Laughter: A Communication Strategy in Business Meeting between Thai and Burmese Professionals

TAPTIP KANCHANAPOOMI*

Department of Language Studies, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Bangkok, Thailand
WANNAPA TRAKULKASEMSUK

Department of Language Studies, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Bangkok, Thailand
*Corresponding author email: tkanchanapoomi@gmail.com

Article Information	Abstract
	Laughter is a common feature found in daily conversations as an element showing amusement. However, laughter can also appear in serious talk such as business meetings (Murata, 2007; Markaki, et al., 2010). This paper scrutinizes laughter use between Thai and Burmese participants in a business meeting held in Yangon, Myanmar, and examines laughter functions and factors stimulating laughter to occur. The business meeting data was collected using the ethnographic method - a participant observation, extensive field notes, interviews and audio recordings. The data were analyzed based on the framework of laughter adapted from Hayakawa (2003) and Murata & Hori (2007); the findings reveal that laughter was used as a communication strategy and occurred in the meeting both in a relaxed atmosphere and in a serious discussion with different intentions - to have fun, to make fun of work, to ease the tension and to threaten other interlocutors.

INTRODUCTION

Advanced technologies and globalization have enhanced mobility, communication, connection of global citizen, social interaction, and communication between individuals from different parts of the word is more convenient than ever. International business activities also benefit from this phenomenon. In international business, English is recognized as a lingua franca among professionals around the world, that is, Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF). Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) was defined as a language shared by professionals who have different cultural backgrounds and speak different languages but have a common communication goal which is to succeed in an international business purpose (Louhiala-Salminen & Charles, 2006). Thus, various aspects of international business communication issues have attracted many scholars (Handford & Matous, 2015; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Plaken, 2010; Kardkarnklai, 2009).

There are studies investigating the use of English in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) community that is English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) which is the use of English language as

a means of communication among speakers of different first languages in Southeast Asian countries. For example, Deterding and Kirkpatrick's (2006) investigation of the English pronunciation features of people from ten different ASEAN countries and misunderstandings and Deterding's (2013) study of linguistic factors causing misunderstandings in ASEAN ELF communication. However, these studies have not specifically investigated the use of BELF in international business communication.

In this study, the way the research participants managed communication attracted the researchers' interest. It was noticeable that the use of ELF by the research participants and its features were found to be similar to those listed in previous ASEAN ELF studies (Deterding, 2013; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006) and did not cause any misunderstandings. On the contrary, their discussion seemed to be highly successful which prompted the researchers to reinvestigate how the participants managed communication. It was observed that the atmosphere of the business meeting in which data was collected was strikingly different from that which would be expected. In other words, rather than being formal, serious and/or contentious, participants created a friendly, relaxing and entertaining atmosphere with smiles on their faces and repeated use of laughter throughout the discussion. Therefore, this study aims to examine how ASEAN business professionals, Thai and Burmese, communicate and focuses on an investigation of roles and functions of laughter and factors which drove laughter to occur in an actual and international business communication between Thai and Burmese professionals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

We are often involved in something humorous in our daily life conversation, for example, hearing amusing stories, or delivering a funny speech, and these types of activities usually elicit smiles, grins and laughter. To illustrate, humor is regarded as a process initiated by a stimulus (a joke, a gag) which results in a response (a smile, a laughter) to indicate pleasure (Godkewitsch, 1976). In addition, humor is a socially intriguing phenomenon which penetrates human life (Linstead, 1985; Meyer, 2000; Veatch, 1998). Moreover, humor is considered to be a communication instance which is perceived as humorous and consists of nonverbal and verbal communications which produce a positive cognitive or affective response from listeners (Martineau, 1972; Crawfords, 1994). Further, humor is generally known as anything that is interpreted as funny intentionally or unintentionally (Lynch, 2002).

With regard to humor theories, it is widely acknowledged that humor emerged through perceptions of incongruity, relief, and superiority (Raskin, 1985; Berger, 1993). From the perspective of incongruity, surprise is the key of producing laughter. Veatch (1992) further explained that laughter occurs in the situation when discrepancies between what is expected to happen and what actually happens occur. Regarding the relief theory, people usually feel that

their stress or tension has been reduced when they experience humor and laugh. Telling jokes to relieve tension in situations is the application of relief theory. O'Donnell-Trujillo & Adams (1983) discovered that laughter during conversations psychologically assists in reducing stress and developing positive relationships between interlocutors. In terms of the superiority theory of humor, it is usually observed when people laugh because they feel triumphant over others which Lyttle (2007) reflected that the purpose of this type of humor is not for pleasure, but threat. this theory, people use humor to ridicule another's mistake; however, it limits to only a minor and slight mishap. It usually happens to make the persons who apply this theory feel better about themselves (Raskin, 1985).

Humor has long been in the spotlight for many researchers and has been studied in various aspects such as linguistic analysis, functions of humor, humor styles etc. (Hay, 2000; Holmes, 2006; Galloway, 2010; Stieger, Formann & Burger, 2010; Wangsomchok, 2016) and in different settings including business area (Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen, 2014; Lyttle, 2007; Ohja & Holmes, 2010; Murata, 2014; Rogerson-Revell, 2007). For example, a research conducted to compare humor use in business meetings between a Japanese company and a New Zealand company which indicated that the relational role of humor in business meetings was important in both settings and its results also demonstrated that the humor features found in both settings possibly reflected cultural differences (Murata, 2014). Hence, humor is an intrinsic factor of not only in our everyday life, but also at the workplace which can help reinforce company norm and strengthen and maintain the company culture.

It is widely acknowledged that laughter is generally associated with humor (Godkewitsch, 1976; Meyer; 2000). Successful humor can be influenced by shared cultural and knowledge backgrounds of interlocutors. This phenomenon can be seen through both verbal (words) and nonverbal responses (a grin, a laugh). When referring to nonverbal communication, it includes things such as posture, gesture, tone of voice, facial expression, touch and personal space (Hecht & Ambady, 1999). Interestingly, even though nonverbal communication is not words, it can connote meanings to other interlocutors. Take for example when people shake their heads with frowns on their faces, it is usually interpreted as disapproval. As a part of nonverbal communication, laughter is considered universal among humans and has been defined by many scholars. It can be described as a physiological response to humor and is a combination of gestures and a sound which reinforces and modifies what is said in words and conveys meanings and feelings of the speaker's emotional state to others (Brain, 2000; Ruch & Ekman, 2001). In line with this, Szameitat et al.'s reflection (2009) stated that "Laughter, thus, is an acoustical nonverbal vocalization, which carries information about the sender's emotional state that can be decoded by the listener" (p.402). As for this study, laughter was, therefore, defined as physical reactions including rhythmic sound and movement which could be shared or could stand alone during the discussion.

