

# “Face” Conflict and Conflict Resolution in Thai – Japanese MNCs in Thailand<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to test the argument that “face” is a fundamental cause of interpersonal conflict and explore the similarities and differences of conflict resolution between Thai and Japanese MNCs participants. Additionally, the correlation between face concerns and conflict management styles of the two cultures was examined. The research explored the Face-Negotiation theory (FN) version 2 to test that “face” is an underlying assumption and/or an explanatory mechanism for conflicts in the organization. The adapted version of Rahim Organization Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) was employed to test the differences and similarities of conflict management styles.

The findings of this research illustrated that “face” is a fundamental cause of interpersonal conflict for Thai and Japanese participants. Thais rated themselves higher for all types of face concerns: self-face, other-face, and mutual-face, than Japanese. Regarding the similarities and differences of conflict resolution, Thai participants preferred using integrating, avoiding, obliging and compromising more than Japanese participants. The relationship between face concerns and conflict

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management style showed that the more self-face and other-face concerned the Thai participants were, the more they reported using obliging. Additionally, the more mutual-faced concerned they were, the more they reported using integrating. Whereas for Japanese participants, the more self-face concerned they were, the more they reported using dominating. Additionally, the more other-face concerned and the more mutual-face concerned they were, the more they reported using integrating.

## Introduction

Greater globalization has led to increased attention being paid to cultural diversity and its influences on personal, social, and organizational practices. As the world becomes a smaller place, the potential for conflict across cultural boundaries in our daily interactions is increasing. One of the considerable causes of conflict is "face", which is defined as an underlying assumption for conflicts. Thus, my proposed research focused on conflicts within Japanese multinational companies (MNCs) in Thailand, which have a large number of invested projects and a significant number of exposed expatriates, as well as to test whether "face" is an underlying assumption and/or an explanatory mechanism for conflicts in the organization. Moreover, my research investigated the differences and similarities of face and conflict management styles which have been used by Thai and Japanese people.

## Theoretical Framework

In this research, face-negotiation theory (FN) version 2<sup>3</sup> was employed to test that "face" is an underlying assumption and/or an

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<sup>3</sup> Stella Ting-Toomey and Atsuko Kurogi, "Facework competence in intercultural conflict: An updated face-negotiation theory," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 22 (1998): 187-225.

explanatory mechanism for conflict in the organization. This theory emphasizes three face concerns:

*Self-face* reflects the concern for one's own image;

*Other-face* reflects the concern for another's image; and

*Mutual-face* reflects the concern for both parties' image and/or the "image" of the relationship.

There are many different approaches to emphasis that "face" is important and that have been widely used in the current research. First, the concept of face originated from Chinese culture and consisted of two types: *lien* [臉] and *mien-tzu* [面子].<sup>4</sup> *Lien* is identified by an individual's moral worth, whereas *mien-tzu* refers to reputation or status obtained from success in life. The concept of face is prevalent in all cultures, but the meaning and uses differ from one culture to another. Some researchers have stated in their studies that the original sense of *mien-tzu* was transmitted to Japan and has been kept as the notion of *taimen*, *kao*, *menboku*, or *mentsu*.<sup>5</sup>

The following meaning of conflict was used as an operational definition for this research, defined by Putnam and Poole as "the interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims, and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals."<sup>6</sup>

There are many different approaches to the study of conflict which have been used in the current research to evaluate the methods people use to manage conflicts in the cross-cultural organization settings or otherwise. However, the Rahim Organizational Conflict

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<sup>4</sup> Hu Hsien-chin, "The Chinese concept of 'face'," *American Anthropologist*, 46 (1944): 45-64.

<sup>5</sup> Morisaki Seiichi and Gudykunst William, "Face in Japan and the United States," *The Challenge of Facework: Cross-cultural and interpersonal issues*, ed. Stella Ting-Toomey (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994): 47-93; Sueda Kiyoko, "A quantitative analysis of differing perception of mein-tze/mentsu between Chinese and Japanese students: A case study," *Shakaishinrigaku Kenkyu* [Research in Social Psychology], 13 (1995): 103-111.

<sup>6</sup> Linda Putnam and Scott Poole, "Conflict and negotiation," *Handbook of organizational communication*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., eds. F.M. Jablin, L.L. Putnam, K.H. Robert, and L.W. Porter (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992) 552.

Inventory-II (ROCI-II)<sup>7</sup> is one of the most common methods which is composed of five styles: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising, derived based on two dimensions: concern for self and concern for others.

