
Research

Patterns of English Used in Business Negotiations in Thailand

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The purpose of this study is to determine the patterns of English used by Thai businessmen during their business negotiations with their foreign business counterparts.

The study is limited to a survey of 80 of the biggest Thai companies comprising manufacturing companies, trading companies, financial institutions and one hotel.

A questionnaire which was patterned after those found in a number of well-known textbooks and also based upon interviews with experienced managers was designed and tested. Then the questionnaires were distributed to 118 businessmen in 80 companies. It was required that those who replied have experience in negotiations regardless of their positions.

The questionnaire is of the type based upon a rating scale. It consists of patterns used in business negotiations including the techniques employed by the negotiators and their attitudes towards their Japanese and American counterparts.

The findings are as follows :

1. A total of 84.6 percent of the businessmen negotiate not only over merchandise purchases but over other matters related to trade or commerce as well.
2. A total of 83.6 percent report that it is not necessary that they achieve their set goal or that they prevail every time they negotiate.
3. A total of 84.69 percent state that they are willing to lose or compromise during current negotiations if this enables them to continue a particular relationship and if it provides them with an opportunity to win at some point in the future. In other words, there are a number of reasons why it is not always prudent to win.
4. A total of 82 percent of negotiators were found to be directly responsible for the topic under negotiation.
5. During negotiation 58.56 percent direct their efforts at particular individuals within the group rather than at the whole group.
6. Of the Thai negotiators studied, 58 percent revealed that they were occasionally concerned about ethics.
7. Of all those studied, 94.9 percent were concerned about success in negotiations.
8. A total of 68.4% accorded a certain amount of importance to the question of individual status while 31.6 percent were of the opinion that during negotiations all are equal.
9. Although the goal during negotiations is to compromise, 35.19 percent felt there should be a consensus on both sides.

10. According to the Thai point of view, American businessmen are frank, straightforward, emotional, formal and logical while Thais are informal, emotional, status-conscious, humorous, intuitive and impatient. The Japanese are logical, serious, patient, formal, unemotional and reserved.

11. As far as communicative tendencies, Thai negotiators tend to be talkative and straightforward rather than silent; in addition they avoid beating about the bush. Efficiency and politeness are also major concerns.

12. Patterns of language used in negotiations

a. Agreeing

“That’s a good idea ;...”

“I agree.”

and “That’s right”. are used to a moderate degree.

b. Disagreeing

“You could be rightbut” is used extensively.

c. Clarifying

“Well, let’s put it this way”, is used extensively.

d. Giving opinions

“From my point of view,” is used extensively ;

“It seems to me that”, and “As I understand it” to a moderate degree.

e. Asking for opinions

“What do you think about?” is used extensively ;

“Do you think?” is used to a moderate degree.

f. Changing the subject

“Would it be better to discuss?” and “May I draw your attention to” are used to a moderate degree.