Studies on laughter have made an explicit link to humor (Duncan et al., 1990; Holmes, 2000; Greatbatch & Clark, 2003). Regarding Meyer (2000), laughter is a primary indicator which denotes the experience of humor. Nonetheless, from Provine's study (2000), the results showed that less than 20% of laughter incidents reacted to what interlocutors perceive humorous and laughter functioned as a period to punctuate the speech in natural breaks in conversations. His discovery suggests that only a small percentage of social laughter really has something to do with humor and signifies that laughter is not only a product of humor, but a form of communication. Regarding a great variety of perceptions of laughter, it is difficult to think how laughter could happen in a serious talk such as business meeting. Thus, laughter can possibly serve many functions depending on various factors for example the topic of the discussion, relationship between interlocutors, atmosphere in order to create and maintain a healthy business relationship. The roles and functions of laughter seem to be simple and well-understood; however, sometimes it can also be complicated and perplexing in certain contexts. For example, Murata & Hori (2007) explored how laughter assisted in creating and maintaining human relationships. They described some cultural differences in laughter and also pinpointed that the uses of laughter between American students and Japanese students were different. On the one hand, the American students laughed only when they perceived something "funny." On the other hand the Japanese students laughed when they found the conversation humorous and they also laughed "without obvious reasons" which the researchers categorized as "laughter following unlaughable utterance." When the American students did not understand, they decided to overlook their laughter. The result of this study showed that different groups can interpret laughter differently within the same discourse and context. Other types of laughter such as "balancing laughter for easing tension" and "laughter as a cover-up" were identified in Hayakawa's (2003) research. This brought two interesting questions to this study whether, in a business meeting, meeting members can laugh without humor as a stimulus and whether there are any other stimuli encouraging laughter to occur.

Hence, investigating the roles and functions of laughter, especially in an international business meeting not only helps widen the area of laughter study, but also helps gain understandings of other different cultures interpretation and use of laughter. As previously stated, many studies on laughter are associated with humor in various contexts, but equally laughter could be employed for other reasons.

METHODOLOGY

Context of study

In this study, the business meeting between Thai and Burmese business professionals examined was held in a company office in Yangon, Myanmar. The meeting context was selected due to the

fact that the meeting is the place where the participants' ideas are disseminated, and organizational knowledge and culture constructed. The meeting venue of this study is considered semi-formal since the participants held the discussion in an open plan office which provides flexibility, reduces unused space and fosters collaboration (Andrews, 2017). The research **participants in this study were from two countries which use English as a lingua franca. To clarify,** two were from Thailand and two were from Myanmar. A Thai engineer was leading the meeting with another Thai coordinator as his assistant. Both were in the meeting at all times including a Burmese project manager. However, a Burmese project coordinator was present when the topics were related to him.

Recording and observation began after the owners of the company and the research participants had granted permission and ethical approval was received from King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT).

The participants all met the following criteria:
- ✓ Employees of a joint venture between Thai and Burmese construction organizations
- ✓ They participated in business meetings involving Thai and Burmese business employees
- ✓ They were able to communicate in English

The names used in the transcription are pseudonyms (i.e. Th1, Th2, M1, M2). "Th" means Thailand and 'M' is Myanmar. Other people who were mentioned during the discussion but were not present in the meeting including the company names were written under pseudonym and were put into quotation marks for example "son," "yen," "mao," "temtem". The following are the research participants' demographic information of this study. The participants were four Business persons; two were Thai and the other two were Burmese.

Table 1
Demographic information of the participants

Participant	Position	Age	Education	English Proficiency	Remarks
Th1	Factory Engineer	35	A diploma in business studies in US A master at a famous public university in Thailand	Average	Conveying convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics or prompt questions with limited use of vocabulary.
Th2	Project Coordinator	34	A bachelor 's degree from a well-known public university in Thailand	Good	Having capacity to deal with technical terms used in the field.

M1	Project Manager	62	A high school diploma in Myanmar	Good	Having a wider range of vocabulary to discuss topics at length and using different communication strategies such as asking questions.
M2	Project Coordinator	37	A bachelor's degree in Myanmar	Average	Lacking in confidence when speaking

METHODOLOGY

Ethnography of communication (EoC) proposed by Gumperz & Hymes (1972) was applied in this study because of the following reasons. First, EoC allows the conversation to be examined. In addition, EoC enables ethnographic information which was regarded as complementary data for the analysis to be accessed. Blommaert (2010) reflected that ethnography method has an increased role in human communication study amidst globalization. Further, Bowe et al. (2014) stated that "ethnography does not preconceive social practices or categories but rather discovers them" (p.112). Ethnography of communication was, therefore, considered most suitable in investigating the use of laughter between the Thai and Burmese business professionals as the study does not only focus on laughter function in the conversation but also how they used it and what factors influenced laughter to occur.

Instruments

Participant observation and field notes were also employed during the business meeting in order to assist in collecting other nonverbal reactions which an audio recording could not do. Other nonverbal data functions as "additional assistance" to the analysis, but not a main focus of this study. Video recording was not used because participants considered it intrusive. However, photographs were used as visual aids to assist the researchers' and participants' memories which included the working environment, the meeting location, seating positions of participants, and the drawings. After the data was transcribed and analyzed, the participants were allowed to see the transcription and photos. The semi-structured interviews were conducted afterwards to check the transcription. The reason why the semi-structured interview was selected for this research was because of its strength which allows room for both researcher and research participants to discuss topics in more detail.

Data collection and data preparation

The field researcher attended 11 formal and semi-formal meetings in Yangon; however, only 4 meetings were recorded due to confidentiality. The recording of the second meeting at the office was selected for this study because of the total length of two hours and fourteen minutes. Although the chosen setting was the most formal compared to other settings, laughter occurred throughout the discussion. This attracted the researchers' interests. The recording equipment was on from when the meeting conversation started until it ended. The purposes of these meetings were mainly to solve problems, to make decisions, to review both ongoing and future projects and to set goals. In terms of the transcribing process, the researchers applied discourse transcription (Du Bois et al., 1992) to facilitate the analysis. The data was carefully and systematically transcribed following the discourse convention such as overlapping, rising and falling intonation, long sound, loudness etc. This helped the occurrence of laughter to be clear. Additionally, the use of discourse convention allowed the data to be viewed as a "naturally occurring interaction," (Dubois et al, 1992, p. 9).