**Integrating** reflects high concern for both self and others. This style is both direct and cooperative,<sup>8</sup> and promotes synergy and attempts to achieve both individual and group goals. The win-win approach for business negotiation is one of the appropriate examples for this style.

**Obliging** reflects low concern for self and high concern for others. People who use this style believe that giving in to others serves the needs of the group, even though some other group members may have more beneficial ideas and those may better benefit the group's goal.

**Dominating** reflects high concern for self and low concern for others. Dominating member uses their power and position to achieve their own goals by competing, ignoring the other member's goals. The win-lose is an appropriate approach which reflects this style.

**Avoiding** reflects low concern for both self and others. Avoiding members prefer conflict-free, escape confrontation, and ignore their own goals or the group's goals.

**Compromising** reflects a moderate level between self and others. This style is halfway, which means each member is willing to suffer some losses in exchange for receiving some gains. Even though the result may be satisfied partially, the whole group members feel that this is a fair method of conflict management.

## Methodology

### Quantitative Analysis

This research applies FN to test that "face" is an underlying assumption and/or an explanatory mechanism for conflicts in the

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<sup>7</sup> Rahim Afzal, "A measure of styles of handling interpersonal conflict," *Academy of Management Journal*, 26 (1983): 368-376.

<sup>8</sup> Blake Robert and Mouton Jane, *The Managerial Grid: The Key to Leadership Excellence* (Houston: Gulf Publishing Co., 1964).

organization. The questionnaire of conflict management used the adapted version of ROCI-II to test the differences and similarities of conflict management styles between Thais and Japanese and also to find the relationship between face and conflict management styles.

### Participants

The selection of the MNCs was based on convenience sampling of Japanese-owned companies in the Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate in Rayong province and some from Chonburi and Bangkok areas. All of the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire, of which there were a total of 155 returned, a response rate of 81.6%. Of those, 73 were Japanese and 82 were Thai. The positions of the participants are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Positions of the Participants

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Assistant Manager	30	19.4
Section Manager	46	29.7
Department Manager	21	13.5
Deputy GM	2	1.3
General Manager	2	1.3
Managing Directors	6	3.9
Plant Manager	3	1.9
Executive Director	2	1.3
Advisor	4	2.6
Others	37	23.9
Not identify	2	1.3
Total	155	100.0

For the Japanese participants, 66 (42.6%) were male and 7 (4.5%) were female; whereas there were 49 (31.6%) male and 33 (21.3%) female for the Thai participants. The average age of the Japanese participants was 43; whereas the average age of Thai participants was 38. The average length of time the Japanese participants spent at their Japanese MNCs in Thailand was 18.74

years, and the mean of length of time spent working in the company for the Thai participants was 10.47 years. Regarding the exposure time to other countries, only 4 of the 73 Japanese participants reported no experience in another country; for Thai participants, 55 of 82 reported no experience in another country.

### **Instrumentation**

The original language for all questions was English. However, the researcher translated those into Japanese and Thai to enhance clear understanding and make participants feel more comfortable in giving their answers. There were three parts in the questionnaire: The first part was demographic information containing five questions regarding the participants' age, gender, position, the length of time they spent in the organization, and the exposure time they spent in other countries. The second was 34 items having 5-point Likert scales of face concerns,<sup>9</sup> and the last part of the questionnaire involved 28 items having 5-point Likert scales of conflict management styles.<sup>10</sup>

### **Types of variables**

There were two variables used in this research; dependent variable and independent variable.<sup>11</sup> Face concerns: self-face, other-face, and mutual-face were the first set of dependent variables. A participant

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<sup>9</sup> Oetzel John, Ting-Toomey Stella, Masumoto Tomoko, Yokochi Yumiko, Pan Xiaohui, Takai Jiro and Wilcox Richard, "Face and facework in conflict: A cross-cultural comparison of China, Germany, Japan, and the United States," *Communication Monographs*, 68 (2001): 235–258.

<sup>10</sup> Boonsathorn Wasita, "Competence is in the eye of the beholder: Conflict management style and perceived competence of conflict management styles by Thais and Americans in multinational corporations in Thailand," Unpublished PhD dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> A dependent variable is a key variable in a research study. In term of experiments, a dependent variable means a result variable, whereas in term of sociology, in measuring the effect of education on income or wealth, a dependent variable could be something equal to a psychological variable, for example; level of income or wealth; whereas an independent variable could be the education level of the individual (i.e., academic degrees) or something equal to category variable, for examples, gender, nationality, education method, and school's size, etc.

selected only one phrase from five phrases which most accurately described their behavior. The second set of dependent variables was the respondents' preference for the five conflict management styles (ROCI-II): integrating, avoiding, dominating, obliging, and compromising. A participant indicated their own way to solve the conflicts by selecting one choice from the total five choices in the Likert format. The independent variable was a nominal measure of the participant nationality which consisted of two categories: Japanese and Thai.

