everyone is in the same group, so we should have the same target, we have the same goal, then everyone will follow the leader opinion.
P2			
P3	4	99	Also ... big challenge between, for example Company1 [current company] Asia, Company1 [current company] Germany. They just have different, you know ... thinking for different benefits, different interest. So sometimes it's very difficult to find a way to communicate.
P4			
P5	7	167	As I told you, I am Thai and I have to deal between Thai customer and maybe another non-Thai customer, and also my supporting is the ... another nationalities, not Thai. I, I think this is a challenge me because I have to fill in the gap to make the customer to get the good support and ... feeling good about our team, and we have to the, the ... success the business. Because if the Singaporean did not understand Thai, Thai did not understand Singaporean, then if they are to work directly together, they will ... I think business cannot be ... more success. I have to fill in in that to make the ... Singapore our colleague, Germany our factory and customer in Thai to same understanding, to ... make the business success together. This is our challenge.
P6			
P7			
P8			
P9			
P10			
P11			
P12	12	333	Another challenge is to overcome the different positions hold by me and other nationalities. Most people will think from their position, and insist on their view point, ignoring others' position and their view points, and this will cause conflict. I think we must at least respect others' opinion, from their position, then see how your position can strike a balance with others' position. When I talk about position, I refer to work position. For example, you are in the position of employee, you think as an employee. But when you are promoted to managerial position, you think as a manager. Same time, intercompany and inter-department have people in different positions with different thinking in different countries within the organization.
P13			
P14			
P15			

APPENDIX 13: DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY



APPENDIX 14: AUDIT TRIAL

	Audit Trail Classification	File Type	Evidence
1.	Raw data	a) Interview audio. b) Interview transcript.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of audio files in WAV format. Records of interview transcript files in doc format.
2.	Data reduction products	a) Coding. b) Categories. c) Themes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coding table Descriptive summary of codes, categories and theme Completed document.
3.	Data display products	a) Summary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive summary of codes, categories and theme Completed document.
4.	Data findings products	a) Findings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive summary of codes, categories and theme Completed document.
5.	Data analysis products	a) Analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive summary of codes, categories and theme Completed document.
6.	Process notes	a) Methodology procedure. b) Methodological design. c) Methodological strategy. d) Methodological rationale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of methodology development in doc format. Records of email correspondence on methodology development.
7.	Materials relating to intentions and dispositions	a) Proposal. b) Reflective notes. c) Predictions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher scrapbook.
8.	Instrument development information	a) Interview schedule.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of interview schedule development in doc format. Records of email correspondence on interview schedule development.