Coding validity and reliability

The coding scheme was adapted from Hayakawa (2003) and Murata & Hori (2007). The original framework of laughter classification remained; however, the names of laughter types were changed for ease of understanding. The data was coded by separate coders. Two external inter-coders, a British instructor and a Thai instructor teaching English in leading public universities, were invited. This assisted in establishing the inter-coders reliability and reducing socio-cultural bias towards laughter coding.

In the first step of this process the researchers provided both inter-coders with the meeting transcriptions, audio recordings and the laughter classification scheme along with instructions of how to classify the types of laughter. The following is the coding scheme used in this study.

Classification of Laughter (Adapted from Hayakawa, 2003 and Murata & Hori, 2007)

1. Happy laughter:	Laughter occurs when the speaker thinks an ongoing conversation is amusing, and the speaker expects the listener to share the laughter.
2. Nervous laughter:	The laughter is used to soften the atmosphere of serious talk, for example, in conflict or negotiation situations.
3. Laughter of agreement:	The speaker / listener uses the laughter to express agreement and make the conversation more enjoyable. This type of laughter occurred mostly when the topic was related to work-related topic.

4 Threat softening laughter:	The laughter happens when the utterance is considered threatening listener's feelings or face which includes speech acts of, for example, "ordering, criticizing and suggesting."
5. Self-deprecating laughter:	The laughter is used when the speaker feels embarrassed or ashamed of what s/he is doing or saying.
6. In-filling laughter:	The purpose of the laughter is to maintain the speaker's turn.
7. Purposeless laughter:	The laughter has no clear purpose. It occurs to make the conversation more cooperative and smoother.
8. Laughter of evasion:	The laughter happens when the participants don't want to say something clearly or don't want to answer to a question.
9. Backchannel laughter:	The laughter means "I'm listening to you or I'm following you."

After receiving the results from both inter-coders, the points where both disagreed were further discussed and reviewed among the two inter-coders and the researchers. Then the data was reanalyzed to make the results clearer and more reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the semi-formal business meeting, laughter was found throughout the whole business conversation and used for different purposes as shown in Figure 1.

Result of Laughter

	Happy laughter	Nervous laughter	Laughter of Agreement	Threat Softening Laughter	Self-deprecating Laughter	In-filling Laughter	Purposeless laughter	Laughter of evasion	Backchanel laughter
▪ Laughter Percentage	36	20	18	12	4	4	2	2	2
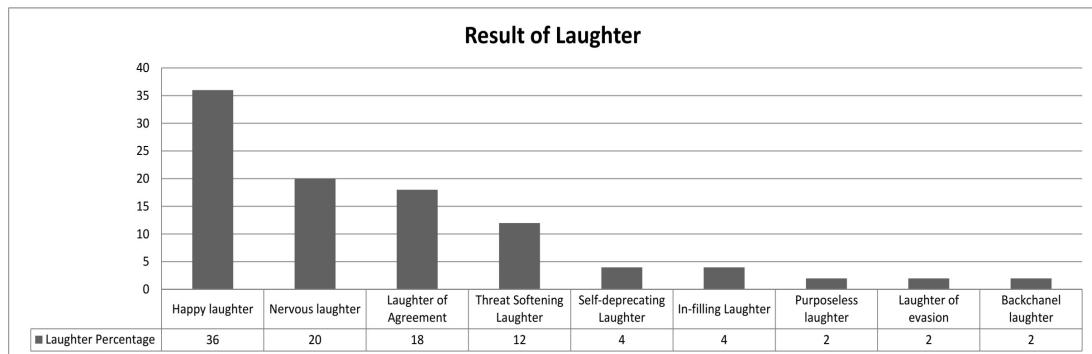
Figure1. Result of Laughter

Amongst the nine types of laughter, happy laughter (36%) was the most frequent, while nervous laughter, laughter of agreement and threat softening laughter were ranked second (20%), third

(18%) and fourth (12%) respectively. Other types of laughter, namely self-deprecating laughter (4%), in-filling laughter (4%), purposeless laughter (2%), laughter of evasion (2%) and backchannel laughter (2%) did not occur very frequently. Different types of laughter randomly occurred throughout the meeting as the pattern of this Thai-Burmese business meeting was spiral (Hoey, 1983,) and the topics of discussion did not strictly follow the meeting agenda. Thus, the meeting was more casual and allowed room for laughter to emerge in the conversation about work related and non-work-related issues.

The following will discuss the four most striking types of laughter found as not only their significant frequency shown, but also these four types represent certain personality traits of this particular group of business professionals. The other five types of laughter, with their occurrence of less than 5%, are considered insignificant as they might occurred by chance and with its small amount of information, their use cannot be concluded.

1. Happy laughter

In business meetings, discussions are expected to be formal and serious whilst humor and laughter are expected to be less common. In contrast to general expectations, the findings of this study demonstrated that the most common laughter in the Thai-Burmese business meeting was happy laughter. Conceivably, happy laughter may not be considered a pure business communication strategy but a strategy to strengthen their social and personal relationships to enable business run smoothly. This could also be seen as a character trait which is transferred from their cultural backgrounds. To explain, Thais are famed for their laid-back lifestyle and attitude towards work (Niratpattanasai, 2013), while Burmese people were considered easy-going and carefree (Yin, 2016) and one of the reasons that enabled both Thai and Burmese professionals to put a high value on interpersonal relations was that they were from the same cultural background which was collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). Therefore, they tend to share similar values and transfer each other's ethics to their business transactions. With this particular value, it was common practice for Thai and Burmese co-workers to spend significant time on non-work-related issues such as lifestyle, personal interests, and other small talk topics e.g. brand preference of mobile phone, flight, food. Unlike a typical small talk convention which usually starts at the beginning (McKay-Semmler & Semmler, 2013), in this study, small talk could happen whenever needed to help reinforce their rapport management and laughter itself could assist in maintaining relationships both in personal and professional levels.