### Participants

The 155 participants who filled in the questionnaires were selected by purposive sampling<sup>12</sup> using the following criterion:

1. Participants who believe that "self-face" is a fundamental cause of interpersonal conflict in Thai-Japanese MNCs in Thailand. (1 Thai, 1 Japanese).

2. Participants who believe that "other-face" is a fundamental cause of interpersonal conflict in Thai-Japanese MNCs in Thailand. (1 Thai, 1 Japanese).

3. Participants who believe that "mutual-face" is a fundamental cause of interpersonal conflict in Thai-Japanese MNCs in Thailand. (1 Thai, 1 Japanese).

4. The participants who accept to be an interviewee.

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<sup>12</sup> Purposive Sampling is the sampling method in which the researcher chooses the sample based on who they think would be appropriate for the study. This is used primarily when there are a limited number of people that have expertise in the area being researched. For example, Chiangmai province being selected as representative of Thailand Northern because of its number of population, size, and education level of people, etc.

**Table 2:** Results of participant's selection

Participants	Self		Other		Mutual	
	35	%	55	%	20	%
Japanese 1	23	65.71	33	60.00	12	60.00
Japanese 2	17	48.57	42	76.36	16	80.00
Japanese 3	20	57.14	40	72.73	18	90.00
Thai 1	24	68.57	35	63.64	13	65.00
Thai 2	32	91.43	55	100.00	20	100.00
Thai 3	27	77.14	38	69.09	17	85.00

\*The number 35, 55, and 20 are the full score of each face dimension in the questionnaire

\*The obtained scores of each face dimension were calculated in percentage

### Instrumentations

As PAC (Personal Attitude Construct),<sup>13</sup> a social psychology method which employs cluster analysis, is effective in analyzing individual personal data, so the researcher decided to apply for an individual interview. First, the interviewee was asked to write freely 10 answers or more about the stimulated question:

Try to think of the incident when you faced difficulties with your colleagues, subordinate, and boss and the cause of such difficulties (conflict) happen from the interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition goals, opposition point of view, and values. How did you solve that problem?

After reading the question, the interviewee wrote down their answer on a card one by one, consecutively. After receiving each answer, the interviewer wrote down the ordering number on the back of the card. After the interviewee finished writing the answers, all of the cards were shown in front of the interviewee and at the same time the interviewee was asked to rank the number for each card according to the importance of the answer, and also was asked to evaluate their

<sup>13</sup> Tetsuo Naito, *Using PAC Analysis in Research-Practical Theory 1* (Nakanishiya Press, 2009) (in Japanese).

answers as to whether they were positive (+) or negative (-) or neutral (0) about how did their counterpart think about their way to solve the problem. Next, the interviewee was asked to evaluate the similarity between each pair of answers (by sampling method) by the following Likert scale of evaluation: Very close (point 7), Pretty close (point 6), Rather close (point 5), It is hard to say which (point 4), Rather far (point 3), Pretty far (point 2), Very far (point 1). Last, hierarchical cluster analysis based on the Ward method to the similarity distance matrix by SPSS ver. 16.0 was applied. As a result of cluster analysis, a dendrogram was obtained. Finally, the interview was recorded to the interviewee's acceptance.

### Analyses

The analyses were done according to the below procedures.

1) Ordering number of the answer: Ordering number of the answer illustrates the accessibility to the interviewee's recognition. Hence one-third of the answers were interpreted and analyzed.<sup>14</sup>

2) The tone of writing: The use of words can illustrate the type of personality of the writer and the tone of writing sometimes can be interpreted as to how the writer feels and what the attitude toward conflict management they have.

3) The number of answers and the similarity between each pair of answers (by sampling method): The number of answers can be used to draw the recognition structure of the writer and sometimes can illustrate how complex is the thinking of the writer. The similarity between each pair of answers (by sampling method) can be used as a reference in interpreting the overall analysis of the data.

4) Ranking of the answers by the interviewee according to the importance of the answer. In social psychology, the ranking of the answers can be used to interpret the "importance" of those answers. However, the ordering of continuous and free answers and the ranking according to the importance of the answers by the interviewee sometimes produced no correlation. (When the interviewee re-read their answers, they may put new ranking numbers with no intention to what the previous ordering numbers for those answers.)