Take for an instance, in Example 1, a non-work-related story about a restaurant that M1, Th1 and Th2 went to for brunch that morning was mentioned after a suggestion made by Th1 was put forward to M2 about how to politely decline a project offered by a Japanese company. When the conversation ended and before the participants moved onto other work-related topics, M1

brought up a small talk which was firstly delivered in Burmese language and then M1 asked Th1 to tell this story.

Example 1
Context: The talk began when M1 mentioned the place he took Th1 and Th2 to have brunch.

```
1 M1: having having breakfast this morning [haha]        'ykko' [haha]      [haha]
2 Th1:                               [ok]   k k 'ykko'        so  [big]  [portion] i
3 M2:                                                                [ykko][haha]
4 Th1: cannot [finish] it [even me] you know a lot
5 M1:      [haha]
6 M2:      [haha]
```

Before the meeting started, Th1 and Th2 were taken to a noodle restaurant called "ykko," located near the office. "ykko" was famous for large portions and M1 and M2 knew this very well. M1 asked Th1 to tell M2 where he had taken him and Th2 to lunch and when Th1 said "ykko," M2 repeated its name and then laughed. This signified that he had shared knowledge of "ykko" restaurant. In addition, when Th1 mentioned how large the portion was, both M1 and M2 burst into laughter again. The sound of laughter was louder because Th1 compared the portion of the dish to his body. To illustrate, Th1 was 181 centimeters tall and he had been a basketball player when he was in college. Everyone in the meeting knew that normally, he could finish a dish without problems, but not at "ykko."

Of note is that M1 knew what he was going to recount was amusing because after he hinted where he took Th1 and Th2 for brunch (line 1), he laughed. This was later supported by shared laughter produced by M2 (line 3). Both M1 and M2 seemed to have background knowledge of this restaurant. It was likely that M1 knew Th1 was about to mention the large portion of the dish. In addition, Th1 used his own physical appearance as the target of the joke and it was successful because of the presence of the laughter of M1 (line 5) and M2 (line 6).

This type of small talk serves as a means of transition between work and "sanuk" (fun) talk which oils the interpersonal wheel before returning to work-related issues in a friendlier atmosphere and shows that they were close with each other. Malinowski (1972) reflected that small talk can be regarded as free, aimless social intercourse. Although this type of talk is usually optional, it can serve an important social function in order to establish and maintain the relationship between interlocutors (Holmes, 2000; Spencer-Oatley, 2000).

Interestingly, happy laughter did not only occur when the topic and content were non-work issues but also occurred when the topic and its content were directly related to work issues. Happy laughter concerning the work which accounted for 60 percent of the happy laughter classification

implied certain working character traits of this professional group. With a relaxed attitude towards work, there were times when the participants made fun of the work, as in the next example when M1, M2, Th1 and Th2 were discussing one of the unfinished projects. There were certain unexpected and uncontrollable external construction factors which caused the delay. Delay is one of the major challenges in every construction project as late completion penalties can be costly and as everyone knows, in the business world, "time is money" (Franklin, 1748). Thus, this should have been a serious discussion to find a proper solution to the problem. Surprisingly, laughter was still there and not just one person laughed, but all.

Example 2
Context: The research participants were discussing the project deadline which was delayed for more than 3 months.

```
1 Th1:the 'ada'       what we can do
2 M1:     yeah                 hmm   i ah: al: for 'tiantian ' also i: contact
3      the owner and explain everything        that material almost arrive here
4 Th1:                hmm                          yeah  [yeah]
5 M1:                                        [and]
6      arrives here   just tem just give us some more days          yeah finish it <sigh>
7 Th1:                    <smile>             to finish it
8 M1: they told me ah they want to open the hotel ah:: during: december last year and if we
9      cannot finish they change to they plan to open the new year and     [then they]
10 Th1:                                  [haha]
11 Th2:                                  [haha]
12 M1:                                   [haha]
13 M2:    change again to [chi chinese] new year             now we are going to haha
14 Th1:          [songkran]
15 M1:                        [now]  the money
16 Th2:                  [haha]
17 Th1: ok last last new year      they gonna they can open
```

In Example 2, all participants agreed on the point that they did their best and it did not turn out as well as they expected; they seemed to accept the things that they could not change and were still positive about it. Welty (2016) considered this action as "Mai Pen Rai" concept which means "grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change" (p.165). Sometimes when things went wrong, they did not exert pressure on each other. On the other hand, they rather understood the situation and eased the tension up and one of the ways they did was making fun of work. It did not mean that the persons involved in the situation did not care, but when there was nothing

---

[1] 'tiantian' is a name of construction site project written under pseudonym.

they could do, they use the concept in Thai of "to get everyone off the hook," (Welty, 2006, p. 165).

Since they had worked together from the very beginning of the project, they shared background knowledge that its deadline had been delayed a couple of times and knew that it had several problems that needed to be solved. At first, the completion date was in December, however, the deadline needed to be postponed to New Year. When M2 was at this point (line 2), shared laughter happened (lines 3-5) among Th1, Th2 and M1. This was because they knew that the project was unable to meet the deadline as planned; therefore, its deadline was postponed, for the first time, to New Year. Nonetheless, the project missed the deadline again, which led to the overlapping speech between M2 and Th1 (lines 6 and 7). The different "New Years" they mentioned made Th2 laugh (line 9). In an interview, Th2 said that she laughed because she thought the concept of a New Year deadline was amusing. The International New Year and Chinese New Year (February) deadlines had already past because the recording was conducted in March. Thus, the final option would be "Thai New Year" or "Water Festival" in April. M2 knew about this and during an interview and expressed his thoughts saying that "we have to postpone its deadline and it is a coincidence that every time we change, it is changed to other New Year in different countries," and he found this coincidence amusing.

According to the interview data, both Thai and Burmese participants believed that a friendly and relaxing working environment had a significant impact on productivity and creativity. Th1 claimed although they laughed, it did not mean they did not take work seriously. Regarding this project, they encountered problems and tried their best to find proper solutions. However, what caused the project delay was not because of them and it was beyond their control. Therefore, Th1 affirmed that there was no point to have negative feelings towards this problem. Komin (1990) provided an interesting thought of how Thai was viewed. Thai people are considered to be flexible and situation-oriented, and their general attitude towards problems is "Tuk yang kae khai kan dai" which means everything can be fixed. This accords with Yin (2016) who reflected Burmese people "are naturally fun-loving and even in extremely hard times or crises they can still find something to laugh about" (p. 69). With similar positive attitudes towards life and work, they could develop good working relationship.