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<sup>14</sup> Adapted from Naito, *Using PAC Analysis*, 30.

5) Dendrogram (Tree-shaped diagram computed from cluster analysis): The output from the SPSS program was calculated and separated to be a group of answers according to the similarity of those answers. A Dendrogram can be used to interpret the relationship of the answers in the same group and, at the same time, the relationship between groups.

6) Interpretation of the answers in the same group: First, the researcher created the name of a group of answers by comparing the overall meaning of the answers in the same group with the two questionnaires employed as instrumentations in the quantitative parts of this research; 34 items of face concerns<sup>15</sup> according to FN and conflict management styles according to ROCI-II. Second, after creating the name of a group of answers, the meaning of the overall answers in the same group was interpreted whereas the interviewed information was also used in the interpretation.

7) Interpretation between groups of answers: The interpretation between groups of answers can be used to find the connection or disconnection of the overall answers and sometimes can illustrate the interviewee's idea.

8) Interview: An interview can help to verify the unclear answers and can be used as a reference for the whole interpretation.

9) The number of +/-/0: The number of positive (+), negative (-) and neutral (0) toward each of the answers which illustrates how your counterpart thinks about your way to solve the problem can be used to predict the confidence level of the interviewee and help to interpret how much is the individualistic (self-face concern) or collectivistic (other-face concern) of the interviewee.

10) Interviewee's body language (Facial expression and gestures during interviewing): Not only the confidence level of people can be predicted from non-verbal language, but personality and how and what they think can also be predicted. The non-verbal language found during the interview were: sorrowful speaking sound, taking a deep breath, keeping quiet long before speaking, repeatedly speaking, punch on one's own head.

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<sup>15</sup> Oetzel, et al.

## Results

### Results of Quantitative Analysis (Questionnaire)

The results of the questionnaires were summarized and analyzed according to the three hypotheses of this research.

Hypothesis 1: Face, in the context of the face-negotiation theory, is defined as a fundamental cause of interpersonal conflict in Thai-Japanese MNCs in Thailand.

The assumption of Hypothesis 1 of this study was to test that “face” is defined as a fundamental cause of interpersonal conflict in Thailand and focused on differences in face concerns between Japanese and Thai managers in Japanese MNCs in Thailand.

To test this hypothesis, an independent-sample t-test was used as the statistical tool. Each face concern served as a separate dependent variable, whereas nationality, Thais or Japanese, served as the independent variable. Additionally, the researcher used a one-tailed test to assess this directional hypothesis. The relevant mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Independent-sample t-tests for Face Concerns Separated by Thai and Japanese Participants

Face Concerns	Thai		Japanese	
	M <sup>16</sup>	SD	M	SD
Self	3.72	0.44	3.09	0.52
Other	3.86	0.59	3.54	0.48
Mutual	4.50	0.51	3.93	0.56

According to Table 3, it can be summarized that there was a difference found in each face concerns: self-face, other-face, and mutual-face between Thai and Japanese. Whereas Thai participants rated themselves higher for all types of face concerns than Japanese,

<sup>16</sup> M=mean; SD=Standard deviation.

both Thai and Japanese people had concern for face. From Table 3, it can be explored that face is a fundamental cause of interpersonal conflict in Thai-Japanese MNCs in Thailand; thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

**Hypothesis 2:** There are differences in preferences of conflict management styles between Japanese and Thai managers in Japanese MNCs in Thailand.

Next, the analysis served as a test of Hypothesis 2 which was designed to reveal whether Thais and Japanese had differences in preferences of conflict management styles. An independent-sample t-test was also used as the statistical tool to test hypothesis 2. Preference for each conflict management style (ROCI-II) was computed as a separate dependent variable. Nationality, Thais or Japanese, was computed as the independent variable. A two-tailed test was also used for directional hypothesis 2. A comparison of preferences of conflict management styles between Thai and Japanese are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Independent-sample t-Tests for Preferences of Conflict Management Styles Separated by Thai and Japanese Participants

Conflict Styles	Thai		Japanese	
	M	SD	M	SD
Integrating	4.20	0.40	3.87	0.40
Avoiding	3.29	0.60	2.44	0.51
Dominating	2.74	0.66	2.64	0.60
Obliging	3.39	0.54	2.47	0.50
Compromising	4.16	0.50	3.48	0.53

The findings mainly supported Hypothesis 2 because there are significant differences in preferences of conflict management between Thai and Japanese participants. Thai participants reported using integrating, avoiding, obliging and compromising more than Japanese

participants. While there were no significant differences in preferences for dominating.

Hypothesis 3: There are relationships between “face” and conflict management styles in Thai-Japanese MNCs in Thailand.

The next analysis was used to test hypothesis 3, which posited that there is a relationship between face and conflict management styles for both Thai and Japanese participants. Pearson correlation was also used as the statistical tool to test this hypothesis. Each face concern (self-face, other-face, and mutual-face) and preferences for each conflict management style (ROCI-II) were the set of dependent variables, whereas the set of independent variables were Thais and Japanese. The results of correlations between face concerns and conflict management styles of Thai and Japanese participants are explained in the next two tables.

**Table 5:** Pearson Correlations between Face Concerns and Conflict Management Styles of Thai participants

Face Concerns	Conflict Management Styles				
	Integrating	Avoiding	Dominating	Obliging	Compromising
Self	0.368 p=0.001	0.443 p=0.000	0.275 p=0.013	<b>0.452</b> <b>p=0.000</b>	0.267 p=0.015
Other	0.465 p=0.000	0.451 p=0.000	0.168 p=0.131	<b>0.561</b> <b>p=0.000</b>	0.496 p=0.000
Mutual	<b>0.545</b> <b>p=0.000</b>	0.414 p=0.000	-0.001 p=0.996	0.461 p=0.000	0.512 p=0.000

Note : \*p < .10, \*\*p < .05 (2-tailed)\*<sup>17</sup>

The results show that the more self-face and other-face concerned the Thai participants were, the more they reported using

<sup>17</sup> p=statistically significant threshold value in practice. The threshold value (called p) is almost always set to 0.05 (an arbitrary value that has been widely adopted). A result is said to be statistically significant when the result would occur less than 5% of the time if the populations were really identical.

obliging for managing conflicts in their workplace. Additionally, the more mutual-faced concerned Thai participants were, the more they reported using integrating.

**Table 6:** Pearson Correlations between Personality Types and Conflict Management Styles of Japanese participants

Face Concerns	Conflict Management Styles				
	Integrating	Avoiding	Dominating	Obliging	Compromising
Self	-0.132 p=0.268	0.374 p=0.001	<b>0.511</b> <b>p=0.000</b>	0.248 p=0.036	0.098 p=0.413
Other	<b>0.452</b> <b>p=0.000</b>	0.337 p=0.004	0.033 p=0.178	0.293 p=0.013	0.385 p=0.001
Mutual	<b>0.375</b> <b>p=0.001</b>	0.288 p=0.014	-0.039 p=0.745	0.100 p=0.401	0.374 p=0.001

Note : \*p < .10 (2-tailed), \*\*p < .05 (2-tailed)

From Table 6, the results show that the more self-face concerned the Japanese participants were, the more they reported using dominating for managing conflicts in their workplace. Additionally, the more other-face concerned and the more mutual-face concerned Japanese participants were, the more they reported using integrating. Therefore, it can be summarized that the results of Tables 5 and 6 support hypothesis 3.

### Result of qualitative analysis (PAC Method)

Six interviewees were purposively selected and the results of selection are shown in Table 2 above, however, only the results for one interviewee, Japanese 1, will be presented in this article.

### Japanese 1's result

Brief Profile of Japanese 1: 24 years of working at the parent company in Japan. His current position is President of an affiliate company (MNC) in Thailand, who came to be an expatriate (long-stay) in Thailand 6 months previous. He frequently came to Thailand

for short visits before becoming an expatriate. Japanese 1 rated the highest self-face concern in the questionnaire.

### **Analysis by selecting one-third of the overall answers**

After select one-third of the 10 answers ranked according to their importance, the first top three in ranking were: 1) Accept what I think is correct, but if it sounds like nonsense, say directly (0); 2) In case I find my own mistakes, I will reconsider from the top of the process to the bottom and forecast the result before issuing a new direction (0); and 3) Accepts their approach if it seems to be a different angle point of view (+). This obviously shows that using the word 'I' frequently found in top three ranked answers for example: "...accept what I think it's correct, in case I find my own mistakes, I will..." can be interpreted that Japanese 1 sometimes used their own power to decide the solution. This interpretation is quite similar to the question of "I sometimes use my power to win in a competitive situation" used in the questionnaire to evaluate the participants who preferred using dominating style in conflict resolution.