With regard to Thai - Myanmar relations, even though they have had difficulties in terms of politics and economy, they share the same borders, and are agricultural based economies which, to some extent, means they have similar ways of life. Hence, it is possible that Burmese employees had certain similar personalities to Thais. Even though integrating fun with work is a wise strategy to be used as a unique form of self-motivation to make strenuous work less boring. However, Welty (2006) deemed the characteristic feature of "always-finding-sanuk (fun)" or "sanuk" quality in this particular event to be double-edged sword because it might cause business

people from other different cultures to mistakenly think that they did not pay significant attention to their work and were neglectful. For this reason, it might disturb business persons from other countries and it takes some time for them to learn how Thais and Burmese people work.

2. Nervous laughter

Nervous laughter is usually used to soften the seriousness of the talk for example negotiation and conflict. The interplay of the nervous laughter as a communication strategy between Thai and Burmese business persons was observed from time to time when the tension became increasingly obvious. In Example 3, Th1, M1 and M2 were discussing the issue of the pay raise of the Burmese staff working in the joint venture in Myanmar. This request was first submitted some time previously by M1 and M2. However, they had not heard anything from the board of directors. It was important that the board of directors mutually agreed for important issues such as financial related-issue, therefore M2 wanted to know whether there was any progress made so that they could inform their staff.

Example 3
Context: The Burmese employees would like to know the updated news on the pay raise which they had been issued to the board of committee for a while.

1 M2:   now it's in the mid[dle of this] month   so let's wait one more [week] if they
2 M1:   [this month]   hmm   [week]
3 M2   don't give us within this week   we will confirm to them that   what's going on
4 Th1:   hmm   hmm
5 M2:   what we should do
6 Th1:   i'm i'm sorry about it you you might think that the 'obanon [2]' time
7   take [to talk about talk]
8 M2:   [no no i understand] [about the salary but]   but right after we got
9 M1:   [no no no no we understand haha:]
10 Th1: but right after we got the information from you   we send it out
11 M1:   hmm hmm
12 M2: i i [really] understand and we also know that ah you already discuss with mr 'amnuay'
13 M1:   [yeah]
14 M2: and mr 'amnuay' also talk to 'tcc' side   and M1 also: asked many times to push
15 M1:   hmm

---

[2] 'obanon' is a Thai company name written under pseudonym.

There was mounting tension when M2 mentioned how long this request had been pending and when he could inform his colleagues (lines 1, 3 and 5). Th1 responded with "hmm" (line 4) and a nervous look. Then Th1 started his talk by saying "I'm I'm sorry" in a low tone. His nervousness showed in his voice. It was obvious that Th1 did not want M1 and M2 to think their request had been ignored or deliberately delayed by the Thai party. Although Th1 had not finished his sentence, M2 asserted that "no no I understand." M2 observed that Th1 was tense and then apologized without having done anything wrong which made M2 feel uneasy. In addition, this statement was similarly repeated by M1 with laughter (line 9). When the atmosphere of the discussion became serious and tense, M1 used laughter as a communication strategy to make the situation become less serious, and sound more compromising.

This analysis was later supported by the interviews of M1 and M2. M1 insisted that it was not Th1's fault and both M1 and M2 understood that Th1 did not have the authority to make decision on this matter. However, they wanted to ask Th1 whether there was any news or any progress had been made. Personally, M1 thought that Th1 was very polite to say "I'm sorry" (line 6) and after that he could feel that Th1 wore tension on his face. Therefore, M1 believed that laughter might help. Noticeably, M1 was careful to preserve working relations with the Thai participant to create harmony in the office. As for Burmese business culture, it is important for relationships to be maintained and be smooth at all times (Yin, 2016). Likewise Th1 also needed to maintain good relations with the Burmese by making an apology and trying to explain what was happening. It could be observed that laughter was chosen as a positive politeness technique to minimize negative feelings between each other and maximize a healthy business relationship between Thai and Burmese business professionals. They both tended to place a high value on face issue (Brown and Levinson, 1987).This finding demonstrated that they valued maintaining good working relationships; they seemed to avoid negative feelings that spoiled the atmosphere of the discussion, and used laughter as one of their selected strategies.

3. Laughter of agreement

Agreement can be displayed in many forms of expression including through the use of laughter. In the workplace, laughter of agreement is supposed to be desirable as it creates a good working atmosphere and it signifies that the meeting is running smoothly. It is clear that in the workplace setting, business people not only reach agreements about work, but also about sarcastic comments such as when they talk about other people or other issues. Sometimes it can be entertaining and fun. In addition, this phenomenon can somehow provide interesting insight into the working climate of an organization (Georganta et al., 2014). It builds social bonds and also shows their in-group solidarity because they not only share information but also build trust between them. In Example 4, Thai and Burmese professionals discussed working styles of different companies, one of which was a Japanese company, "temtem" (line 8) that had not

impressed them. Th1 and M2 thought that the Japanese company was too detailed and not very helpful. In this example, the laughter of agreement noticeably occurred when they were sharing the story among them.

Example 4

Context: The research participants were talking about the way the Japanese company work which tended to be different from them.

1 M2: and you and mr 'panyawut' keep telling me there's a problem installation over there
2   because of the 'obanon' pro product but the main people they don't contact to me
3   anything about any [problem they didn't] tell me [about] the [installation] problem so i:
4 Th1:   [yeah yeah that that]   [uh hmm] [uh hmm]
5 M2: confirm them if there any problem they just told me no no problem at all   they
6 Th1:   hmm
7 M2: they didn't hear any of the problem yeah
8 Th1:   yeah it because the problem that 'temtem '
9   told me it's just screw in the it's a it's [it's] a normal normal
10 M2:   [yeah]
11 M1:   too easy ye haha
12   hahaha
13Th1:   too easy yeah i don't know [why they need the]
        <laughable tone>
14 M1:   [<sigh and shaking his head>]
15 M2:   [for the small thing] we don't need to go there to
16   instruct them but
17 Th1:   they they even ask 'obanon' [people]   find [to show them and
18 M2:   [yeah yeah]   [yeah yeah yeah yeah]
19 M1:   [oh::: hahaha] [haha]
20 Th1: instruct them what]