### **Interpret the tone of writing**

The use of words in the answers below can interpret the confidence of Japanese 1:

"Find room to convince the others to accept my idea"

"Insist on my idea"

### **Analyze the similarity between each pair of answers (by sampling method)**

Selection of each pair of answers from 10 answers by the sampling method.

**Table 7:** Similarity and Difference between Each Pair of Answers

Answer	Answer	Similarity or Difference
1. Accept what I think is correct but if it sounds impossible/nonsense, say directly (0).	10. Say 'yes' to acknowledge their answer (+).	Pretty Close (6)
6. Find the room to convince the others to accept my idea (-).	9. Explain the best method or solution as I think (0)..	Rather Close (5)
2. In case I find my own mistakes, I will reconsider from the top of the process to the bottom and forecast the result before issuing a new direction (0).	8. Insist on my idea (-).	Rather Close (5)
3. Accept other's idea if it seems to be a different angle or point of view (+).	5. Listen to their idea once more (+).	Rather Close (5)
4. Reconsider our (company's) direction or the appropriate attitude (+).	7. Correctly accept if their idea sounds sensible (+).	Rather Far (3)

According to Table 7, we can see that a pair of answers which have same +/-/0 or even similar, for example, +/0 or -/0, would be rated with high similarity, except for the pair of 4 and 7 in which both answers were (+), but was rated as 'Rather Far (3)'. The record of Japanese 1's interviewing can be used to support this difference. Japanese 1 said:

...to reconsider our direction or the appropriate attitude is a must and this method is always accepted by the team members. Hence, this answer should be positive (+) toward the listener. However, correctly accept if his/her idea sounds sensible can make the speaker happy (+) but if their sensible ideas did not match with the company's direction, in that case, the acceptance only means that I correctly understand what he/she says but, I did not truly accept or take the ideas into consideration.

Finally, Japanese 1 rated 'Rather Far (3)' to this pair of answers. We can interpret that the stance of Japanese 1 from the interview has high individualism or self-esteem since he is in a high position (President). So, making clear and sharp decisions should be one of his roles; at the same time, respecting other's idea and listen to what the others say were found in his interview.

**Table 8:** Compare the ranking of the answers by interviewee with the first ordering of answers

Ranking of the answers	5	7	10	8	4	9	6	3	2	1
First ordering of the answers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

After comparing the ranking of the answers and the first ordering number, one point is that the number has changed backward and forward. It seems that Japanese 1 paid more concern on "other-face" after reconsider the ranking of the answers, which we can explain by the use of words mean 'other' frequently found in the top-three of ranking of the answers. For example:

Listen to their idea once more (+) (no. 5).

Correctly accept if their idea sounds sensible (+) (no.7).

Say "yes" to acknowledge their answer (+) (no. 10).

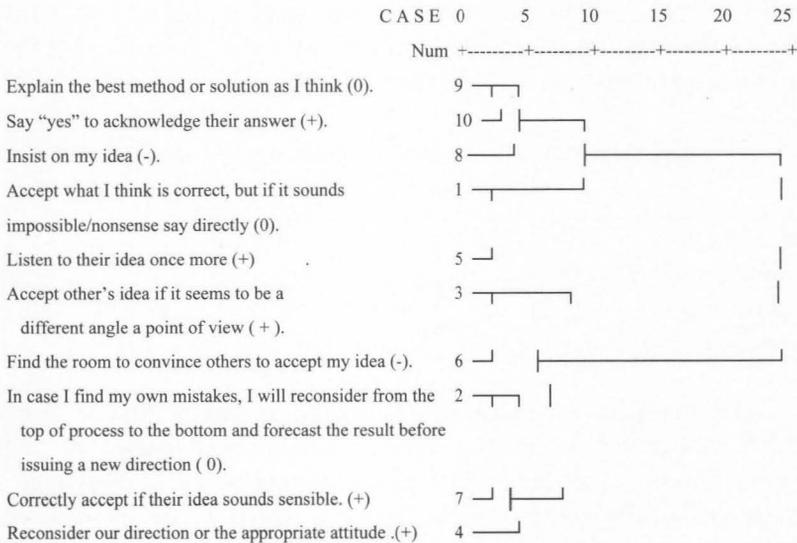
Whereas, by the use of words in the first ordering of the answers (1, 2), it can be interpreted that Japanese 1 put more concern on "self-face". For example:

Accept what I think is correct, but if it sounds nonsense say it directly (0) (no. 1).

In case I find my own mistakes, I will reconsider from the top of the process to... direction

(0) (no.2).