During the discussion, M2, M1 and Th1 talked about working with another international company and later they agreed that the staff of this company were not cooperative and usually made things complicated. M2 recounted what he had been through with the staff of that company then Th1 complained that they even requested basic installation training from the Thai company, which M2, Th1 and M1 agreed was unnecessary as the Japanese company should have been able to handle this by themselves. Noticeably, during this conversation, there were agreeable signals, "yeah" produced by Th1 (lines 4, 8, 13) and M2 (lines 7, 10, 18) to support one another while talking. In addition, there were times that Th1 took the turn from M2 and continued the talk

---

[3] 'temtem' is a Japanese company name written under pseudonym.

without hesitation (line 8 and 17) which indicated that M2 and Th1 shared the same story background. In line 12, Th1 pointed out that there was a simple solution to the problem of installation and then M1 said "too easy" which Th1 also agreed to by repeating M1's words with a laughing tone in his voice. This agreement became absolutely clear when Th1 expressed his obvious disapproval about the training (line 17) and it was apparent that he was distraught from the note change in his tone "what" at the end of his talk (line 20). While M2 used "yeah" as a signal of agreement, M1 said nothing, but the laughter he produced (line 19) was identified as showing his agreement on this issue and was also considered an indicator of in-group solidarity that showed they were on the same side in this matter. In a later interview, M1 said that he understood how Th1 felt about this story; he thought the training was needless and the Japanese staff could be demanding at times. However, he did not put his thought into words but laughed instead. Interestingly, without uttering anything, all participants seemed to understand each other very well.

Another difference was work cultures. The joint venture company (Thailand and Myanmar); they tended to simplify their work procedure and preferred to manage as much as they could by themselves to complete the mission. On the other hand, those of the Japanese company were interested in details and when they felt uncertain about something, they promptly asked for help. It would appear that the staff of the joint venture company and the staff of Japanese company could learn from each other. It would benefit the joint venture company to adopt some of the Japanese meticulousness and the staff at the Japanese company would benefit from learning how to simplify things to create a smoother work flow. This was an opportunity for them to understand each other, to tune in to another party's needs, and to finally find a solution that both parties could accept.

4. Threat softening laughter

The last major category of laughter is threat softening laughter. This usually occurred when the speaker perceived that an utterance was too threatening and wanted to use laughter to preserve face of the listeners whilst still emphasizing the need for cooperation from the other party in a friendly way. In Example 6, the discussion started when Th1 said that the performance of the Burmese staff in the joint venture company in the past year was not as productive as the Thai party expected.

Example 5
Context: The discussion started when Th1 said that the performance of the Burmese employees in the joint venture company in the past year was not as productive as the Thai party expected.

1 Th1: make it more productive we can   hit the target hundred million baht   yeah then we
2 M1: hmm

3 Th1:we can pay   other otherwise i i show you the number because otherwise if we pay
4   you this much right but cannot hit hundred million baht company corrupt   don't
                              <laughable tone>
5 M1:   [yeah]
6 M2:   [hmm]
7 Th1:have money to pay you don't have the the profit   so that's the key   so
8 M1:   hmm   hmm
9Th1: show so right after they increase the money for you ok we set the target   and then
10   we go but this year maybe er: we have to i think we we experience some you know
11   something that we should do and something we should not do in a couple year
12   passed right
13 M1:   yeah

In terms of management, Burmese colleagues were responsible for managing the marketing of the business in Myanmar; however, they could not achieve the sales target, which led to lower profits compared to the year before. In addition, the conversation became more serious when Th1 told M1 and M2 that the company could be in financial difficulties (line 4) to show that he was serious about their working performance and that he wanted them to improve. Even though it was a joint venture company, the Thai party owned the majority of company's shareholding. In addition, in this meeting, Th1 was assigned to talk about this issue to the Burmese party on behalf of the board of directors from Thailand. Therefore, Th1 was likely to have more power over the Burmese colleagues. However, as most Thais favor compromising to avoid conflict, Th1 used a laughing tone in his voice when he said "company corrupt" to soften the threat he made. Claramita et al. (2013) affirmed that Southeast Asian culture places high value on harmonious relations and to avoid conflict which accords with Kardkarnklai's study (2009) that Asian people tend to avoid conflicts. Nonetheless, in some cases, they had to confront the conflict, but in their own way. In Example 6, Th1 needed them to know that he meant what he said but he did not want to be "too aggressive." Thus, he decided to apply this laughter strategy to make the statement gentle but firm. As Bachorowski & Owren (2001) mentioned in their research, voiced laughter elicits positive emotions in the listeners. Interestingly, M1 and M2 also knew that this laughter tone was not one of enjoyment, but carried the sense of seriousness; hence there was no shared laughter. Rather, M1 and M2 responded briefly to Th1 with "yeah" and "hmm" in lines 5, 6 and 8. However, Th1's use of a laughing tone alone was not sufficient to make this conversation successful, as it required verbal communication together with some non-verbal factors such as hand gestures and facial expressions to enable other listeners to understand his intention.

CONCLUSION

Almost all human activities around the world have become interconnected, and frequently, English is the chosen language for the medium of communication as in the context of the study. Moreover, it was observed that both Thai and Burmese business professionals could adapt themselves to communicate with each other throughout the business meeting discussion. The role of English employed between Thai and Burmese business professionals was based on the concept of BELF and even if their English did not conform to traditional English standards, in the end, they could both produce effective and successful communication as there no misunderstandings occurred during their talk. In addition, this leaves room for a communication strategy such as laughter to perform an "assistant role" in order to facilitate and co-construct the intelligibility to occur in their business discussions and to assist the flow of communication to be smoother.

Interpreting laughter is not a straightforward task since it involves a number of factors which are, for example, familiarity with the context, paralinguistic cues, cultural assumptions and non-verbal communication because the laughter could have different meanings in different situations. To elucidate, happy laughter was provoked when amusing jokes or words together with the non-verbal behavior occurred. For instance, in Example 1, Th1 used a hand to draw in the air to show how big the meal was or when Th1 made a self-deprecating joke. He also made a funny facial expression and pointed at himself. These two occurrences created continuous laughter to other interlocutors. Each time that laughter is produced, it does not only signify certain meanings to the hearers, but it also connotes and shares the cultural aspects to each other. Further, these four distinctive types of laughter are regarded as successful communication strategy which is applied in the business meeting between Thai and Burmese business professionals in a joint venture.