**Figure 1:** Dendrogram of Japanese 1 who believes that “self-face” is a fundamental cause of interpersonal conflict



\*The Number (Num) means rank of importance of each answer

\* ( ) after the answer means the evaluation of each answers whether they are positive, negative, or neutral.

**Interpret the answers in the same group**

A name of each group of answers was created by comparing the overall meaning of the answers in the same group with the two questionnaires employed as instrumentations in the quantitative parts of this research; 34 items of face concerns according to FN and conflict management styles according to ROCI-II.

From Figure 1, Japanese 1 answers have been divided into three clusters (groups).

**Cluster 1:** “I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation.”

Cluster 1 includes three answers as below:<sup>18</sup>

(1-9) “Explain the best method or solution as I think.” Here it is possible to interpret that Japanese 1 strongly shows confidence with his way of thinking. He believes in one-self and tries to dominate others with his ideas.

(1-10) “Say yes to acknowledge their answer.” Here it is possible to interpret that he shows respect to his counterparts while saying “yes” or showing non-verbal cues to acknowledge his listening and to make them feel good (+). But his acknowledgement shows no means of acceptance of another’s idea.

(1-8) “Re-explain my idea.” Here it is possible to visualize that Japanese 1 tries to satisfy his goal by convincing other to accept his ideas. He seems to not pay much attention to other’s who are reluctant (-) with his repetition of talking since he attempts to satisfy his objectives.

**Cluster 2:** “I am a direct person and was concerned with protecting my self-image.”

Cluster 2 includes only two answers as below:

(2-1) “Accept what I think is correct, but if it sounds nonsense, say directly.” Here it is possible to interpret that Japanese 1 prefers direct speaking. Although he thinks that ‘say it directly’ sometimes has a negative result since the listeners may lose their face (-), but sometimes the listener may feel good with his direct words. (+)

(2-5) “Listen to his/her idea once more.” Here it is possible to visualize that Japanese 1 tries to encourage his team members to speak for a better understanding of their real objective.

**Cluster 3:** “I attempt to satisfy my own concerns and try to examine a problem carefully with others to find a solution acceptable to both of us.”

Cluster 3 includes five answers as below:

(3-3, 3-7) “Accept other’s idea if it seems to be a different angle or point of view;” and “Correctly accept if their idea sounds sensible,”

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<sup>18</sup> The number of answers in each cluster which be mentioned in ( ), for example; (1-9), means that this answer was divided into the first cluster and the ranking number for this answer was 9.

illustrate that Japanese 1 does not ignore other's idea; moreover he always gives them a chance to explain and if it sounds sensible, he will accept.

(3-6) "Find the room to convince the others to accept my idea." To achieve a goal or objective, Japanese 1 will convince the others to accept his plan/idea, even his listeners are dissatisfied. (-)

(3-2) "In case I find my own mistakes, I will reconsider from the top of the process to the bottom and forecast the result before issuing a new direction." It is quite obviously that to satisfy Japanese 1's concerns, he will not allow even his own mistakes; if it really happens, he will promptly reconsider all of the processes to find the causes of problems and at the same time forecast the risks that might happened before issuing a new direction or plan.

(3-4) "Reconsider our direction or the appropriate attitude." Again, this is to strengthen his attempts to satisfy his goal.

### **Interpret the answers between clusters**

(Cluster 1 and Cluster 2)

First, the name of clusters: "I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation" and "I am a direct person and am concerned with protecting my self-image," can be used to visualize what kind of a person is Japanese 1. Since Japanese 1 has a high position in the company, it is unavoidable to expect that Japanese 1 should have high confidence in his management; for examples, strong decision making, high concern for protecting his own image, etc. Moreover, respect for other's idea is also a concern of Japanese 1.

(Cluster 2 and Cluster 3)

It can be interpreted from this relationship that Japanese 1 is a direct person, however, one who tries to accept other's ideas. But, if those ideas do not correlate with the company's direction, he will insist on his own idea. Insisting on his own idea considered to be the company's direction seems to be the most important thing for Japanese 1.

(Cluster 3 and Cluster 1)

The relationship between these two clusters can be used by Japanese 1 to strengthen his high concern in "self-face".

## Interview

Name of Cluster 1: "I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation," can be correlated to dominating conflict style according to ROCI-II. People who prefer dominating in conflict management, sometimes use their influence, authority, knowledge and experience to reach a decision in their favor. The results of Japanese 1 do not support Japanese culture which can be categorized as collectivist culture. The Oetzel and Ting-Toomey study mentioned the difference between individualism and collectivism that:

**Individualism** is a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives and who give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others. Whereas **collectivism** is a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as part of one or more collective (family, coworkers, tribe, nation) and are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals.<sup>19</sup>

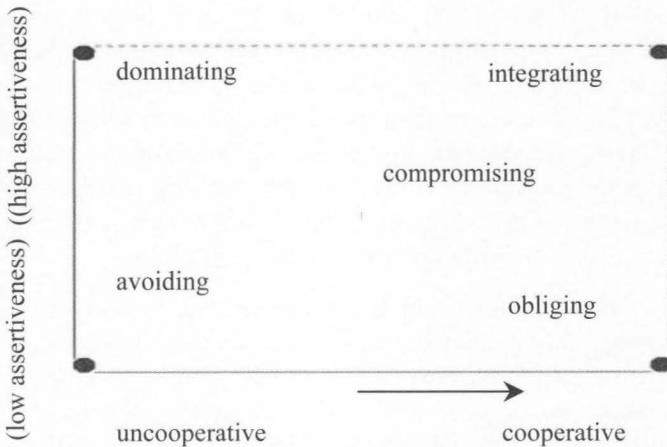
However, it is possible to conclude that Japanese 1 highly attempts to satisfy his concerns which is correlated with the definitions of dominating; members use their power and position to achieve their own goals by competing, ignoring the other member's goals. It also can be explained according to the Thomas model as shown in Figure 2 below; more dominating the person prefer, higher assertiveness they will be.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Harry Triandis, *Individualism and collectivism* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995), cited in John Oetzel and Stella Ting-Toomey, "Face Concerns in Interpersonal Conflict: A Cross-Cultural Empirical Test of the Face Negotiation Theory," *Communication Research* 30 (2003): 602.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth W. Thomas, "Conflict and Conflict Management," *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*, ed. Marvin D. Dunnette (Chicago: Rand McNally College Pub. Co., 1976), cited in Zhenzhong Ma, "Chinese Conflict Management Styles and Negotiation Behaviours: An Empirical Test," *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 7.1 (2007): 101-119.

2: The Thomas model of conflict-handling styles adapted from Thomas



Thomas employed five different conflict handling styles based on two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness. Assertiveness measures the extent to which an individual attempts to satisfy their own concerns, and cooperativeness assesses the extent to which an individual attempts to satisfy another person's concerns. Hence, it can be summarized that dominating people attempt more to satisfy their own concerns and at the same time lower attempts to satisfy another's concerns.

### Evaluate the numbers of +/-/0

Out of 10 answers, five are positive (+), two are negative (-) and three are neutral (0). It can be interpreted that Japanese 1 thinks that only half of his answers satisfy the others, whereas the other half may not satisfy the listeners. Japanese 1 said in the interview that "It can't be helped if listeners are not satisfy with what I am trying to explain since what I say means what the company wants and there is no room to avoid doing that. Sometimes only half of listeners accept, it's OK for me."

### **Interpret interviewee's body language; especially facial expression and gestures, during the interview.**

During the interview, Japanese 1 paid attention to what he was asked and also when he wrote down on each card. Japanese 1 spoke clearly and loudly, sounded like a politician showing no feeling of being awkward at being asked. Japanese 1 answered the questions in a judicious manner what generally is seen as an image of top management in the company.

According to the PAC analysis result of Japanese 1, this can be used to support a part of the result of the quantitative part (see Table 6), which found that the more self-face concerned the Japanese participants were, the more they reported using dominating for managing conflicts in their workplace.

### **Summary and Discussion**

The research findings reveal that Thai participants rated themselves higher for all types of face concerns, self-face, other-face, and mutual-face, than Japanese participants. Regarding the similarities and differences of conflict resolution, Thai participants reported using integrating, avoiding, obliging and compromising more than Japanese participants. The results of the correlation between face concerns and conflict management style showed that the more self-face and other-face concerned the Thai participants were, the more they reported using obliging. Additionally, the more mutual-faced concerned they were, the more they reported using integrating. For Japanese participants, the more self-face concerned they were, the more they reported using dominating. Additionally, the more other-face concerned and the more mutual-face concerned they were, the more they reported using integrating.

Most of the findings from the PAC analysis (interview) supported the results of quantitative parts (questionnaire); however, the preferences in styles of conflict resolution for Thais found some differences. The discussion toward the causes of the difference between Thai and Japan participants, especially from the family system through the organization system, was also elaborated and analyzed in this study.

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