This research suggests that Thai and Burmese people place a value on "maintaining good relationships". No matter how serious the discussion was, they attempted to manage it without damaging the business relationship. These findings accord with Komin's analysis (1990) that the Thai national value of "maintaining a good social relation," is one of the values which remains unchanged. Furthermore, this specific value appears not only in Thai or Burmese societies, but also appears in an international business community where the people from two countries are present. Another value presented in the paper was both Thai and Burmese are concerned with the issue of face. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987, p. 62), defines positive politeness as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others executors." When positive politeness is used within the group, it represents an indication of an in-group solidarity marker. Noticeably, the use of politeness strategies through laughter assisted in creating a positive and friendly talk which kept the business running smoothly. Kardkarnklai (2009, p. 160) stated that positive talk in an amusing way not only helps maintain a close

relationship, but also promotes a relaxed atmosphere and softens possible conflicts happening during discussion.

Failure to consider trivial non-verbal behaviors such as laughter in international meetings can lead to misunderstandings and an undermining of effective of inter-organizational collaboration. Ferraro (2002, p.7) notes that one obvious reason of failing in the overseas business setting often results from an incapacity to perceive and adjust to foreign ways of thinking rather than from professional incompetence. Laughter is a part of culture and culture is not transmitted genetically, but is transmitted through the process of learning. Therefore, if you want to understand and grasp the implications of laughter, it is important to experience it in actual settings, and to think and analyze. Simply reading a transcript and listening to recordings might be inadequate for interpreting laughter.

The results of this research demonstrated interesting and thought-provoking messages of the use of laughter in a meeting between Thai and Burmese business persons. From the results, they shared and understood their workplace communication, and to a certain extent each other's culture. Therefore, there were no misinterpretations and misunderstandings found in this study; they knew when it is appropriate to produce and use laughter and when laughter was needed in their discussion. Laughter might be considered a small unit compared to other components occurring in a meeting. However, this study showed that laughter was an effective tool. Different types of laughter were discovered and various aspects were identified as factors which provoked participants to produce laughter for example intentions to maintain good business relationships, to make fun of work, to ease tension and to threaten other interlocutors. Additionally, this research assists in broadening our understanding of the laughter used in an international meeting between Thai and Burmese business professionals. To be able to raise the awareness of cultural-specific of the business persons in this region enables the business persons from other cultures to be prepared and to create a better understanding; hence, misjudgment would occur less. The heart of interpersonal communication such as meetings is shared meanings between persons. It is not only about exchanging verbal messages but it is also about interpreting the functions and implications of additional communication strategies, such as laughter.

Nonetheless, the study has limitations in terms of limited access to literature about Myanmar culture and people because its country was closed off to the rest of the world for years and not many scholars have done research on socio-cultural issues in Myanmar.

THE AUTHORS

Tabtip Kanchanapoomi holds a BA from Kasetsart University and an MA from the University of Sydney. She is a PhD candidate at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. Her research interests include World Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca and Sociolinguistics.

tkanchanapoomi@gmail.com

Wannapa Trakulkasemsuk is an associate professor at the Department of Language Studies, School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology. Her research interests include World Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, language and communication and corpus-based language analysis.
wannapa.tra@kmutt.ac.th

REFERENCES

Andrews, D. C. (2017). A space for place in business communication research. *International Journal of Business Communication, 54*(3), 325-336.

Arent, R. (2009). *Bridging the cross-cultural gap: Listening and speaking tasks for developing fluency in English*. Michigan, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Atkinson, C. (2015). Self-deprecation and the habit of laughter. *Florida Philosophical Review, 15*(1), 19-36.

Bachorowski J. A., & Owren M. J. (2001). Not all laughs are alike: Voiced but not unvoiced laughter readily elicits positive affect. *Psychological Science, 12*(3), 252–257.

Berger, A. A. (1993). *An anatomy of humor*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Bhasin, B. B. (2010). *Doing business in the ASEAN countries*. New York, NY: Business Expert Press.

Blommaert, J. (2010). *Sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bowe, H., Martin, K., & Manns, H. (2014). *Communication across cultures: Mutual understanding in a global world*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Brain, M. (2000). *How laughter works*. Retrieved from http://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the mind/emotions/laughter.htm.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Claramita, M., Nugraheni, M. D. F., & van der Vleuten, C. (2013). Doctor-patient communication in Southeast Asia: A different culture?. *Advances in Health Sciences Education: Theory and Practice, 18*(1), 15-31.

Crawfords, C. B. (1994). Theory and implications regarding the utilization of strategic humor by leaders. *The Journal of Leadership Studies, 1*(4), 53-68.

Deterding, D. (2013). *Misunderstandings in English as a lingua franca: An analysis of ELF interactions in South-East Asia*. Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter.

Deterding, D., & Kirkpatrick, A. (2006). Emerging south-east Asian Englishes and intelligibility. *World Englishes, 25*(3/4), 391–409.

Du Bois, J. W., Cumming, S., Schuetze-Coburn, S., & Paolino, D. (1992). Discourse transcription. *Santa Barbara Papers in Linguistics, 4*, 1-225.

Duncan, W. J., Smeltzer, L. R., & Leap, T. L. (1990). Humor and work: Applications of joking behavior to management. *Journal of Management, 16*, 255-278.

Ferraro, G. P. (2002). *The cultural dimension of international business*. New Jersey, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Franklin, B. (1748). *Advice to young tradesman*. Retrieved from http://founders. archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-03-02-0130.

Galloway, G. (2010). Individual differences in personal humor styles: Identification of prominent patterns and their associates. *Personality and Individual Differences, 48*, 563-567.

Georganta, K., Panagopoulou, E., & Montgomery, A. (2014). Talking behind their backs: Negative gossip and burnout in hospitals. *Burnout Research, 1*, 76-81.

Godkewitsch, M. (1976). Physiological and verbal indices of arousal in rated humour. In A. J. Chapman & H. C. Foot (Eds.), *Humour and laughter: Theory research and applications* (pp. 117-138). London, UK: Wiley.

Greatbatch, D., & Clark, T. (2003). Displaying group cohesiveness: Humour and laughter in the public lectures of management gurus. *Human Relations, 56*. DOI: 10.1177/00187267035612004.

Gumperz, J., & Hymes, D. (1972). *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Haakana, M. (2010). Laughter and smiling: Notes on co-occurrences. *Journal of Pragmatics, 42*, 1499-1512.

Handford, M., & Matous, P. (2015).Problem-solving discourse on an international construction site: Patterns and practices. *English for Specific Purposes, 38*, 85-98.

Hay, J. (2000). Functions of humor in the conversations of men and women. *Journal of Pragmatics, 32*, 709-742.

Hayakawa, H. (2003). *"The meaningless laugh": Laughter in Japanese communication* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sydney). Retrieved from https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/656

Hecht, M.A., & Ambady, N. (1999). Nonverbal communication and psychology: Past and future. *The New Jersey Journal of Communication. 7*(2), 1-15.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. California, CA: Sage Publications.

Holmes, J. (2000). Doing collegiality and keeping control at work: Small talk in government departments. In J. Coupland (Ed.), *Small talk* (pp. 32–61). Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.

Holmes, J. (2006). Sharing a laugh: Pragmatic aspects of humor and gender in the workplace. *Journal of Pragmatics, 38*, 26-50.

Holmes, J., & Stubbe, M., (2015). *Power and politeness in the workplace: A sociolinguistic analysis of talk at work*. Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Kankaanranta, A., & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2010). English? – Oh, it's just work!: A study of BELF users' perceptions. *English for Specific Purposes, 29*(3), 204-209.

Kankaanranta, A., & Planken, B. (2010). BELF competence as business knowledge of internationally operating business professionals. *International Journal of Business Communication, 47*(4), 380-407.

Kardkarnklai, U. (2009). Conflict-softening in Thai-Japanese business discourse. In F. Ramallo, A. M. Lorenzo, X. P. Paulo-Rodriguez & P. Cap (Eds.), *New approaches to discourse and business communication* (pp. 153–170). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Komin, S. (1990). *National character in the Thai nine values orientations*. Retrieved from http://www.fulbrightthai.org/data/culture/TALES%20OF%20THAILAND.doc

Lehmann-Willenbrock, N., & Allen, J. A. (2014). How fun are your meetings? Investigating the relationship between humor patterns in team interactions and team performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 99*(6), 1278-1287.

Linstead, S. (1985). Jokers wild: The importance of humour in the maintenance of organizational culture. *Sociological Review, 13*(3), 741-767.

Louhiala-Salminen, L., & Charles, M. (2006). English as the lingua franca of international business communication: Whose English? What English? In C. Palmer-Silveira & F. E. A. Ruiz-Garrido (Eds.), *Intercultural and international business communication: Theory, research, and teaching* (pp. 27-54). Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.

Lynch, O. H. (2002). Humorous communication: Finding a place for humor in communication research. *Communication Theory, 12*, 423 - 445. DOI:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2002.tb00277.x.

Lyttle, J. (2007). The judicious use and management of humor in the workplace. *Business Horizons, 50*, 239-245.

Malinowski, B. W. (1972). Phatic communion. In J. Laver & S. Hutcheson (Eds.), *Communication in face-to-face communication* (pp. 146-152). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Martineau, W. H. (1972). A model of the social functions of humor. In J. Goldstein & P. McGhee (Eds.), *The psychology of humor* (pp. 101-125). New York, NY: Academic Press.

Marakaki, V., Merlino, S., Mondada, L., & Oloff, F. (2010). Laughter in professional meetings: The organization of an emergent ethnic joke. *Journal of Pragmatics, 42*, 1526-1542.

Meyer, J. C. (2000). Humor as a double-edged sword: Four functions of humor in communication. *Communication Theory, 10*(3), 310-331.

McKay-Semmler, L. M., & Semmler, S. M. (2013). The art of making conversation: Learning the skills small talk. *Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal, 40*, 48-55.

Murata, K. (2007). Laughter in Japanese business meetings – A relational perspective. *Wellington Working Papers in Linguistics, 19*, 1-20.

Murata, K. (2014). An empirical cross-cultural study of humour in business meetings in New Zealand and Japan. *Journal of Pragmatics, 60*, 251-265.

Murata, K., & Hori, M. (2007). Functions of laughter in intercultural communication: An analysis of laughter as a communicative strategy. *国際社会文化研究所紀要　第９号*, 115-124.

Niratpattanasai, K. (2013). *Bridging the gap: Managing the cross-cultural workplace in Thailand.* Bangkok, Thailand: Thailand Asia Books.

O'Donnel-Trujillo, N., & Adams, K. (1983). Heheh in conversation: Some coordinating accomplishments of laughter. *Western Journal of Speech, 47*, 175-191.

Ojha, A. K., & Holmes, T. L. (2010). Don't tease me, I'm working: examining humor in a Midwestern organization using ethnography of communication. *The Qualitative Report, 15*(2), 279-300.

Provine, R. R. (2000). Laughter: *A scientific investigation.* New York, NY: Penguin.

Raskin, V. (1985). *Semantic mechanisms of humor.* Boston, MA: Reidel.

Ruch, W., & Ekman, P. (2001). The expressive pattern of laughter. In A. Kaszniak (Ed.), *Emotion, qualia and consciousness* (pp. 426-443). Tokyo, Japan: Word Scientific Publisher.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2000). Introduction: Language, culture and rapport management. In H. Spencer-Oatey (Ed.), *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures* (pp. 1-8). New York City: NY, Continuum.

Stadler, S. (2019). Laughter and its functions in Japanese business communication. *Journal of Pragmatics,141*, 16-27.

Stieger, S., Formann, A. K., & Burger, C. (2011). Humor styles and their relationship to explicit and implicit self-esteem. *Personality and Individual Differences, 50*, 747-750.

Szameitat, D. P., Alter, K., Szameitat, A., Darwin, C. J., Wildgruber, D., Dietrich, S., & Sterr, A. (2009). Differentiation of emotions in laughter at the behavioral level. *Emotion, 9*(3), 397-405.

Veatch, T. C. (1998). A theory of humor. *Humor, 11*(2), 161-215.

Wangsomchok, C. (2016). A linguistic strategies to express humor in Thai context. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity, 6*(6), 462-465.

Welty, R. (2016). *Thai culture and society*. Bangkok, Thailand: Thailand Asia Books.

Yin, S, M. (2016). *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A survival guide to customs and etiquette*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions.