UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF CROSS-CULTURAL CODE SWITCHING OF GLOBAL VIRTUAL TEAMS IN KNOWLEDGE SHARING

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A thesis submitted to the Ghazalie Shafie Graduate School of Government in fulfilment of the requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Management Universiti Utara Malaysia

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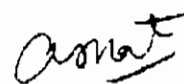
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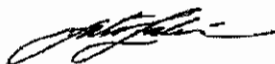
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ABSTRACT

Globalization is reshaping the international business landscape and shifting traditional work structures to a more flexible, dynamic, and virtual work structure. —This has led to the use of Global Virtual Team (GVT) —which has become a common working structure in most organisations, with email being the most popular medium for global virtual teams to bridge the language barrier gap. However, cultural diversity has resulted in miscommunication, which has had an impact on the virtual business environment. Despite the absence of face-to-face interaction and a diverse cultural background, virtual team members could adjust their communicative behaviour to account for the lack of nonverbal cues and cultural differences. The cross-cultural code-switching concept, which refers to the shifting of behaviour when people communicate in a foreign setting, served as the foundation for this study, which aimed to explore and understand the cross-cultural code-switching process of high-context GVT members. Twenty-two (n=22) Malaysian employees who participated in a GVT were interviewed for the study. The qualitative research method with semi-structured online interviews was used to collect data. To gain a better understanding of the cross-cultural code-switching process, the data was analysed using a qualitative content analysis with an inductive approach. The findings revealed that high context GVT members switched cross-cultural codes in three stages: initiation, convergence switching, and internalisation. It also discovered the cultural factors and reasons for the switch, as well as the challenges that high context GVT members faced when switching communication styles. This study theoretically extended Hall's cultural context in a virtual setting and bridged Molinsky's cross-cultural code-switching model with intercultural communication theory. In practical sense, this study proposed a cross-cultural code-switching training for effective intercultural communication in a virtual setting. This that would help various GVT stakeholders, including Human Resource managers and GVT project leaders to communicate more effectively with people from other cultures.

Keywords: Global virtual team, Cross-cultural code switching, Knowledge sharing, High-context and Low-context, Communication Accommodation Theory, Qualitative content analysis, digitalisation, computer mediated communication.

ABSTRAK

Globalisasi sedang membentuk semula landskap perniagaan antarabangsa dan mengubah struktur kerja konvensional kepada struktur kerja yang lebih fleksibel, dinamik dan maya. Lantaran, penggunaan —Pasukan Maya Global (GVT)— telah menjadi struktur kerja biasa dalam kebanyakan organisasi, dengan e-mel menjadi medium paling popular untuk pasukan maya global merapatkan jurang halangan bahasa. Walau bagaimanapun, kepelbagaian budaya telah mengakibatkan jurang komunikasi, yang memberi kesan kepada persekitaran perniagaan maya. Walaupun tiada interaksi bersemuka dan latar belakang budaya yang pelbagai, ahli pasukan maya boleh menyesuaikan tingkah laku komunikatif mereka untuk mengambil kira kekurangan isyarat bukan lisan dan perbezaan budaya. Konsep penukaran kod silang budaya, yang merujuk kepada peralihan tingkah laku apabila individu berkomunikasi dalam suasana asing, digunakan sebagai asas untuk kajian ini, yang bertujuan untuk meneroka dan memahami proses penukaran kod silang budaya konteks-tinggi ahli GVT. Dua puluh dua (n=22) pekerja Malaysia yang menyertai GVT telah ditemu bual untuk kajian ini. Kaedah kajian kualitatif secara temu bual dalam talian separa berstruktur digunakan untuk mengumpul data. Untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang proses penukaran kod silang budaya, data dianalisis menggunakan analisis kandungan kualitatif dengan pendekatan induktif. Dapatan kajian mendedahkan bahawa ahli GVT konteks tinggi menukar kod rentas budaya dalam tiga peringkat: permulaan, penukaran penumpuan dan internalisasi. Kajian ini juga menemui faktor-faktor budaya dan sebab-sebab penukaran, serta cabaran yang dihadapi oleh ahli GVT konteks tinggi apabila menukar gaya komunikasi. Kajian ini secara teorinya meluaskan konteks budaya Hall dalam suasana maya dan merapatkan model penukaran kod silang budaya Molinsky dengan teori komunikasi antara budaya. Secara praktikal, kajian ini mencadangkan latihan penukaran kod silang budaya untuk komunikasi antara budaya yang berkesan dalam persekitaran maya. Ini akan memanfaatkan pelbagai pihak berkepentingan GVT, termasuk pengurus sumber manusia dan pemimpin projek GVT untuk berkomunikasi dengan lebih berkesan dengan individu berlainan budaya.

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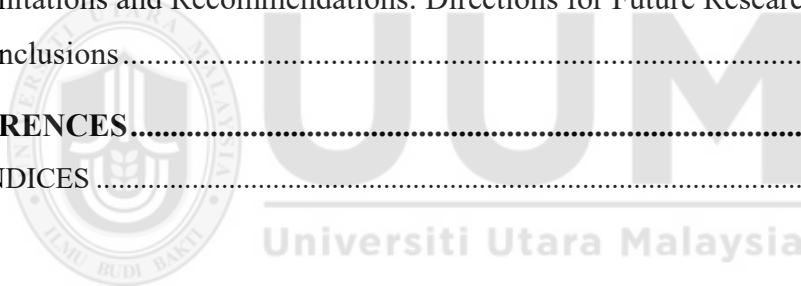
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

x

LIST OF APPENDICES

xi

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

xii

GVT	Global Virtual Team
C^3S	Cross-cultural Code Switching
KS	Knowledge Sharing
HC	High-context
LC	Low-context
CAT	Communication Accommodation Theory
ICC	Intercultural Communication

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Globalisation is shaping the international business landscape and shift the typical work structure to a more flexible, dynamic, and virtual work structure—Global Virtual Team (GVT) and it has become a typical working structure in the most organisation (Samul & Petre, 2019). Globalization also expands business transactions from multiple enterprises to multiple countries, crossing national borders (Ying-Chang, Cheng, & Chien, 2011). One result of these trends has been the burgeoning of multinational corporations (MNC) and a shift from collocated work structures to work structures distributed across multiple countries. Helmold (2021) recently highlighted that pandemic COVID19 had turned virtual teams into the new office concepts and this new office concept offer flexibility for the workers to work from anywhere in the world. Today, a compelling reality faced by multinational corporations (MNCs) is that workers are no longer constrained with the typical 9-5 jobs in a collocated workspace with homogenous team members. Instead, MNCs need to be prepared to manage flexible work structures in which their human resources are made up of heterogeneous team members, collaborating and networking remotely. Major MNCs such as Intel, Cisco Systems, Microsoft, IBM and Toshiba have moved towards this new work structure (Badrinarayanan, Madhavaram, & Granot, 2011, Silva, 2021), taking advantage of its more flexible and dynamic virtual setting to enhance their international business opportunities and Derven (2016) stated that GVT work structure

is becoming the "new normal" where business expand across borders. With the new digitalisation trend such as cloud computing, it makes the business process and communication in an organisation easier and more effective (Silva, 2021). The pandemic COVID-19 that turned the office environment into remote workplace has forced the organisations across the globe to embrace in flexible digital solutions.

Both studies and real-world experience have shown that a virtual work setting provides tremendous benefits to the organization, including a flexible working environment (Ebrahim et al., 2009; Kayworth & Leidner, 2000; Nurmi & Hinds, 2016, Helmond, 2021), reduced travel costs and inconvenience (Zakaria & Talib, 2011), and more effective research and development which leads to better output and increased coordination (Ebrahim, Rashid, Ahmed, & Taha, 2011). Ferrazzi (2014) reported that almost 80% of workers nowadays work in dispersed teams. According to the 2019 Global Teams Survey, as of 2018, 70% of Trello's employees working remotely across the globe, and 63% of all departments in an organisation have team members who work remotely (SHRM, 2019). In other words, globalization has shifted the work environment from the conventional physical basis to a new, more advanced virtual work setting, often referred to as the global virtual team (GVT).

In a GVT, each team member comes from a different part of the world and brings with them their own cultural values, beliefs, norms, and unique patterns of interaction, including communication styles (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim & Heyman, 1996; Holtbrugge, Weldon, & Rogers, 2012). In 2019, Globalization Partners conducted a survey with 464 global human resource professionals and the result indicates that 48% of the corporate team are now utilizing a virtual work

14

structure and their virtual team never meet in person daily. At the individual level, 86% of the respondents reported that they are now works on virtual teams at least weekly. Thus, the expansion of the virtual work environment requires extra attention to the development of effective intercultural communication through the socialization process.

According to Gudykunst et al. (1996), socialization is the most appropriate way for people to learn about their own values and the values of others. One way of activating the socialization process in a GVT is through knowledge-sharing activities, during which knowledge related to the project is shared among team members. Team members need to acquire an understanding of their cultural differences and diverse communicative behaviours to achieve effective knowledge sharing and improve team performance. However, knowledge sharing in a GVT often lacks non-verbal elements of communication, since a GVT operates virtually due to geographical dispersal of its members. On top of that, differing communication styles employed by team members from different cultural backgrounds during the knowledge sharing process can result in severe miscommunication (Daim et al., 2012; Ebrahim et al., 2009; Goodman & Bray, 2015; Izumi, 2010; Jane Lockwood, 2015; Shachaf, 2008; Velmurugan, Narayanasamy, & Rasiah, 2010). Despite these communication barriers inherent in GVTs, it is important for team members to develop a set of competencies that enable them to accommodate differences in communication styles to ensure effective intercultural communication.

In any virtual environment, a person adapted his or her communicative behaviour to accommodate another individual cultural different (Anawati & Craig, 2006;

15

Molinsky, 2007; Wang, Fussell, & Setlock, 2009). Specifically, knowledge sharing activity in a GVT involve project and non-project related knowledge. The knowledge is shared and transferred through groupware system and multiple communication tools such as email, videoconferencing and social media (Wei, 2007).

The examples of knowledge sharing activity in a GVT are personal conversation – formal and informally, mentoring, on job training, job rotation and staff development, giving feedback, negotiation and other business communication activity (Alavi & Leidner, 1999; Molinsky, 2007). Communicating cross-culturally require people to alter their communicative behaviour and especially when cultural diversity is involved to maintain effective communication. Meanwhile, Molinsky's cross-cultural code-switching framework, illustrated that there were 5 factors that influence people to switch their behaviour during the interaction—norm complexity, norm discrepancy, psychological safety norms, cultural knowledge and personal values. For example, people switch when the communication expectations are not fulfilled and to avoid embarrassment, people will switch the communicative behaviour.

In a different situation, when people encounter norm or cultural discrepancy, they will accommodate the differences to ensure the communication efficacy. Furthermore, Molinsky points out three different states that made people to switch their behaviour; when they experienced face threat or need validation, when they encounter performance difficulty or demand for efficacy and when they experience identity conflict which requires them to fit in the cross-cultural communication.

Thus, this qualitative study aims to explore cross-cultural code-switching during knowledge sharing in a GVT work structure by gathering detailed information from

professionals (engineers and team leaders) engaged in GVT work structures in Malaysia. The data which will be collected in this study will provide a deeper understanding of cross-cultural code switching.

1.2 Problem statement

Communication is at the heart of most international business transactions and it extremely important in international business. Specifically, intercultural communication plays an important role in sharing knowledge, building, and maintaining relationships, negotiating deals, and establishing and maintaining partnerships. Previous studies agreed that successful communication is recognized as a critical factor in the operation of multinational companies at the interpersonal, group, and organizational levels (Barner-Rasmussen, Ehrnrooth, Koveshnikov, & Mäkelä, 2014; Felin, Foss, & Ployhart, 2015; Szkudlarek, Osland, Nardon, & Zander, 2020). Engaging in business involving different cultures without knowing the other cultures often leads to embarrassing mistakes or making a business partner feel slighted, resulting in ineffective communication. The main reason for this problem is a lack of understanding of cultural differences and the assumption that doing business with people from another culture is just business. For example, Shi and Wang (2013) identified poor adaptability of business communication and language barriers as the major issues in cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese business expatriates, while Cheng and Seeger (2012) reported that the failure of an international merger and acquisitions deal between Ben-Q and Siemens was due to communication issues.

In a different context, Hinchcliff-Pelias and Greer (2004) and Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) demonstrated that communication styles are a main contributor to communication difficulties for international students. All the above-mentioned studies reported one consistent finding: a failure in intercultural communication, which was due to significant cultural differences in communication styles, language, and cultural practices.

The digital age has changed the way business is done, which many organisations have had to adapt to compete and survive in globalised markets. In addition, cross-cultural communication in a virtual environment faces even greater challenges as communication becomes dependent on technology. Thus, globalisation and the increasing use of GVTs reinforce the need for effective intercultural communication in international business (Aripin, Mustafa, & Hussein, 2010; Daim et al., 2012; Klitmøller & Lauring, 2013; Lockwood, 2015; Shachaf, 2008; Zakaria & Talib, 2011, Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020). Specific GVT problems caused by significant cultural differences include the inability of individuals to communicate effectively (Daim et al., 2012), team members' use of different communication styles and communicative behaviours (Aripin et al., 2010; Shachaf, 2008; Zakaria & Talib, 2011), and differences in language proficiency (Klitmøller & Lauring, 2013). All these lead to communication issues.

Miscommunication impedes effective knowledge sharing and dampens GVT team performance (Kauppila, Rajala, & Jyrama, 2011; Li, 2010; Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020; Velmurugan et al., 2010). In recent study by Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020), they highlighted geographical distance as one of the main challenges in GVT. In

particular, geographical distance resulted in low trust between team members and the level of technical competence of team members in using communication technology is another problem (Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020). Meanwhile, Kauppila et al. (2011) identified geographical and cultural diversity as one of the factors that hinder knowledge sharing in a GVT, while Velmurugan et al. (2010) found that people, culture and technology were the three main factors that affect knowledge sharing in a GVT, and noted that GVT members were unable to coordinate their communication styles and ways of thinking during knowledge sharing due to cultural differences.

However, several studies have demonstrated how adaptation and switching can enable people to overcome communication issues in both face-to-face and virtual environments. For example, studies by Adair and Brett (2005) and Pekerti and Thomas (2003) of face to face settings described the ability of people from high-context cultures (e.g., Asian) to adapt to low-context (Western) communication styles and alter their communicative behaviour to accommodate the cultural differences. A number of studies by Benet-Martinez and colleagues (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Ying-yi Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000; Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter, & Pennebaker, 2006) have focused on switching behaviours of bicultural individuals. In the virtual setting, Wang, Fussell, and Setlock (2009) and Anawati and Craig (2006) demonstrated cross-cultural adaptation, while Qiu, Lin, and Leung (2013) and Zakaria (2015) reported switching behaviour by people from different cultural backgrounds.

All these studies focus on switching behaviour among bicultural individuals, report the outcome of the adaptation and switching behaviour, or reveal factors that influence

people to adapt or switch their behaviour. Regardless of the context of the study (i.e., face-to-face, or virtual setting), all these studies reported similar findings: they revealed the flexibility of high-context culture individuals in their communication styles and observed a tendency among Asian individuals (denoted as high-context) to switch their behaviour in a virtual setting. However, none of these studies explored the process by which people from different cultural backgrounds know when to modify their behaviour navigate their behaviour during this adaptation or switching, especially during a knowledge sharing activity in a GVT setting.

Molinsky (2007) introduced the concept of cross-cultural code switching, defined as a person changing their behaviour when communicating in a foreign setting. Molinsky theorized that people attempt to switch their communication styles to accommodate different cultural norms by engaging in culturally appropriate behaviours. However, this concept suffers from some limitations. First, this is a new concept and there are few empirical studies to support it. Second, the concept is centred on the psychological and emotional aspects of the individual engaged in cross-cultural code switching, while any theory of adaptation or switching of communicative behaviour should investigate all possible aspects. Later studies by Qiu et al. (2013) and Molinsky (2013) focused on switching behaviour, but both merely investigated the reason why people attempt to switch and examined the factors that influence the switching process. Study by Zakaria (2015) explored switching of communicative behaviour in a GVT but only in a written context (email).

Thus, to understand the extent to which people from different cultural backgrounds alter their communicative behaviour in a virtual work structure, this study explores cross-cultural code-switching during knowledge sharing in a GVT. By understanding this process, it will help to uncover the reasons for switching and factors that influence the cross-cultural code-switching process.

Apart from the specific research question, the lack of GVT research in a Malaysian context is one of the motives for this study. To date, a limited number of research studies have focused solely on GVT topics in Malaysia; these include Manea, Radzi, Rahman and Haron (2021), Soon and Salamzadeh (2020), Tan, Ramayah, Teoh and Cheah (2019), Ebrahim, Ahmed, and Taha (2009), Aripin, Mustafa, and Hussein (2010), Ramayah et al., 2003 and Zakaria and Talib (2011). The issues discussed were virtual team effectiveness in ICT-facilitated businesses organizations, the leadership in virtual teams, team performance of Malaysians virtual teams and Malaysians working in culturally diverse GVTs. In addition to the paucity of research on GVT topics in a Malaysian context, existing studies on GVT topics in general are scant. With the growing number of organizations that are adopting GVTs, more studies on GVT topics are very much needed.

To summarize: This study attempts to fill a gap in the research on GVTs in Malaysia and on switching behaviour in a virtual environment; specifically, it attempts to explore and understand the cross-cultural code switching of high-context people during knowledge sharing in a GVT.

1.3 Research Questions

The goal of this study is to understand the extent to which high-context team members switch their communicative behaviour during knowledge sharing in a global virtual team (GVT). The specific research questions to be answered are:

a) How does cross-cultural code-switching process occur during knowledge sharing activities in a GVT?

b) Why do high-context GVT members switch their communicative behaviour and what are the cultural factors that influence high-context GVT members to switch their communicative behaviour?

c) What are the challenges that high-context GVT members encounter when they must switch their communicative behaviour?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to understand the extent to which GVT members alter their communicative behaviour during knowledge sharing activities in a GVT. Specific research objectives are:

a) To understand the cross-cultural code switching by high-context GVT members during knowledge sharing activities

b) To identify the intention and cultural factors that influence high-context culture GVT members to code switching during knowledge sharing activities in a GVT work structure

c) To explore the challenges that high-context GVT members encounter when they switch their communicative behaviour during knowledge sharing activities when working in a GVT

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is twofold. The theoretical implications are expected to add to the cross-cultural management literature. Practically, the expected findings will benefit the multiple stakeholders involved in the deployment of GVT work structures.

1.5.1 Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributed to the cross-cultural management field since the focus is on intercultural communication. The globalization and expansion of international business through virtual setting show the growth of MNC everywhere and shifting of work structure. Thus, it is crucial to understand the impact of culture in international business communication context, particularly in a virtual workspace. Expanding our understanding of cross-cultural code-switching process provided a new perspective on cross-cultural adaptation in communication. Cultural differences can either enhance or diminish communication effectiveness, thus the application of Hall's high- and low-context cultural dimension and of Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory will explain our exploration of effective intercultural communication among people from different cultural backgrounds in a GVT work structure. On top of that, previous studies on these two theories were mostly conducted

in a face-to-face setting; hence, the GVT work structure as virtual platform will provide a new perspective in a different context.

1.5.2 Practical implications

This study offers a new insight to multiple stakeholders that are involved in GVTs, including global HR managers, GVT leaders and GVT team members. The shifting of MNC work structures towards the virtual requires employees who participate in GVT to be competent in communicating with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The findings of this study can be used to identify best practices in intercultural communication during knowledge sharing in GVT work structure, and to develop cultural awareness of others. For global HR managers and GVT leaders, the findings contribute to the development of proper intercultural training frameworks for people who will be working with Malaysians in GVTs. For GVT team members, the findings help to build competency in intercultural communication during knowledge sharing activities in a GVT, thereby nurturing team effectiveness through cross-cultural collaboration.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted within Malaysia with the high-context Malaysian working in a GVT as the sample for the study. Malaysian employees were chosen as respondents because Malaysia represents a high-context culture. The research context is MNCs in Malaysia because 1) MNCs often have multicultural teams and thus intercultural communication is required, and 2) MNCs frequently have teams that work

in a virtual setting, indicating the increased use of GVTs in Malaysia. Specifically, researcher interviewed twenty-two (n=22) high-context Malaysian employees in northern and central region of Malaysia via online platforms such as Google Hangout and WhatsApp.

1.7 Definition of Key Concepts

1.7.1 Culture

Culture in general refers to the characteristics of a particular social group or organization, encompassing everything from language and religion to attitudes, behaviours and communication styles. Joy and Kolb (2009) pointed out that although research on culture spans many different disciplines, scholars have come to a common ground in defining culture. For Hall (1976, p.20), culture is a "way of life of a people: the sum of their learned behaviour patterns, attitudes and material things." Hofstede (1991, p. 5) used the analogy of a computer program, defining culture as the "collective programming of mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." In short, culture describes the unique characteristics of a group of people who have a shared set of norms, attitudes, and beliefs.

1.7.2 Intercultural Communication

Key scholars in intercultural communication, Gudykunst (2003), simply defined intercultural communication as "communication between people from different cultures" (p.1), meanwhile, Chen and Starosta (1998) stated that intercultural communication is the study of the influence of culture on a person's attitudes, beliefs

and behaviour in the attempt to reduce misunderstanding due to cultural diversity. Based on the above, in this study we define intercultural communication as occurring when two or more culturally different people try to communicate despite their differences in attitude, beliefs, norms and communication styles.

1.7.3 Cross-cultural Code Switching

Cross-cultural code switching refers to the ability of an individual to modify his or her behaviour in specific situations to accommodate diverse cultural practices in communication. The term "code switching" originates from the sociolinguistic field and refers to a person's use of alternate language in their interaction with different people in different situations. Molinsky borrowed this term and added the adjective "cross-cultural," defining cross-cultural code switching as "the act of purposefully modifying one's behaviour in an interaction in a foreign setting in order to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behaviour" (Molinsky, 2007, p. 624). Molinsky further asserts that this switching refers to the adoption of foreign or unfamiliar behaviour and that it requires the ability to handle psychological challenges that arise when people interact in a foreign setting. Following Molinsky, this study defines cross-cultural code switching as the adjustment of communicative behaviour for the purpose of behaving in an appropriate manner in a virtual work setting. This requires flexibility on the part of an individual to adapt to the different cultural norms and communication styles present in a GVT.

1.7.4 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is a communication activity in which individuals that possess tacit (intuitive; rooted in context, experience, and practice) and/or explicit (codified in a physical form) knowledge. By transferring and exchanging this knowledge, individuals will possess two different kinds of knowledge: that which they acquired on their own and that which they gained from others (Hendriks, 1999; Hooff & Ridder, 2004; Nonaka & Toyama, 2003; Zakaria, Amelinckx, & Wilemon, 2004).

1.7.5 Global Virtual Team (GVT)

A GVT is a group of workers who are geographically dispersed and use information communication technology (ICT) and/or Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) tools to communicate with one another. Although team members are dispersed organizationally and often from diverse cultural backgrounds, they work together (Ebrahim et al., 2009; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1998; Lilian, 2014; Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020) towards a common goal (Horvath & Tobin, 2008; Jarrell, 2020; Pazos, 2012). Yusof and Zakaria (2012) asserts that GVT employ a work structure that is heavily dependent on information communication technology and composed of people from different cultural backgrounds, meanwhile, Maznevski and Chudoba (2000) defined GVT as internationally distributed groups of people with an organizational mandate to make or implement decisions with international components and implications. They rarely meet in person, conducting almost all of their interaction and decision-making using communications technology (Jarrell, 2020; Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020).

1.8 Summary

This chapter reviewed past research on GVTs and outlined the problem statement. The research questions and objectives were then described, followed by the expected significance of the study and definitions of the key concepts. In the next chapter, the focus will be on thorough review of previous literatures that is related to this research.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to this study. We begin by defining culture, its characteristics, and its layers and levels. The next section then describes intercultural communication and its process, and reviews past studies of intercultural communication in the virtual environment. Next, we introduce and conceptualize cross-cultural code-switching behaviour as the groundwork of this dissertation and review previous relevant studies. Following this, the global virtual team (GVT) is presented along with a detailed summary of past studies on GVTs and their associated cultural challenges. One common GVT activity, knowledge sharing, is also reviewed. Finally, we provide an extensive review of the two theoretical frameworks on which our model is based: Communication Accommodation Theory and Hall High-Context and Low-Context communication is presented. The structure of the literature review is illustrated as in Figure 2.1 below.
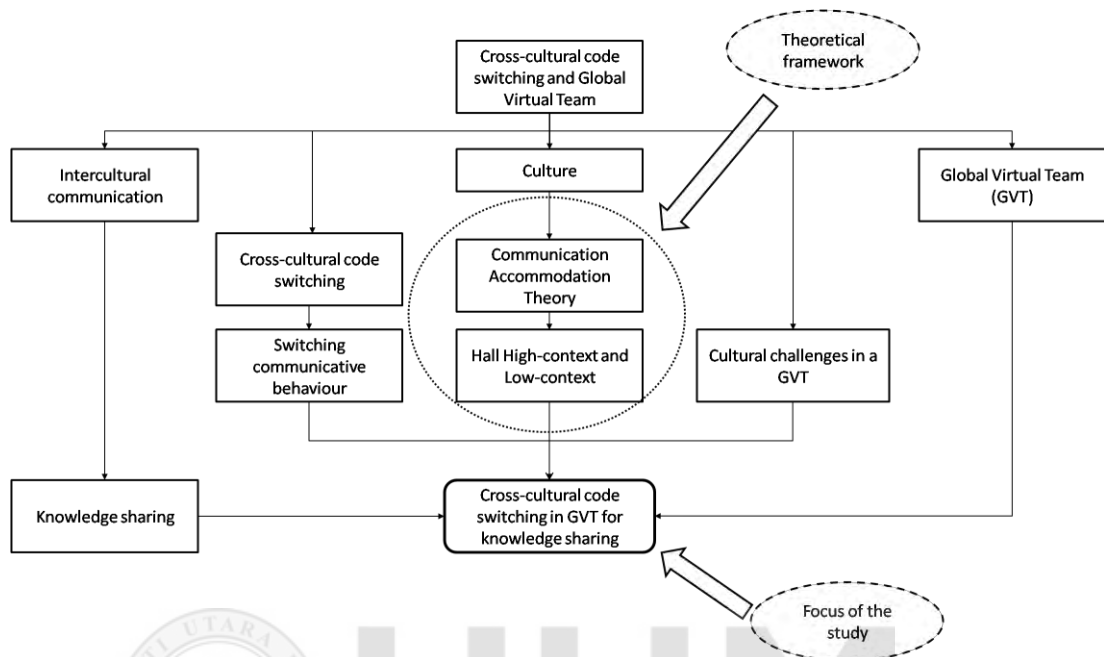
Figure 2-1 Literature review structure

2.2 Overview of Culture

Cultures are intricate and multifaceted, yet culture is important in describing the unique characteristics of group of people. The concept of culture is complex and hard to define; American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) identified over 160 different definitions of culture. Ferraro further pointed out that even among anthropologists who claim culture as their guiding conceptual principle there was no consensus regarding its definition (Ferraro & Ferraro, 1997; Smircich, 1983).

According to Joy and Kolb (2009), however, although research in cultures spans in different disciplines, scholars have come to more or less common ground in defining culture itself. In general, culture refers to the characteristics of a specific group of people, defined as everything related to them including religion, language, ritual, food, fashion, mode of living, and communication styles.

30

The earliest definition of culture comes from Taylor, who described it as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man [i.e., mankind] as a member of society" (Taylor in Ferraro & Ferraro, 1997). Hall sees culture as "[the] way of life of a people; the sum of their learned behaviour patterns, attitudes and material things" (Hall, 1959, p. 20). In line with Hall, Hosftede described culture as "collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 5). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner identified culture as "man-made, confirmed by others, conventionalized and passed on for younger people to learn" (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2000, p.24). Perhaps the broadest definition comes from Ferraro, who says, "Culture is everything that people have, think, and do as members of their society" (Ferraro, 1997, p.15).

The above definitions tell us that every human is attached to a culture (Ferraro, 1997). Culture can be viewed from many different perspectives: a way of life, a collective programming, or even a man-made invention; but culture exists so that people will be able to live together within a community and adapt to their surroundings. Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2007) view culture as a blueprint of people's life activities. People need guidelines by which to structure their lives and help them avoid deviating from their society's norms. For example, this blueprint may help teach a child to respect their elders, or a mother learns to prepare food for her family or encourage people to respect their society's customs. An important characteristic of culture is that

31

it's something we can learn; as Hofstede says, "Culture is learned, not inherited" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 5).

2.2.1 Culture Characteristics

Despite the various and complex definitions, culture possesses several consistent characteristics (Ali & Brooks, 2008; Hofstede, 1991; Samovar et al., 2007).

a) Culture is learned – Culture is learned, not inherited. An individual normally learns his own culture (enculturation) but can also learn the cultures of others. For example, a Chinese American boy who was born in America may develop American traits while at the same time he learns to speak and write Chinese.

b) Culture is shared – Culture is collective among all members of the group, not specific to an individual. A culture's norms, belief and values are commonly shared and practiced by all people within the culture (yet it is not homogenous).

c) Culture is dynamic – No culture remains permanently in the same state. Culture constantly changes to meet new situations. Some old parts of a culture may be lost when they are no longer applicable, and new cultural traits may be added to replace the old ones. For example, the cultural custom of sending postcards when travelling abroad became irrelevant as faster communication media evolved; today people are more likely to post pictures on social media to share their travelling experiences.

d) Culture is based on symbols – A symbol can take many forms, such as dress, objects, religious icons, flags, gestures, and currency. The most important element that symbolizes a culture is language.

e) Culture is an integrated system – Culture is holistic; all aspects of a culture are interconnected. A culture's values are related to its norms, beliefs, customs, and religion. To understand a culture, one must learn about all its parts, not only a few.

2.2.2 Layers of Culture

Culture is ubiquitous. It reflects a collective thinking and influences the environment surrounding a group of people. Within the same group, different levels of culture are in operation. However, scholars have illustrated the layers of culture differently. For example, Hofstede's illustrated the manifestations of culture through the onion diagram, as shown in Figure 2.2.
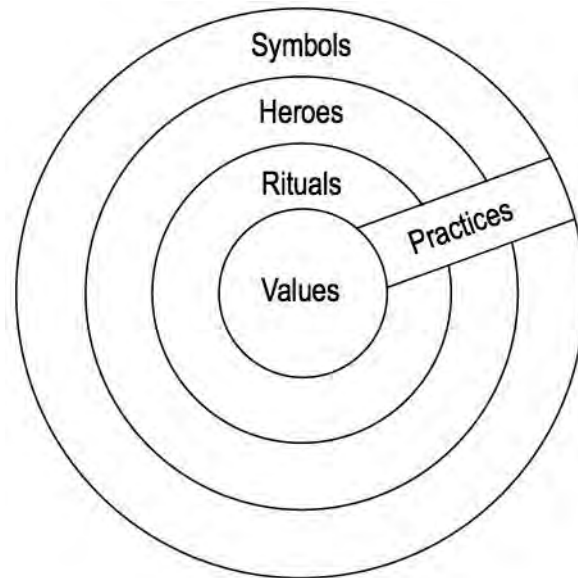
Figure 2-2 Hofstede's Onion Diagram (Hofstede, 1991)

The onion model has four layers with "values" as its core. The core is influenced by history, and it remains largely the same over time. The next layer is rituals, which could include way of life, how people greet each other and how people eat their meals. For example, consider different styles of greeting: The Japanese bow, while in other countries men and women do not shake hands or hug. The next layer, heroes, refers to role models in a particular society or group. Heroes have a strong influence on the culture. The outermost layer, symbols, is tangible things such as architecture, fashions or flags that represent the culture's values and beliefs.

Trompenaars & Turner (1997), on the other hand, envisioned culture in three layers, as shown in Figure 2.3.

34
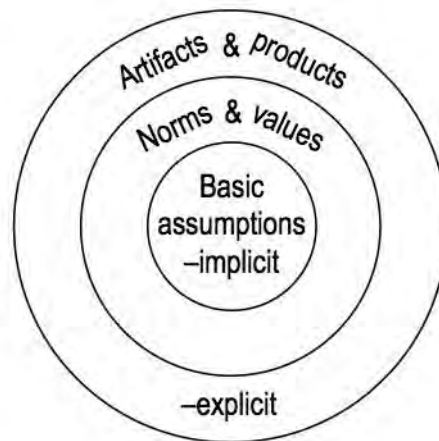
Figure 2-3 Three-layer Model of Culture (Trompenaars & Turner, 1997)

Like Hofstede's onion model, the outer layer is artifacts and products, which are equivalent to symbols and may include language, buildings, monuments, and fashions. The second layer, norms and values, refers to the mutual sense a group or society has of what is right and wrong, or good and bad. For example, Korean and Japanese bow when they greet people because this custom is embedded in their culture. When westerners that come to Asia bow in greeting, they are doing so because Asians do it – because it is what we call a norm. The core layer of this model is the set of basic assumptions that underlie the values of a culture.

These different descriptions of cultural layers illustrate the complexity of culture. Explicitly, a building, a flag and fashions can describe culture as it reflects the culture values. Meanwhile, norms and values such as attitude, greeting styles explain culture implicitly. Despite its complexity, the layers of culture by Hofstede and Trompenaars and Turner help to describe the concept of culture collectively.

2.3 Intercultural Communication

2.3.1 What is Intercultural Communication

In the 1950s, during the post-World War II era when the United States came to dominate the world stage, many American diplomats were sent overseas by the U.S. government. However, they received little or no preparation in how to work with people from different cultures and the language training they received in the U.S. Federal Government's primary training institution was insufficient for them to work effectively abroad. Hall's work in intercultural communication began in the training institution, where his focus was on practical and applied intercultural training, and his career there helped to nurture the field of intercultural communication. "Many concepts utilized today in the field of intercultural communication had been formulated in the decades prior to the intellectual heyday of the Foreign Service Institute from 1951 to 1955" (Rogers, Hart, & Miike, 2002, p.8).

Hall focused on the micro-level behaviours that comprise interactions between people of different cultures, and he and his colleagues developed intercultural training material as one of the "pre-departure" courses for Americans who would be working abroad (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Through the development of this training material, they discovered new ways of looking at culture and communication. The term "intercultural communication" was first used by Hall and his colleagues as they began to explore how people from different cultures communicate with one another (Martin & Nakayama, 2010).

Hall (1959) believed that culture is communication and communication is culture (p. 20). At its most basic, communication is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of thoughts, messages or information by or to or between different people (Adler, 1991a). Communication can occur in different contexts, such as with others in our social group (interpersonal communication) or with people from different cultures (intercultural communication). The way people interact is strongly influenced by their cultural values. Martin and Nakayama (2010) believe that culture is associated with intercultural communication because cultural differences shape people's communication styles and the way they interact. Culture and communication are interrelated; while communication is influenced and shaped by cultural values, culture is also shaped and learned through communication. A study by Amir (2009) demonstrates that culture not only influences communication between employees, but also influences the organization as a whole.

In recent years, the description of intercultural communication has varied but the core components remain the same: culture and communication. For example, Martin and Nakayama (2010) found that culture, communication, context, and power are key components in understanding intercultural communication. Cultural values can be used to illuminate aspects of intercultural communication. Context refers to the setting in which communication takes place, and it also affects intercultural communication. While power is invisible, yet it plays an important role in intercultural interactions.

Chen and Starosta (1997, as cited in Hu & Fan, 2011) define intercultural communication as the study of the influence of culture on an individual's attitudes, beliefs and behaviour; their goal is to reduce misunderstandings due to cultural

differences. Goettsch (2014) states that intercultural communication is a multidisciplinary field that incorporates communication, anthropology, linguistics and culture; its goal is to understand how humans communicate and understand each other despite their differences. Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005), on the other hand, define intercultural communication simply as "people of two different ethnic groups or cultures trying to communicate, perhaps despite their differences" (p. 19).

Drawing on the above descriptions, the definition of intercultural communication in this dissertation is "a process that occurs when a group of people of different cultural backgrounds communicate while at the same time maintaining their own cultural values." Everyone involves in intercultural communication brings their own unique communication traits (verbal and non-verbal) which are deeply rooted in their own culture – the one in which they grew up and which they practice. Thus, the exchange of information through intercultural communication is much more challenging, and clear transmission of messages requires a good understanding of the process of intercultural communication.

2.3.2 Intercultural Communication Process

Communication connects people. It is a way of conveying information and requires understanding the context of the information being conveyed. Communication is complex as it encompasses many methods of communication: verbal, non-verbal, interpersonal, written, and visual. Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin, Korac-Kakabadse, and Savery (2001) define communication as a process of information sharing by multiple persons, wherein the information is significant to at least one of the persons involved. Adler describes communication as the exchange of meaning, creating a shared

meaning of information, ideas, or even feelings. Adler also believed that communication is "your understanding of what I mean," thus communication requires a mutual understanding (Adler, 1991, p.1). The basic components of communication are a sender, a receiver, and a message. A message is created by the sender (encoded) and sent to the receiver who understands (decoded) the meaning of the message. Communication is bidirectional because both sender and receiver play an active role in encoding and decoding the message being transmitted, as illustrated in Figure 2.4.
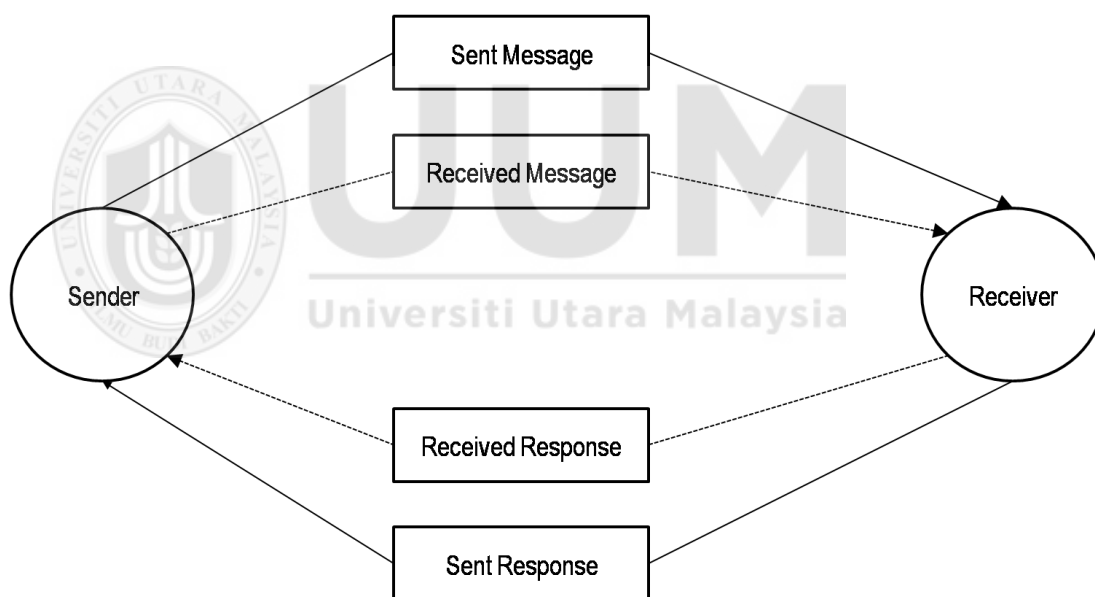
Figure 2-4 Communication Model (Adler, 1991)

Intercultural communication is therefore a process of sending and receiving messages between an individual from culture A and an individual from culture B (Adler, 1991; Szalay, 1981). However, Adler underscored the risk of intercultural miscommunication since the individual from culture B might not properly decode the message from culture A, thus they will not receive the correct information. She also asserted that the greater the cultural differences, the greater the chance of

39

miscommunication (Adler, 1991); this is supported by Leinonen (2015), who said that "often the misunderstandings in intercultural communication come from the differences in how people view communication in different cultures" (p. 15).

Studies by Hinchcliff-Pelias and Greer (2004) and Spencer-Rodgers and Mcgovern (2002) found communication styles to be important contributors to difficulties in intercultural communication. For example, Hinchcliff-Pelias and Greer (2004) found that misunderstandings due to language barriers and poor communication skills were among the reasons why international students are reluctant to engage in intercultural interaction. It is because they were unable to express themselves due to the language differences and frustration associated with the inabilities to communicate in a common language. Meanwhile, Spencer-rodgers and Mcgovern (2002) reported that foreign students in the United States suffer from communication difficulties due to cultural differences in non-verbal communication styles and inability to blend in with the host culture.

Leinonen's (2015) communication model emphasizes the role of cultural values in communication. Specifically, cultural values shape individual communication styles, and the meaning of a message is grounded in individual cultural values. Intercultural communication is thus complex due to "cultural noise," with "noise" being defined as anything that distorts the message being sent. According to Blackwell Reference (http://www.blackwellreference.com/), cultural noise refers to any obstacle to effective communication between people from different cultures. These obstacles may include differences in language or communication style, misinterpreted non-verbal

cues, conflicting cultural values, and more. Leinonen (2015) points out that too much cultural noise can lead to a communication failure.

A study by Cheng and Seeger (2012) attributed the failure of an international merger and acquisitions deal between BenQ and Siemens to "cultural noise." This deal, between a German company (coming from an individualistic culture) and a Taiwanese company (a collectivistic culture) was due to the significant gap in culture and communication practices. In a similar vein, Shi and Wang (2013) identified language barriers and differences in communication styles as the major issues in cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese business expatriates.

The different communication styles of high-context and low-context individuals led to errors, both verbal (word confusion, grammatical mistakes and bluntness in communication) and non-verbal (personal space, eye contact). Keles (2013) found that the English language is a barrier to effective communication. Based on his interviews of exchange students from European countries, half reported that they had a hard time with even basic communication with locals, because not many of them could speak English well. This led to many misunderstandings. Non-verbal communication was another issue highlighted by Keles.

Significant differences in non-verbal cues such as smiling, eye contact, proximity and hand gestures can be easily misinterpreted since the meanings of these cues differ from one culture to another. Intercultural communication in a virtual setting thus faces an even greater challenge since communication is reliant on technologies which largely do not support non-verbal communication. The next section explores in detail intercultural communication in the virtual environment.

41

2.3.3 Intercultural Communication Studies at the Virtual Context

Communication that involves a single culture is consistent, whether the communication occurs in a face-to-face or virtual setting. But when communication involves people from different cultural backgrounds, their communication styles may diverge to the point of causing miscommunication (Anawati & Craig, 2006; Daim et al., 2012; Jane Lockwood, 2015; Shachaf, 2008; Sundar, 2013). A business deal that involves different cultures without knowledge of one another can lead to embarrassing mistakes, or cause one of the parties to feel offended, thus making the communication ineffective. The main cause of this problem is an individual's lack of competency in coping with cultural differences and the assumption that business deals with people from different cultures are just business deals like any other. In a face-to-face intercultural communication setting, Shi and Wang (2013) identified poor adaptability of business communication and language barriers as major issues in cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese business expatriates.

Given the reliance many cultures place on non-verbal cues in communication, intercultural communication in a virtual setting faces even greater challenges since it relies on technologies that do not support, or poorly support, non-verbal cues. Table 2.1 (see appendix) summarize past studies on intercultural communication in the virtual environment.

Daim et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative study to investigate factors that contribute to communication breakdown in virtual matrix-managed teams. Their results demonstrated that intercultural communication was the main problem in GVTs. The problems stemmed from individual team members' inability to communicate

effectively due to cultural differences. In a virtual setting, different cultural orientations have different communication styles, which influence the way we interact and perceive the messages sent by others and the lack of non-verbal cues also have impact on effective communication. Shachaf (2008) examined the impact of cultural diversity on team effectiveness in a GVT setting and observed that cultural differences led to miscommunication since team members from Asia practiced different communication styles than team members from Western countries.

Similarly, Wang, Fussell, and Setlock (2009) conducted a study in a laboratory environment with university students of mixed nationalities (American, Hong Kong, Chinese and Taiwanese) currently residing in the United States and fluent in English. The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of individual cultural backgrounds, cultural composition, and communication medium on group brainstorming sessions. They found that Chinese participants were able to adapt to American communication styles, but that the Americans were unaware of the cultural differences and therefore did not adapt. This indicates that people are able to adjust and adapt to differences in communication styles in a virtual setting and that individual cultural background is a powerful influence on communication. Sundar (2013) conducted a qualitative study to explore how team leaders address the challenges of cross-cultural and virtual communication in the workplace. His findings were similar to those of Shachaf (2008), who found that miscommunication was among the main challenges in the cross-cultural virtual workplace, along with differences in language and business practices. To address those challenges, team leaders must be able to accommodate different business practices and communicate carefully and clearly.

In sum, past studies in intercultural communication in the virtual environment have all found that miscommunication due to cultural factors (e.g., language, values, habits) is a significant challenge. Yet clear and effective intercultural communication is extremely important when conducting international business. Thus, it is crucial to understand the causes of intercultural miscommunication and identify effective solutions.

2.4 Conceptualising Cross-cultural Code Switching

"Culture is communication and communication is culture," according to Hall (1959, p. 169). Culture and communication are firmly interlinked. An individual's modes of communication are shaped by his or her culture, and communication is a primary channel for the spread of culture. People communicate the way they do because they are raised in a particular culture and taught a specific language, cultural practice, and code. Different cultures have different practices, so a good understanding of other cultures facilitates effective cross-cultural communication. In the business world, the rise of globalization requires the ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures and countries. It is not necessary for people to accept or like these cultural differences, but they must be willing to adapt to differences in communication styles and cultural practices if they wish to work effectively in an international environment.

Cross-cultural code-switching (Molinsky, 2007), culture-specific frame-switching (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, Morris, et al., 2002) and shifting (Shorter-Gooden, 2009), are all psychological constructs connected to code-switching (Green & Wei, 2014;

Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). All of these categories are based on the idea of altering elements of an individual (e.g., language, conduct, and mannerisms) to adapt to some context-specific norms (Johnson, Mattan, Flores, Lauharatanahirun, & Falk, 2021). Molinsky (2007) introduced the term "cross-cultural code switching" in cross-cultural communication in a foreign setting and this concept forms the basis of this dissertation. In this study, researcher adopted cultural frame switching concept which is similar to a cross-cultural code switching. Table 2.2 summarizes these two concepts and their common research areas. Cross-cultural code switching takes the concept of code switching from the field of linguistics and applies it to cross-cultural communication. It is concerned with the shifting of behaviour when people communicate in a foreign setting. Since cross-cultural code-switching concept is a new concept, the only definition of it to date is Molinsky's own (Table 2.2). Cultural frame switching is concerned with the shifting of cultural values by individual possessing dual cultural identities (bicultural people).

Table 2-1

Definitions of Cross-cultural Code Switching and Cultural Frame Switching

Concept/Details	Cross-cultural Code Switching	Cultural Frame Switching
Author	Molinsky, 2007	Hong, Benet-Martinez, Chiu, & Morris, 2003; Hong, Zhan, Morris, & Benet-Martinez, 2016; Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter, & Pennebaker, 2006
Definition	"The act of purposefully modifying one's behaviour, in a specific interaction in a foreign setting, to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behaviour" (p.623)	"Bicultural individuals shift values and attributions in the presence of culture-relevant stimuli" (Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter, & Pennebaker, 2006, p.100) "Biculturals engage in a process called cultural frame switching, where they shift between their two cultural interpretive frames in response to cues in the social environment." (Cheng, Lee, & Benet-Martínez, 2006, p.742) "The individual shifts between interpretive frames rooted in different cultures in response to cues in the social environment" Hong et al., 2016, p.709)
Research Area	Cross-cultural communication	Biculturalism

2.4.1 Cross-cultural Code Switching

In developing the concept of cross-cultural code switching, Molinsky borrowed the idea of code switching from sociolinguistics. Generally, code-switching can be explained in different ways in different disciplines. The practice of code-switching at the individual level helps to establish social boundaries in interactions and between different individuals (Scotton & Ury, 1977). Meanwhile, in pedagogy, code-switching has been conceptualised as a tool for students to learn to classify different dialects in appropriate scenarios (Wheeler et al., 2004). In sociolinguistics, code-switching describes switching between languages or dialects of the same language (Das, 2012). Psychologists, on the other hand, describe code-switching as an impression management strategy that involves adjusting aspects of one's appearance, behaviour, or even expression in different contexts and it is not limited to a linguistic practice (McCluney, Durkee, Smith, Robotham, & Lee, 2021). He noted that cross-cultural code switching is like linguistic code switching, but that it focuses on switching of behaviour during interaction, with the additional involvement of emotions. He described interaction as a specific business communication activity, such as giving feedback or negotiating, that occurs in a cross-cultural setting, (Molinsky, 2007). Molinsky's main assumption is that people switch as an attempt to accommodate different cultural norms and thereby exhibit appropriate behaviour. Switching is a way to create a desired social impression during an interaction in a cross-cultural setting. Molinsky formulated a framework to conceptualise his cross-cultural code-switching concept and illustrate the psychological challenges that arise during behavioural switching in a cross-cultural setting (see Figure 2.5).
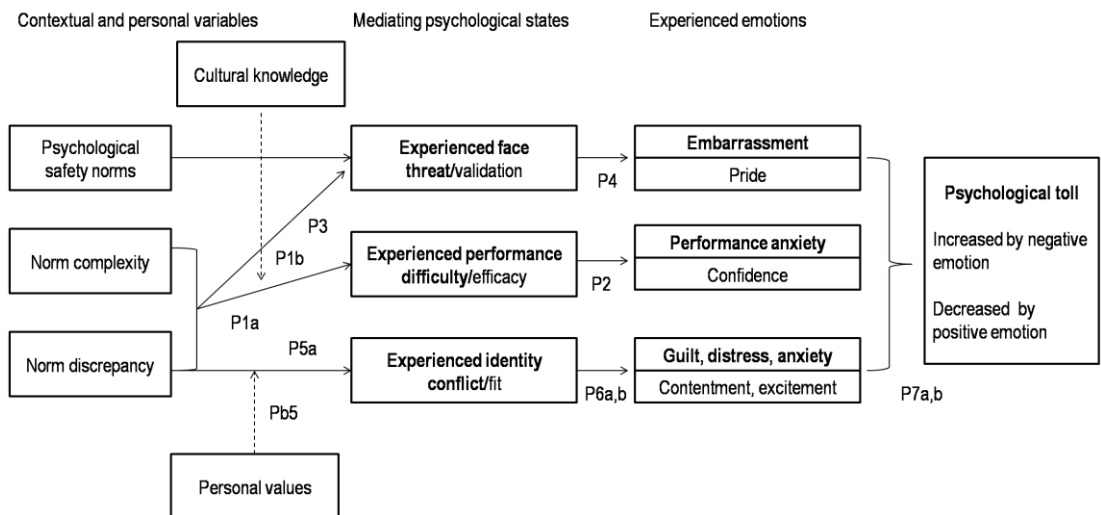
Figure 2-5 Cross-cultural Code-Switching Framework (Molinsky, 2007)

The purpose of the cross-cultural code-switching framework is to show 1) the communicative behaviour switching that occurs in a single interaction in a cross-cultural setting and 2) the factors that influence the psychological toll experienced during the interaction process. A psychological toll is a feeling or emotion experienced by an individual during cross-cultural code switching. Five factors –, norm complexity, norm discrepancy, psychological safety, cultural knowledge, and personal values – determine the psychological toll exacted during the code-switching process.

Norm complexity is when the switching activity involves an expectation of communication styles that fit the listener. When communication expectations are not fulfilled, it leads to a negative emotion such as embarrassment or anxiety (Cheng & Seeger, 2012). Norm discrepancy refers to the fact that switching away from one's native culture requires a person to engage in unfamiliar communicative behaviour. Thus, the degree of discrepancy between the native norm and the new norm will influence the psychological toll in a cross-cultural communication setting.

Psychological safety has to do with the environment in which the communication takes place. When the switching process occurs in a "safe" environment, i.e., the risk involved is low; it will produce a positive emotion. When the cross-cultural setting is "unsafe", it will impact the experienced emotions.

The last two variables, cultural knowledge, and personal values relate to the individual's own internal landscape. Sufficient cultural knowledge facilitates the switching process since it makes it easy for the individual to function appropriately in a foreign setting (Hong et al., 2003). Personal values play a vital role in shaping an individual's experiences and emotions during the code-switching process.

In the cross-cultural code-switching framework, Molinsky identified three psychological states that serve as mediators of the emotions experienced during the code-switching process: experienced face threat, experienced performance difficulty and experienced identity conflict. These states determine the psychological toll exacted on an individual. First, Molinsky believes that if the individual experience a humiliation or encounters a negative emotion because of the "unsafe" environment, the individual will feel more embarrassed.

Meanwhile, experienced performance difficulty refers to the fact that when a person attempts to code switch, he or she will either have difficulty doing so (performance anxiety, which decreases confidence) or will not have difficulty doing so (performance efficacy, which increases confidence). Experienced identity conflict occurs when interacting in an environment that is contrary to a person's ingrained cultural norms results in unpleasant emotions such as anxiety, guilt and insecurity (example from past studies).

To recapitulate, Molinsky's cross-cultural code-switching framework draws together two key factors that influence the psychological toll: the psychological state that mediates the code-switching activity and the emotions that an individual experience while switching. He believes that the degree of psychological toll during cross-cultural code switching highly depends on emotion a person experiences: greater if the person experiences a negative emotion, and less if the person experiences a positive emotion. A study by Molinsky (2013) explored how individuals experience and manage internal conflicts during cultural adaptation. This study was based on his earlier cross-cultural code-switching framework, where he focuses on psychological aspects of switching. His findings showed that people adapt or switch their behaviour in three phases regarding internal conflicts: Phase 1 deep conflict, phase 2 ambivalence, and phase 3 authenticity.

The initial *deep conflict* phase presents a high level of unnaturalness and experienced awkwardness for two reasons: because behaviour switching is strongly against their native cultural values and the new behaviour following the switch is significantly different from their ingrained cultural practices. Molinsky reported that 70% of respondents are constrained by negative feelings during Phase 1.

In phase 2, *ambivalence*, respondents reported a shift towards feeling more comfortable adapting to the new cultural norms. Molinsky's analysis found that respondents experienced intense negative and positive feelings simultaneously. The positive feelings included feeling proud of their ability to adapt despite the significant differences recognized during phase 1. The negative feelings were because they were anxious about the switching behaviour, as the process is intricate and difficult.

In phase 3, *authenticity*, some of the respondents reported a full feeling of legitimacy and confidence in their ability to naturally engage in the new behaviour. Respondents used phrases such as "I am feeling myself" and "I am living and enjoying my experience," demonstrating an authentic sense of the behavioural switching they achieved in a foreign setting. This indicates that they were able to switch their behaviour while at the same time maintaining their own cultural practices. Specifically, the empirical evidence shows that despite the contrast between their ingrained cultural values and these new cultural practices, they were able to switch their behaviour in a foreign setting through several different phases.

Molinsky further examine respondents' internal conflict over time and identified four distinct trajectories: 1) full transformation - a completed movement from deep conflict to authenticity, 2) partial transformation - a movement from deep conflict to ambivalence, 3) stagnation - the individual remains at the deep conflict phase and 4) regression - a swing to and fro, from deep conflict to ambivalence and back again to deep conflict. Only 14% achieved full transformation while 64% achieved partial transformation.

Molinsky (2013) further identified two approaches people use to validate their authenticity during cross-cultural adaptation: self-licensing and personalization. During self-licensing, people embrace the new cultural perspective, while personalization is when a person attempts to make slight behavioural adjustments to accommodate his new cultural environment. Molinsky's recent study validated his cross-cultural code-switching framework's proposition that emotion plays an important role in the cross-cultural code-switching process and provided empirical

findings supporting his earlier work. As important as emotions, differences in communication in a virtual setting are worth studying because emotions in communication are strongly related to non-verbal communication, which is often absent in a virtual setting and which Molinsky did not include in his model.

2.4.2 A glance at the Past Studies of Cultural Frame Switching

A similar concept to cross-cultural code switching, cultural-frame switching was introduced by Benet-Martinez and colleagues. They were interested in how bicultural individuals alter their cultural frame of reference. A bicultural individual is one who has two principal cultures and can switch their cultural roles on or off depending on the environment. They conducted a number of studies on how cultural priming influences switching between cultural frames for bicultural people (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000), how shifting of bicultural people is influenced by the degree of bicultural identity integration (BII) (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, Morris, et al., 2002), the effect of individual personality on cultural frame switching (Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006), the acculturation and frame switching of immigrants (Van Oudenhoven & Benet-Martinez, 2015) and switching behaviour in an online context (Qiu et al., 2013).

Findings from Hong et al. (2000) revealed how cultural priming such as symbols, icons, context and language influences the switching process of bicultural individuals. The findings also demonstrated how bicultural people cognitively incorporate two distinct cultures and can differentiate between the two cultural meaning systems. For example, when a Korean American is at home with family members, he is likely to

speak Korean because the home language is Korean; at the workplace, however, he is surrounded by Western friends and western cultural practices, thus he is more likely to speak English and act like an American, yet he does so without losing his Korean cultural values. The study showed that bicultural individuals accommodate both sets of cultural practices and are able to control two cultures within themselves depending on the cultural cues or situation (Hong et al., 2003; Qiu et al., 2013)

A study by Benet-Martinez and colleagues (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, Morris, et al., 2002) examined cultural frame switching activity based on bicultural identity integration (BII). Replicating a method from their earlier study in 2000 (see Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000), they found that bicultural individuals with high BII perceived their two cultural identities as compatible and were able to respond in a culturally appropriate manner to specific cultural cues. In contrast, bicultural people with low BII perceived their cultural identities as oppositional (the two cultures were not compatible) and could not respond effectively to specific cultural cues. The results show that bicultural individual switches their cultural frame depending on the context and that this switching is moderated by the cultural knowledge they possess. Within the same domain, Ramírez-Esparza et al. (2006) investigated how personalities of bilingual people influence cultural frame switching. Their results, which validated those of Hong et al. (2000), observed personality changes among English and Spanish bilingual individuals – they were more extroverted, agreeable and conscientious when they used English. These personality shifts may reflect the individualistic nature of America, an English-speaking culture, and suggest that cultural values shape bilingual

individuals' personalities and influence those personalities during cultural frame switching.

In a recent study, Van Oudenhoven and Benet-Martinez (2015) explored the strategies used by immigrants during cultural frame switching in a native culture. They theorized that immigrants would use a personalized approach during cultural frame switching and that their ability to switch depends on their intercultural communication competency – that is, the ability to interact with people from different cultures. They discussed the emergence of strategies to acclimate to a new culture, from acculturation strategies to different types of biculturalism. Given increasing numbers of immigrants, the authors believe that they are more likely to develop a bicultural orientation that makes them able to navigate between different cultural orientations through the cultural frame switching process.

A study by Qiu et al. (2013), which was conducted purely in an online environment, investigated the cultural differences of two identical social networking sites (SNS) and the switching behaviour of bicultural users of those SNS. To identify the propensity of switching behaviour among bicultural SNS users, they first investigated the differences between two prominent SNS, one in China (Renren) and one in America (Facebook). Their finding revealed that in terms of technically performance, Renren is on par with Facebook. However, in terms of cultural orientation, they reported that Renren embodied a collectivistic culture and was perceived as a sharing oriented SNS, and less egalitarian. Using the same participants, Qiu et al. (2013) also found that users of Renren exhibited a higher tendency to be flexible in switching their in-group sharing behaviour The initial findings indicate that since Renren is more sharing-friendly,

users demonstrate a tendency to share their activities in Renren compared to when they use Facebook. The researchers concluded that users' switching behaviour was based on adapting to the online cultural context in which they were operating.

Zakaria and Cogburn (2010) studied the cultural behavioural patterns of people from different cultural backgrounds in a globally distributed collaborative setting. They focused on the intercultural communication styles of high-context and low-context individuals and investigated how high-context and low-context cultural orientation influences communicative behaviour. Their findings showed that people from both cultural orientations demonstrated strongly collaborative behaviour despite their differences; yet at the same time they were able to retain their original communication styles and cultural values. Based on their findings, Zakaria and Cogburn (2010) proposed further investigation into the influence of individual cultural values on the switching of communicative behaviour in an online environment. They also recommended further research into the consistency of individual behaviour and communication styles when moving from a collocated work environment to a distributed workplace.

Recent study by McCluney et al. (2021) examines racial codeswitching as an impression management strategy for members of a marginalized social identity group. Codeswitching in their context involves the adaptation of external behaviours and knowledge of "appropriate" behaviours in the immediate context that would produce the desired outcome. The result of the study illustrates how racial codeswitching is perceived by others when they are made aware that Black people are intentionally "switching" their behaviour. Interestingly, the finding of the study shows that

professionalism culture in business sector is shaped by white cultural norms and values and the study indicate that the Black people are aware of the behaviours and norms valued in the traditional American workplace.

The findings from all the above studies indicate that people with dual cultural knowledge are more flexible in controlling their "switching" between cultural orientations in response to the situation. The studies also demonstrate that the main goal of people who attempt switching is to accommodate a new cultural environment. Bicultural individual can move between the different cognitive and behavioural frames of their different cultural identities. Several factors influence this switching activity, such as cultural priming and the cultural values that shaped the personalities of bilingual people. However, most of the studies focused on the cultural factors that affect cultural frame switching; few studies have examined the communication aspects, such as communication style, that might have a direct effect on cultural frame switching in a new cultural environment. When people communicate interculturally, their communication styles need to be considered as well. Zakaria and Cogburn (2010) investigated the communication styles of groups of people with different cultural backgrounds, but they did not report any switching activities; however, they did recommend further study of switching communicative behaviour in an online environment.

2.5 Global Virtual Team

2.5.1 Defining Global Virtual Team

Johnson, Heimann, and Neill (2001) used an analogy from Alice in Wonderland to explain the virtual team concept: you are there (virtually) but not there (physically). With the rise of globalization, most of the traditional work structures have been supplanted by more advanced structures, including the global virtual team or GVT (Hosseini, Zuo, Chileshe, & Baroudi, 2015; Walker, Cardon, & Aritz, 2018). In the early years of GVT studies, Jarvenpaa, Knoll, and Leidner (1998) described GVTs as an example of a "boundaryless network organization form where a temporary team is assembled on an as-needed basis for the duration of a task and staffed by members from different countries" (p.29). Maznevski and Chudoba (2000) described GVTs as "internationally distributed groups of people with an organizational mandate to make or implement decisions with international components and implications" (p. 473). Zakaria, Amelinckx, and Wilemon (2004) defined a GVT as a work structure that "require[s] innovative communication and learning capabilities for different team members to effectively work together across cultural, organisational, and geographical boundaries" (p. 1). Study by Nurmi and Hinds (2016) defined GVT as a kind of global virtual work; global virtual work in turn was defined as a "collaborative work that occurs among co-workers spread across different countries, often supported by technology mediated communication" (p. 2).

Kankanhalli, Tan, and Wei (2007) and Fleischmann et al (2020) believe a GVT work structure is an extension of the concept of virtual teams, in which globally dispersed

members work together using ICT to accomplish organizational tasks despite their geographical boundaries. In recent years, GVT scholars have described the GVT as a work structure composed of people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Zakaria & Yusof, 2012), who collaborate primarily via digital technologies such as email and videoconferencing (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013; Nordbäck & Espinosa, 2019) and who work and live-in different countries but collaborate towards making and implementing decisions important to the organization's strategy (Pinjani & Palvia, 2013).

Based on these definitions, we can say that a GVT is a group of individuals from different countries, time zones, languages and cultures working together as a team to deliver a project. With limited face-to-face interaction, they rely on technology to communicate. Effortless global communication despite geographical dispersion has turned GVTs into common practice in well-known organizations such as Shell, Microsoft, Intel, Kodak and Dell (Martins & Schilpzand, 2011; Mukherjee et al., 2012). A survey conducted by Unify (2014) found that 79% of respondents reported working always or frequently in a virtual team. Meanwhile, in April 2016, a recent study conducted by RW[3] CultureWizard with 1372 respondents reported that 41% of the corporate team are now utilizing a virtual work structure and individually, 85% of respondents work on virtual teams (Solomon, 2016). In recent article by Winter (2020), he described global virtual team by three dimensions; the level of technology usage, the ability of virtual technologies to convey the information and the asynchronous exchange of information. In the nutshell, the global virtual teams are teams that have high level of dispersion in terms of place and time as well as the higher

dependency of virtual technologies in their communication (Blomqvist & Nordstrand, 2018; Nordbäck & Espinosa, 2019).

2.5.2 Past Studies in Global Virtual Team

Past studies on GVTs are scarce in the cross-cultural management field. Derven (2016) introduced a conceptual framework based on Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) and the 3Ps—People, Purpose and Process—that can be implemented in any organization that employs the GVT work structure. Derven further outlined the key components that enhance GVT performance based on the challenges inherent in a GVT. Drawing on extensive consulting research and literature review, he generated a summary of the possible challenges that can hinder team performance, based on the 3Ps. Among these challenges are lack of collaboration, missing deadlines, recurring conflicts, and passive team members. However, his framework is purely conceptual and no empirical research was conducted to validate the theory, although the challenges listed have been highlighted by other GVT scholars such Daim et al. (2012), Duran and Popescu (2014), Lockwood (2015), and Shachaf (2008).

On the other hand, Nurmi and Hinds (2016) explored job complexity and learning opportunities within the GVT work structure. They found that the challenges and job complexity associated with team performance are lessened if the team members take time for off-job recovery, such as engaging in leisure activities to loosen up and detach from stress. In the early stages of their study, they did preliminary interviews with engineers actively engaged in a GVT to gain a better understanding of the GVT work structure and its characteristics. Their findings revealed the salient characteristics of

global virtual work are job complexity, learning opportunities and off-job recovery. Almost 90% of respondents believed that global virtual work is challenging because they need to collaborate at a distance with people from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, 92% of respondents affirmed that the learning opportunities they received from the project collaboration were beneficial because 1) it gave them access to experts across the globe and 2) it exposed them to new cultures, which gave them a positive perspective towards other cultures. Almost 90% of respondents stated that off-job recovery was crucial in enabling them to deal with the job complexity and increased their motivation to take advantage of the learning opportunities. To validate their qualitative findings, Nurmi and Hinds conducted a survey of 515 members of a labour union for experts and managers (including both global workers and local workers). Among the respondents, 66% were engaged in global work structure. These studies confirm that global virtual work is associated with job complexity and learning opportunities. This job complexity does not hinder their learning opportunities; but global workers need to take time to recover from work stress (referred to as "off-job recovery"). The findings also show that global workers engaged in a global virtual work structure have better performance compared to local workers.

However, the study was limited to workers in Finland, thus the findings cannot be generalized to other populations. In addition, a global worker is not the same as a global virtual team member. The global worker in this study collaborated with at least one co-worker in another country and spent 35% of their working time on this collaboration. On the other hand, Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) in their GVT framework specifically define a GVT as a work structure in which none of the team

members have a common history or the possibility of working together in the future, they communicate purely via electronic communication technology and they are culturally and geographically diverse (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999).

Studies by Lockwood (2015), Daim et al. (2012), Duran and Popescu (2014), Shachaf (2008) and Blomqvist and Nordstrand (2018) investigated the factors that cause communication breakdown in a GVT work structure. Lockwood conducted a training needs analysis (TNA) of a multinational financial company that employed a GVT work structure. The analysis identified language and cultural misunderstandings as the root causes of communication breakdown in the virtual team. Other factors that contribute to communication issues are power differential, misalignment around corporate values, trust, identity struggles and anxiety. Daim et al. (2012) reported a similar communication breakdown. A series of interviews with virtual team members in high-tech companies revealed that trust, interpersonal relations, cultural differences, leadership, and technology were the main factors that cause communication issues in a GVT. Furthermore, their findings show that cross cultural differences in a GVT affect team performance because it diminishes the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication.

On the other hand, in a survey conducted by Duran and Popescu (2014), almost 50% of respondents stated that adaptive communication strategies such as humour and the use of open-ended questions helped overcome miscommunications during virtual collaboration. Interestingly, even though the nature of virtual teams is to have people from different cultural backgrounds, 33% of respondents stated that they do not emphasize the culture aspect. The researchers concluded that culture in virtual team

collaboration acts in two different ways; as an accent on the team culture (or the partners, collaborators) and the culture as a transition stage. Even so, the findings of this study did not fully confirm the impact of culture on communication in a GVT, for two reasons. First, the study was conducted with only 40 respondents in a single multinational company. Second, no cultural dimension was used (e.g., Hofstede or Hall) as a foundation. Still, their findings regarding adaptive communicative behaviour were interesting, such as the use of humour to accommodate miscommunication in an intercultural setting (Ramírez-Alesón & Fleta-Asín, 2016).

In most recent study by Winter (2020), he investigates the challenges teams encountered when they must fully rely on virtual teams work structure in their work environment due to pandemic COVID19. Before the COVID19 outbreak, some organisations utilized a blended work structure that also allow a face-to-face communication and electronic platform to communicate. The outrages COVID19 proliferation across the globe makes the virtual working environment become the most ideal and efficient ways to communicate and complete the project or tasks.

Study by Holmberg and Manse (2021) investigated the leadership challenges in global virtual teams due to the COVID19 pandemic impact and discovered the common GVT challenges such as communication, cooperation, trust, and motivation. Even though the advancement of technologies allows the face-to-face virtual communication via Zoom platform, the study highlighted that trust still the main challenges encountered by GVT leaders. They stated it was challenging to maintain trust because of the nature of the meeting and work environment, work-from-home (WFH). Despite the location

independence of WFH, the inability of the GVT leader to see what the team members are doing making the trust hard to maintain.

Other scholars such as Yusof and Zakaria (2012), Zakaria, Yusof, Hiroshi, and Muton (2016) and Pinjani and Palvia (2013) focused on trust and/or swift trust issues in GVTs. A meta-analysis conducted by Yusof and Zakaria (2012) proposed that swift trust in a GVT is more challenging than in a collocated work setting due to the diverse cultural backgrounds of team members. However, their finding was based on a review of other studies and had no empirical component. Zakaria et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative study using focus group interviews to explore the challenges in swift trust formation in a GVT. They found that delays in communication due to time zone differences, cultural clashes, technical problems, and passive team members influenced the team's collaboration, and thus affected the swift trust formation. However, their study used students as sample, thus the findings might not be accurate or representative of a GVT within a real organization.

In a related study, Pinjani and Palvia (2013) conducted a survey to investigate the impact of task interdependence on trust and knowledge sharing in a GVT. The results showed that trust level is significantly related to knowledge sharing in a GVT. This empirically proves that trust is a crucial element in building a mutual relationship among GVT members that will lead to a better team performance.

Alsharo (2013) investigated the relationship between knowledge sharing, trust and collaboration in a GVT and how these factors affected team effectiveness. His experiment demonstrated that knowledge sharing has a significant influence on trust and collaboration in a GVT. Knowledge sharing activities during team collaboration

63

can be an important driver in establishing social capital among team members. In terms of trust, he found that trust among team members is higher if they share similar characteristics; however, he made no further elaboration regarding the relationship between trust and knowledge sharing. A study by Pinjani and Palvia (2013) complemented this study by empirically proving the relation between trust and knowledge sharing in a GVT work structure. Goettsch (2014) delved even deeper and verified that team effectiveness depended on team members' perceptions regarding communication, trust, collaboration, and cohesiveness. All these components were important factors in a GVT and have an impact on GVT effectiveness.

2.5.3 Cultural Challenges in Global Virtual Team

Previous section reviewed the past studies in a GVT, and this section specifically will review the cultural challenges in a GVT. According to the 2016 Trends in Global Virtual Teams survey conducted by RW³ CultureWizard, 48% of the respondents reported that half of their virtual teams' members came from different cultures (Solomon, 2016). Thus, working in such environment, team members will experience or expected a different kind of cultural-related issues.

Klitmøller and Lauring (2013) conducted a qualitative study to explore the interrelationships between language, communication media and social categorization in global virtual teams within a single Finnish MNC. The findings revealed that during verbal communication (i.e., on the phone), the differences in language proficiency (in this case, in English), led to the emergence of social categories among members such as "South" and "North" based on their accent. As one of the respondents stated, "North

members have a better accent, and their English is much easier to understand compared to South members." This indicates that verbal methods of communication can lead to social categorization of individuals in a team based on language ability. In a written medium such as email, language proficiency had no impact on communication, perhaps because the built-in functions of email such as grammar and spelling correction help to improve the sender's writing and thereby reduce misunderstandings. Another study by Muethel, Siebdrat, and Hoegl (2012) explored how GVT characteristics such as geographic dispersion, communication media and cultural values moderate the development of interpersonal trust within a team. Respondents from two countries (Germany and the United States) participated in this survey of 80 software development teams. The findings showed that cultural values significantly influenced the trust-effectiveness relationship. Interestingly, they also found that geographical proximity plays an important role: the less dispersed the team, the less they rely on trust to achieve effectiveness, while the larger the dispersal, the greater their dependency on trust. However, the study was conducted with only two countries, and within a single industry (software development), thus the findings might not be applicable to other countries and/or business sectors.

Mockaitis, Rose, and Zettinig (2012) used a student sample to study the relationship between GVT members' cultural orientation (collectivistic vs. individualistic) and their evaluations of trust, task interdependency, knowledge sharing and conflict during collaboration. Their findings demonstrated that collectivist GVT members are less likely to involve themselves in conflict situations and that, overall, GVT member with a stronger collectivist orientation reported more positive impressions about the team

processes. These results reveal how cultural orientation influences collaboration in GVTs and proved that collectivist GVT members have a different attitude towards teamwork than their individualist colleagues.

Chang et al. (2011) in their qualitative study investigated the influence of cultural factors such as cultural adaptation, communication quality and trust on GVT performance. They conducted in-depth interviews with engineers that were actively involved in GVTs and found that cultural differences created communication barriers and affected the teamwork process. On the other hand, the capability for cultural adaptation in GVTs positively affects trust development among team members. For example, when communication involves two people at different levels (e.g., manager and subordinate), trust is no longer important as the subordinate will have to listen to his manager regardless of whether he trusts her or not.

Zakaria and Talib (2011) focused on distributive communicative behaviour among GVT members in an MNC. They explored the phenomenon of Malaysians working in GVTs with people from other cultural backgrounds. The interviews showed clear differences in intercultural communicative behaviours among GVT members which were rooted in their cultural values.

The findings of this study were similar to those of Mockaitis, Rose, and Zettinig (2012), who demonstrated the effect of cultural values on the GVT work structure. They also found that cultural values influence management practices. For example, decision-making in GVTs was challenging due to different work and communication practices. Respondents reported significant differences in decision-making between Asian and Western team members. When Asian team members made decisions, their

66

decisions during the meeting were preliminary and the top management determines the final decision. On the other hand, Western team members tended to make quicker and firmer decisions, and no ranking was required to come out with a decision. Interestingly, Zakaria and Talib (2011) also identified a unique action performed by Malaysian GVT members: switching of their communication behaviour. However, this unique finding requires further investigation.

In a similar vein, Dekker and Rutte (2007) identified 11 categories of effective and ineffective communication behaviour in a virtual setting, including clear and complete communication, use of appropriate media, active participation, and pro-social behaviour. These 11 categories indicate the existence of a set of communicative behaviour that is critical for people to communicate and work virtually. Subsequently, in 2008, Dekker et al. (2008) expanded the set of communicative behaviour by studying samples from the United States, India, and Belgium (in their previous study, the samples came from the Netherlands, United States, and Finland). They found that the perception of communicative behaviour in a GVT differs across cultures. As a result of this study, the "respectfulness" category was added to the set of critical communicative behaviours. Both studies concluded that the set of communicative behaviour was common to both virtual and face-to-face communication, and they further emphasized the importance of critical interaction behaviour in intercultural communication in a GVT because communication is strongly influenced by cultural differences (Daim et al., 2012; Holmberg & Manse, 2021; Lockwood, 2015; Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020; Shachaf, 2008; Zakaria & Talib, 2011).

2.5.4 Use of GVTs in Multinational Corporation (MNCs)

Previous research on GVTs has mostly been conducted within the business context, with a few different research directions. For example, Maznevski and Chudoba (2000) studied three GVTs within a single organization, with the emphasis on effective GVT operation. For their research context, they defined a GVT as an international group of people that receive an organizational mandate to make or implement decisions with international implications, and the decisions made by the GVT are crucial to the organization's global strategy.

Within the same business context, a study by Pinjani and Palvia (2013) attempted to understand the relationship between diversity, mutual trust and knowledge sharing within GVTs. From their perspective, a GVT is a group of people that is identified by their organization as responsible for making and implementing decisions that are important to the organization's strategy rely heavily on information and communication technologies to communicate, and work and live in different countries. Lilian (2014) found that GVTs function independently of organizational boundaries, geographical location, and time zone, while at the same time striving to reach team-specific goals. A GVT consists of culturally diverse team members with no common history or future, who engage in intercultural interaction with globally dispersed colleagues (Debmalya, Susan, Ben, & Prashant, 2012; Holmberg & Manse, 2021; Zander, Mockaitis, & Butler, 2012). This definition was shared by Pinjani and Palvia (2013) and Zander, Mockaitis, and Butler (2012) who stated that GVTs include interpersonal relationships among team members.

Specifically in Malaysia context, there were few studies have focused solely on GVTs in Malaysia; these include Soon and Salamzadeh (2020), Tan, Ramayah, Teoh and Cheah (2018), Ebrahim, Ahmed, and Taha (2010), Aripin, Mustafa, and Hussein (2010), Ramayah et al., 2003 and Zakaria and Talib (2011). Ebrahim, Ahmed and Taha (2010) explored the potential advantages of GVTs for small and medium-sized enterprises in Malaysia and Iran. They conducted a survey of 91 respondents with various positions in GVTs from Malaysia and Iran. The study found a significance difference in turnover between virtual team and collocated team. The results show that research and development teams that conducted their research via GVTs had higher turnover. In terms of virtual teams, Iranian respondents reported 71.4% of research and development activities were done via GVTs compared to 33.3% in Malaysia. They believe that the higher number of GVT research and development activities by Iranian small and medium-sized enterprises are a good example of GVTs achieving high growth for their small and medium-sized enterprises.

Aripin et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study to understand virtual team structures in ICT-facilitated businesses organizations in Malaysia. They identified six key characteristics of GVTs in those organizations: 1) the team is geographically dispersed and works towards a common goal and vision, 2) the team uses a variety of communication technologies for interaction, 3) the team has a unique blend of members with different cultural norms and practices, 4) language barriers exist, with team members who are not fluent in English, 5) members work around the clock, since their collaboration involves team members from multiple time zones, and 6) a good

relationship among team members facilitates the development of trust, which leads to improved team performance.

Although research on GVTs in Malaysia is limited thus far, these few studies that have been done reported interesting findings, indicating that this type of work structure has a high potential to grow and flourish in the future.

2.6 Knowledge Sharing

2.6.1 Defining Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge is power, and the most valuable resource for any organization (Chen & Hew, 2015). Knowledge is also personal; it is used to make judgements and distinctions and interpret the meaning of information (Fernie, Green, & Weller, 2003). Knowledge can take two forms: tacit and explicit (Chen & Hew, 2015; Fernie et al., 2003; Horwitz & Santillan, 2012; Nonaka & Toyama, 2003). Explicit knowledge refers to information codified in physical form, such as documents, databases, files and written notes or memos.

On the other hand, tacit knowledge is intuitive and rooted in context, experience, and values. Tacit knowledge is also called "know-how" and is often hard to define (Fernie et al., 2003; Smith, 2001). Both types of knowledge can be gained through learning, experience and sharing. Learning and experience strengthen our knowledge, while sharing it helps to perpetuate it, since knowledge does not decrease by being shared. Knowledge sharing helps people gain new knowledge and share existing knowledge. Using the analogies of donating and collecting, Van den Hooff and de Ridder (2004) describe knowledge sharing as the active process of "both bringing (or '*donating*')

70

knowledge and getting (or '*collecting*') knowledge" – donating refers to the communication of existing knowledge to others, while collecting is when an individual consults colleagues to acquire knowledge from them. Van den Hooff and de Ridder further describe knowledge sharing as a process that involves the mutual exchange of existing and new knowledge.

In accord with this viewpoint, Nasirian (2015) believes that knowledge sharing is about mutual trust, mutual understanding and conflict-free communication throughout the knowledge "donating" and "collecting" process. In a similar vein, Hendriks (1999) describes knowledge sharing as "something else than but related to communication" (p. 92). He adds that knowledge sharing involves at least two parties, one of whom *possesses* knowledge while the other *acquires* knowledge. Kankanhalli et al. (2011) define knowledge sharing in terms of communication concepts: *sender* (the knowledge contributor), *receiver* (the knowledge acquirer), *channel* (the knowledge medium), *transmission* (the knowledge process) and *effect* (the knowledge outcomes). Zakaria et al. (2004) describes knowledge sharing as a dynamic and complex process of communication that involves the exchange of knowledge.

In summary, knowledge sharing is a communication activity between two individuals who possess tacit and/or explicit knowledge, and by transferring this knowledge, both individuals will gain: they retain their original knowledge, and add to it the new knowledge that each has gained from the other (Hendriks, 1999; Van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004; Nonaka & Toyama, 2003; Zakaria, Amelinckx, & Wilemon, 2006). The next section discusses knowledge sharing workplace situations, and knowledge sharing within a GVT.

2.6.2 Knowledge Sharing in the Workplace

In an organization, employees rely on knowledge to do work, to communicate and to collaborate with others. Knowledge is intellectual capital, and is the organization's most valuable asset since it confers a competitive advantage (Brčić & Mihelič, 2015). This intellectual capital can take many different forms, such as written, printed, visual, audio, or electronic, and requires proper usage to maximize its value. One of the ways to do this is through knowledge sharing, either between individuals or between an individual and the organization. Knowledge sharing in an organization is the active process of exchanging information, skills, and expertise among employees. Knowledge sharing has a positive impact on organization performance (Fernie et al., 2003; Zakaria et al., 2004), accelerates client-partner relationships (Hendriks, 1999) and drives the organization towards its goal (Fernie et al., 2003).

The most crucial part of knowledge sharing is making sure the information is available and comprehensible at all levels of the organization. For instance, a study by Brčić and Mihelič (2015) examined knowledge sharing among employees within an organization in Slovenia and found the two key factors that influence knowledge sharing are willingness and motivation. These two factors are crucial in predicting the actual sharing of knowledge among employees and suggest that knowledge sharing should be encouraged at the organizational level. The researchers also expressed concern about the sustainability of the shared knowledge since employees may not embrace the new knowledge and may continue acting on their previous knowledge. Thus, it is important to motivate employees to share their knowledge, and to stimulate their willingness to do so continuously. Brčić and Mihelič suggest that actions such as

communication over coffee break, informal workshops and impromptu meetings could motivate and encourage employees to share knowledge in more creative ways.

In line with Brčić and Mihelič (2015), Bresman, Birkinshaw, and Nobel (1999) confirmed that communication is one of the factors that facilitates knowledge transfer in international acquisitions in the fifteen large Swedish MNCs. Bresman et al. (1999) qualitative findings revealed a two-stage pattern of knowledge transfer, early stage, and late stage. At the early stage, knowledge transfer activities are low due to the lack of interpersonal relationships and cultural distance between the acquirer (receiver) and acquired unit (sender). At the late stage, both parties demonstrate a high level of reciprocal knowledge transfer because they have developed an interpersonal relationship over time. When there is a high level of knowledge flow, it indicates that both parties are willing to share their knowledge and trust each other. Bresman et al. (1999) was supported by Park and Lee (2014) who found that dependence and trust between clients and information systems (IS) consultants have a positive effect on knowledge sharing in IS projects. The higher the level of trust and dependence, the greater the chances for project members to share knowledge among each other (Ndubisi, 2004). Frequent communication creates more opportunities and encourages knowledge sharing in such projects (Brčić & Mihelič, 2015; Bresman et al., 1999; Park & Lee, 2014).

In a different study, Yang and Wu (2008) assumed that knowledge sharing in an organization is driven by a tangible motivation such as rewards or other incentives. Their results validated their assumptions. They regard knowledge sharing as a benefit-based interaction and as something people do if they receive incentives or rewards, not

73

because they have an innate desire to share. It is a trade-off between the knowledge holder and the organization. Their findings revealed that the tendency to share knowledge was dependent on the value of the knowledge. For example, when a person possesses a specific knowledge that is valuable to the organization, that knowledge can be considered a source of power. Thus, to get the person to share or transfer that knowledge, incentives or rewards are offered.

Feely and Harzing (2003) asserted that social interaction between managers from different units within the same MNC was able to stimulate intra-MNC knowledge sharing. They suggest that face-to-face interaction is an effective channel for transferring knowledge among workers. They further explored the influence of social interaction on knowledge sharing within the MNC by conducting a survey of 169 employees from 50 MNCs. The findings strongly support the important role of social interaction for intra-MNC knowledge streams. In terms of sender-receiver, the results showed that highly competent employees are more likely to act as knowledge senders to the parent firm and other individuals and confirmed the important role of hierarchical relations in vertical knowledge sharing in MNCs. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that social interaction is not merely a communication channel but has a strong effect on intra-MNC knowledge flows. Thus, it is important for MNCs to support and encourage social interaction between their employees and those of other MNCs.

The above studies clearly demonstrate that knowledge sharing is one of the most important workplace activities, yet it is affected by intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as willingness, organizational capabilities, and trust as well as rewards. Thus, it is

important to properly manage knowledge sharing in the workplace. We believe that knowledge sharing in the collocated workplace is manageable, but we were uncertain about knowledge sharing in a GVT. The next section discusses knowledge sharing in GVTs in general, and the specific factors that influence knowledge sharing activities in that environment.

2.6.3 Knowledge Sharing in GVTs

Knowledge sharing is common in any workplace environment, and for it to occur, frequent communication among employees is crucial. However, in a GVT, team interaction is limited since team members do not share the same physical location and time zone and have different cultural values and communication styles. Yet, they must be effective communicators to ensure optimal knowledge flow within the team.

Study by Pinjani and Palvia (2013) examined the relationship between diversity, mutual trust and knowledge sharing in a GVT. Their findings highlighted that deep diversity, such as personal characteristics, cultural values, and attitudes, has a significant effect on knowledge sharing in a GVT. Task interdependence was found to have a moderating effect on trust development and knowledge sharing in a GVT. This finding is in line with Staples and Webster (2008), who demonstrated the influence of task interdependence on knowledge sharing. When GVT members depend on each other to complete their assigned task, they can cope with diversity issues and develop a mutual trust, hence they can work effectively as a team. Yet, they must be able to adapt to two things: the differences in work and communication styles, and the technologies they need to use to communicate and collaborate.

Horwitz and Santillan (2012) explored the application of technology – namely collaboration engineering (CE) and ThinkLets – to knowledge sharing in a GVT. CE is a research-based approach to designing and deploying tools that facilitate the collaboration process, while ThinkLets are a CE term for units of facilitation that can be integrated into groupware tools for collaboration. The authors believe that CE and ThinkLets can be applied in a GVT setting to transform tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge while at the same time fostering knowledge sharing during GVT collaboration.

In their extensive review of literature, they identified four main issues that affect knowledge sharing in a GVT: the diversity and distance between team members, technology, and trust. They propose CE and ThinkLets as effective solutions to these problems, although they offer no empirical support for their proposed solutions. They also acknowledge that the cost, the potential misuse of the application by novice users, and team members' level of experience with their current technology might impede the adoption of a ThinkLet-based CE approach. Interestingly, based on their extensive literature review, they were able to thoroughly describe the problems inherent in the knowledge sharing process in GVTs, which is beneficial for other researchers wishing to understand and further explore the challenges of knowledge sharing in a GVT setting.

In a similar vein, Kauppila, Rajala, and Jyrama (2011) explored the challenges faced by MNCs in knowledge sharing, specifically in an international virtual working environment. First, based on past studies, they identified five possible barriers to knowledge sharing in a GVT: 1) ignoring tacit knowledge, 2) knowledge possession

as source of power, 3) geographical and cultural diversity, 4) functional boundaries, and 5) over-reliance on other individuals as knowledge providers. They then conducted a qualitative study using the case method to validate the possible barriers they had found. Their qualitative analysis revealed the major challenges in knowledge sharing in a GVT to be: 1) geographical and cultural distance, 2) functional boundaries, and 3) over-reliance on other individuals to provide knowledge. They also reported two factors that enhance virtual team performance: 1) establishing virtual teams for knowledge sharing, and 2) the use of collaboration software to support knowledge sharing. The findings of Kauppila, Rajala, and Jyrama (2011) verify that the ability of virtual teams to engage in knowledge sharing can be enhanced by reducing the challenges they face through the incorporation of the facilitating factors they identified. Thus, virtual teams can be an effective platform for encouraging knowledge sharing in a GVT work structure.

On the other hand, Velmurugan et al. (2010) conducted a study to identify barriers that impede the knowledge sharing process in a GVT. They found that people, culture, and technology influence knowledge sharing in a GVT. Respondents indicated that they were reluctant to share their knowledge due to personal insecurities, because they felt a low level of trust towards the other team members and were afraid of appearing incompetent if they asked for or shared information with other team members (Pinjani & Palvia, 2013; Staples & Webster, 2008; Velmurugan et al., 2010). According to Staples and Webster (2008), knowledge sharing is highly influenced by task interdependence. They demonstrated that task interdependence can change the effect of trust. If team members rely on one another, knowledge sharing is driven by task

interdependence, whereas if they do not rely on one another, knowledge sharing depends on trust in each other.

In terms of cultural factors, differences in cultural values influence the intention to share knowledge; some respondents found that the virtual setting made it too difficult for them to coordinate their communication styles and ways of thinking during the knowledge sharing process (Velmurugan et al., 2010). This finding was supported by Li (2010) who found that the language barrier between Chinese and American workers hindered knowledge sharing among them, because the Chinese team members were concerned that their English was not sufficiently clear and would be misinterpreted. On the other hand, outdated technology or advanced technology may also hinder the knowledge sharing process in a GVT. Outdated technology can cause delays in the sharing process, while advanced technology may be difficult or intimidating for non-technically literate or older employees (Velmurugan et al., 2010). To overcome the barriers to knowledge sharing, they believe that, in addition to culture, adaptation to ICT is central to effective knowledge sharing in a GVT (Staples and Webster, 2008). Meanwhile, study by Zakaria et al. (2004) on GVTs emphasized the importance of a knowledge sharing culture. They reviewed the culture-related issues faced by GVT members and proposed effective ways of developing a knowledge sharing culture in a GVT. Based on their observations, they believe that having a face-to-face meeting will strengthen the interpersonal relationships among team members, thus promoting the development of trust. They also believe that the team leader plays an important role by providing support and encouraging team members to communicate and actively participate in the knowledge sharing process. This is aligned with Ardichvili (2008)

that highlighted the key factor to a successful virtual team are the active participation of team members in knowledge sharing activities. He further elaborated that the active participation is not limited to sharing an information only, but team members must have the willingness to participate in various other vigorous knowledge sharing activities. Recent study by Ahmad and Barner-Rasmussen (2019) describes knowledge sharing as a dynamic interpersonal knowledge sharing in MNC that was influenced by the code-switching process. Researchers emphasize the importance of languages during the interaction between individuals in MNC in delivering the knowledge and promoting a good interactive activity. However, several factors can hinder the good knowledge sharing in an organization such as individual, technological, culture and several other factors (Anwar, Rehman, Wang, & Hashmani, 2019; Jarrell, 2020). Next section will discuss the challenges in knowledge sharing in GVTs.

2.6.4 Challenges in Knowledge Sharing in GVTs

Despite the benefits of knowledge sharing in fostering the flow of creative ideas and improve performance; several factors such as the cultural and geographical barriers hinder the knowledge sharing process, especially in GVT work environment due to the lack of physical presence (Anwar et al., 2019; Jarrell, 2020; Pangil & Chan, 2014). In earlier study by Ardichvili, Maurer, Li, Wentling, & Stuedemann (2006), his framework identified interpersonal factors, technological factors and cultural norms as barriers to knowledge sharing via online platform. The absence of face to face communication is the main challenges in virtual environment as it contributes to lack

of engagement in knowledge sharing process (Ali, Selvam, Paris, & Gunasekaran, 2019; Hao, Shi, & Yang, 2019). The lack of engagement led to ineffective communication because working in a virtual context, the lack of nonverbal visual cues is unavoidable. The nonverbal cues could act as a key element in building trust among team members. However, the usage of communication technologies such as emails, videoconferencing, and instant messaging unable to provide a way for team members to effectively share knowledge and it sometimes failed to convey the correct message. Furthermore, Hao, Yang and Shi (2019) stated that one of the challenges GVT team members experience during the knowledge sharing is lack of self-confidence. They were worried if the information is misleading, and they might lose face if the knowledge misunderstood by other team members as people always tend to share only what went well. For example, Asian cultures is known save face that reflect their lack of confidence in sharing information and at the same time to remain a harmony communication (Merkin, 2009; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Meanwhile, studies by Wei (2007) revealed that language was the main concern among Asians in knowledge sharing process. The language barriers impacted the process of information sharing as the limitation in expressing ideas in English language hinder the effective knowledge sharing. Moreover, the key concern is correct grammar and sentence usage. One of the respondents in Wei study shared his concern on the grammatical mistakes that makes him difficult to have a social conversation with other team members. This limitation had given impact to the respondent's communication as he said the meeting is all about work related and technical knowledge sharing only. On the other hand, the recent study by Davidavičiene, Al-Majzoub and Meidute-

Kavaliauskiene (2020) found that language did not affected the knowledge sharing process in a GVT. It is because due to the nature of GVT environment that are composed of team members all over the world with different languages and cultural values, GVT team members were able to achieve language commonality, which is English language. However, other factors such a culture, motivation, conflict, technology, and leadership skills affecting the knowledge sharing in a GVT work environment.

Besides that, the language barrier makes the information sharing less effective and dynamic. The fear of misleading information and the concern about grammatical usage makes the sharing restricted to what they only know. For example, the respondents mentioned that he has seven points, but he was able to express four points in English and he will keep to himself the remaining three points. Wei's study was supported by recent research conducted by Jarrell (2020) that highlighted language as the challenge in knowledge sharing process. She specified the interpretation and perception of the knowledge and the different understanding of the knowledge possibly lead to misleading information. Besides that, the cultural differences and the way people understand the meaning of the information are another concern. For example, English speaking country and non-English speaking country may interpret the information differently based on their cultural values that can produce a different perception.

Studies by Anu-Riikka Mäki (2013) and Ardichvili (2008) have identified "knowledge-hoarding" as one of knowledge sharing challenges. Knowledge-hoarding referring to an interpersonal factor of individual that reluctant to share their information that might be due to different professional culture norms. The sharing is

limited to certain group of individuals within the same category of position in an organization which will provide benefits to their professional reputations. Interestingly, Ardichvili (2008), also highlighted cultural assumptions as one of the elements that hinder knowledge sharing in virtual communities and the knowledge sharing is more challenging when it involves multinational and global organizations. Studies by Anwar et al. (2019) and Jarrell (2020) identified almost similar knowledge sharing challenges such as technological, cultural, and geographical. While Anwar et al (2019) describe technology as the barriers to knowledge sharing, Jarrell (2020) portray technology as a benefit and as a challenge in knowledge sharing among team managers. Both studies agreed that the lack of knowledge, experience and exposure to the knowledge sharing tools made the knowledge sharing less effective. The unfamiliarity with the technologies impacts the knowledge sharing process among team members; for example, the communication technology the US counterpart use to exchange information is common technology they use, meanwhile, for Malaysia counterpart, the technology they must use to communicate with US counterpart might be a new technology and they are not familiar with the features. In a different perspective, Wei (2007) revealed that both US site and China site agreed that technology infrastructure is not the main issue because their organization has standardised the technology infrastructure and provide sufficient training to all employees. Finding from this study is in line with study by Davidavičiene et al. (2020) that identified technology as the main challenge in a GVT. The cultural diversity causes the challenges to GVT team members as each of them carries different values

and perception which affect their preferences on the technology used to communicate with each other.

Wei (2007) and Anwar et al (2019) identified the technical knowledge sharing as one of the highlighted challenges among team members. The difference in work experience and education qualification created the knowledge sharing gap in global virtual teams. Meanwhile, Wei (2007) found that the direction of knowledge flow impact and created the knowledge gap among GVT team members. He further elaborated, the core knowledge was controlled by the US site and for China site, they most probably received the knowledge from US site that cause imbalance knowledge distribution. Interestingly, the respondents (China site) shared various reasons for this situation such as they do not ask the US site because they do not want to look stupid or they have self-doubt, the problems could be from China site and not US site, thus, they keep the questions to themselves.

Besides technological challenges, Anu-Riikka Mäki (2013) Anwar et al. (2019), Jarrell (2020) and Wei (2007) identified geography as one of the factors that hinder the knowledge sharing process among team members in virtual setting and these three studies unanimously specified that time zone as the challenge that delays the knowledge sharing. For some, the absence of face-to-face communication make the sharing challenging as they need to utilize the nonverbal cues to deliver and convince the message to their counterpart. They agreed that the different time zone cause the delay of the information sharing especially if the information requires quick response and directly impact the project execution. Moreover, the different time zone requires extra efforts from the team members as they need to stay back in the office or stay

awake to join the meeting with different counterpart. For example, with almost 12-hours' time zone difference between US and China had made the China counterpart feel burden that they have to spend their night after normal working day in the office to attend online meeting.

Despite the rich advantages of knowledge sharing among global virtual team members to exchange and expand the knowledge, they must investigate the challenges in knowledge sharing caused by technology, culture and geography. Thus, team members need to be more flexible and appreciative towards the diversity so that the knowledge can be transferred effectively despite the challenges. As the global virtual teams consists of a mixture of high-context and low-context culture, next section will be discussing the theoretical framework that describe and elaborate these two different cultural contexts.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

2.7.1 High-Context and Low-Context: An Introduction

Edward Hall's theory of high-context and low-context cultures helps us understand the effect of culture on communication and communication styles (Nishimura et al., 2008a). According to Victor (1992) as cited in Thomas (1998), context is defined as "the way in which one communicates and especially the circumstances surrounding that communication" (p. 137). Furthermore, Thomas (1998) feels that the concept of high-context and low-context cultures is a good way to explain cultural differences in speaking and writing. According to Rogers et al. (2002), Hall's interest in intercultural communication began with his personal experiences; later, scholarly influences drove

his discoveries regarding intercultural communication. In the early 1950s, Hall became an anthropology professor in the U.S. Federal Government's primary training institution. While other anthropologists look at the macro level of culture studies, Hall disagreed with certain important aspects of then-current anthropological scholarship (Rogers et al., 2002). Thus, during his work for that training institution, Hall focused on the micro-level behaviours during interaction between people of different cultures. In the 1950s, the field of intercultural communication was largely unknown because the idea of an intersection between culture and communication did not exist, and because the study of nonverbal cues as part of intercultural communication was still an alien concept. Hall's career in the U.S. Federal Government's primary training institution helped nurture the new area of intercultural communication. "Many concepts utilized today in the field of intercultural communication had been formulated in the decades prior to the intellectual heyday of the Foreign Service Institute from 1951 to 1955" (Rogers et al., 2002, p. 8). Besides observing the micro-level behaviours during interaction between people of different cultures, Hall also emphasized the micro-level aspects of space and time as they apply to non-verbal communication in the modern world – specifically, space refers to proxemics and time refers to its polychromic and monochronic aspects (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001; Rogers et al., 2002).

Although context, space, and time are the cultural dimensions of Hall's intercultural communication theory (Edward, Hall, & Casey, 2011; Holtbrugge et al., 2012), in this thesis I will focus on context. Hall, in his book *Beyond Culture*, affirms that context is a critical component of communication, yet received insufficient attention. He

85

proposed that context acted as a medium to carry the meaning of the message: "This brings us to the point where it is possible to discuss context in relation to meaning, because what one pays attention to or does not attend is largely a matter of context" (Hall, 1977, p. 90).

Following the same definition, Salleh (2005) reiterates that the meaning of the message is embedded in the context, Yama and Zakaria (2001) describe context as embedded information that carries the meaning of the message, and Alkhaldi, Yusof, and Aziz (2013) believe that context carries knowledge/information that is essential in understand a message. Thus, my understanding of context based on these prior scholars is that context consists of both information and meaning; without information, a message is empty and without full understanding of its meaning, a message is just a piece of random noise. Almost all previous studies on context as a cultural dimension use Hall's original definition of context (Croucher et al., 2012; Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001; Larsen, Rosenbloom, & Smith, 2002; Nishimura, Nevgi, & Tella, 2008; Würtz, 2005).

Context, a spectrum that runs from high-context to low-context, helps us to understand culture's effect on communication and communication styles (Nishimura et al., 2008; Xie, Rau, Tseng, Su, & Zhao, 2009). Salleh (2005) adds that communication is the best illustrator of differences between high-context and low-context cultures. Asian countries, for example, are generally categorized as high-context cultures, while Austria and Switzerland are categorized as low-context cultures. In high-context cultures, communication assumes a common context and information resides in the context; as a result, some pieces of the message are not verbalized, and people are

86

expected to read between the lines. On the other hand, low-context cultures do not beat around the bush; they convey information straightforwardly.

Hall's dimension of high-context and low-context is widely used as an underlying theory to explain differences in communicative behaviour between cultures. Past studies such as Barkai (2008), Kim, Pan, and Park (1998), Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, and Blue (2003), Cardon (2008), and Croucher et al., (2012) proved that socio-historical context profoundly shapes cultural values, and these values influence the initial orientation of both high-context and low-context GVT members. According to several scholars, the high-context communication style is more implicit (Kawar & Jordan, 2012; Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001), they rely on non-verbal cues to convey their message (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001; Miller, Griffin, Paolo, & Sherbert, 2009), they are context-dependent (Zakaria & Cogburn, 2011), and they are typical of collectivist cultures (Gudykunst et al., 1996). On the other hand, the low-context communication style is more explicit (Barkai, 2008; Cardon, 2008), they depend on words to convey their message (Nishimura et al., 2008; Zakaria, Yusof, Hiroshi, & Muton, 2016), they are more content-dependent (Zakaria & Cogburn, 2013), and they are typical of individualistic cultures (Gudykunst et al., 1996).

2.7.1.1 High-Context Characteristics

High-context cultures are those in which the individual uses covert and implicit methods of conveying messages (Kawar & Jordan, 2012; Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001). High-context individuals expect their listener to be able to read between the lines (Chen, Okumus, Hua, & Nusair, 2011; Nishimura et al., 2008) and t heir

communication has a large nonverbal component (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001; Miller et al., 2009). Individuals from high-context cultures value personal connections among people and emphasize interpersonal relationships (Yamazaki, 2005). According to Nishimura et al. (2008) and Thomas (1998), for example, Japanese people tend to employ indirect communication, they use fewer words since words are not as important as context, and they place great attention on tone of voice, facial expression, and body gestures. Several empirical studies (Croucher et al., 2012; Holtbrugge et al., 2012; Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998; Miller et al., 2009; Richardson & Smith, 2007) have been conducted to verify these high-context characteristics.

Zakaria et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative study to better understand the communication patterns, characteristics, and styles of GVT members from different cultures. They interviewed university students engaged in virtual collaboration projects and confirmed that high-context people are more likely to use indirect communication. Specifically, high-context people use implicit and unclear statements and are more likely to employ emoticons/emojis as a proxy for non-verbal cues in the virtual environment. They also found that high-context individuals tend to retreat into silence to avoid confrontation or when they do not agree with other team members. The silence approach is viewed by high-context people to express their dissatisfaction in a polite way and at same time maintain a harmony communication. In a similar vein, a study by Kim et al. (1998) investigated the extent to which high-context and low-context characteristics can be empirically confirmed. The study involved participants from three different countries, two high-context (China and South Korea) and one low-context (America). The authors conducted the study because they suspected that high-

context and low-context characteristics observed in previous studies were based on personal observation and interpretation, and they felt there was a lack of empirical evidence to validate the theory of high-context and low-context cultures. The empirical results of their study confirmed that China and Korea are high-context cultures, as shown by the fact that natives of both countries are socially oriented and less likely to involve themselves in confrontational situations.

These findings are in line with a study by Croucher et al. (2012) that examined differences in conflict style preferences between high-context and low-context cultures, in this case India and Thailand (high-context) and Ireland and the United States (low-context). The authors hypothesized that high-context culture would use indirect communication in handling a conflict situation, while low-context cultures would prefer a direct and dominating approach. The findings of the study supported their hypotheses. They found that individuals from high-context cultures were more likely to use an indirect, non-confrontational style in a conflict situation. This non-confrontational approach to conflict can be related to the high-context characteristic of emphasizing personal relationships in doing business. Thus, results from both these studies empirically proved the accuracy of Hall's description of high-context culture, in that individuals from a high-context culture tend toward indirect communication and are attentive to their relationships with others (Barkai, 2008; Hall, 1977; Kim et al., 1998).

Another interesting study by Salleh (2005) used Malay participants to represent the high-context culture (Malaysia is considered an Asian country). Although the study provided no empirical evidence, the author believes that Malaysia's Malay culture and its traditional practices are a good example of high-context culture. She used four criteria to demonstrate how the Malay culture fits Hall's description of a high-context culture: 1) emphasis on emotions in a close relationship, 2) directness in conveying messages, 3) use of nonverbal communication, and 4) use of digital/analogous language. She showed that the Malay culture places great value on relationships among friends and family, and that this same value is brought into the business environment. For this reason, she says, creating a good relationship prior to a business deal is important to the Malay. Interestingly, Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, and Blue (2003) found that high-context people prefer indirect communication, but at the same time they perceive themselves as communicating directly, like low-context people.

2.7.1.2 Low-Context Characteristics

In low-context cultures, communication is direct and consists of explicit messages that are simple and clear; such individuals also value logical and linear communication (Hall, 1976; Yamazaki, 2005). America is a good example of a low-context culture, because Americans are more likely to engage in linear thinking and place less emphasis on personal relations at work. When it comes to decision making, their decisions tend to be based on fact rather than intuition (Nishimura et al., 2008). Barkai (2008), in his article on mediation and cross-cultural mediators, provides an interesting insight about America as a low-context culture. He points out that his own

characteristics as an individualist, egalitarian, informal, low-context communicator are typical of Americans (Barkai, 2008; Cardon, 2008). He further explains that Americans tend to be rational and use a problem-solving approach when dealing with conflicts.

In term of mediation, low-context cultures communicate directly and depend almost entirely on verbal communication; discussion is direct and straightforward, like an arrow (Barkai, 2008). Barkai strongly believes that when mediating between high-context and low-context individuals, the mediation solution often comes from the low-context person because of their assertive characteristics. Barkai's perspective and insights about America as a low-context culture are supported by studies by Croucher et al. (2012) and Kim et al. (1998); the empirical results of both studies were consistent in finding that America matches Hall's descriptions of low-context culture; Americans are direct and prefer the rational approach over the emotional when handling conflicts, are less interested in interpersonal relationships, and are task-oriented (Cardon, 2008). In terms of communication styles, Zakaria and Cogburn (2010) explored cultural behavioural patterns among a group of people working in a globally distributed environment, specifically their e-mail communication, and found that culture is an important factor to be considered in communication styles. Their results revealed that people from low-context and high-context cultures were able to collaborate in a virtual setting despite the differences in communication styles, while at the same time maintaining their own communication styles. However, they identified different communication characteristics of low-context people in their e-mail communication. Low-context people tend to be more direct and jump straight to the subject matter.

They also use brief, assertive, and concise words in their messages and only provide lengthy messages when giving detailed instructions. These characteristics are in line with Zakaria et al. (2016) who reported that the low-context people in their study depended on textual content to convey the message.

Western cultures, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia, in general, rely more heavily on low-context communication (Hooker, 2008). The rest of the world, on the other hand, tend towards high-context communication. Western influences and the desire to accommodate travellers and expatriates have made low-context communication increasingly common in high-context cultures. Therefore, high context culture is more inclined to change their communication styles and several previous studies have shown the flexibility of high-context individuals to adapt to and accommodate the communication behaviour of low-context individuals. A high context culture adapts to different communication styles to maintain good relations, avoid conflicts and, of course, avoid misunderstandings.

For instance, Adair, Buchan and Chenc (2015) reported that individuals with high context and high cultural intelligence tend to adjust their communicative behaviour. Their study found that individuals from high context with high cultural intelligence cultures are more willing to interact and work with people from other cultures. They emphasized that culturally intelligent people are more likely to adjust their own verbal and non-verbal behaviour to mimic or observe the culturally normative behaviour of those from other cultures. They emphasised that culturally intelligent people are more likely to adapt their own verbal and non-verbal behaviour to imitate or observe the

culturally normative behaviour of people from other cultures. In a specific GVT context, Zakaria (2017) reported that GVT members from high-context cultures show indirect communication styles, use non-verbal approaches, and use silence and polite gestures in certain situations, while low-context GVT members tend to use more direct and straightforward communication styles with many verbal responses in online team discussions. The study found that individuals with accommodative and divergent learning styles tended to be among those with high context cultural values, while those with convergent and assimilative learning styles tended to be among those with low context cultural values. In addition, past studies by Wang, Fussell and Setlock (2009), Pekerti and Thomas (2003) and Wei (2007) recorded the similar findings; high context individuals are more accommodating to cultural and communication differences.

2.8 Communication Accommodation Theory

2.8.1 Defining Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication accommodation theory (CAT) originated from Speech Accommodation Theory, which was developed by Howard Giles in 1973 (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991; Gregory & Webster, 1996; Soliz & Giles, 2014). According to Giles, Coupland, and Coupland (1991), CAT serves as a generalized model for situated communicative interaction and is comprised of two strategies: convergence speech and divergence speech (Giles et al., 1991). In recent years, Mirzaiyan, Parvaresh, Hashemian, and Saeedi (2010) developed CAT as model that explains some of the reasons for changes in conversation as "individuals seek to emphasize or minimize the social differences between themselves and their

interlocutors" (p. 1). Soliz and Giles (2014) affirmed that CAT can be used to understand the adjustments individuals make during an interaction; either they converge toward or diverge away from one another. Gasiorek, Giles, and Soliz (2015) related CAT to personal relationships, saying that "we use communication to manage our social relationships; we affiliate and disaffiliate with others not only through what we say, but also how we say it" (p. 2).

Convergence is when an individual adjusts or adapts their communicative behaviour so as to become more similar to the person with whom they are interacting, and reduce their dissimilarities (Gasiorek et al., 2015; Giles et al., 1991). Convergence enhances the similarities between the speaker's and listener's communicative behaviour (Gudykunst, 1988). People alter their communication behaviour because they want to decrease social distance from, earn respect from, and/or seek approval of their interlocutor (Gasiorek et al., 2015). By adjusting his or her communication behaviour, the interactant underscores their common social identities, thereby achieving a consensus in negotiation, conveying empathy, and/or developing a good relationship with the other person. In contrast, divergence is when a speaker alters his communicative behaviour to accentuate the differences between himself and his interlocutor and emphasize his distinctiveness. The main reason that people to diverge is to increase or maintain social distance, even though the act might negatively affect the quality of the interaction (Gasiorek et al., 2015).

Figure 2.6 illustrates a revised version of the CAT model, showing a communication between two individuals (individual A and individual B), their sociohistorical context (interpersonal history, intergroup history, and cultural norms), the immediate

interaction situation (the state in which interaction takes place), what they bring to the interaction (psychological accommodation strategies, behaviour, and tactics) and what they gain from the interaction (perceptions and attributions). This model was formulated as a general framework for intergroup communication (Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2006).
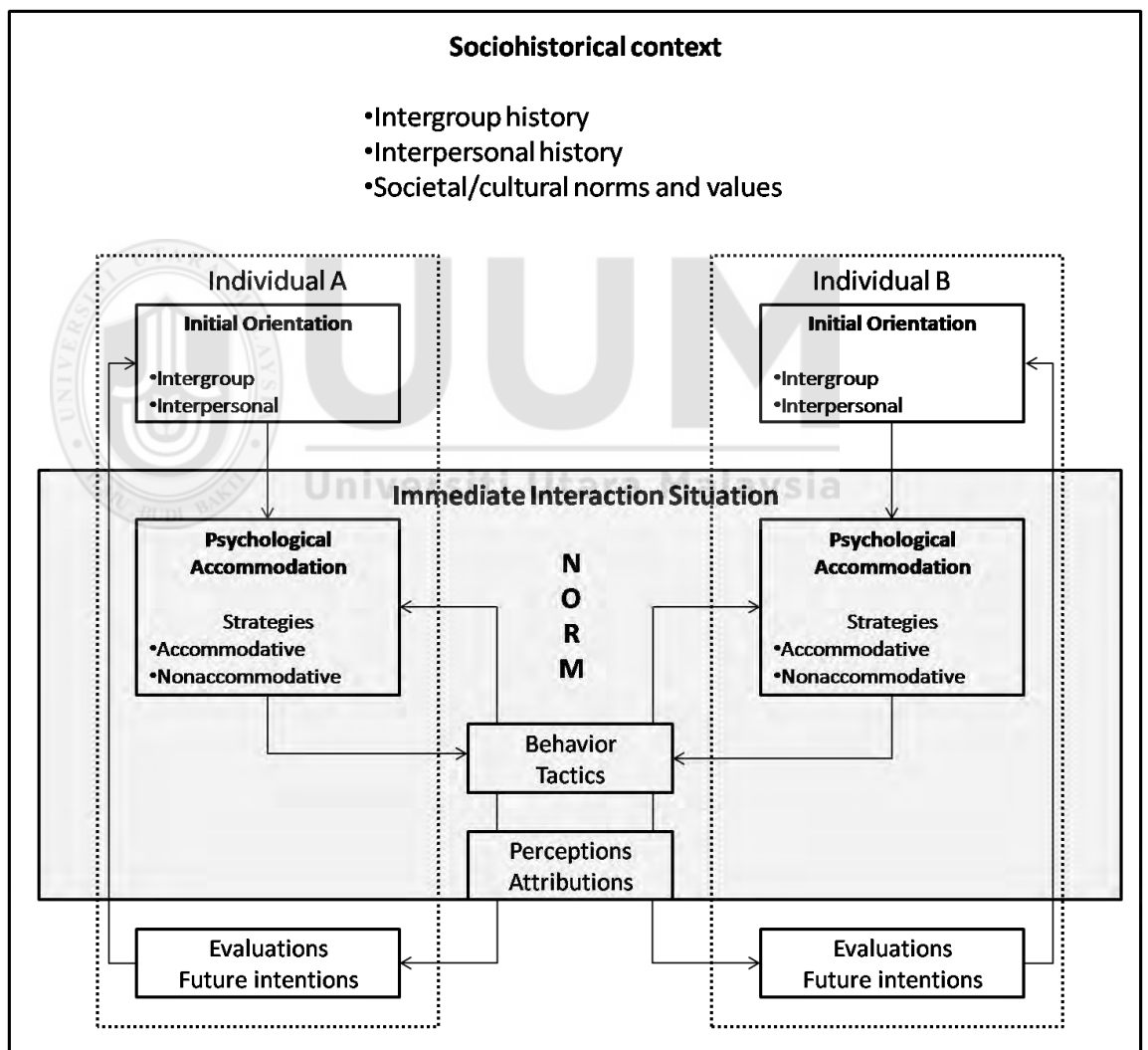
Figure 2-6 Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

This version of the CAT model is based on three assumptions.

Assumption 1: Communicative interactions are embedded in a sociohistorical context. Gallois, Ogay, and Giles (2006) assume that context plays a major role in communication and exerts a strong influence on it. Context, according to them, is a sociohistorical context rooted in intergroup history, interpersonal history and societal/cultural norms and values. The sociohistorical context includes such things as past relations between the group, group vitality, permeability, and stability of intergroup relations, all of which contribute to the establishment of societal norms. These societal norms shape the interaction since they specify with whom, when and how it is appropriate to interact. The two individuals each have their own initial orientation (either intergroup or interpersonal). In general, communication is a form of activity of communicating and/or the activity of conveying information (Adler, 1999). This initial orientation is informed by their past interpersonal and intergroup experiences and common sociohistorical context.

Assumption 2: Communication is about exchanges of referential meaning and negotiation of personal and social identities. As two individuals begin to communicate in an interaction situation, a psychological accommodation take place as they adjust their communicative behaviour (they become either accommodative or nonaccommodative). The adjustments they make lead to the third assumption.

Assumption 3, Interactants achieve the informational and relational functions of communication by accommodating their communicative behaviour, through linguistic, paralinguistic, discursive, and nonlinguistic moves, to their interlocutor's perceived individual and group characteristics. During the interaction, everyone adjusts their

96

communicative behaviour by applying accommodative strategies, either converging towards or diverging away from their interlocutor. These accommodating strategies may entail the adjustment of verbal (use of language, change in speech rate or accent) and/or non-verbal (body language, facial expression, tone of voice) cues. When people converge, they reduce the social distance between them, maintaining a good relationship and social identity; when they diverge, they underscore the differences between them. Both individuals have can choose to converge or diverge, as they desire. Throughout the interaction, they evaluate each other's behaviour and make attributions which affect the outcome and the quality of both current and future interactions.

2.8.2 Past Studies on Communication Accommodation Theory

The process by which one person assimilates the behaviour of another can be explained by CAT. For example, in Thomson's (2006) study on gender-preferential online discussions, he captured the interaction flexibility when people of two different genders interact. His results indicate that during the online discussion, participants were more likely to accommodate their communication towards topics and content highlighted by another person that involve in the same discussion. It indicates when the context in which the communication takes place influences people to accommodate their communication. When they converge, they not only accommodate their language, but to some extent they also converge their cultural norms. These results suggest that people accommodate to the language style consistent with a gender stereotype when discussing gendered topics such as female-stereotypical—health, fashions, and gossips; male-stereotypical—car, sports and computers (Thomson, 2006). However,

Thomson's study did not capture the factors that influence people to accommodate their communication or the reasons why people accommodate their communication when discussing gender-specific topics.

In a different study, Hewett et al. (2010) investigated doctors' written communications using doctors' progress notes as their sample. They performed an interpretive analysis of the language used and found that doctors used their progress notes to express their specialty identity and to negotiate intergroup conflicts. In general, the results revealed that during intergroup communication, when a junior doctor seeks help from senior colleagues, the junior doctor accommodates their written communication if they come from different specialty units. The use of proper language is an example of the accommodating strategy – junior doctors use it to converge towards their senior colleagues. On the other hand, the findings also revealed that some doctors emphasize the uniqueness of their speciality through these written communications. This shows that specialty influences communication among doctors, an important finding since non-accommodative communication could endanger patients if it results in a lack of mutual understanding in written communication via medical records.

In an online environment context, Goode and Robinson (2013) investigated parasocial interaction in asynchronous online communication (blog posts). They explored the linguistic behaviour of individuals replying to blog posts by television characters. Specifically, they examined the language used by the TV character and the language used by the individual replying to the blog post, with the aim of understanding whether individuals adapt their communicative behaviour to the behavioural patterns of TV characters. The blog posts in this study were written by three soap opera characters.

Goode & Robinson conducted a textual analysis on these blog posts and found that individuals do adapt their communicative behaviour toward the TV character when replying to a blog post. Based on CAT, the adaptation of communicative behaviour shown by individuals in this study suggests that when people interact with socially desirable others, they adapt to reduce the social distance between them and develop a good relationship. However, the results were based on single source of data which is questionable; further investigation is needed on why and how people adapt their communicative behaviour.

Building on Goode and Robinson (2013), Riordan et al. (2012) investigated temporal convergence in synchronous online communication (in this case, Instant Messaging or IM). They conducted two studies with university students to examine convergence when communicating via IM. Study 1 involved a task-based IM conversation with strangers, while study 2 involved a social conversation between friends. The authors observed convergence in both studies but reported different findings for study 1 and study 2. In study 1, the task-based interaction with strangers resulted in longer messages and composition times compared to the conversation with friends. Interestingly, in study 1, the authors reported that when respondents became involved in a conflict situation, they diverged; in study 2, however, even in a conflict situation, the pre-existing relationship led them to continue to converge in their communication and adapt to each other's temporal pace. Several of the factors that influenced this convergence in communication, such as relationship and prior communication history, require further investigation.

Willemyns, Gallois, and Callan (2006) analysed intergroup communication between postgraduate students and academic supervisors. They conducted a qualitative study with 31 postgraduate students and academic supervisors from various departments. The postgraduate students and academic supervisors in this study had no connection with each other. The authors predicted that accommodating strategies would dominate their findings. Based on transcripts and content analysis of conversation, a number of themes emerged, both accommodative and non-accommodative. In the accommodative category, interpersonal control and relational communication were used to reduce the social distance between student and supervisor. For example, during the student-supervisor discussion, most of the supervisors accommodated by expressing their desire to see their postgraduate students and always referred to themselves in a non-supervisory role, thus, this accommodative strategy obviously helps to reduce the status distance and hence fosters a good student-supervisor relationship.

The analysis also suggested that invoking similarities during the student-supervisor discussion helps build a positive student-supervisor relationship and diminishes the power and status differences. However, a major weakness of this study is that the postgraduate students and academic supervisors did not have any relationship with one another. Since power and academic status might influence the accommodating strategy, as shown in this study and Thomson (2006), more research is needed – for example, to investigate an intergroup of postgraduate students and their own supervisors, and vice versa (advisors and their students). While some respondents

apparently strove to eliminate the power and status distance to close the relationship gap, others underscored the status differences to reinforce the relationship gap.

For example, one of the supervisors highlighted her higher status and her wide experience in academics due to the academic tasks for which she was responsible. Interestingly, the analysis also found that the power gap was one of the factors that made postgraduate students diverge in their communications and highlight their status differential with their supervisor. The supervisors reported being surprised that postgraduate students were intimidated by the power gap and tended to emphasize the status differential during student-supervisor discussion.

2.9 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is based on three theories: Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), Hall's (1976) high-context and low-context cultural dimension, and a study by Molinsky (2007) on cross-cultural code switching. The purpose is to illustrate cross-cultural code switching among high-context GVT members during knowledge sharing activities (refer to Figure 2.5).
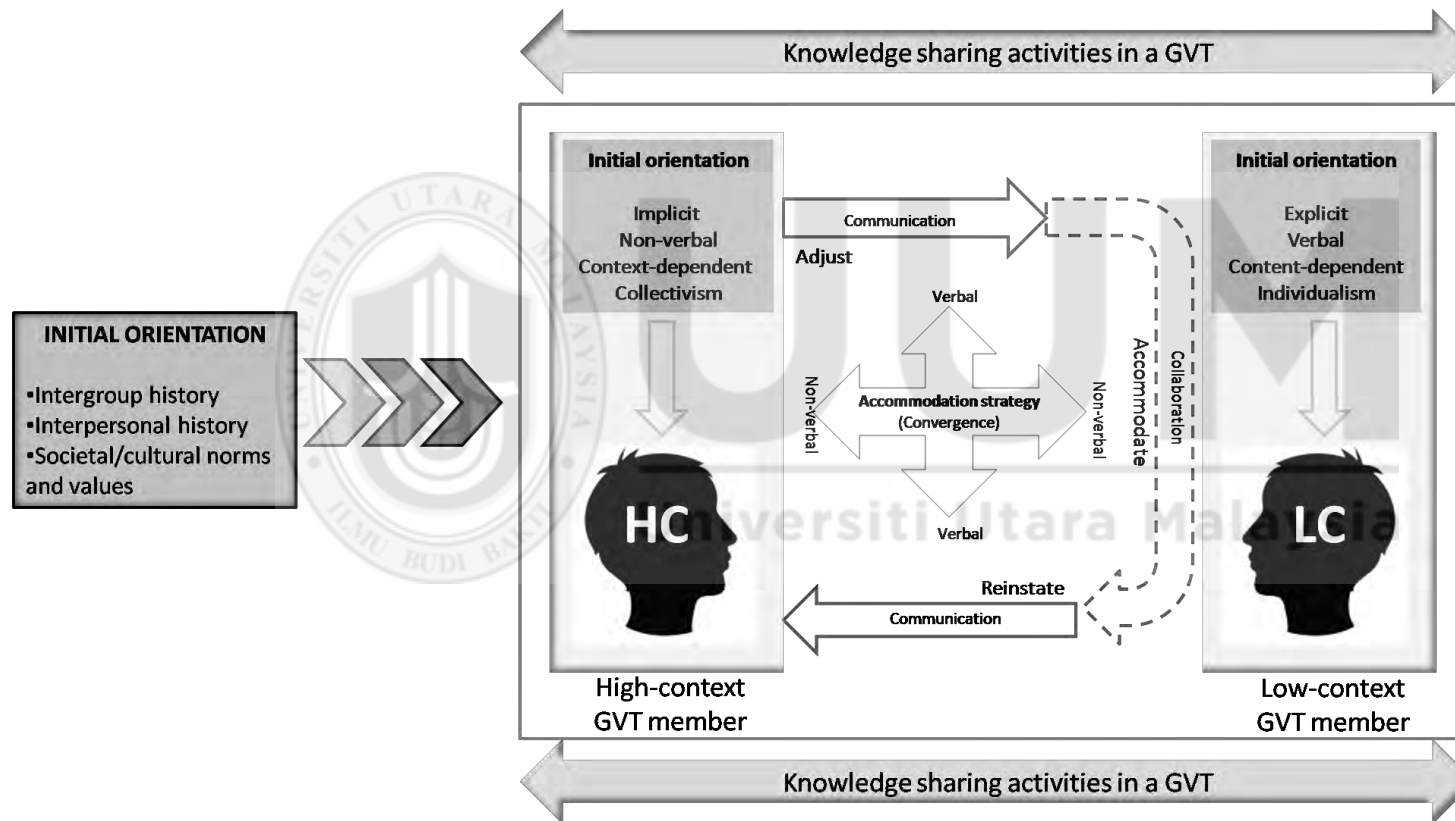
Figure 2-5 Conceptual Framework of High-context Cross-cultural Code Switching

According to CAT, people adjust while communicating for two reasons: either to minimize the social differences between them or to emphasize the social differences between them. In intercultural communication, interactions are highly influenced by each person's sociohistorical context, which is rooted in their interpersonal history, intergroup history and societal/cultural norms and values. The socio-historical context shapes the initial orientations of two culturally different interactants. Gallois, Ogay, and Giles (2005) and Elhami (2020) affirmed that socio-historical context is a key influence on individual initial orientation as it regulates how the interactant treats another interactant during the interaction. The interaction takes place in a GVT work structure during knowledge sharing activities; in a GVT, this involves two interactants with different communicative behaviours, namely, high-context and low-context. We refer to them as the high-context GVT member and low-context GVT member.

In a cross-cultural setting, a person engages in switching to produce a desired social impression. For example, in his framework, Molinsky illustrated a positive and negative condition that trigger the switching in communication. Condition 1: When individual experience a face threat that led to embarrassment (negative), he or she will modify the behaviour to maintain the pride (positive). In condition 2: During cross-cultural interaction, when a person experiences a performance difficulty (negative), it will decrease the confidence level. Hence, by switching the communicative behaviour, it will help to gain the confidence level (positive). Meanwhile, in condition 3: The identity conflict (negative) during the interaction in a foreign setting could cause anxiety and distress due to diverse cultural values. Thus, Molinsky asserted that when

people alter their communicative behaviour, it will help to overcome anxiety and develop excitement (positive) when communicating cross-culturally.

Molinsky (2013) points out that people adapt or switch their behaviour in three stages, which reflect how they are addressing their internal conflicts. Phase 1: Deep conflict, phase 2: Ambivalence, and phase 3: Authenticity. During the deep conflict phase, the person experiences a high level of unnaturalness and awkwardness. In the ambivalence phase, respondents shift towards feeling more comfortable adapting to the new cultural norms and in phase 3, authenticity, some of the respondents have a full feeling of legitimacy and confidence in their ability to naturally engage in the new behaviour.

The conceptual framework of high-context cross-cultural code switching (Figure 1.1) shows that the cross-cultural code-switching process begins when high-context GVT members adjust their communication during the initiation of knowledge sharing activity. High-context GVT members adjust their communicative behaviour to become more like their low-context colleagues in terms of verbal and non-verbal communication. During the exchange and transfer of knowledge, high-context GVT members also demonstrate the ability to adjust their communicative behaviour to accommodate cultural differences within the team.

As mentioned earlier, since high-context GVT members are more flexible in their communication, during collaboration they are more likely to adjust their verbal and non-verbal communicative behaviour. For instance, past studies by Anawati and Craig (2006) verified that people working in cross-cultural virtual teams were able to adjust not only their communication styles, but also their communicative behaviour. In line with that study, Zakaria (2015) reported that high-context individuals show a greater

tendency than their low-context counterparts to switch their online communicative behaviour during the decision-making process in a GVT setting. In a study by Wang et al. (2009), Asian respondents demonstrated the ability to adapt to differences in communication styles when working with Westerners.

Thus, we see that high-context GVT members use convergence to accommodate verbal differences; they modify their implicit communication style to be more explicit. They converge towards their low-context GVT colleagues to become more like them, with the aim of diminishing the social distance between them and fostering a good relationship. The flexibility of high-context GVT members is also shown by their ability to reinstate their original communicative behaviour following the collaboration. When the collaboration is finished, high-context GVT members restore their communicative behaviour to its previous effective state (their initial orientation).

In short, cross-cultural code switching begins with a high-context GVT member adjusting their communication, then accommodating during the collaboration by converging towards their low-context GVT colleagues, verbally and non-verbally. When the collaboration (the exchange and transfer of knowledge) is successfully concluded, the flexibility of high-context GVT members allows them to reinstate their original communication style. All in all, this conceptual framework explains and illustrates the process of cross-cultural code switching by high-context GVT members during knowledge sharing in a GVT.

2.10 Summary

This chapter offered a thorough review and analysis of past studies relating to the components of this study: culture, intercultural communication, and global virtual teams, including cross-cultural code switching among people working in a global virtual environment. The first part of the chapter outlined the current state of research concerning intercultural communication in a virtual environment and the cultural challenges confronted by global virtual teams. Driven by the absence of previous studies on switching behaviour in an online environment, the next section of Chapter 2 introduced the concept of cross-cultural code switching. Since cross-cultural code switching is a new concept there are no past studies; thus, I reviewed concept like cross-cultural code switching known as cultural frame switching. A further finding of this literature review was that there is little prior research on switching behaviour in a virtual workplace, yet several past studies have shown that people are not just able to accommodate cultural differences in global work environment; they were also able to switch their communicative behaviour. Next section, Chapter 3 will elaborate the research methodology that was used to conduct the overall research.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study was conducted qualitatively, and this chapter summarises qualitative research method used. Next, this chapter further elaborates the research respondents, the main criteria of respondents, the selection process via purposive and snowball sampling, the sample size, and its relation to the point of saturation. This chapter presented a specific data collection procedure with a brief discussion of the semi-structured online interview protocol. Then, this chapter will also discuss on the data analysis procedures; specifically, the qualitative content analysis and the inductive coding process.

3.2 Qualitative Research Method: An Overview

Qualitative research seeks answers to the "How" and "Why" questions. According to Merriam (2009)(p.5), "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences". A qualitative study focuses on the process, understanding from respondent perspectives (or known as emic perspective) (Merriam, 2009). This is in line with Vaismoradi et al. (2013) that affirmed a qualitative approach aims to seek an understanding of a particular phenomenon of the research respondents based on their own experience. Meanwhile, Miles and Huberman (1994) further describe the advantage of conducting a qualitative approach. Hence, the

primary goal of a qualitative method is to collect data that reflects social life experienced by research respondents.

A qualitative approach is normally conducted in a natural setting; thus, researcher will have a strong handle on the actual situation on the research topic, thus it helps to strengthen their understanding of the study and sometimes leads to the discovery of the non-obvious or neglected issues related to the research. Typically, respondents' behaviours are examined in the context in which they occur, and researchers' involvement would not affect the respondents' behaviours. Furthermore, Bricki and Green (2007) stated that qualitative study is conducted when the situation is unknown to the researcher and requires further understanding. In simple words, they differentiate qualitative to quantitative method by stating that quantitative aims at identifying the problems and qualitative gives a comprehensive details and "story" of the problems. It is crucial to choose a suitable research method that will be able to answer the research question. Thus, this study will employ a qualitative method as it will facilitate the process of answering the overarching research question that intends to understand to what extent GVT members switch their communicative behaviour during knowledge sharing activities in a virtual setting.

3.3 Respondents

3.3.1 Recruitment Process: The Snowball Sampling

The snowball sampling method was used as the primary process to recruit research respondents. Before the snowball sampling, purposive sampling was used to identify the first respondent. According to Noy (2008), snowball sampling is "when the researcher accesses informants through the contact information that is provided by other informants" (p. 5). The main reason for snowball sampling is that it provides a unique approach to gather respondents (Noy, 2008). Meanwhile, Handcock and Gile (2011) stated that snowball sampling is "collecting a sample from a population in which a standard sampling approach is either impossible or prohibitively expensive, to study characteristics of individuals in the population" (p. 369). Creswell (2013) asserted that snowball sampling aims to reach individuals who can provide rich data and the rich data from research respondents facilitate researcher to attain theoretical saturation.

The population in this type of sampling is also known as *hard-to-reach* populations (Handcock & Gile, 2011). A snowball sampling is desirable because it provides an alternative to overcome the difficulties of the respondent recruitment process due to hard-to-reach populations (Handcock & Gile, 2011; Owonikoko, 2016; Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). The hard-to-reach population in this study refers to potential respondents who are 1) currently active in GVT projects and hard-to-meet due to their busy work schedules and 2) have previous experience in GVT projects but located at hard-to-access locations such as outside the northern region of Malaysia.

The initial phase of the recruitment process was through purposive sampling. This sampling helped to identify the first respondent who is relevant and qualified to participate in this study. The purposive sampling method is when a researcher specifically chooses an individual within the population as a potential respondent. This study was done through a *referral* system, meaning that the respondents will suggest the next best person be contacted, and if agreed, the person will be interviewed. This referral system was a continuous process until researcher reached 30 respondents for this study. The purposive sampling is viable because it helps obtain research respondents from a particular and qualified group of people, and thus, this process becomes a lot less time-consuming. Meanwhile, the utilization of snowball sampling after purposive sampling is likely to increase the participation rate of this study (Sadler et al., 2010).

3.3.2 Respondents' Main Criteria

As a starting point during the respondents' recruitment process, researcher focus is on the Northern Region of Malaysia (states of Kedah, Penang, Perak, and Perlis). The two states in the Northern region, Penang (Bayan Lepas Free Trade Zone) and Kedah (Kulim Hi-Tech Park), were high-tech industrial zones. MIDA highlighted that the Northern region, specifically Penang, is one of Malaysia's most top and sustainable investment destinations. In the first quarter of 2021, Penang recorded an approved manufacturing investment of RM14.1b in 2020 (MIDA, 2021). Numbers of prominent MNC such as Motorola, Intel, Dell, Osram Opto Semiconductor, Robert Bosch, Siemens, KeySights, Jabil, Plexus, and others have set up the factory since 1969

(http://www.jaavin.com) and they are part of the key player in Penang foreign direct investment. Badrinarayanan, Madhavaram, and Granot (2011) stated that these large companies were impacted by the shifting work structure, which they provide a more flexible and dynamic work structure; via virtual or a GVT. The current Industry Forward National Policy on Industry 4.0 (https://www.malaysia.gov.my/portal/content/30610) is a policy that aims to change the manufacturing sector into smart manufacturing via cutting-edge technology. This has completely changed the way MNCs use the technologies in various ways, and the virtuality in a team context is not a new thing to the MNC. Although the Northern region of Malaysia was recognized as a high-tech industrial park, researcher opened for another region in Malaysia if the referral person is outside the Northern region, and as a result, 40% of my respondents residing in Klang Valley who works in MNC.

The main criteria of the respondent are that he or she is 1) currently active or has previous experience working in a global virtual team project for at least one year and 2) has worked in an MNC for at least one year. The potential respondents with active status in GVT projects will provide the latest view on the phenomenon related to this study; meanwhile, an experienced worker will provide a rich and fruitful insight into the phenomenon based on their broad experience collaborating in various GVT projects. The second criteria of the potential respondent are that he or she must have at least one year of experience working in an MNC-status company within Malaysia. The working duration of the potential respondents is crucial because it indicates their knowledge of the company's operation and practice, their familiarity with the GVT work structure, and strong networking.

From a different perspective, the main criteria of respondents play a vital role in producing good data and determining the data saturation point. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) justified that study with purposive sampling requires extra care. The saturation point in qualitative research is difficult to attain if 1) the group of respondents is heterogeneous, 2) the interview data is poor, and 3) the domain of inquiry is weak. Thus, in this study, researcher emphasize the main criteria of the respondents through snowball sampling. This sampling technique will facilitate the search process for qualified respondents that are homogeneous (GVT team members).

3.3.3 Sampling Size and Point of Saturation

In terms of sampling size, Francis et al. (2010) and Guest et al. (2006) stated that data saturation is often used to justify the sampling size in a qualitative study. Similarly, Bricki and Green (2007) pointed out that sample sizes in qualitative research are small and have the same opinion as Francis et al. (2010) and Guest et al. (2006) that saturation point is always used to justifying the number of respondents. In general, saturation point in qualitative research refers "to the point in data collection when no new additional data are found that develop aspects of a conceptual category" (Francis et al., 2010) (p. 1230). On the other hand, Marshall et al. (2013) examined the valid explanation used by qualitative researchers in justifying their sample size. Their empirical findings found that no study has cited qualitative methodologists in defence of their sample size, and in fact, many of the qualitative studies that they reviewed use the data saturation concept to identify and justify the sample size. Their empirical findings also lead to the recommendation of the best practices for justifying the sample

size of qualitative studies, and one of the best practices is to cite or refer to other similar studies that have adopted similar designs with similar research problems.

Thus, following the recommendation, Table 3.1 below summarised past studies that employed qualitative research method within GVT context with number of respondents and category of respondents.

Table 3-1

Summary of the number of respondents of qualitative research within GVT

Author	Number of respondents	Respondents
Zakaria & Mohd Yusof (2020)	57	University students
Nurmi & Hinds (2016)	78	Engineers
D. Olson, D. Appunn, A. McAllister, K. Walters, & Grinnell (2014)	5	University faculty members
Au & Marks (2012)	28	4 different companies that practice GVT
Zakaria & Talib (2011)	22	Managers
Dekker, Rutte, & Van den Berg (2008)	36	Professional virtual team
Lee-Kelley & Sankey (2008)	11	Project managers and director
Shachaf (2008)	41	GVT members from Fortune 500 company
Kankanhalli, Tan, & Wei (2007)	27 (Three GVTs)	University students
Wei & Haring (2007)	10	Workers in China-based company
Kayworth & Leidner (2000)	12 virtual teams (5-7 members)	MBA students

The highest number of respondents is 78 from Nurmi and Hinds' (2016) study. However, they conducted a mixed method study, and 78 engineers were interviewed during the preliminary phase. Meanwhile, for other studies, the number of respondents is between 5 to 60 individuals. Thus, based on Marshall et al. (2013) and Guest et al. (2006) recommendation and complement with summary from Table 3.1, the ideal sampling size for this study is 30 Malaysian employees who are currently active or have experience working in a GVT structure within an MNC company within Malaysia. In ten months, the researcher was able to collect and interview twenty-two (n=22) respondents from Penang and Klang Valley using both techniques, purposive and snowball sampling.

3.4 Data Collection
3.4.1 Semi-structured Online Interview

In general, Qu and Dumay (2011) asserted that interview approach in qualitative study provides a practical way for researchers to understand and learn about others' situation even though the situation may sometimes be subtle. A conventional in-depth interview is a conversation between two individuals that usually collects specific information about specific topic and produce rich information. The key is to have a good communication skill and systematic and well-organized interview plan to gather a rich set of data. In recent years, the proliferation of communication technologies allows the qualitative research to be conducted over the network.

According to Franklin & Lowry (2000), "the internet provided qualitative researchers with a new method of collecting 'real life, real time' artifacts with ease, convenience,

and a whole new set of ethical and moral considerations" and the utilization of internet in qualitative research was discovered as early as in the 1960s (Franklin & Lowry, 2000). For example, a recent study by Owonikoko (2016) conducted a series of online interview with virtual team leaders from different continents. There were two different approaches in conducting the qualitative research via network: asynchronous and synchronous. When conducting an asynchronous interview, researchers use email, discussion group, weblog, or any computer mediated communication (CMC) that allows communication over a period. The synchronous method enables real-time communication, and the communication imitates face-to-face communication if it involves a video-based tool such as video conferencing.

A semi-structured interview was conducted because it enables the researcher to control the interview flow depending on the respondents' answers and provide an opportunity to probe respondents for detailed understanding. The semi-structured interview also allows the researcher to ask respondents at any time during the interview for further clarification of the interview questions (Owonikoko, 2016). For example, Owonikoko (2016) conducted a semi-structured online interview with virtual team leaders in order to explore the strategies used by them to build and maintain trust among virtual team members. Online communication tool and social media such as Google Hangout and WhatsApp were used as the main communication medium to conduct the interview in this study. Due to respondents work commitment, the semi-structured interview was conducted purely online with the mixture of audio and video communication.

Additionally, online interview was convenient method because it eliminates travelling costs and the interview can be conducted anytime and anywhere. Despite its flexibility, online interview has disadvantages that need to be taken into consideration such as the lack of non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expression, body language and voice tone). To address this challenges, researchers allowed respondents to use built-in emojis in Google Hangout and WhatsApp whenever they wanted to express their emotions or feelings during the interview. Derks (2007) affirmed that emojis help people to express their emotions via symbols rather than text because words might not be able to interpret all the feelings a person wants to express or convey. He pointed out that the use of emoticons help to clarify a person feeling, mitigate the negative tone during the communication and help to control the interview situation (Derks, 2007).

3.4.2 The Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure is illustrated in the flowchart below. The first respondent for this study was found via the purposive sampling through friend recommendation, and researcher managed to reach the following respondent through snowball sampling with the total respondents of twenty-two (n=22) GVT high-context GVT members. Even though the first respondent and following respondents was gathered through different methods, the data collection procedure for all respondents was similar. They received three different emails: invitation email, introduction email, and arrangement email. The invitation email was sent to ask for their participation. When respondent response to the invitation email, researcher sent them the introduction email and provide a brief introduction of her doctoral study, explained the step-by-step procedure

116

of the online interview, and as well as an Informed Consent Form. Next, the third

email, the arrangement email, the confirmation email on the date and time of the online

interview based on respondents' preferences.
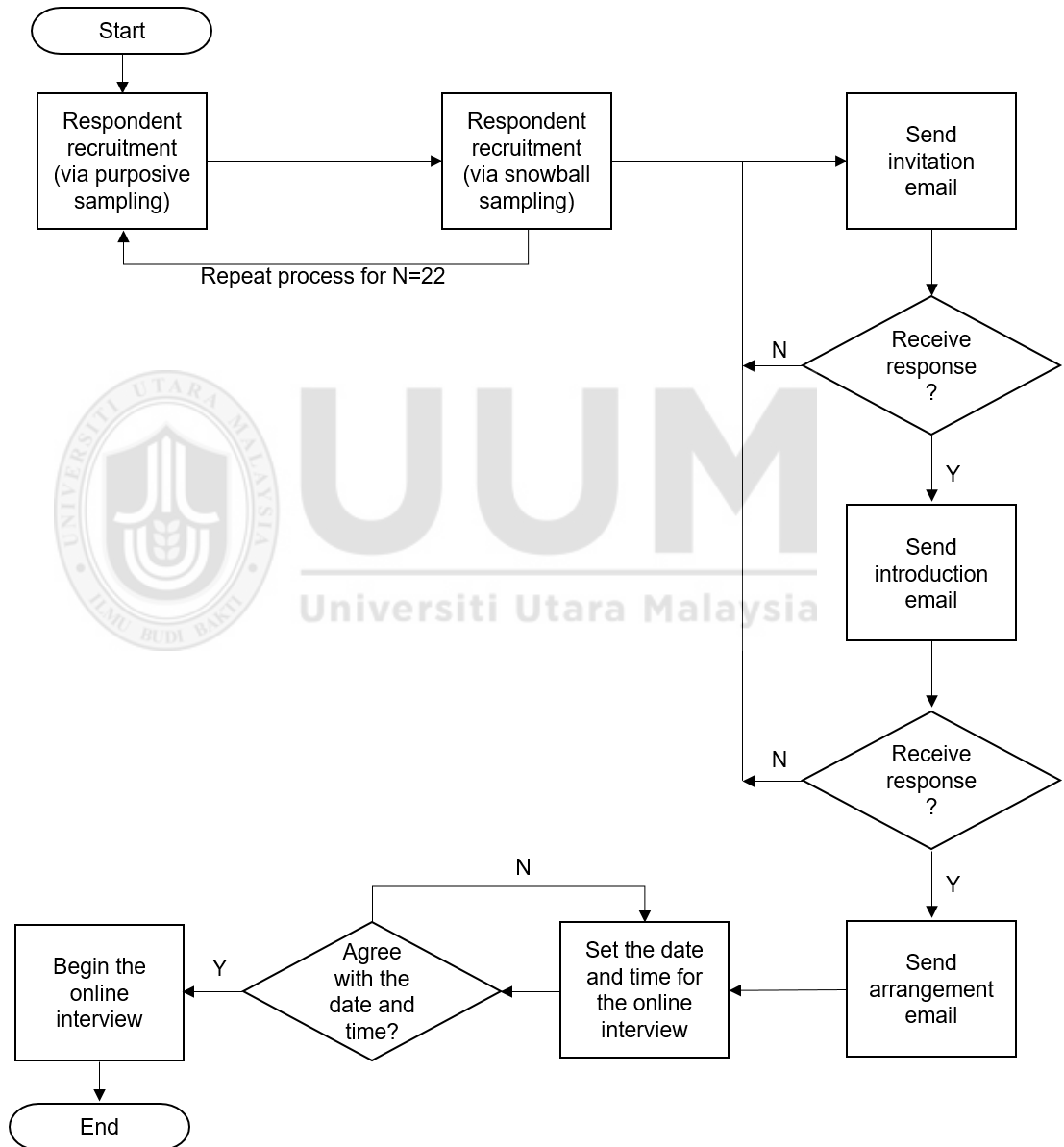
Figure 3-1 Data Collection Flowchart

3.4.3 The Interview Protocol

The interview protocol of this study was developed after a thorough review of the literature related to the research questions. The interview protocol was developed using Hall's high- and low-context theory, Communication accommodation theory, and Molinsky's Cross-cultural code-switching theory.

In Phase one, researcher ensuring the interview questions are aligned with research questions to ensure that the interview questions can fit the research purpose. The alignment was done by creating a matrix of mapping between interview questions with research questions. The mapping matrix assists researchers in identifying gaps in interview questions. It assists researchers in balancing the number of interview questions assigned to research questions. The mapping between interview questions and research questions, however, does not imply that the interview protocol was developed directly from the research questions. Table 3-2 showcase the mapping between interview questions and research questions.

Table 2-2

Interview protocol matrix

	Background information	RQ1: How does cross-cultural code-switching process occur during knowledge sharing activities in a GVT?	RQ2: Why do high-context GVT members switch their communicative behaviour and what are the cultural factors that influence high-context GVT members to switch their communicative behaviour?	RQ3: What are the challenges that high-context GVT members encounter when they must switch their communicative behaviour?
Demographic				
1. Can I know how long have you been working here and your current position? Can you please introduce to me briefly about yourself and job scope in global virtual team? For e.g. you participate in all virtual meeting and involve in critical decision making	x			
2. Can you please introduce your team members in the GVT? For e.g. where are they from?	x			
Communication Styles				

1. How do you communicate
   - With your colleagues?   x   x
   - With your superiors/subordinates
2. What type of medium you use to communicate?
   (e.g. email, videoconferencing, audio
   conferencing, social media).
   - Why do you choose such channels? Is it   x   x
     based on what is available or agreed
     upon or company's policy?
3. What is your style when you communicate
   virtually with your foreign team members?
   - What mannerism or what approach do
     you use? Can you identify and describe   x   x   x
     to me?
   - Do cultural differences influence your
     communication styles when you
     communicate with other people?

Knowledge sharing

1. What is knowledge sharing in your work
   context?   x
2. What kind/type of knowledge that you share?
   - How do you decide to share knowledge?
   - Why do you share knowledge? Is it task-
     related or it is because the knowledge is
     worth to share?
   - Can you describe the process of   x
     knowledge sharing?
   - Do cultural differences influence the
     way you share knowledge with other
     people?

120

3. Now, I would like to ask how you share knowledge virtually.
   - What communication channel you use to share knowledge virtually? Eg. Email, Google Drive, social media—WhatsApp, Telegram?   x
     i. Why you decide to use such channel to share knowledge?
   - What are the obvious differences when you share knowledge with your colleagues within the same department and when you share with foreign team members, virtually?   x
     i. Could you please elaborate?
     ii. Can you describe and explain the process of knowledge sharing via virtual environment occurs?
4. Can you describe your communication styles during knowledge sharing?
   - With your colleagues
     i.Can you describe to me a bit about your communication styles when you share knowledge? (i.e –the style is more informal or you can be more open)   x   x
   - With your foreign team members
     ii.Can you describe to me a bit about your communication styles when you share

knowledge? (i.e –the style is more formal)

Cross-cultural code switching (CCCS)
1. Do you aware or feel the differences in your communication styles when you interact with people from different cultural background?
   - Can you give example or situation or share your experience?   x
   - Can you describe what are the differences in their communication style when they interact with you
2. When you commence the knowledge sharing, how do you adjust your communication styles with your foreign team member?
   - How do you adapt your communication style? For example:
     i. Verbal – When they being straightforward, what is your reaction? How you adapt it?   x   x
     ii. Non-verbal – When they use short and concise statement to share knowledge, what is your reaction? How you adapt it?
3. During the knowledge sharing, can you describe your communication styles?
   - Do you maintain your communication styles? Can you give specific examples?   x
   - But, if you adjust your communication style, can you describe and explain the process?

Questions			
4. How you accommodate or fit in your communication styles compatible with your foreign team member?			
• Verbally	x	x	x
• Non-verbally			
• Describe the process/provide an example			
5. Anyway, do you aware or realize any situation/condition that indicates your communication styles is different from your foreign team member? Can you give example or explain in details?	x		x
6. I believe that culture has influence on our communication styles. What do you think? Do cultural differences give impact to your communication styles when you share knowledge?		x	x
7. Do you feel that you adjust your communication styles for the purpose of behaving in an appropriate manner?			
• If yes,			
i. When do you realize the adjustment process? Can you tell me when you realize it and how it happens?	x		x
ii. Can you share with me the incident/situation?			
8. After the knowledge sharing is done, can you describe your communication styles when you communicate with	x	x	
• Your colleagues within the same department			
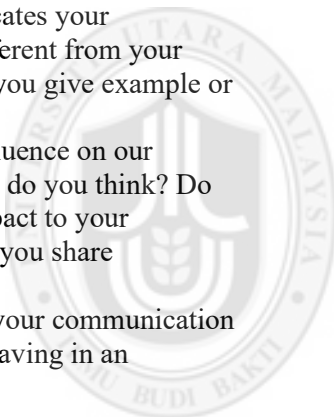
- Your foreign team member after the project completed

During Phase two, the IPR framework (Castillo-Montoya, 2016) advised researchers to create interview questions that were distinct from research questions. While research questions are derived from understandings of research problems, interview questions are developed based on the researcher's understanding of the respondents' perspectives on the study. The interview protocol for this study consisted of three main sections: demographic information, cross-cultural code switching, and the influence of cultural factors on attempts to code switch. The demographic information help build rapport and comfortable space for respondents. This section will help researcher and respondents to initiate and have an open conversation throughout the interview. This is followed by a friendly introductory question because the goal is to assess the respondent's conversation style and to establish rapport. The researcher communicates informally and assess whether the interview style was culturally appropriate and respectful of the respondent (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

The interview protocol was sent to two experienced qualitative researchers for review and feedback **in phase three**. Both experienced researchers examined the interview protocol in terms of style, number and complexity of questions, and ease of understanding. The review focused on the interview questions' suitability for the respondents as well as their ethical and cultural sensitivity. The experienced researchers then provide useful feedback so that the researcher can improve the interview protocol and ensure that the questions are appropriate for the respondents and that their responses can provide answers to all research questions.

Following that, the refined interview protocol was used in pilot testing to ensure that the questions functioned as intended in a real-world setting. For this study, three high-

context GVT members were chosen for pilot testing, and only the first respondent was interviewed face to face, while the other two were interviewed via online platforms.

The researcher introduced herself, briefly explained the research objectives, and obtained respondents' informed consent (first respondent was obtained via hard copy and the remaining respondents via soft copy). The interview was conducted section by section, with the researcher ensuring that the conversation remained strictly private and confidential. Pilot testing assists researchers in uncovering useful findings such as the structure of questions being asked and probing questions so that respondents continue to provide good responses.

During the pilot testing, the researcher discovered that respondents used a combination of languages (English and Malay) during the interview. As a result, during the actual interview, the researcher will ask respondents what language they prefer to use for the interview so that they feel more at ease sharing their experience with the researcher. The researcher then conducts actual interviews with the remaining nineteen respondents via online platforms.

The final and refined interview protocol is divided into two sections: one for demographic information and one for questions about the research question. In Section 1, basic demographic questions such as working experience, position in the company, and GVT work experience will be asked. Meanwhile, Section 2 is divided into three sub-sections, and each question begins with a basic question followed by probing questions for further clarification. Section 2 includes questions about communication styles, knowledge sharing activities in a GVT, and cross-cultural code-switching during knowledge sharing activities.

The section on cross-cultural code-switching included questions about respondents' intercultural communication styles, the communication platforms they used to communicate with team members, and thorough inquiries about their process of communication adjustment when interacting with foreign team members. These questions also sought to discover the reasons why respondents switched behaviours. In the final section of the interview, respondents were asked to share any cultural factors that influenced their attempts to cross-cultural code switch during knowledge-sharing activities. The final interview protocol for this study is shown in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3

Interview protocol questions

Section	Questions
Introductory	1. First, I would like to thank you and I appreciate your time and effort to participate in this online interview. Let me introduce myself. My name is Kirah. This interview will take about 60-80 minutes. How are you doing? 2. This interview is divided into 3 sections. In the first section, I will ask your communication styles when working in a GVT, next, I will be asking the knowledge sharing activity that happen in a GVT and in the last section, I will ask your behaviour in communication especially in a virtual work setting
Section 1	
Demographic	3. Can I know how long have you been working here and your current position? Can you please introduce to me briefly about yourself and job scope in global virtual team? For e.g. you participate in all virtual meeting and involve in critical decision making 4. Can you please introduce your team members in the GVT? For e.g. where are they from?
Section 2a (Communication Styles)	
Communication styles (CS)	4. How do you communicate • With your colleagues? • With your superiors/subordinates 5. What type of medium you use to communicate? (e.g. email, videoconferencing, audio conferencing, social media).

	• Why do you choose such channels? Is it based on what is available or agreed upon or company's policy?
	6. What is your style when you communicate virtually with your foreign team members?
	• What mannerism or what approach do you use? Can you identify and describe to me?
	• Do cultural differences influence your communication styles when you communicate with other people?

Section 2b (Knowledge Sharing)

Knowledge sharing	Knowledge sharing (KS)
	
	1. What is knowledge sharing in your work context?
	2. What kind/type of knowledge that you share?
	   • How do you decide to share knowledge?
	   • Why do you share knowledge? Is it task-related or it is because the knowledge is worth to share?
	3. Can you describe the process of knowledge sharing?
	   • Do cultural differences influence the way you share knowledge with other people?
	4. Now, I would like to ask how you share knowledge virtually.
	   • What communication channel you use to share knowledge virtually? Eg. Email, Google Drive, social media—WhatsApp, Telegram?
	      i. Why you decide to use such channel to share knowledge?
	   • What are the obvious differences when you share knowledge with your colleagues within the same department and when you share with foreign team members, virtually?
	      i. Could you please elaborate?
	      ii. Can you describe and explain the process of knowledge sharing via virtual environment occurs?

5. Can you describe your communication styles during knowledge sharing?
- With your colleagues
  i.Can you describe to me a bit about your communication styles when you share knowledge?
- With your foreign team members
  i.Can you describe to me a bit about your communication styles when you share knowledge?

Section 2c (Cross-cultural code switching)	

Cross-cultural code switching
 	
(CCCS)
	1. Do you aware or feel the differences in your communication styles when you interact with people from different cultural background?
	- Can you give example or situation or share your experience?
	- Can you describe what are the differences in their communication style when they interact with you
	9. When you commence the knowledge sharing, how do you adjust your communication styles with your foreign team member?
	- How do you adapt your communication style? For example:
	  i. Verbal – When they being straightforward, what is your reaction? How you adapt it?
	  ii. Non-verbal – When they use short and concise statement to share knowledge, what is your reaction? How you adapt it?
	10. During the knowledge sharing, can you describe your communication styles?
	- Do you maintain your communication styles? Can you give specific examples?
	- But, if you adjust your communication style, can you describe and explain the process?
	11. How you accommodate or fit in your communication styles compatible with your foreign team member?
	- Verbally
	- Non-verbally

- Describe the process/provide an example

12. Anyway, do you aware or realize any situation/condition that indicates your communication styles is different from your foreign team member? Can you give example or explain in detail?

13. I believe that culture has influence on our communication styles. What do you think? Do cultural differences give impact to your communication styles when you share knowledge?

14. Do you feel that you adjust your communication styles for the purpose of behaving in an appropriate manner?
    - If yes,
        i. When do you realize the adjustment process? Can you tell me when you realize it and how it happens?
        ii. Can you share with me the incident/situation?

15. After the knowledge sharing is done, can you describe your communication styles when you communicate with
    - Your colleagues within the same department
    - Your foreign team member after the project completed

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

In this study, a qualitative content analysis was employed to analyse all online interview data. The qualitative content analysis is chosen because it provides a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) asserted that content analysis could be used to interpret latent content. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) described a qualitative content analysis as a "research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p. 1278). Schreier (2012) asserted that qualitative content analysis is one of the qualitative approaches for assessing material and determining its meaning as the output will provide a broad and rich description of the phenomenon being studied.

It involves an in-depth process of examining the text data to extract meanings, themes, and categories that can later manifest into a story to explain the phenomenon. Specifically, in this study, the qualitative content analysis will allow the researcher to understand the process of cross-cultural code-switching of GVT members during the knowledge sharing activity and help identify the reasons and factors that influence GVT members to switch their communicative behaviour. In terms of its procedure, Mayring (2014) emphasized two main procedures: inductive category development and deductive category application (Mayring, 2014). Therefore, an inductive category development was used to analyse the data. The next section will provide a detailed

explanation of the inductive coding process based on a process diagram by Elo and Kyngäs (2008).

3.5.2 Inductive Coding Process

The inductive coding process involves formulating the criterion of definition derived from two sources: the theoretical framework and research question (Mayring, 2014), and can be presented in three distinct stages: preparation, organization, and report (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The inductive coding process for this research was based on Elo and Kyngäs's (2008) process diagram and illustrated as in Figure 3.2.
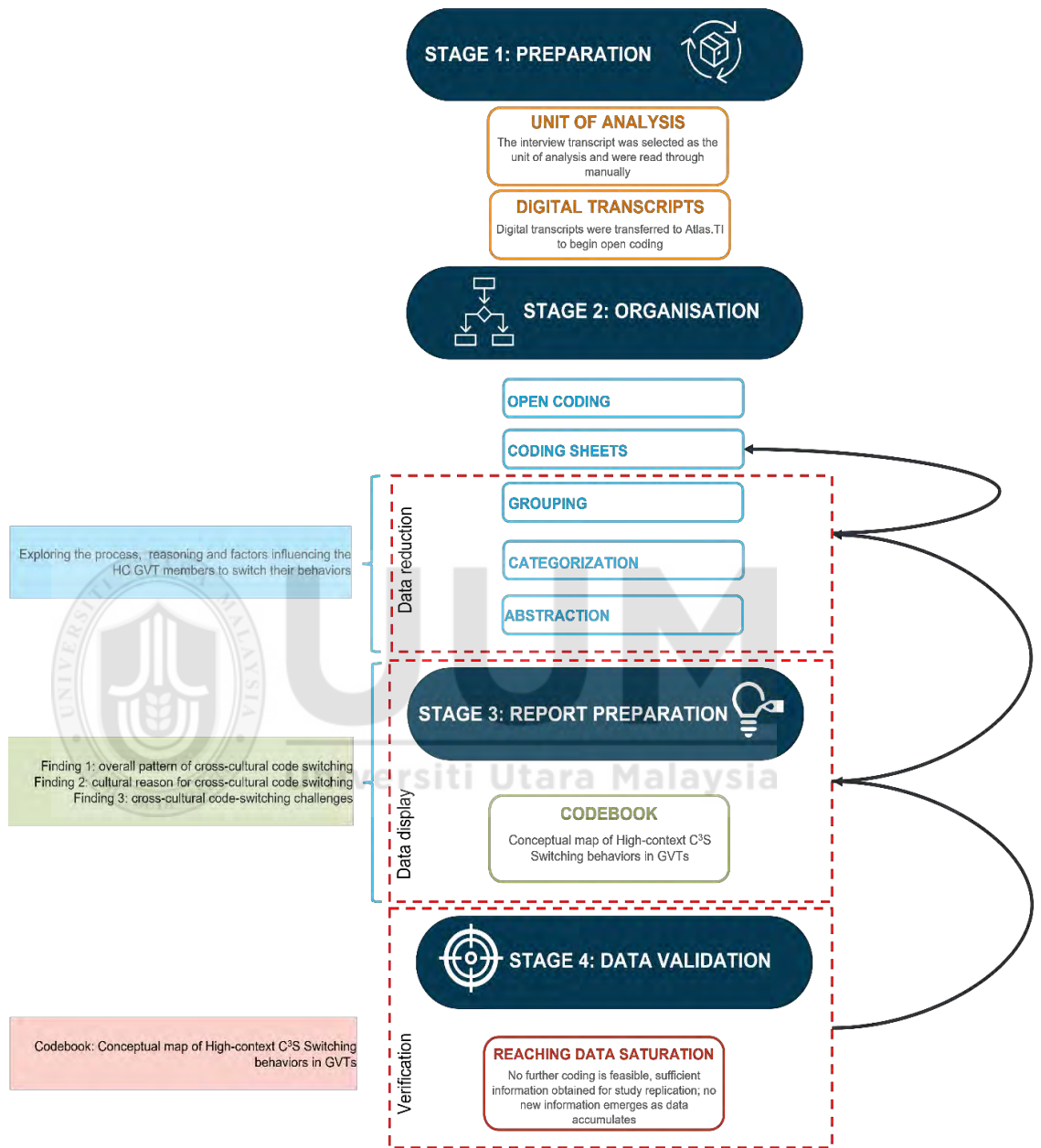
Figure 3-2 Inductive Coding Process

The first stage, ***preparation***, deals with selecting the unit of analysis. According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004), the most suitable unit of analysis in qualitative content analysis is the whole interview or observational protocols so that it will be large enough to be considered as a whole and small enough to be kept in mind as context. The unit of analysis can also be a letter, word, sentence or paragraph depending on the research question (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). For this study, researcher utilized the whole interview transcriptions as a unit of analysis. Next step within the first stage is making sense of the data by reading through all interview transcriptions and finding the initial answers to the 5W questions: the who, where, when, what and why? During this step, researcher created a brief note when she found interesting or relevant information that could be use during the coding process.

In the second stage, ***organization***, researcher applied Atlas.ti version 7.0, a Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) to facilitate the qualitative content analysis. researcher uploaded all interview transcriptions to the Atlas.ti software package and start the coding process with an *open coding*. There were total of 22 interview transcripts in PDF format were uploaded to the software package and each transcript is renamed with respondent's fictitious name. Open coding refers to the process of reading through all interview transcriptions several times and starts to create the initial codes that summarise my initial observation of data. The initial codes identified were based on the dataset and not based on the existing or underpinning theories. For example, within this phase, the walkthrough of interview transcripts helped to identify several initial codes such as knowledge sharing_knowledge, knowledge sharing_process, switching behaviour_direct, switching

behaviour_indirect, switching behaviour_factors, HC_remainprofessional, HC_demandofwork, HC_avoidmiscommunication.

Next, all initial codes were collected, and researcher proceed to the next step which is creating the *coding sheets.* Within this phase, researcher walk through the initial codes, identifying relationship among the open code, organise the initial codes and categorize the codes into similar group/category. Within this phase, the categories were freely generated, and it was based on existing code or new abstract category that encompasses different codes. The examples of category researcher managed to identify were switching behaviours, communication styles, HC communicative behaviours.

The following steps; grouping, categorization and abstraction are known as data reduction, based on Miles and Huberman data analysis interactive model (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Within this phase, researcher start the *grouping* of the codes to reduce the number of similar codes into subcategory, generic category and main category (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The different levels of categories are to provide a meaningful description of the phenomenon from specific to broader categories; hence, it will increase the understanding of the data. Figure 3.3 illustrates the output of abstraction process for one of the categories researchers identified from previous inductive content analysis process.
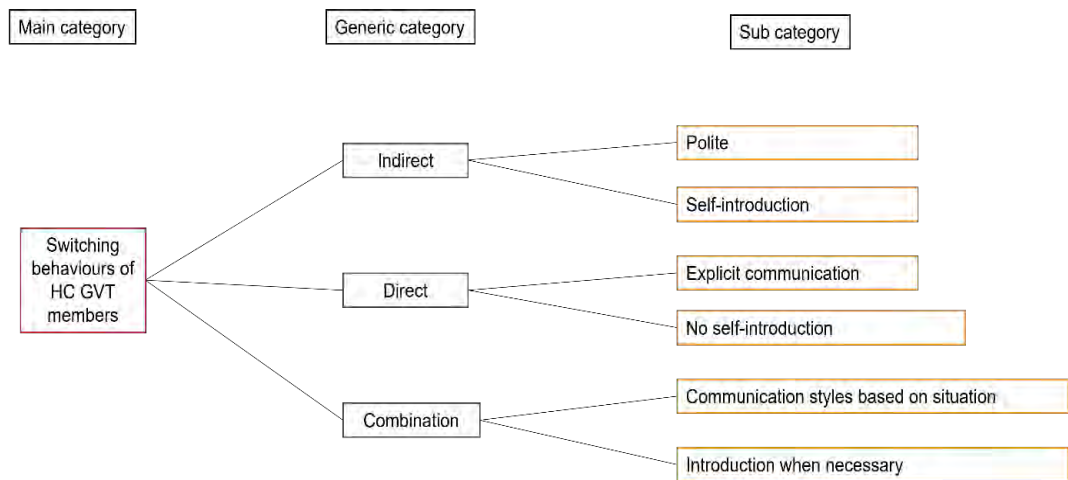
Figure 3-3 Output of abstraction process

Next, the *categorization* process took place and within this process, researcher classified the emerged data from specific to broader categories/themes which more relevant and fit the research questions. Once all data is being classified into sub-theme, generic theme and main theme, researcher reviewed the themes and its subthemes to ensure that all data are categorised as it should be. Miles & Huberman (1994) emphasized that data reduction process is a continuous process throughout the data analysis phase. The next step after categorization is *abstraction* which refers to the process of formulating a general description of the research topics based on the generated themes (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In this step, all sub-theme, generic theme, and main theme are appropriately renamed.

In the ***report preparation*** stage, the emerged data is converted into an understandable format, and according to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative data can be interpreted in various formats such as model, conceptual system, conceptual map, graphs, charts, and even network diagram(Elo et al., 2014; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In this study, the overarching research question is to understand to what extend HC GVT

members switch their communicative behaviour during knowledge sharing in the GVT work structure. Therefore, a *conceptual map* was used to help understand cross-cultural code-switching among HC GVT members during knowledge sharing. Furthermore, a conceptual map is the most suitable way to describe the overall findings of this study in a pictorial form. Daley and Milwaukee (2004) strongly agreed that a conceptual map in a qualitative study helps the researcher focus on the meaning, and good mapping allows the researcher to discuss and interpret the findings to the general viewer. Specifically, a conceptual map, a tabular, and a qualitative codebook were used to represent the emerged data in this study.

The final ***data validation stage*** requires the researcher to seek second thought in testing the data plausibility, sturdiness, validity, reliability, and trustworthiness. Elo et al. (2014) asserted that data trustworthiness in qualitative research is important as it clarifies readers in following the analysis and resulting conclusions. To validate the research findings, researcher have utilized a data saturation point and *intercoder reliability*. Generally, a data saturation point can be achieved during data collection when no new additional data have emerged in the data collection process. Meanwhile, data saturation in the analysis phase refers to when no additional new findings or codes have emerged during the analysis process. Finally, the intercoder reliability approach was utilized to validate the conceptual maps derived from the data.

The intercoder reliability was tested with two independent coders who did not take part in the study and analysed the same texts using the same coding scheme and reached the same level of agreement. When multiple researchers code the same set of data, intercoder reliability ensures that they reach the same conclusions. Both

independent coders received the codebook with detailed instructions, and they must review the documents to understand their role and responsibilities as intercoder. The intercoder reliability process was completed with both coders reviewing the codebook components such as primary code, definition, and verbatim sample and reaching an agreement level of 85 percent as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) that a standard of 80 percent agreement on 95 percent codes.

3.6 Qualitative Codebook

A codebook is a list of codes and definitions of codes that was created to record the emergent codes. MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, and Milstein (1998) describes a codebook as conceptual map that researcher developed to systematically map the informational terrain of the text. Furthermore, the codebook facilitate researcher to explain the assumptions and biasness in plain systematic view. According to Braun and Clarke (2021), the codebook consists of basic components of the codes, the brief definition and full definition and example text. Throughout the codebook development, researcher reviewed several times to refine the codes and its definition to ensure it can explicitly reflect the research questions.

Specifically, in this study, researcher was the primary human coder who creating, updating, and revising the codebook and my advisors were responsible to reviews the codes and definition in the codebook to ensure its consistency and to minimize the ambiguities. The review and refinement process by my advisors helps to achieve the codes clarity that able to capture all unique responses based on research questions. Researcher adjusted and expanded my codebook based on my advisors' feedback to

reflect the themes and topics that emerged from the data and the focus was on inductive process. The final codebook (see Appendix C) illustrates the complete list of codes with code definition, the subcode (if applicable), purpose of the code and verbatim examples. The code represents the inductive codes researcher identified in my data analysis process, meanwhile, the code definition provides the meaning of the code in general. Next, the subcode denote the breakdown of main codes and purpose/meaning of code illuminate a specific definition of each code and subcode. The verbatim examples were included as supplementary support to the codes for reader understanding. From generic category and subcategory, the final codebook consists of definite themes that represent the research questions. Prior to finalising the codebook, researcher reviewed each code, its definition and verbatim associated with it to check for coding consistency. As a result, the final codebook was divided into three sections which each section of the codebook represented a specific research question in this study.

3.7 Credibility and Trustworthiness

The research was conducted qualitatively and demonstrated the strong process that promote the credibility and trustworthiness. The credibility and trustworthiness help researcher to manifest that the whole research process from data collection to data analysis was conducted correctly and not based on superficial approach. As such, to promote the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, researcher consistently followed the interview protocol with all my research participants. Palaganas, Sanchez,

Molintas, and Caricativo (2017 and Ranney et al. (2015) asserted that adhering to the interview protocol helps to achieve the consistency during data gathering process.

Furthermore, Palaganas et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of researcher reflexivity during the data collection process. As researcher is the main instrument in qualitative research, it is crucial for a researcher to understand the subjectivity and personal feelings influence throughout the data collection and analysis process. Hence, considering this matter, researcher was constantly engaged in self-introspection to alleviate the effect of personal biases during data collection and data analysis process. On another note, using a single method of verification to explain the interconnected and shared phenomena in a qualitative will be ineffective. Therefore, researcher utilized additional coders to ensure that the data analysis procedure is thorough and that the data is interpreted correctly via the codebook (Patton, 2003).

3.8 Summary

This chapter outlines the overall research methodology and details on qualitative is discussed in this section. Next section elaborates on the sampling data, the recruitment process and saturation point. A semi-structured online interview is chosen to be the main approach to collect data, thus a diagram to illustrate the process of online interview and the overview of interview protocol is presented. The data analysis section thoroughly explains and illustrates the qualitative content analysis that is used to analyse the online interview data.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study, obtained from the qualitative data analysis. The chapter starts by describing the cross-cultural code-switching process during knowledge-sharing among high-context GVT members. The process comprises three main phases: Phase 1 – Initiation, Phase 2 – Switching, and Phase 3 – Internalization. The next section describes the possible cultural factors and reasons why high-context GVT members switch their communicative behaviour during the knowledge-sharing exercise. The analysis yielded four cultural factors influencing such behaviour. They are upfront communication, expressiveness, team urgency, and agenda-oriented communication. The analysis also revealed that high-context GVT members modify their communicative behaviours for three reasons: (1) to accommodate different communication platforms, (2) to accommodate different communication purposes, and (3) to overcome language constraints and avoid misunderstandings. Finally, the last section explains the challenges high-context GVT members encounter when they must switch their communicative behaviours.

4.2 Demographic information

In this study, respondents were selected according to several specific criteria such as their work location, number of years working in an MNC-status company, and their involvement in the GVT work environment. The focus area of our respondents was the Northern Region of Malaysia, and we are also open to referrals from different regions within Malaysia if the respondents fulfil our specific criteria. However, we focused primarily on the Northern Region because this is a high-tech industrial zone home to several prominent MNCs, including Motorola, Intel, Dell, Osram Opto, Robert Bosch, and Siemens.

Badrinarayanan, Madhavaram, and Granot (2011) note that the shift to virtual work structures has particularly impacted large companies like these. The next criteria we are focusing on is the respondents working period. Specifically, for this study, the ideal number of years working in an MNC is at least one year to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge of company operations and practices, a familiarity with the GVT work structure, and a strong network. Besides that, the number of years working in an MNC would ensure that respondents could provide rich insights based on their experience of collaborating on multiple projects. Respondents who were active in a GVT at the time of the interview would also provide the most up-to-date view of the phenomenon.

Figure 3.4 illustrates the demographic profile of our respondents and Table 3-1 depicts the respondents' profiles, and there were twenty-two (n=22), and almost 72% of participants came from an IT background, with the remainder working in other sectors such as engineering and customer service. Regarding the type of work, 40.9% of

participants were engaged in a routine task-based via a GVT, while the remaining 59.1% were working (or had worked) on a specific project – with the shortest project lasting six months' weeks and the longest two years. Furthermore, the majority had experience working with team members from the US and the Asia-Pacific region; every team comprised more than one nationality consisting of high-context and low-context GVT members. Specifically, the low-context GVT members came from the USA and European countries. Meanwhile, in terms of years of working in a GVT, 36.4% had an average of three to five years' experience working with foreign team members in a virtual environment.

Almost 95.5% of the respondents used email to communicate with team members from other countries, complemented by other communication platforms such as Skype, Instant Messenger, teleconferencing, and direct phone calls. Regarding respondent's role and responsibilities, 32% is an engineer with various responsibilities such as software test engineer, system engineer, and research and development engineer. Meanwhile, 50% works as IT specialists ranging from application support specialists to IT specialists. The remaining 18% of the respondents were involved in the GVT project or ongoing tasks as project managers or project consultant to the counterpart and local team members. In terms of working location, 54 percent of respondents worked in Malaysia's central region, while the remaining 46 percent worked in Malaysia's northern region.
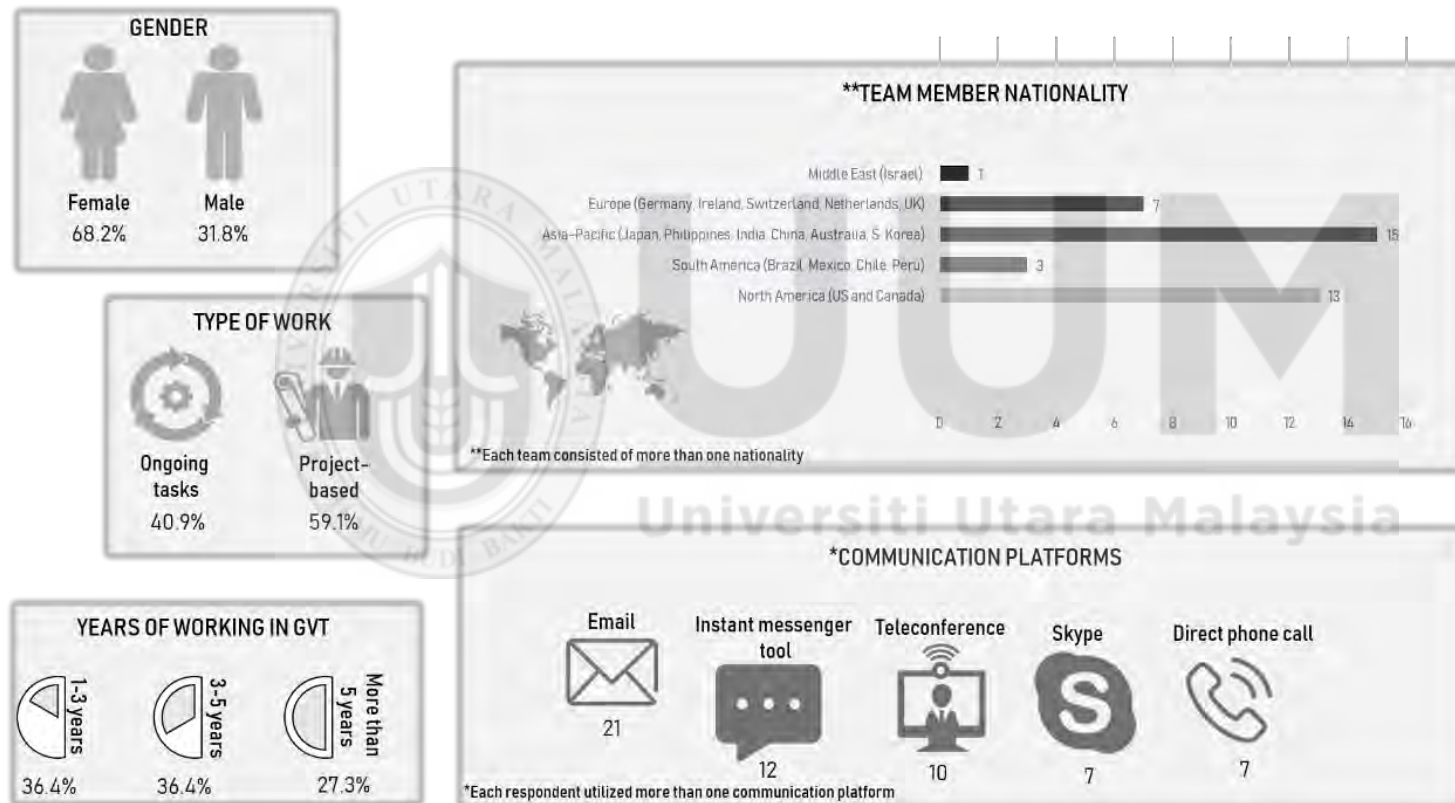
Figure 4-1 Demographic Infographic

Table 3-1

Respondents Profile

Respondent index	Respondent Name	Name of current company	Years of experience with GVT	Position	Type of work
R1	Ariani	Motorola Solutions	3	IT support	Routine-task based
R2	Azam	Philips	7	Project Manager	Project-based
R3	Zharif	Infenion	4	Engineer	Routine-task based
R4	Nadia	Infenion	5	Engineer	Routine-task based
R5	Wardah	Dell	5	IT support	Routine-task based
R6	Adira	Cognizant	3	IT support	Project-based
R7	Farhana	Servicesource	3	IT support	Routine-task based
R8	Nazmi	Intel	5	Engineer	Project-based
R9	Sulfiah	Cognizant	5	IT support	Project-based
R10	Hanani	Cognizant	4	IT support	Project-based
R11	Yasnira	Cognizant	5	IT support	Project-based
R12	Usha	TechMahindra	3	IT support	Project-based
R13	Salman	Weir Mineral	3	Project Manager	Project-based
R14	Hariz	Servicesource	3	Engineer	Routine-task based
R15	Zuraida	Weir Mineral	5	Project consultant	Project-based
R16	Adam	Dell	5	IT support	Routine-task based
R17	Iliani	Intel	2	Engineer	Project-based
R18	Shafrina	DCX technology	6	IT support	Routine-task based
R19	Khadija	Weir Mineral	5	Project consultant	Project-based
R20	Akmar	Intel	5	Engineer	Project-based
R21	Syazwani	Servicesource	2	Engineer	Project-based
R22	Izham	Servicesource	2	IT support	Routine-task based

4.3 Overall patterns of GVT development for knowledge sharing and cross-cultural code switching

Based on the findings, the cross-cultural code-switching process that occurs during knowledge-sharing activities in a GVT can be illustrated in Figure 4.1. The cross-cultural code-switching in this context refers to the ability of high-context GVT members to modify their communicative behaviours during the knowledge-sharing session with low-context GVT members. The cross-cultural code-switching process comprises three major stages: (1) Initiation: An introductory session, (2) Switching: Convergent communicative behaviours, and (3) Internalisation: The closure of effective cross-cultural code-switching. In the first stage, high-context, and low-context GVT members initiate communication via different types of technology, such as email or video conferencing. The communication starts with an introductory session, and all GVT members share a common aim, i.e., to achieve a project or task goal. The next crucial phase is switching in which high-context GVT members accommodate their communication styles to fit their counterpart (i.e., low-context GVT members). The outcome code-switching the overall cross-cultural code-switching process is a closure phase where high-context GVT members can assimilate to different communication styles.
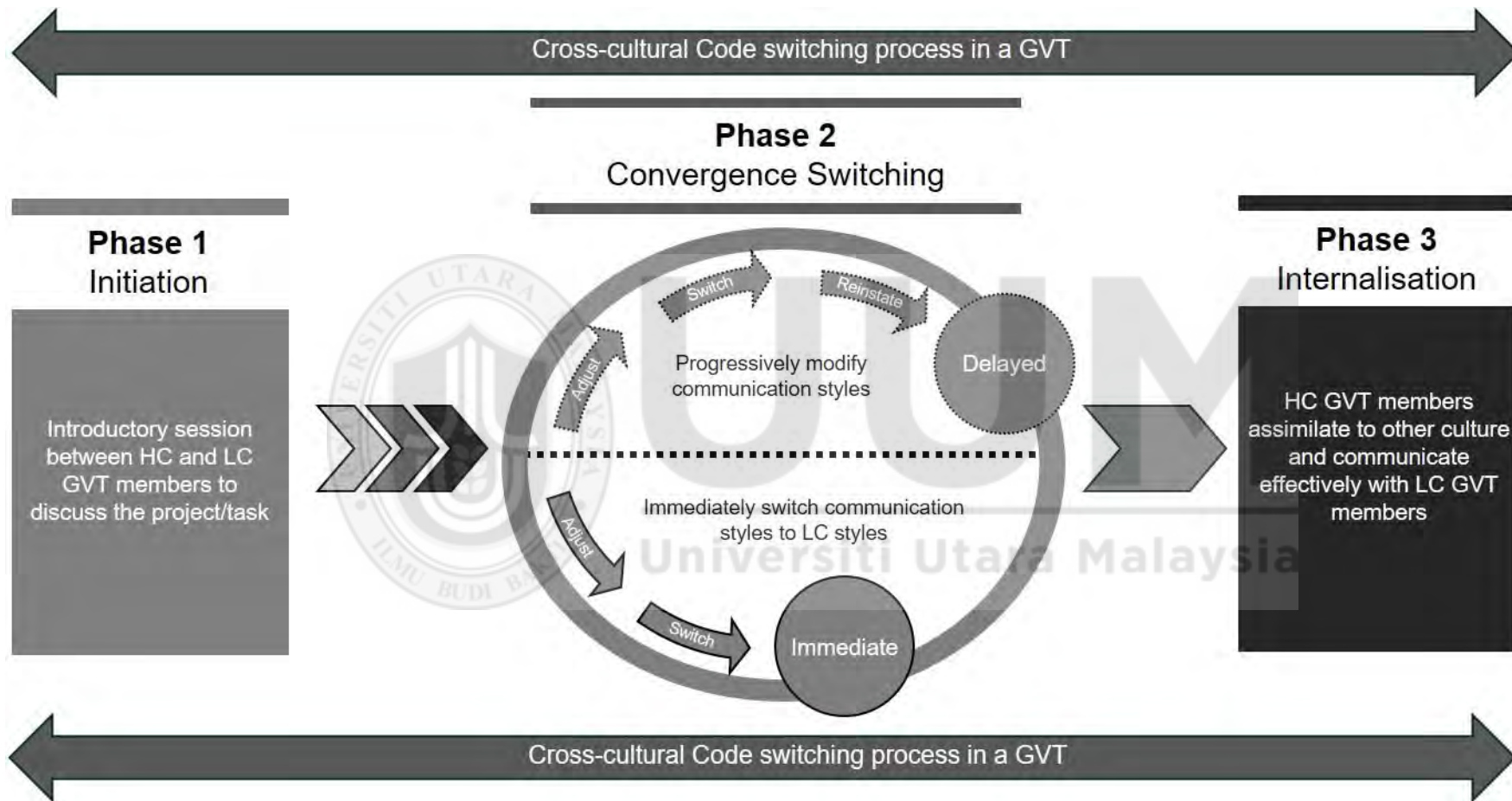
Figure 4-2 Cross-cultural code Switching Process

4.3.1 Phase 1 – Initiation: An introductory session

A global virtual team is basically a group of people with different cultural backgrounds cohesively working towards an organization's common goal while the team members are dispersed geographically and culturally. They are also very much dependent on technology to communicate and may never meet face-to-face. Based on our findings, a global virtual team in this study refers to two types of teams: a project-based and routine-task based. In both types, the project or task begins with an introductory session, and an email or brief video conferencing is often used to initiate a team. At this stage, team members introduce themselves as well as their roles in the team. They normally start the introductory session with a usual greeting, a brief introduction, and then directly discuss the project goal. For example, R10 who was working in a project with her USA counterpart, mentioned that they utilized conference calls to introduce themselves and roles in the project. Next, they discussed the project requirements, their needs, and limits so that the counterpart knows what they can deliver to achieve the project goal. Then, they continued communication via other media, such as email, phone calls, and audio and video conferencing. Meanwhile, R17 stated that for every project she was assigned to, she would have different roles and tasks, from front-end to back-end services. As she was working in a project, her team was formed through a simple ice-breaking session where they shared their skills briefly with the counterpart via email and videoconferencing. R3 also mentioned that his team was initiated in an introduction session. He remarked:

149

For new projects that involve multiple people in an organization, the first meeting will always start with an introduction session. This is where I will introduce my name, my role in the organization, the number of years in the industry, and the number of years in the company. We tried to create the atmosphere as friendly and as jovial as possible ... It would help with the flow of the meeting in terms of idea generation or different opinions discussion.

(R3, Zharif)

Meanwhile, for R15 and R19, working as a consultant virtually in a project required them to prepare some documentation before the introductory session started. R19 further explained that prior to the ice-breaking session, she had to establish all the documentation about the new processes in a blueprint format and upload them in SOLMAN (solution manager), a platform the team utilized to share the project-related information. The document preparation involved two parties: (a) the consultants (their counterpart team members), and (b) the consultant and business users. The SOLMAN platform was used with a single intention, that is, to allow all parties to have access to the same information before and after the Webex session. Next, they would organize a Webex session with the counterpart for the ice-breaking session.

According to R19, since they were new to each other, they used a formal business language during the ice-breaking session to understand their communicative behaviour. She said:

> *In the beginning, we do not know each other yet, so we use a business language. Once we all know about their culture, we follow their culture. Sometimes, they are very casual, and we have a very strong business relationship, and sometimes we become friends.*
>
> *(R19, Khadija)*

R19 added that besides a Webex session, they also conduct a workshop where they would go to their counterpart's site in Europe and the USA to explain about the project as well as gather the requirements needed for the project. Basically, the workshop would be conducted in the first two weeks of the project initiation, and a follow-up session was done through a phone call and other Webex sessions. For R12, her team conducted an audio conference and screen sharing during the ice-breaking session. Besides the introduction session, the main purpose of the audio and screen sharing was to brief the new team members with the new process of the workflow as well as explain the details of the product.

However, R6 experienced a different team formation process. She explained that the project was like a change in a workplace whereby she had to go through an interview session with the local and US manager. During the interview session, she briefly introduced herself so that she did not have to re-introduce herself later when the project started. She further explained that the term "project" refers to "relocation" in the company. If the project she is currently involved in is completed, she will be released

from it. Next, she will be placed on the "bench", waiting for a relocation (new project).

She described:

> *'Project' to us is more like changing the workplace. When I changed*
> *from the previous team to the current team, it was because I was*
> *released from the previous team as the team was demolished. So, we*
> *will have to attend an interview with the US and local managers.*
> *After the interview and get accepted for the position, we do some*
> *knowledge transfer on how to perform the work/task, then we start*
> *work. After the interview and accepted for the position, the team will*
> *conduct knowledge transfer to share the workload. My manager will*
> *brief on what our team is all about and how do we do the work:*
> *explain the task, what to expect, and what to deliver. The term*
> *'project ends' means we will be released from the team.*
>
> *(R6, Adira)*

R8 shared his experience working in four different projects throughout his career in Intel. Unlike R6, R9 and R11, who said the introduction session was omitted, R8 explained that, in his case, the whole team rarely introduced themselves in detail; instead, they briefly mentioned their name and role in the project. The team was formed based on the project, and the project manager initiated the communication.

The main intention of the introductory session was to brief all team members about the project timeline, and the communication was mainly about the project requirement. R8 said:

> *The project manager will introduce all the team members. And the first thing to do normally is to discuss the project timeline and daily meeting time adjustment. Other than that, it is more about the business requirement. Rarely we introduce ourselves: just told the team our name and our responsibility in the project.*
>
> *(R8, Nazmi)*

According to R4, who had been actively involved in GVT for almost seven years, her team was formed through an *alignment* session with all team members from different regions, such as North America, Asia Pacific, and Europe. The alignment session was conducted a month before the project started via telephone conference, and each of the team members would provide briefly indicate their name, origin of the team, roles, and responsibilities in the project.

> *The meeting is through telco aka telephone conference. Usually, in the first meeting, we would greet them, say hello, state our name and which team we are from…. That's all…We would not go into detail because there are a lot of people in the new team…. next, we start with the task and project management…. We would align every task with everyone…. So, from there, each of us would know each other's roles and tasks …. In the first step, the alignment of the timing is needed. We have two separate telephone conferences with our colleagues in the EU and NA due to different time zones. After the timing is confirmed, we talk about the tasks involved for each team*

so that we know what the priority tasks are. Then, we would do a
mock-up test in the test system so that we could estimate how many
hours we need to do all the tasks.

(R4, Nadia)

The communication style in this initial stage is more direct because the details they share are crucial to the project, and the team needs to coordinate the tasks and responsibilities with each other. On the other hand, since the routine task-based participants will be working with the same team members daily, the initiation phase begins with the low-context team leader thoroughly explaining the new task. R1 said:

For example, for our new task, she (USA team) will pass down her
work to the Penang (Malaysia) team, and since no one has
experience in the new task, all staff will go for training and then
planning for the task distribution…all come from the team leader.
Then he will inform all of us…he will state the purpose of this
training (to pass down the work): "I have plan…..you will do this
work, two other staffs will back you up when you are not around"…
Like us, we have three persons, and each of us has our own task. For
example, if I could not come to work, for my part, I need to tell the
other two, and they will back me up … for this new task, we will back
each other up if one of us could not come to work…the planning and
task distribution happen during the conference call with the USA
team….

(R1, Ariani)

R5 and R16 also went through the same experience with their counterpart from Ireland. They utilized the hand-over meeting with her counterpart to get to know them and have a casual talk with them too. Specifically, R5 elucidated:

> *Every day we will have one hour overlapping time from 7 am MYT - 8 am MYT (with the US team) and 3 pm MY - 4 pm MYT (with the Ireland team). This overlapping shift allows us to perform a short hand-over meeting with the other team if we have any tickets/cases that need to be handed over to the next shift, or if we have a severity one issue on-going that needs the team to be on a high alert. Every handover session--one in the morning and the other in the evening-- will only be conducted by one agent from each location (e.g., one Malaysia and one from the US) and performed via our office phone. Other agents will need to be available for the call queue. After the handover call ends, an email would be sent out to all of the team members along with the brief information regarding any cases. We took turn every day to create a fair opportunity for visibility. We can get to know each other.*
>
> *(R5, Wardah)*

In the initiation phase, the communication between high-context and low-context GVT members tends to heavily depend on the technology, such as email, audio, and video conferencing call. For project-based, high-context GVT members, the ice-breaking session is brief by focusing on the main information, such as their name and role in the team. However, for task-based, high-context GVT members, the introduction session is done through a training session in which the introduction of the members is prolonged to build the team rapport.

4.3.2 Phase 2 – Switching: Convergent communicative behaviour

When all GVT members have already known each other through an introductory session, they now shift their communication focus towards the project and task given. In this phase, high-context GVT members gradually accommodate their communication style to fit their counterpart's communication styles. Our findings showed that high-context GVT members switch their communication styles in a GVT work environment in two forms: delayed switching and immediate switching.

4.3.2.1 Delayed switching

Delayed switching occurs when high-context GVT members progressively modify their communication styles to fit their low-context GVT members. The knowledge-sharing process after the project or task is initiated is inclined towards high-context cultural norms, such as being polite and reserved, addressing the team members appropriately, and providing a prelude before jumping to the main topics. In this stage, the communication is normally initiated by the high-context GVT members, who still embrace the high-context cultural norms. For example, Nadia and R1mentioned that they will always start communication with a brief introduction about to make them more comfortable to communicate.

R1 mentioned that she will always provide a prelude when communicating with her low-context GVT members, and prior to the meeting (via conference call), she will write down a note to her local leader so that the leader can highlight any issue during the meeting instead of her.

> *Usually in the meeting, the leader will start the conversation, and before we start the meeting, if we have issues, we will give the notes to her (leader)…. so in the meeting, she will do the talking… .as for me, I usually introduce myself …. In a conference call, we will begin the conversation with a normal topic, such as the weather… or recently, we had a laptop issue, so they asked about it first then only moved to the main issues.*
>
> *(R1, Ariani)*

In a different situation, R1 would only share the information after getting approval from her superior even though she knew that her counterparts required the information urgently. She further added that despite having a decision in mind, she would keep it to herself and ask verification from her local leader before she could disseminate the information to all team members. This situation shows that most high-context communication remains unsaid and implicit as she elaborated:

> *Ok, first, design engineer (DE) will ping and ask us to confirm the issues. … usually, DE will find me, then we will discuss it with another engineer (team leader), so since she is also an engineer, we will ask her opinion. Even though I already know the answer, I will still ask my team leader's opinion…because I want to know--maybe my own decision has a weakness. Then, she will provide her opinion*

regarding my decision. Even if she said my decision is OK, I will not tell (my team) that the decision is from me; instead, I will ask my team leader to agree…. but, I will issue the email to all members regarding the decision that we made together.

<div align="right">

(R1, Ariani)

</div>

However, R1 shifted her communicative behaviours when the issues being discussed over the conference session was fully her responsibility. The importance of the knowledge she had to share with her counterpart caused her to switch her communication style. In such a situation, she responded to her low-context GVT members directly and straightforwardly because she wanted them to receive the information first-hand from her. She also stated that, due to her limited English proficiency, the direct response in the conference call helped elude misunderstandings and ensure the counterpart receive the correct information.

As she was required to communicate with her US counterpart daily, she had to adjust her communication styles when necessary. While using the high-context communication style, she also had to be more direct and straightforward when communicating with her US counterpart. In her detailed elaboration, she explained that when she confidently believed that she could ask the US counterpart, she would straight do so. However, if she believed that the inquiry was serious, she would hesitate to ask directly; instead, she would ask her local leader to inquire on her behalf. However, most of the time during the conference call, she would confidently throw questions to them (the counterpart) to answer. She described her experience:

I will ask directly. First, if I think that the issue is too heavy, I will ask my [local] leader first is it ok if I ask the question later (during the conference call), but, usually, I will be the one who talks, but I will always ask my leader's opinion. But, if I think I can handle the issue, I will directly ask them. The USA team sometimes asks for my opinion, and if I think the issue is minor and I can handle it, I will provide the answer. However, if the issue is major and difficult, I will pass it to the engineer (my team leader).

(R1, Ariani)

R1 further illustrated her delayed switching in her communication. For instance, her directness or indirectness would be based on the weight of knowledge she wanted to share. If the issue was major that required her to address it in the email, she would write a lengthy email to explain the issue in detail. She remarked:

If in the email, since it is an email, then I can write a lot, I will write whatever I want to ask. I will ask everything and during the conference call, I will ask directly; however, in terms of my spoken communication, I'm not that good…I don't know how to talk in grand English, I can talk in normal English….

(R1, Ariani)

However, if the issue were minor, she would directly voice her opinion to the US team members during the conference call. This behaviour demonstrates her flexible, communicative behaviour when communicating with a low-context counterpart. The delay helped her to understand the knowledge and the counterpart's communication styles before she could flexibly switch her communication styles to fit theirs.

159

Meanwhile, R4 illustrated her flexibility in communicative behaviour as her career developed from a freshman to a senior software engineer. In her early years in the company, joining a GVT project involved merely listening and following instructions. She was a passive listener because she was not sure how to respond to the discussion. However, such a situation allowed her to be more observant and gave her more time to understand her low-context counterpart communicative behaviour in detail. As she was involved in many different GVT projects throughout her seven years in the company, they helped her to gain confidence in switching her communicative behaviour to be more relaxed and casual in her communication.

She could respond to the query and provide feedback in the meeting. She further mentioned that in any telco (teleconference), she could now confidently discuss her point of view with her counterpart. She said:

> *Earlier, I was passive but day-by-day, I improved…. started with communicating with a small team project, and now, if I join a big project, I don't feel intimidated anymore…. I can provide my own opinion on them….*

> *(R4, Nadia)*

Despite having more confidence to communicate directly, she still initiated the communication in her high-context style. She said that greeting her counterpart in an email and conference call is common for her when initiating the knowledge-sharing process. However, even though the start of the communication involved the high-context communication style heavily, the continuous knowledge-sharing process

required her to be more like low-context GVT members. So, she gradually switched her communicative behaviour when she had to comprehend and respond to her low-context counterpart. She would switch her communicative behaviour from writing a lengthy email with an introduction to writing a straightforward email, and in a conference call, the question-and-answer sessions were direct and straightforward. She even used a low-context communication style in a meeting with her local team members because the meeting was straightforward, and the focus was work-related issues and decisions to be made. After the meeting, the minutes were emailed to all team members.

Furthermore, working with Germany for several GVT projects had helped shape her active acculturation communicative behaviour. Since Germans are explicit in their communication, she had to be adaptive and flexible so that they could communicate effectively. So, throughout her extensive working experience in the same organization, she took the opportunity to observe and learn their communication styles and grasp the differences so that she could adjust her styles. She realized the apparent differences when she first encountered the Germans, who were very straightforward in their communication and immediately started the discussion without any introduction or greetings. As most of her GVT team members were from Germany, she had to adjust her communication styles and be more straightforward when communicating with them. This is in line with responses from R18, R20, and R22 who worked with low context counterparts and had to adjust their communication styles and be more direct. Specifically, R3 also started fresh by actively listening and understanding the discussion with his counterpart. He would only speak in the meeting if he had to clarify

issues. His involvement in the project had helped him to develop his confidence in the meeting, and, as a result, he could deliver his opinion and manage to capture his counterpart's attention during the meeting.

The extensive experience in different GVT projects has helped R3 switch his communicative behaviour from being a passive listener to an active communicator in the meeting. He said:

> *When I was still new and fresh, I have almost zero knowledge and experience. At that time, I would just listen and understand what was being discussed. I would only speak to ask questions or clarify something that was being said or discussed.*
>
> *From time to time, the more knowledge and experience I have gained, I am more confident in this type of meeting. I will express more opinions, give more ideas. Because of this, other team members will listen more to you, and thus, respect you more*
>
> *(R3, Zharif)*

In addition to observation, R3 used a different approach when he wanted to initiate the knowledge-sharing process with his low-context GVT members. Instead of using prelude and having a polite introduction session, he slowly started to build a relationship with his counterpart until they were comfortable to communicate with him. Once he had successfully gained the trust of his team members through a rapport session, he had more courage to voice his ideas or opinions related to the project. He switched his communicative behaviour when he earned trust from the team members

162

that enabled him to be more direct and use simple and clear messages in his communication with the counterpart.

Similarly, other respondents such as R9, R12, R17 and R21 affirmed a similar experience: when they were involved in the project, the initial stage was listening and observing the communication process between the high-context GVT members and low-context GVT members. The initial communication style was more likely to resemble a typical high-context culture: reserved communication. R17 mentioned that when she first started working in a global project, she mainly observed the email communication style her senior used in dealing with low-context GVT members so that she could understand the differences and gradually adapt. Also, observing an email communication from the counterpart had helped R20 to accommodate her communicative behaviour to fit her low-context GVT member's communication style. From her experience working with different projects with the US and Israeli team members, she noticed that the email from the US team members would be concise and straightforward.

In contrast to the US counterparts, she had to use a different communication style when working with the Israeli counterpart. While the US team members preferred a short and simple email, the Israeli counterparts' expectations were different. She said:

The e-mails I sent to my foreign team members are usually concise and straight to the point because lengthy messages will get a slower response based on my experience.... Yes, it does ... as my counterparts from the US prefer straight forward and concise emails while the Israeli team expects every detail of the problem explained for them to debug any software.

(R20, Akmar)

Her understanding of the low-context GVT member's communicative behaviour also allowed her to intensely understand the pattern of response she would get from her counterpart.

As a typical high-context individual, she would send a lengthy email to explain the issues with a colleague in the US; however, such an email usually received one or two sentences as a reply. So, when she received a short response from her counterpart, she decided to change her email communication style.

Instead of a long email, she decided to split the email into a few emails to make them short so that her counterpart would reply and respond to all her questions correctly. R20 also shared another interesting story when communicating with her low-context GVT members in a conference call. She said:

Some of the incidents that made me realize the differences between my communication style and foreign team member's is when their style is more straight to the point, and I feel like I talk too much

(R20, Akmar)

In that incident, she realized that she talked more than the rest of the team members, losing her counterpart's interest. The incident and the lengthy email demonstrate a normal communicative behaviour of a high-context individual, who prefers to convey information implicitly and is heavily dependent on the context rather than actual words. The communication of a high-context individual tends to be indirect, lengthy, and beats around the bush. From that incident, her communicative behaviour changed; she became flexible in her communication style to fit the context and people she was dealing.

R16 was accommodative in his communicative behaviour after he observed his counterpart's communication style in an audio conferencing. He explained that his adaptive behaviour has one main aim, i.e., to ensure he comprehends the correct information so that the given task can be completed without any problems. During the exchange of information related to the project, R16 had to communicate directly to obtain the necessary evidence, but at the same time had to revert to indirect communication so that he could understand the overall workflow and gain accurate details related to his task. As his main task was to conduct a PCI assessment review, he had to consistently communicate with team members across the globe, such as from Ireland and the USA. Working with team members in different roles and positions, he

had to be like a chameleon and adjusted his communicative behaviour to fit the communicative behaviour of his low-context team members:

> *At first, my thought is that this will be difficult. However, I know that I have to adapt so that I can finish my task and complete my review. I have to be like a chameleon.*

> *(R16, Adam)*

He also shared his early experience working in a GVT work environment. From the first few days working with his counterpart, he could directly tell the differences in their communication style. Thus, his observation had helped him shape his flexible, communicative behaviour. He further said that when communicating with both high- and low-context GVT members, the shifting process happens naturally,

> *It just happens naturally ☺...I don't know how to explain this one…. Since day one, I can tell the difference, and know that with people from India I have to communicate differently from people in other SMEs in the US or Ireland. When I first did my PCI assessment as a reviewer, my thought was that the SME should know what the questions want, and it should then guide me to get the right evidence; but it is the other way around. I have to be direct to them and tell them this is what I want and this is what I need etc.*

> *(R16, Adam)*

R19's delayed switching happened because she had to observe and perceive the behaviour and communication style of her counterpart first. Since she had to work with team members from different regions and continents, she had to be observant before proceeding with the conversation. The observation helped her accommodate the communication style she had to use when communicating with her team members from two different cultural contexts.

> *Communication style depends on which region we work in. Some are very direct, especially like Europe. If they want to scold us, they will say it directly. So, we have to be direct as well with them. But, people from some countries are very casual, like the Mexican or Chilean teams; they are all very casual.*
>
> *(R19, Khadija)*

She further explained that sometimes the communication style changes depending on the knowledge and people involved in the conference call. If the conference call she attended involved the top management and business personnel, the communication style changed to fit the context and people of the meeting.

Delayed switching involving a process in which high-context GVT members observe the communication style of the low-context members before they decide to switch. The observation enables the high-context members to respond and acculturate to the different communication styles.

4.3.2.2 Immediate Switching

However, some high-context GVT members immediately switch their communicative behaviour and utilize the low-context style in their communication. The switch happens swiftly prior to a project initiation or task discussion. For high-context GVT

members who make such an instant, they tend to communicate in the same manner in the current or future project. For example, R6 and R11 immediately adjusted their communication styles to fit the low-context GVT members from the USA even though their emails had to be reviewed and verified by the team leader, which was a common process for both to go through. Specifically, for R6, her email needed to be verified to avoid any misleading information conveyed to the counterpart. It was for this reason she immediately switched so that the communication between them would be explicit and accurate. Interestingly, she used the same verification process in her exchanges her counterpart in different communication platforms where she repeatedly sought clarification to gain a better understanding of the information given. In this situation, she used a clear and precise style so that her counterpart could understand her questions to enable them to provide her with the information she needed.

Meanwhile, according to R8, working with a counterpart with a strong cultural accent required him to be more adaptive in his communication whereby he had to be open and explicit. In the early phase of the knowledge-sharing process via audio conferencing, he struggled to understand the words they uttered; so, he had to ask them repeatedly to verify the information so that he could understand it and what it meant. For him to comprehend the correct information with the correct meaning, he would seek for the clarification via a follow-up email:

> *Due to the accent problem, I sometimes pretend to understand or ask*
> *them to repeat, but we will get the point when an email is sent out*
> *(reading much easier to understand than listening).*
>
> *(R8, Nazmi)*

168

On the other hand, R15 switched their communicative behaviour based on the audience. Different audiences require different communication styles so that the information can be conveyed accurately. For R15, who worked with team members from different continents, such as the US and Europe, she had to immediately switch her communicative behaviour to fit her counterpart's communication style. For instance, when communicating with the European team members, she had to be more explicit and direct to the point of discussion.

> *It depends on the audience…. with Europeans…. we will greet and get straight to the point…. we will discuss, first, the main issue…. problem statement …. the solution we have… we will see the improvement as well … if there is an issue, we will immediately highlight it during the meeting…*
>
> *(R15, Zuraida)*

In another example, R15 shared the directness of her low-context counterpart, who shaped her communicative behaviour:

> *When [communicate] with the UK or US, they all are very direct. When they don't like it, they will say it on the dot. When they feel dissatisfied, they will just utter it immediately… sometimes the language they use is harsh, especially when there are mistakes or anything … so when we deal with the people in the UK, we have to really go straight to the point, and they really know what they want.*
>
> *(R15, Zuraida)*

According to R12 and R9, both a software engineer working with a counterpart from the US, they too had to switch their communication style based on the audience. For R12, her email was always brief and contained the main point she needed to discuss with her counterpart "because they [US team members] do not prefer a lengthy email and unnecessary details."

R5 asserted that she demonstrates flexible, communicative behaviour depending on the people, the purpose of communication, and the context in which the interaction takes place. For her, being direct is important and in her career; however, the directness of her communication would depend on the situation and the person she is communicating. According to her, the way she delivers her directness is crucial. In her example, communication with customers and team members required a different level of directness. "*Being frank is important as well if you want to give feedback to your teammates. But the way you deliver the message is very important. Need to use a proper word. For me, being straightforward is when I can ask straight whatever question I have in mind without any doubt.*" Such communicative behaviour reflects the ability of high-context GVT members to acculturate and accommodate different communication styles in a virtual environment. When she first joined the company, R5 described herself as a *polite freshie* because always started her email communication with greetings and heavily used the word *sorry* when communicating with her US counterpart. She further explained, the polite-freshie syndrome was part of her learning process as someone who worked with a US counterpart virtually on a daily and weekly basis. Within a year, her communication style changed to be more explicit and straightforward. She said, "*Playing around the bush is not my thing ...*

because we know what we want [to solve the programming error]." Even though she now uses a straightforward communication style, in certain situations, she must adjust it. For instance, when she dealt with her customers, the level of directness was different. For R5, when interacting with a customer, she had to restrain her directness style, and when the customers made a mistake, she would have to take the full responsibility and educate them in the best manner. For R8, who had experience working in an MNC for three years, his communication style was moulded by the industrial standard.

He had to switch his communicative behaviour during a conference call with his counterpart not because of the cultural differences but to comply with the requirement or standard of the MNC he had to exhibit in his communication. The standard in this context refers to the communication style to be used during a conference call meeting with their counterparts.

> *Direct to the point. No introduction, just say hi to the team members.*
> *Wait until five minutes max and proceed to the meeting agenda.*
> *Every meeting must have an agenda and open session to Q&A at the*
> *end of the meeting. Meeting duration is 1-2 hours; so, during this*
> *limited time frame, all important issues must be addressed. Minutes*
> *will be sent after the meeting, same day or the following day.*
>
> *(R8, Nazmi)*

Although he now works in a government organization, he still uses the low-context communication style but with more consideration to avoid misunderstanding and conflicts with his colleagues.

R11 also narrated her communication style when communicating with her team members. Since her nature of work was project-based, she was actively involved in different GVT projects with team members from India and the US. To keep the communication at a professional level, she had to adjust her communication style swiftly and maintained the same style when communicating with all her team members.

Although she could notice the differences and patterns of communication styles for both counterparts (India and the US), she continued using explicit and professional communication with them.

> *Keep it professional…. always straight to the problem…Yup, we communicate about the problem and the solutions only….*
>
> *(R11, Yasnira)*

For the participants working in a project based GVT, the flexibility of their communication style depends on the context and people. Even though they can engage in direct communication with their low-context GVT members, they still embrace the high-context cultural trait. For example, R13 emphasized that he used a direct communication style when interacting with his counterpart team leader. However, although he could be direct and open with them, "*after four years of working with them, I still feel like talking to a boss*". He further emphasized that his straightforwardness in communication was based on the context and content of the communication. If the team leader had decided albeit still uncertain, he just obeyed the decision. "*There is really no argument as they are the boss. If they already have*

decided, and the decision cannot be changed, just go with the flow even we know the decision will bring us nowhere". Here, his communication experience with his low-context counterpart had moulded his communication style even when communicating with the local team members; he would promptly switch his communication style to being explicit and open when the communication is work-related.

Immediate switching demonstrates a prompt switching of high-context GVT members. The switching occurs as soon as the communication starts, and they are likely to retain the same communication style throughout the knowledge-sharing session.

In general, the switching phase illustrates two different stages of switching: delayed switching and immediate switching. In delayed switching, high-context GVT members became an observant to understand the low-context communication style first before accommodating themselves to a different communication style. On the other hand, immediate switching happens swiftly because of prior experience as well as the urge to be direct when the communication commences.

4.3.3 Phase 3 - Internalization: The closure of effective cross-cultural code switching

The initiation phase allows high-context GVT members to get to know their low-context GVT members before proceeding with the knowledge-sharing process. The introductory session helps the high-context GVT members to flexibly switch their communication style, either immediately or delayed after several observations. Our further analysis revealed that the internalization phase is a closure stage to the cross-cultural code-switching process of high-context GVT members in their virtual work

environment. The internalization phase demonstrates the ability of high-context GVT members to assimilate to a different culture and communicate effectively and casually to their low-context counterparts in a knowledge-sharing session. In this phase, high-context GVT members are able to connect with their low-context GVT members, share, and exchange extensive work-related knowledge and non-work-related knowledge, such as their family and the latest news.

For instance, working with the same team members for several years had allowed R1 to be more open and confident in her communication. There was an incident in which her USA team members were unaware of the server migration and thought that the server they always had access to vanished. So, R1 took the initiative to conduct a short sharing session to teach her team members how to access the new server with the help of screenshots. She narrated the following once the sharing session was over. "*Then, one of my USA team members replied and said it was totally not logical to ask that kind of question… Then he made a joke. He said … I should kill myself for asking stupid questions.*"

As R1 dealt with the same team members for the ongoing task, she was assigned to a senior staff from the US named Marry, and her main responsibility for the task was to ensure their data server was updated. Prior to the conference meeting, Marry asked an update about the server, and when R1 overlooked the server update, Marry scolded her for not updating the server. R1 further shared that since she had been working with Marry for several years, R1 now could openly make jokes with Marry when she scolded her for the mistakes. As a result of her communication, she was more aware and would make sure to update the server before a meeting.

Sometimes when I forget to do it, they will scold me, and one of the team members, the most senior in charge of the production, always talks a lot… Marry. I always do work with her and she will scold and remind me to update the server…. Sometimes, I will do some jokes… She doesn't keep it in her heart, and after 2-3 times getting scolded by her, I finish my work first… I contact Marry every day, send her email every day because I work with her on the same task.

(R1, Ariani)

Besides sharing work-related information, R1 also communicated about non-work-related issues. For example, while waiting for other team members to get ready for a conference call meeting, she would initiate the communication by asking about the Christmas preparation and the plan her team members have made for the holidays. Likewise, her team members asked her about personal topics, such as hijab, when her US team members saw R1's friend wearing a shawl during the visit to the headquarters office in the US. So, R1 explained in detail about the shawl to them.

While waiting for others, I would say hello and ask them about their Christmas--where they plan to go in the long holidays … They also ask the same thing. For example, one of my friends went there (the USA headquarters office). They said the shawl she was wearing was so nice. Then, I told them that it is a common thing in Malaysia to wear a shawl…

(R1, Ariani)

R1 also shared her story of how she had to politely request to call off the conference call at night because she had to attend the night prayer during Ramadan. Moreover, to make sure all her teams understand her situation and agree to her request, she explained in detail about the event and the reason why she requested to cancel the night conference call during Ramadan. So, they agreed to shift the conference call to morning (Malaysian time) to fulfil her request.

R4 also shared a similar experience. While waiting for the other team members to get ready for the meeting, they talked about non-related work topics, such as families and other interests. For R4, building a relationship is crucial, and since she had been working with the same individual for seven years, the relationship gradually grew.

> *Relationship is important. When we deal with the same person for seven years, the relationship will start to develop on its own. For example, I have a colleague from Germany, and I have been dealing with her since my first day of work. She is almost 60 years old, and she is like my mother. We will always share personal stories when we have times. When she has issues or problems or whatever, most of the time she will look for me because she is comfortable working with me. Even my other colleague from Germany, who I just started to deal with since last year, does not mind sharing her family life with me.*

> *(R4, Nadia)*

However, for R5, instead of sharing personal family stories, she exchanged similar interests with her colleague from Finland and the USA via Lync (a chatting platform). For example, they would talk about holidays and traveling experience. Since she has

an interest in PlayStation games, she would exchange information about the game; however, she emphasized that the conversation would be quick because the exchanges normally took place while working. According to her, such conversations helped build rapport. As a result, the work process was smoother because each of them understood each other well.

> *If off the phone, we all communicate via Lync (chat). Usually, we talk about holidays, traveling experience. If a team member just had a baby, we will congratulate them… if we have the same interest, like playing a PlayStation game, we will talk about the game… but usually, it won't take a long time because we are communicating while doing our work … if some of us don't want to join the conversation, it is still OKAY, but if we have any issues or cases and need help, it is very inappropriate to just ask help…. we have to build rapport and be good to all.*

> *(R5, Wardah)*

R4 and R5 shared the same situation where they had to deal with the same individual throughout the task. Interestingly, R5 team member was the pioneer of the product they were currently working on. Because she had a close relationship with him, she would always refer to him for any issues. She was amazed by the way he responded to her email, and she adopted the same way when she communicated with her clients.

> *There's one mentor from the US. He's the pioneer of our product AlertFind. He's old and has been doing the same work for quite some time, and he is very helpful and friendly. If I encounter an issue, especially about programming, I will compose an email to him during the day. Since our time zones are different, I have to wait the*

next day for him to reply. He is not a support agent; he is more like
a backend engineer. He always replies to all my emails, no matter
how small and stupid the questions were. His reply is lengthy, BUT
it is very straightforward with a simple analogy that you can easily
understand. It's not easy teaching people through an email about
programming. And because of the way he teaches, I adopt his way
to deal with my customers.

(R5, Wardah)

For R14 and R15, besides sharing the project requirements details, they also exchanged the latest news. According to R14, the casual conversation with his low-context counterpart allowed him to learn and understand other countries and their cultural differences. In the case of R15, when one of the counterpart offices in Peru was hit by a flood, she showed her concern by asking them about their condition first before proceeding with the main topics. The casual conversation with her counterpart helped her to be alert with what was happening in their country and helped her build a good relationship with her counterpart.

There was one case, a devastating flood hit Peru. So we ask: how is
the flood? Is it impacting the office there? So, we are alert about
what is happening in their country so that we can have a small talk
before we talk about work. Sometimes, while waiting for all the
meeting participants, we would have a chat. Once everyone is in the
conference call, we went straight to business.

(R15, Zuraida)

The closure stage of C^3S witnesses the ability of high-context GVT members to connect and communicate casually with their low-context counterparts. The exchanges they make in this phase are more than work-related. The relationship high-context

GVT members build overtime via the small talks enhances their confidence to switch and communicate confidently, effectively, and casually with their low-context counterparts.

4.4 The cultural factors that influence the cross-cultural code-switching process

This section discusses the effects of culture on high-context GVT members' communicative behaviour during knowledge-sharing activities. Molinsky's (2007) cross-cultural code-switching framework suggests that contextual and personal variables influence an individual's initial orientation. In the case of high-context GVT members, these variables are their interpersonal history, intergroup history, and societal/cultural norms and values (See Figure 4.2). In this study, we assumed that high-context GVT members' initial orientation is implicit, non-verbal, and context-dependent, and they adopt a collectivistic approach to their communication. Our findings revealed that the cultural factors affecting the intention of high-context GVT members to switch their communicative behaviours could be divided into four distinct aspects: upfront communication, expressiveness, time urgency, and agenda-oriented communication. The initial orientation of high-context GVT members, together with these cultural factors, drive their intention to adjust their communication style when communicating with low-context GVT members. The findings suggest that high-context GVT members switch their communicative behaviour for three key reasons: (a) to accommodate different communication platforms, (b) to accommodate different communication purposes, and (c) to overcome language constraints and avoid

179

misunderstandings. The next section discusses these findings and the framework in detail.

Knowledge sharing activities in a GVT

Contextual and personal variables	Reasons High-context GVT members switch communicative behavior	High-context C³S outcome

HIGH-CONTEXT GVT MEMBER INITIAL ORIENTATION

Intergroup history
Interpersonal history
Societal/cultural norms and values

To accommodate different communication platforms

To accommodate the differences in communication based on communication purpose

LOW-CONTEXT GVT MEMBER COMMUNICATION STYLES

Upfront communication
Expressiveness
Time urgency
Agenda-oriented communication

To overcome language constraints and avoid misunderstanding

High-context C³S viability during knowledge sharing activities

Fitting in by Accommodating Differences in Communication Platforms, People, and Purpose

Increasing Communication Efficacy by Avoiding Misunderstanding

Knowledge sharing activities in a GVT

Figure 4-3 High-context cross-cultural code-switching behaviour (C³S) in GVTs

One of the main goals of this study was to identify the cultural and other factors influencing high-context GVT members to switch their communicative behaviour. Our analysis identified four main cultural factors (see Table 2). The result showed that low-context communication style influences high-context communication style by offering examples of how to be more effective when speaking; high-context GVT members change because their team members demonstrate a different style, forcing the former to shift their communication style from indirect to direct and alter the way they express themselves. When their counterpart is open and friendly, they are encouraged to disclose more information and add detail to their explanation. Table 2 illustrates the factors based on Hall's cultural dimensions and the description of the switching behaviour of high-context members so that they could accommodate the communication style of the low-context GVT members.

Table 4-2

Reasons for Engaging in Switching Behaviours

Cultural Communication Factors	Description: High Context switching behaviours to accommodate with Low Context communication styles
Upfront communication	**Low-context**: Direct communication style influences high-context GVT members to change their style to fit in with the conversation. *High-context*: Communication style shifted from indirect and courteous protocols to straightforward statements.
Expressiveness	**Low-context**: Explicit communication style encourages high-context GVT members to communicate in a more precise manner, promoting transparency. *High-context:* Communication style shifted from ambiguous and long-winded phrases to concise statements.
Time urgency	**Low-context:** Time-urgency regarding work affects high-context communication style when communicating about work-related topics *High-context*: Communication style shifted from laid-back attitude on time to time-consciousness and meeting datelines.
Agenda-oriented communication	**Low-context**: GVT members concern on the importance of agenda influences the way high-context interact with their counterpart. *High-context:* Communication style shifted from relationship oriented to task-oriented.

Upfront communication. The tendency for low-context GVT members to be straightforward and precise when communicating via email influenced high-context GVT members in the sample in their interactions with both foreign and local team members. R4, for example, described her experience of working with team members from Germany who were habitually direct in their communication. Describing her early days working with these team members, she explained that since she was not able to communicate in German, she could only observe their communication style. As she put it:

> *As for the communication style, I remain the same [direct] style… I am a direct person… throughout working with this company, as I mostly communicate with the Germans, and I realize that the Germans, during the first meeting, they would be very direct and task-oriented …did not ask about other things…*
>
> *(R4, Nadia)*

She realized that even at the first meeting, her German counterparts wanted to create a formal atmosphere in which exchanges revolved around the task at hand and were made using a straightforward communication style. Her observation and experiences led her to adjust her communication style, not just with them but also with other team members, both local and foreign.

As she went on to recount, with this kind of communication style, meetings were normally quick, straight to the point, and agenda based. She added:

> *This is my style; I don't like people to sugar-coat because it is too hard to understand. If he or she has something to say, just be direct, straight to the point. If you like it, then say it. If you don't, say it loudly. If you want to ask for something, just ask. Thus, that is why it was easy to communicate with German teammates...*

> *(R4, Nadia)*

Sharing a similar situation, R17 stated that her experience led her to adjust her communication style to suit her low-context team members from the USA and Germany. Also, communicating with people with different seniority level team members required her to swiftly adjust her communication style to be direct.

> *Yes, direct [communication] because everyone is busy, especially if I want to ask team members with a higher seniority level, such as the senior engineer. They are very busy, and it was very hard to communicate with them....but they were humble and didn't mind sharing knowledge with other people...Intel practices direct communication; thus, it is very easy to communicate. In fact, every two quarters, the big boss will come to Malaysia, and we will conduct a one-on-one session...at that time, we can share anything...even if we feel dissatisfied with our boss....and in Intel we don't hold grudges....as a matter of fact, the Malaysians do not communicate directly like the westerners or the American, especially...because we tend to keep to ourselves ... because some people could not accept when other people talk directly to them .... based on my own experience and advice from my manager... for*

example, my own experience, if we give them a lengthy introduction,
they don't care, that is why, I have to escalate with my manager, then
only I can get a reply from them… that is why I become a direct
[person]……

(R17, Iliani)

R8 was able to give a thorough account of the differences in work practices between his teammates in China, Vietnam, and Israel and explain how these differences influenced his communicative behaviour. Having had to manage two projects concurrently with the three countries led him to adopt a low-context communication style: he communicated directly with team members, ensuring that the communication was task-oriented and emphasizing adherence to deadlines. He described how Chinese team members had been slow with project updates because they were burdened with other work, while the Vietnamese had progressed slowly because they lacked understanding of the project. Although working with Israeli teammates had been more convenient because they were well-versed in the project, the time difference and different working week had made it difficult for him to get project updates on time. It was, therefore, vital to fully utilize virtual meetings to discuss any problems and make necessary decisions. In both projects, he became more direct in his communication, focusing on work-related issues and refusing to compromise on deadlines.

However, this straightforwardness should not be confused with brusqueness or impatience.

> *That is exactly how I communicate when I handle projects…direct to the point, even with different cultures, because MNC companies are international….in terms of my communication style, my answer is consistent…direct to the point and no flowery words…being direct and delivering direct communication for me is quite different…being direct is like you directly get angry if mistakes are made, but for direct communication, it means that you don't wander around in your communication…*
>
> *(R8, Nazmi)*

R10 and R12 both mentioned that their US team members' communication style had had an impact on their communicative behaviour. According to R12, although their different communication practices had made her initially nervous about communicating with international team members, she slowly adjusted her communication style based on her observations of her teammates, imitating their precision, sending direct messages, and employing fewer commas and full stops in written communications. Like R4, R12 felt the experience had affected her communication style when communicating with other team members. R12 also felt that it had had a positive impact on her communication with her clients.

Expressiveness. Communication in a GVT consists of two or more culturally different people trying to communicate despite their differences in attitude, beliefs, norms, and communication styles. Differing cultural norms and values mean they might also

practice different working styles. However, even though high-context communication styles may differ radically from low-context communication styles, some of the high-context participants in our study claimed that their foreign team members' openness and friendliness had influenced them to adjust their way of expressing their intentions and be more explicit. R1 described how when one of her Malaysian teammates requested that one conference call, due to take place during Ramadan, not be conducted at night because she wanted to attend night prayers. The US team members received the request in a friendly way. Their openness encouraged the Malaysian team members to share more about Ramadan, leading the US team to defer conference calls throughout the holy month. The decision was also made that if a short conference call was urgently required, it would be made in the morning (Malaysian time); in other words, the US team would accommodate the different time zone.

> *During the con-call, we will start by asking about the weather. For example, recently we talked about laptop issues. As one of the team members' laptop had broken down, we asked him what happened to his laptop….only then did we move to the question…it is not about respect, but they will do the same thing [be polite] with us….because they have the same style too…let's say, during the Ramadan month, we requested not to have con-calls because we needed to go for night prayers, break the fast….so they asked her to share more about the Ramadan month, then we started to share about it….then they agreed because we explained it to them….if they still had to do it [concall], we would do a morning call….*
>
> *(R1, Ariani)*

R1 went on to say that her US teammates differed from typical low-context culture team members because they did not dominate the decision-making process but respected other team members' decisions.

> *In our team [Malaysian team], we have an engineer, a coordinator, and a TAC. For the US team, they are all engineers. For example, we are in Malaysia, working hours are from 9-6, after 6 was their [US team] task...for example, if we have an urgent case, i.e., production problem, if anything happens, the Malaysian team will get them [US] involved in terms of decision making. The US team is supposed to make the decision, but if the issue is urgent, we will discuss and decide based on our perspective. Then, we will make the final decision about that issue...after the decision is finalized, we will email the US team and state the status of the issue... We will also state the reason why we made the decision and usually they will agree with us with no issue....*

> *(R1, Ariani)*

R3 also asserted that the directness of his low-context teammates had influenced his own communicative behaviour to become more explicit. Having first observed their communication style, he adopted a similar style, for example, by being directly critical of colleagues when necessary. However, he had retained enough of his high-context style to employ a subtle approach where possible.

> *Asians seldom criticize openly on the work quality of other team members...But being in an environment with western work culture, this will happen...Yes, I've been criticized and I have criticized*

189

others as well. When I am criticized, I will accept it openly if it is true. However, if it is not, then I will defend myself. When I am criticizing, usually I will use a soft approach. I will approach the person involved directly and talk to him. ...but if this does not work, then I will say it out during an open meeting.

(R3, Zharif)

For R18, she had to be concise and particular in her email communication because, in email communication, she had to take note of the construction of sentences and grammar structure and make sure that the communication involved everyone in the team. Similarly, R6 had to learn to be more explicit in her communication, specifically in daily emails she was required to send to other team members. Everything had to be transparent and clearly verbalized in these written communications. She provided a sample of her email communication to illustrate this explicitness:

Hi Eric,

The report failed because the column is divided by 0. For now, I have fixed the report to ignore 0 value to avoid the report from failing.

Thank you.

Regards,

R6

Time urgency. Dealing with team members from different countries around the globe poses an additional challenge of being spread across multiple time zones. The 12-hour time difference between Malaysia and the US, for example, created frustration among some team members when they were unable to communicate in a timely manner. This led some to switch their communicative behaviour when working on their GVT project or a daily task. R1, R5, and R17, for example, explained how they had to strategize their work routines and meetings so that they could stay in regular contact with the US team members. R5, who was particularly concerned with the damaging effect the time difference could have on the schedules and performance, explained that she adjusted her written communication style to be as direct as possible because "*You don't waste other people's valuable time. Time is money*". She also provided support, such as screenshots and step-by-step explanations when composing emails to her superior in the US.

> *Since Tom and I are in different time zone[s], imagine if the email I compose he does not understand [and] we have to wait for another 24 [hours] for me to explain, and another 24 [hours] for him to reply. If we want to [use] desktop sharing, we don't have time, because by the time he finish[es] his work [it is too late], [as] I punch in after US business hour[s]. And it is normal in IT if we have an issue [that] we have to explain [to each other] what steps [we] have [taken], so that the person that you ask for help won't repeat the same [steps] again.*
>
> *(R5, Wardah)*

191

She added:

> *So always provide screenshots so that people don't make any wild*
> *assumptions about our explanation… some people call a bicycle a*
> *bike. For those who do not know what a bike is, we will provide a*
> *picture so that they know what a bike is in that communication*
> *context.*

> *(R5, Wardah)*

R5 also accommodated her communication style to fit her low-context US and Irish teammates during knowledge-sharing activities; thus, work-related feedback was given directly and straightforwardly but politely, which is typical for a high-context individual. R5 explained that this flexibility in communication style helped her maintain good relationships and avoid conflict with her teammates.

> *Being frank is important as well if you want to give feedback to your*
> *teammates…But the way you deliver the message is very important.*
> *You must be polite... If teammates make mistakes, mostly conflict*
> *arises because of the tone that we use. So, be straightforward but*
> *with courtesy, you have to control your voice tone so that when you*
> *talk, people do not feel offended….*

> *(R5, Wardah)*

R19 indicated that she had to accommodate her communication style when dealing with people with a different seniority level because the top management had a time limitation. Thus, during the meeting, they had to listen to the important points, and for that reason, R19 had to keep her communication short and concise.

> *Update after a conference call with a team from other regions … it is straight forward [communication]…this is because we will include our manager and top management in the progress report, that is why the communication should be business-oriented …for me, with top management, we have to show professionalism…they don't have time to read nonsense; for them keep it short and clear, precise to be exact.*
>
> *(R19, Khadija)*

Agenda-oriented communication. For individuals from high-context cultures, the relationship is the necessary precursor of a business deal. However, our analysis revealed that in the context of GVTs, high-context team members tend to follow the lead of low-context members and focus on work-related issues in their communication; if they have a business deal, that is the sole focus of the interaction, and no importance is attached to creating rapport.

The conversation is also likely to be straightforward and explicit. R14 described how, when communicating with his clients from low-context cultures, he had to be specific and work-focused.

> *For the Singaporean client, I will respond to his emails the same way as he talks to me…he tends to be more specific and task-oriented, but it depends on the customer….some customers communicate straight to the point and only talk about work…so we don't have to create rapport as they are only concerned about work, and the work has to be done within the timeline.*
>
> *(R14, Hariz)*

R6, R15, and R19 pointed out that almost all communications with low-context team members were task-related, with only a brief exchange of formalities before the discussion started. R15 explained:

> *[If we have a discussion] with the Europeans, we will greet [each other] and get straight to the point. We will discuss: 1) the main issue, 2) problem statement, 3) what solution we have, and 4) what improvement we can achieve. If there is some concern or issue to raise, I will point out the issue without any delay….*
>
> *(R15, Zuraida)*

R3, who described how he had started out as a typical high-context individual within his company and gradually adjusted his communication style based on his observations, stressed that this behaviour was learned over time.

194

When I was starting and still fresh, I did a lot of observation. In this example, I observed how my superiors communicated with other foreign team members. You are introduced as a new member. Slowly I started building relationships with them until the time came that they were comfortable communicating with me.

(R3, Zharif)

As he gained more experience in working with individuals from low-context cultures, he began to become more like them, focusing his communication more on work, but still retaining the polite manner expected of high-context cultures.

Yes, with more knowledge I have become more confident in voicing out opinions or ideas. As mentioned earlier, in technical discussions all communication will be direct or straightforward. But we voice it in a proper manner. Politely we say our ideas or opinions, with respect.

(R3, Zharif)

To summarize, our analysis of the participants' experiences working on projects and ongoing tasks within the GVT work environment revealed that high-context GVT members demonstrate flexible, communicative behaviour when interacting with foreign team members. Cultural factors, based on Hall's dimensions, such as (a) direct vs. indirect, (b) implicit vs. explicit, (c) time urgency, and (d) task-oriented vs relationship-oriented, appeared to influence high-context GVT members'

communication style. We also found that switching behaviour is employed by team members to deliver information correctly and overcome miscommunication.

4.5 Reasons for Cross-cultural Code-Switching during Knowledge Sharing

According to the Molinsky framework, the contextual and personal variables influencing an individual's initial orientation are rooted in interpersonal history, intergroup history, and societal/cultural norms and values. In this study, we assumed that for high-context GVT members, the initial orientation is implicit, non-verbal, and context-dependent and that they adopt a collectivistic approach to communication. The initial orientation of high-context GVT members, together with cultural factors, drive their intention to adjust their communication styles when communicating with low-context GVT members. Our findings showed that the main cultural factor affecting the intention of high-context GVT members to switch their communicative behaviour is a difference in the working culture, but time differences – a geographical factor – can also have a significant impact. We identified three key reasons that drive high-context team members to modify their communicative behaviour when working in GVTs. A desire to (a) accommodates different communication platforms, (b) accommodate different communication purposes, and (c) overcome language constraints and avoid misunderstandings.

4.5.1 Accommodating different communication platforms

The participants used multiple communication platforms, such as email, WebEx, Lync, Skype for Business, and teleconference tools to communicate with their team members. Almost forty-three percent (n=9) said that they adjusted their communicative behaviour according to the communication platform. For example, R1 described employing a typical high-context style of writing in her emails to teammates, which were lengthy and elaborate, even when discussing simple subjects.

> *I drafted [the email] myself. I followed my senior from my previous company. She taught me if we are going to draft an email, we must explain why we're sending the email, then only in the following paragraph do we provide the reasons. I have become familiar with this method and even for simple messages [I will use the same method].*

> *(R1, Ariani)*

Meanwhile, R20 said that she adjusted her communication in an email based on her team member's responses.

> *My communication style usually changes depending on the audience whom I'm dealing with. My communication style is more formal during e-mail with the US and Israeli counterparts… For example, I had to discuss an issue with a colleague in the US who has faced a similar issue with the previous control head. His response to my lengthy e-mail was just one or two sentences. After a few e-mails*

back and forth, I decided to split my questions into a few e-mails and
make them short for him to reply to all my questions properly.

(R20,Akmar)

R5 and R20, who had an ongoing task that required them to communicate daily with the teammates in Israel, Ireland, and the US, also used different communication styles on different platforms. For instance, R20, in her email communication, preferred direct and precise communication.

The e-mails that I send to my foreign team members are usually
concise and straight to the point because lengthy messages will get
a slower response based on my experience... Yes, it does as my
counterparts from the US prefer straightforward and concise e-
mails while the Israeli team expects every detail of the problem
explained to them to debug any software.

(R20, Akmar)

On the other hand, R5 said that she was informal and more relaxed when communicating via chat tools such as Lync or WebEX where they would talk about personal things.

If off the phone, we sometimes talk through Lync (chat). Usually, we
will talk about holidays, where did we travel, or if someone's wife
just delivered a baby, we will congratulate them. If we have the same
interest, for example, we play Play-station, we will talk about the
games. But usually, the conversation is just a short one because we
talk while doing our work. If we don't want to mingle around, then

it is OK, but if we do have an issue with a ticket/case and need help,
it is impossible for us to build a rapport during the critical time…we
have to build rapport and be good with everyone….

(R5, Wardah)

In email and telephone discussions with her clients, R5 also modified her
communicative behaviour again, including providing detailed information and visual
aids (e.g., screenshots) in her emails and using a polite communication style to educate
them about the computer application she supported. She explained that her
communication style had been influenced by the senior team members from the US.

I have one mentor from the US. He's the pioneer of our product
AlertFind. He has been doing this work for a long time and is very
helpful and friendly. If I encounter an issue, especially
programming, I will compose an email to him during the day. Since
our time zones are different, I have to wait until the next day for him
to reply. He is not a support-agent; he is more like a backend
engineer. He never fails to reply to all my emails, no matter how
small and stupid the questions are. And his reply is lengthy BUT very
straightforward with simple analogies that you can easily
understand. It's not easy teaching people through email about
programming. And because of the way he taught me, I adopt the
same way when I communicate with my customers. Imagine
explaining to a user who does not have any programming
knowledge; we need to compose emails with examples and
analogies, familiar analogies.

(R5, Wardah)

4.5.2 Accommodating different communication purposes

Several participants asserted that they modified their communication style to accommodate the particular purpose of the knowledge-sharing activity such as decision making. These participants converged towards their low-context teammates if the communication served a vital purpose and affected their work performance. For example, R15 stated that in important project meetings with the US or UK team members, she adjusted her communication styles to fit those of her western colleagues.

> *When [working] with the UK or US team, they are very direct. [W]hen they [say] they don't like [something], they say it on the dot. When they [are] not satisf[ied], they say it immediately…Sometimes the language they use [is] harsh, especially when there is a mistake or anything…So when we [work] with the UK people, we have to really go straight to the point and they really know what they want…If they don't agree with our proposal during the knowledge-sharing session, they will straight away highlight [that]… So we have to know how to deal with the straightforward culture…So if this happens…I have to carefully understand and analyze what they feel [about the issue]…so usually I will appreciate their point of view… "Thank you for your feedback," [I will say.] "So, let us further discuss what we can do to fulfill your needs and requirements."*

> *(R15, Zuraida)*

If she had a meeting with a team member from South America and encountered language issues, she used human or online translators to ensure the information was delivered successfully.

> *With Chile or Peru, we have a language barrier…. so sometimes, we will explain all the information during the session... At that particular time, we will have a translator [who] will help us to translate… the information that we deliver.... For these case[s], we will always follow up with [an] email to make sure they really understand what we are trying to deliver.*

> *(R15, Zuraida)*

As someone who had to communicate regularly with team members from several different regions, R15 believed that having prior knowledge of her audience and what issues would be discussed were key to ensuring that meetings would be fruitful. In contrast, R19, who worked consistently with foreign team members, such as from the US, Peru, and Mexico, needed only to adjust her communication style to fit theirs, which she was able to do based on past experiences of working together on various projects and several face-to-face meetings. She explained:

> *Ok, if in the meeting we have a serious issue I'll just direct to business. It is because the issue needs to be settled immediately, so no time for small talk. But, if we just need to inform the progress during the meeting, and we know the current issues happening to that country, for example, when with the US team and election time, we ask them how is the election going on. Ask how their thought on*

Trump……And there was one case, a massive flood in Peru, so we ask them how is the flood? Does it impact the office or not? So we were alert on what is happening in that country so that we had a small talk before we talked about work. Sometimes, while waiting for all the meeting participants, we had a small chat. Once everybody was in the conf-call, we went straight to business… But, if the communication involves the management and business, we go straight to the point.

(R15, Zuraida)

Meanwhile, R5 adjusted her communication style according to the communication purpose and with whom she is communicating. Since she dealt with two different groups of people, she had to adjust to fit both situations; in her interactions with the developer, project manager, and other members of her team, she was polite but direct. However, when dealing with her clients, she had to assume the role of an advisor and problem solver. Offering back-end support to IT professionals all over the world, R5 did advanced programming for clients with often limited programming knowledge. Accordingly, she had to adjust her communication style to ensure that her interaction with these clients was both informative and supportive.

Being frank is important as well if you need to give feedback to your teammates. But the way you deliver the message is very important. It has to be polite. For me, straightforward means that I can ask whatever Q [question] I have in mind without [knowing you] or ask[ing] how are you or other things (no need to build rapport). To [a] customer [yo]u cannot be straightforward. If they make

mistakes, you have to educate them, explain to them the best of the best manners. If a teammate do[es] wrong, mostly conflict arise[s] because of the tone that we use. So be straightforward but polite, watch out for your tone so that no one will feel offended.

(R15, Zuraida)

Explaining how he adjusted his communication style to suit the purpose at hand, R13 revealed that, in emails to and teleconferences with their overseas superiors, he employed a direct style to achieve maximum clarity and avoid misunderstanding. Although from a high-context culture himself, he pointed out that he began practicing a direct communication style when he began working in his company, and that this was his usual mode of communication. He explained:

I would email direct the issues or problems straight to the point as my bosses from the US, Canada, and Australia like it simple… At first, I was really hesitant to explaining anything to them as they are the experts and also very experienced in mining. But somehow, I thought I needed to explain in detail to them so that they would not be misled by what I was trying to say. For my Malaysian boss, I will speak face-to-face openly with them but to the foreigners, I will speak during the teleconference only about the point they ask. I am mainly working on permits, licensing, and compliances with the local authorities and many foreigners do not really understand our government's "working" culture, especially in Pahang State.

(R13, Salman)

203

R3, who was similarly concerned about avoiding misunderstanding, explained that he made a point of employing a direct communication style in technical discussions and meetings because this increased the chances of the discussion being successful and facilitated the decision-making process.

> *Because many of the discussion point[s] [are] on technical aspect[s], the communication [has] to be direct so there is no loss of information… Technical discussion will require direct communication… For example, this happens when there are discussions about a process parameter (temperature, pressure, flow) or equipment specifications (dimensions, specifications, etc.)*
>
> *(R3, Zharif)*

The idea that communicating straightforwardly helps team members to proceed with the decision-making process was also repeated by R11, who argued that it ensures that knowledge-sharing sessions fully benefit both the team and the project. R11's job required her to communicate with team members from two different countries (the US and India). However, she emphasized that she adjusted her style only to accommodate the purpose of the communication so that crucial information about the project was delivered correctly.

> *[I go] straight to the problem [emojis] … But sometimes SA from India choose[s] to personal Lync us, maybe [because] our worktime is almost the same. [It's d]ifferent with [the] US. [W]hen we logout, [the] team from [the] US will continue support [system support for their project]. Keep it professional. It is really straight to the*

problem. The communication is the same [for both team members].
Very straightforward to the problem… I think the most important
[thing] to us is [to] provide solutions to the raised problem.

(R11, Yasnira)

R22 and R16 also confirmed that their communication styles were influenced by purpose and people, explaining that in certain interactions, they needed to express their thoughts directly to ensure that the information was successfully transferred to the other party and the project or task could be completed. As R16 states,

It just happens naturally [emoji]…I don't know how to explain this
one…. Since day one, I can tell the difference and know that with
people from India I have to communicate differently from other
SMEs in the US or Ireland …At first, my thought was that this will
be difficult. However, I know that I have to adapt so that I can finish
my task and complete my review. I have to be like a chameleon.

(R16, Adam)

4.5.3 Overcoming language constraints and avoiding miscommunication

The analysis of participants' experiences indicated that high-context GVT members attempt code-switching to accommodate to different communication platforms and communication purposes. To ensure the communication is smooth, they also switch their communication styles to overcome language constraints and avoid misunderstanding. Such misunderstanding is all too easy given that communication in GVTs is infrequent, not conducted face-to-face, and takes place on multiple platforms. As R13 put it:

I think I need to explain in detail to [my teammates] as they can [be] misled [by] what I'm trying to say as they could misunderstand my meaning!

(R13, Salman)

Communication in GVTs is usually conducted in English, but some English accents and dialects can be difficult for high-context GVT members to understand. Several participants mentioned that they switched their communicative behaviour to overcome the language constraints that could hinder communication with western team members. For example, R6 stated that *"For me, direct language is not fluffy and flowery language…So, if we are speaking in English, I use direct words, no double meaning because I lack English vocabulary…"*. The same participant went on to reveal that if a team member shared the information, she found difficult to understand, she would continue to ask questions until she had mastered the material. R1 also opted to use simple and precise English when delivering important information. She pointed out that it is difficult to translate from English into Malay because explanations in Malay tend to be more long-winded and circuitous. Additionally, since the main language in most GVTs was English, it made sense to modify her communication style to avoid misunderstanding. She observed that "*Malaysians always use flowery words, but for the US team, it is better to talk straightforwardly because if we don't talk straightforwardly, they might understand differently*".

When R8 encountered problems to understand the English accents of his Israeli team members, he relied on direct communication in follow-up emails for clarification:

[With the] accent problem, [I] sometimes pretend to understand or ask them to repeat again, but we will get the point when [an] email [is] sent out (read [ing is] much more easier than listen[ing]). The listening problem was maybe my weakness. I was unable to capture properly what they were [say]ing. Not sure how about others. But so far, as long as [I have] got [the information] black and white in [an] email, [there is] no further issue... [With the] Israel[is, I] normally don't have [an] issue, because they [work in] advance, finish the work early on the due date. Just the [Israeli] accent [is] quite difficult to understand, [therefore there is] more communication [through] email with Israel[i] folks... They are aware of their accent. They just point out important information during [the] meeting and any update [they] will communicate [through] email.

(R8, Nazmi)

R15 experienced the same issue in her early teleconferences with team members from South America, who complained that she talked too fast, and they were unable to understand what she was saying. However, she was concerned that using a translator would lead to mistakes and sharing the wrong information.

After [the conference] call, [I] follow up with email. But this time directly with the[m] all... because [in] the follow-up email they can read and [use] Google translate... If we communicate, sometimes we don't know what they talk about or they don't understand us, sometimes their email[s are] messy... but we can still guess the meaning... or straight [out] ask them if we don't understand [their conversation]... If we just continue to talk, we don't know whether they understand us... [and] if we have a translator, we [a]re not so sure if he or she is translating our information correctly... In the

beginning, [the problem] was very obvious, as they said we talk too fast and they cannot understand us… Then after they complained about it, I started to talk slowly and word by word… and [using] simple English… Then… I ask[ed] them [afterwards] whether they can understand my words or not… Usually, I will ask them, "Do [yo]u understand?" [Then I will] ask them a question. This is to make sure the information is deliver[ed correctly].

(R15, Zuraida)

Like previous participants, R15 adopted the strategy of using simple English and repeating information in follow-up emails. For R8, whose teammates were in different countries, the best way to avoid any misunderstandings was to exercise tight control over meetings:
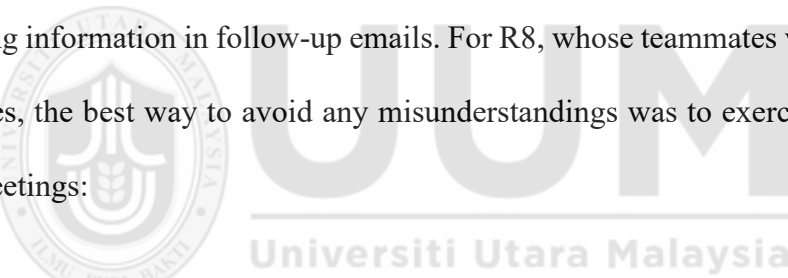
Direct to the point. No introduction, just say hi to the members. Wait until five minutes max and proceed to the meeting agenda. Every meeting must [establish an] agenda and open session at the end of the meeting. Meeting duration[s] [are only] one to two hours, so during this limited time frame, all important issues must be addressed…

(R15, Zuraida)

R10 echoed R3's remark emphasizing the importance of using a direct communication style in technical conversations; but she also seemed equally concerned with preserving a harmonious tone:

As we are working in a multinational company…we have no issue in communication styles. We have more than 40 nationalities working here…We use direct messages to communicate but in a polite way. As communication is about technical issue[s], we need to make sure the other party can really understand us …since we have to deal with many nationalities, so to be safe…use polite way[s] to communicate, [it's the] easiest way…because people come from all over the world, so people will try their best to be nice to everyone.

(R10, Hanani)

Both participants explained that although technical conversations necessitated communications to be direct, it was also important to be polite. R3 explained,

In technical discussion[s] all communication will be direct or straightforward… But we voice it out in a proper manner. Politely we say our ideas or opinion, with respect.

(R3, Zharif)

Interestingly, besides adjusting their communication verbally, some participants, such as R19, applied a non-verbal approach. She used emoji's to represent her feeling to reduce misinterpretation.

Usually, I use a lot of emojis like :) =D to represent my emotion cause text potentially can make them misinterpret what we are trying to say.

(R19, Khadija)

Most participants learned how to understand and react to different communication styles from their experience working with different team members on different projects. This experience had helped them communicate effectively and minimize misunderstandings. R15 is an example of a participant. Her wide experience of working alongside team members from other continents had given her an insight into the communication style of different cultures, giving her an advantage when dealing with new team members.

4.6 Cross-cultural code-switching challenges

The analysis revealed two major challenges that high-context GVT member encounter in the process of cross-cultural code switching. As they must work with team members with diverse cultures, languages have been the main issues. Thus, based on our findings, language constraints when communicating with both low-context and high context GVT members and different interpretation of words during the knowledge are the main challenges high-context GVT members highlighted which we will be discussing in detail within this section.

4.6.1 Language constraints

The aspect which often arose in the interviews was the challenge related to language limitation. Since the team comprise of team members from different countries and ethnics with diverse cultures, some of the respondents stated that the challenges they encountered during the cross-cultural code switching was language constraints. For example, R4 mentioned that her language proficiency cause delayed of information understanding and sharing. As she communicates with her German counterpart, they sometimes use English wording that was difficult for her to understand. She further stated that she always needs to translate the words so that she could understanding the meaning of the information her counterpart deliver during the knowledge sharing session. She also highlighted the challenges she encountered in terms of the language constraints as she uttered:

> ....Sometimes I need to translate the word first, then only I can understand....Those who use simple or easy English, it will be easier for me to understand....If [they] use high English, it will be more difficult for me....

> (R4, Nadia)

However, she did not provide any examples of the English words that made her struggles to communicate with her counterpart. This challenges also explain the delayed in her switching when she communicates with her counterpart. As she further explained, the English words that they used sometimes have several different meanings, thus, for her to understand the information, she need to take sometimes to

translate and understand it clearly so that she gives the correct and precise information in return.

Besides the language constraints due to high level English words that the counterpart use, R4 also emphasized her English proficiency that is lacking make the switching more challenging. For example, there was a situation when she must explain the troubleshoot error, however, the explanation became more difficult as she struggled to let the user to understand the technical terms, she uses to explain the troubleshoot error. She further explained that lack of English vocabulary complicates the communication as she is having hard time to find and use the correct English words to explain to the user.

> *For example, I'm not good in English, so when there is certain time I have to troubleshoot error with user, I have problems to let her understand because the term we use to explain he might not know it. It also maybe I cannot speak English fluently and lack of vocabulary, So, I don't know the correct words to user to explain……*

(R4, Nadia)

In the early year of working in GVT project, she become a passive team member who will only receive input and follow instructions from others. It was because she was unclear on the right way to response to the discussion in either audio or video conferencing session as she said:

Early year if I join the project, I will be quiet. I listen and just follow order. I don't know how to response [to the discussion] ......

(R4, Nadia)

On the other hand, for email communication, the language limitation requires her to always refer to her senior email before she can draft her own email. She further added that sometimes, when she was unable to response to the email from counterpart, she will ask her senior to help with the email. Furthermore, as her main concern was English proficiency, she was worried that she might send an email with broken English grammar that can cause misunderstanding. However, as her senior advice, the grammar should not be the main reason for her to be passive in the communication; and in terms of email communication, if the email she sent can be understood by the counterpart. Thus, to overcome this, she gradually communicates with her counterpart in the meeting and starts sending email despite her language proficiency and broken English grammar.

Sharing the same struggles with R4, the language constraints was also highlighted by R1 as the challenges she encountered in the GVT work environment. She remarked that the way she explains the information in Malay is different when she explains it in English. The explanation in Malay is lengthy and detail, however, the English explanation is short and precise. Thus, due to this issue, she struggled to find the correct words and terms to explain it in English.

Interestingly, besides struggling with their counterpart, some other respondents shared their cross-cultural switching challenges with other high-context GVT members from different countries due to strong accent. According to Zharif, the most difficult nationality to have a conversation with are Korea and Japan due to the language constraints. Since English is not their mother tongue, they did not master the language and for that reason, Zharif had some communication challenges to understand the information his Korean or Japanese team members convey during the audio or video conferencing meeting.

In a similar vein, R8 mentioned that his Vietnamese and Israeli team members English proficiency makes the switching process more challenging. Despite the hardworking behaviour that the Vietnamese team member demonstrated, the poor English proficiency complicate the conversation during the crucial knowledge sharing session. He added that their understanding of the project was below average which make the sharing process more challenging. It is because, for them to proceed with the project and complete the tasks, the communication needs to be consistent.

However, the poor understanding of the project required R8 to continuously explain the project to the Vietnamese team members which was also time consuming.

Meanwhile, for Israeli team members, the strong accent during audio or video conferencing makes the conversation and explanation more complicated as he uttered:

> *Vietnamese…. they tend to be very hardworking, however, their English is not very good and their understanding on the system is below part at that time….For Israeli, their accent very hard to understand and their working hour different with Malaysia…..*

> *(R8, Nazmi)*

At times, he tried to understand the meaning of what his Israeli team member says, and sometimes he needs to repeatedly ask them to explain again as he could not understand it clearly. However, as he need to get things done, and ensure that they are able meet the project timeline, R8 use an alternative in his communication.
He fully utilized email so that he can understand the information his other team members try to convey as he mentioned:

> *Accent problem sometime pretend to understand or asked them to repeat again, but we will get the point when email sent out (read much more easier than listen).*

> *(R8, Nazmi)*

In the same vein, R5 agreed that language accent was one of the challenges when communicating with low-context GVT members. As she works with team members from USA and Ireland, she had to handle some accent differences and she took sometimes to understand the conversation, especially if the communication was with

Ireland counterpart. Moreover, R17, mentioned that since the English was the main language for them to communicate, they must learn to understand the accent as she stated:

In terms of language, English is the main language…it just sometimes their accent is the barrier…. but, after sometimes, I can understand….

(R17, Iliani)

On the other hand, R15 provide an interesting perspective as she is no exception to this challenge and the way she reacts to the challenges was different. R15 experienced language constraints from high-context GVT members from non-English speaking countries; Peru and Chile and she had to adapt her communication styles to fit them. In the early stage of their project, she had to deal with accent from team members from British and South America. Fortunately, she managed to cope with her British team members. However, the communication challenges with South America team members remained. Interestingly, she experienced the challenge in both platforms that they use to communicate; audio/video conferencing as well as email. She highlighted that the inability of her South America to speak proper English made the communication more tough. She was incapable to understand the information they shared as their English was hard to understand as she explained with the following Figure 4.3 as an example of email sent to clarify the information after audio/video conferencing session:

216

Usually with Peru and Chile, we will try as much as possible adapt to their style and to use simple English…. Then we have to follow up to make sure they really understand…..With UK, is more easy because we use the same language even though has accent problem at the early stage of the project….With Chile & Peru, sometimes their English we couldn't understand what they try to say….so, still have to write in email and explain after the session…..

(R15, Zuraida)
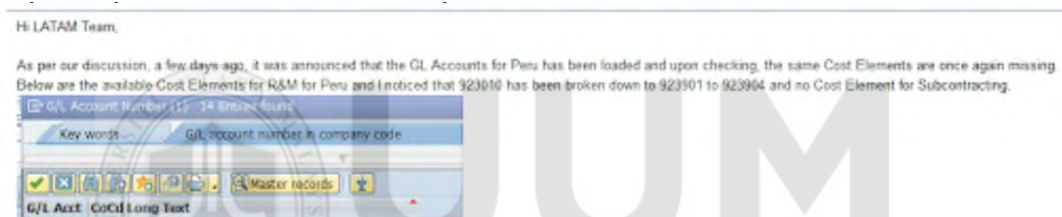
Figure 4-4 Screenshot of sample conversation with US counterpart

In her detail explanation, R15 mentioned that she utilized English language to communicate with them, however, the communication and knowledge transfer was delayed because for them to understand the information, they use Google translate to interpret the email they received from other team members. She further added that sometimes the communication led to misunderstanding as both parties unable to understand the conversation.

217

R15 also stated that the main reason of the delayed switching process was because she needs to take an additional step to do some translation for her to fully understand the information from her South America counterpart before they can proceed with the further discussion as she accentuated:

> *....if the email, they can read and google translate….if we talk, sometimes they don't want what said or what they said….sometimes emails they sent, the information makes us more confuse because of the disorganized sentence….but somehow, we managed to guess the meaning…..*
>
> *(R15, Zuraida)*

Besides using the simple English for communication, R15 and her team decided to communicate with their South America team members using both languages, English and Spanish. Thus, to enable the dual language communication, they utilized an online translator so that they can translate the information or query with hope their South America team members able to understand the information. Figure 4.4 below illustrate the actual communication between R15 and her South America team members using dual languages.

Description

E: To define what level of fixed assets shall be considered as equipment. Check with to see what happens if we sell or a team moved to another location (another plant, another country)

S: Se debe definir qué nivel de activos fijos serán considerados como equipos. Revisar con consultar qué ocurre si vendemos o se traslade un equipo a otra ubicación (otra planta, otro país)

E: Check if working hours of machine/equipment can be collected through FORCAM, to determine number of hours of operation and thus set a certain amount of hours for each maintenance. i.e. maintenance every 100 hrs this implies x days, recording operation data through FORCAM

S: Consultar si horas de máquina/equipo funcionando puede ser colectado a través de FORCAM, para determinar cantidad de horas de funcionamiento y así setear una cantidad determinada de horas para cada mantención. i.e. mantención cada 100hrs esto implica x días de funcionamiento, grabando los datos de operación a través de FORCAM

E: Define if maintenance costs should be performed by cost center or by team. Finance (cost analysis)

S: Definir si los gastos de mantención se deben realizar por centro de costos o por equipo. Finanza (Análisis de costos)

E: How a worker who belongs to a work area and is required to support shared workings to another area. This can be set by capacity utilization or hours available.

S: Cómo se comparte un trabajador que pertenece a un área de trabajo y se requiere que apoye labores para otra área. Se puede definir por capacity utilization o por horas disponibles.

Figure 4-5 Sample of online translation

R15 further added that her team can foresee the same language constraint issues they will encounter when they start the project with another counterpart from non-speaking English country, China. While Peru and Chile required her team to utilize double languages via translator, working with China required them to fly to China, station in their office in China to facilitate the team as she emphasized:

> *we can foresee communication issue with China later, what China team require from us, they want us to be there 2 weeks in a month. We have to be there for two weeks to facilitate the team there.*

> *(R15, Zuraida)*

Interestingly, high-context GVT members highlighted that language constraints that they encounter was caused by their low-context counterpart as well as high-context counterpart. This indicate that high-context GVT members must deal with counterpart with strong accent as well as counterpart with low English proficiency in the project.

4.6.2 Different interpretation of words/symbols

Communication difficulties that high-context GVT members experienced was to comprehend the different meaning of words from the conversation with their low-context counterpart. It is challenging for high-context GVT members to understand the real meaning of some words that their low-context GVT members use in the communication. Besides different meaning, the use of different symbols can lead to misunderstanding of information. For example, R4 shared her early experience dealing with German counterpart. She surprised with the excessive use of exclamation marks by her team members. She was confused and having difficult time to interpret the information. To clear her confusion, she consulted her friend who studied in Germany

for 6 years and the answer from her friend clear all the confusion. The exclamation marks used in the email basically to show the excitement feeling, meanwhile, when R4 received the email with exclamation mark, she assumed that the symbols used to express anger.

> *And one mare, some of them like to use a lot of exclamation marks….we thought they were angry, but when I ask my friend who studied there [German] for 6 years, he said that it was the way for Germany to express what they feel….Not angry, mostly happy….that part sometimes I don't get it…..*
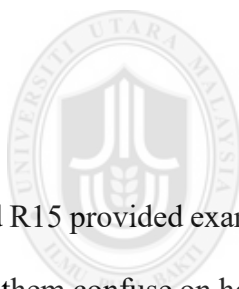
> *(R4, Nadia)*

R4 and R15 provided examples of conversation with their low-context counterpart that makes them confuse on how to correctly interpret the information due to the excessive use of exclamation marks. Specifically, R4 shared:

> *Hi PI team, i just remember that this error is related to OITC project!! Please could you cancel them?*

> *Thanks & regards*

Hi Khai!!

Please receive PLS concerning the work center PM.

Best regards,

Figure 4-6 Sample of screenshot for US counterpart

R4 further added that the first time she received email from them (see Figure 4.5), she thought that the exclamation marks indicate a rage respond and it makes her hesitate to reply to the email. She also said that she was confused to understand and knows the feeling of her counterpart when they sent that email to her. On the other hand, R15 mentioned that she interpreted the excessive exclamation marks as excitement.

In a different case, R1 struggled to interpret the information she received from her other high-context GVT members in Islamabad as the communication was conducted via audio and sometimes video conferencing. When she could not understand the information, they setup an individual meeting so that her counterpart can explain in detail. However, the words they used to explain led to another confusion and even when she asks the team member to re-explain, she still unable to understand the whole conversation as she mentioned:

> *Communication become a reason why I don't really understand what my team from Islamabad said, even they setup meeting one to one, I still cannot understand. I ask him to explain again but I still don't understand.*

> *(R1, Ariani)*

R1 stated that the main reasons of her lack of understanding of because of the words they use to explain the information. The words are sometimes confusing and led to a different interpretation. Thus, that was the main reason she asks them to re-explain the information, however, the re-explanation led to another confusion. Unfortunately, R1 did not provided any examples of words or statement related to this situation.

Meanwhile, for R15, she must be more careful when she communicates with her Latin America team members as they have issue with English languages. She must be cautious and select her words appropriately so that the counterpart would be able to interpret the meaning of the words she used and get the correct information about the project. In terms of documentation, she further stated that any documents they use as part of the communication must contain a complete information to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding as she mentioned:

> *When I communicate to team in Chile & Peru, I have to be more sensitive with words chosen that I will use, document that I use, I make sure have complete information on hand…..*

> *(R15, Zuraida)*

4.6.3 Timing differences

The third cultural factors that few respondents highlighted which makes the cross-cultural challenging is the timing differences due to different time zone. As one of the key communication activities in GVT is a decision making, the timing differences delay the switching process and thus, it makes the switching of communicative behaviour more challenging to high-context GVT member. The timing differences led to an ineffective of information delivery which affected the decision-making process. For R1, R8, R5, R7 and R12, due to the difference timing with low-context GVT members such as US, some of them must bring back the work from office to home. As the environment changed (from office environment to home environment), the distraction at home causes the switching more difficult to handle.

For example, R12 pointed out that sometimes she needs to take the calls from her counterparts from home and she agreed that the timing difference is the issues for her switching. For some work-related matter, a quick decision is required, thus, the communicative behaviour adjustment need to occur rapidly as well. However, as the environment is different, the switching becomes challenging that affected her decision-making process. Besides that, the different working hour required R12 to commit to work after office hour.

However, she claimed it is manageable as their communication is supplemented with asynchronous communication platform such as email and Lync application.

> *Sometimes we do take the calls from home ... and some time from office depending on the situation ... The time difference mainly had some issues. but its manageable…… We use to communicate to them via email (of course), video conf[erencing] (managerial levels), audio conf[erencing] , and through Lync (communicator)…….*

> *(R12, Usha)*

In a similar vein, R8 added that apart from having strong accent in communication, the different working hours caused the challenges for him to adjust his communicative behaviour with his counterpart. As the switching process is dynamic, the different working hours obstruct the switching process for him. It is because the timing differences causes him to wait for his counterpart to make the reply to the communication that also delay the process for him to understand the information they will delivered. If the information is crucial and involve the decision-making process, it affected the process as well as he might understand the information differently.

In the case of misunderstanding, he needs to use the asynchronous platform such as email to clarify it and it will be another delay for him. Thus, the timing differences caused switching behaviour for him is more challenging as he need to wait for the reply or clarification from his counterpart before he can flexibly adjust his communication styles. Moreover, the timing differences also the delay information

sharing for the project progress update. He further added that the different rest day with his counterpart delay the knowledge sharing process.

Thus, to overcome the difference working hours and rest day, he needs to adjust or work extra hours to make sure the information can be delivered on time and the project completed within the stipulated time.

> *Their accent very hard to understand and their working hour different with Malaysia. Their off day is on Friday and Saturday while we in Malaysia is on Saturday and Sunday. So we might need to adjust or working extra hour to catch up with their progress.*

> *(R8, Nazmi)*

Interestingly, as his team also consists of high-context GVT members from different countries such as China, to accommodate the different working hours, he said he need to respect their work hours and if the issues arise after working hours, he will wait for the next working day. However, the waiting delay the process of transferring important information especially when the information required immediate action from the counterpart. Hence, like Usha, he will use alternative communication method such as Lync platform to contact the team members related to the project to explain the issues and to avoid any misinformation.

For R1, as the working hours between Malaysia team and US team are different, the decision-making process is quite challenging especially if the process need the US counterpart to verify. For instance, R1 shared one situation in which the Malaysia team had to make a quick decision on one issue occurred and had to bypass the US team due to different working time. The case was urgent case and required the US counterpart to confirm as the team running the production in Schaumburg, however, since their working hour starts after Malaysia team, R1 and team must make the decision so that the issues can be solved. After the decision has been made, they sent out email to the US team to explain and justify on the issues and decision they made to resolve the issue.

> ....one urgent case because Schaumburg has the production there, anything from Penang site will involve them (US team) in terms of making a decision, however, if we have to wait for them, it would be late, so we (Malaysia team) can help to justify on the certain issues…Basically, the decision comes from them, the US team, but since the issue is urgent, so, we inform, whether can proceed or not, based on our own opinion. After we (Malaysia team) make that decision, we will email the US counterpart and informed that we already made the decision, we state the reason and why we chose that answer…so usually, they (US team) will agree with the decision we made……
>
> (R1, Ariani)

In a different situation, R1 had to accommodate her team members working hours by adjusting her working time, fix the meeting time and prepare the meeting materials so that they can discuss and complete the task when her US counterpart starts the work. For such a case that she unable to adjust her time to communicate with US counterpart, she will send out email, however, she said, the email is time consuming as she has to wait for the team members to reply. This delay not only interrupted the communication process, it causes her delay in her switch of communicative behaviour. As someone with lack of English proficiency, she requires more time to make the adjustment to her communication styles to accommodate her US counterpart, however, the timing differences makes the adjustment process difficult and make the communication more challenging for her. It is because, the gap due to timing differences could be effectively used by R1 to learn her counterpart communication styles and then make the necessary adjustment so that they can have an effective communication. Thus, to overcome the delay communication due to the timing differences, she utilized the morning session of her shift to communicate with her US counterpart, but it will be based on luck. If the team members are still online at 9AM (Malaysia time), she will directly approach them, however, if the team members are offline, R1 need to wait until end of her shift to communicate with her US team members.

> …….for example, there (US team) have 3 people, but the one that involve in the task maybe one only…so, I will set meeting with him/her only…so, I will prepare with him/her working hours…so, during her working hours, we will start communicate and discuss until the issue resolve. If I need to wait for email, I will reply and she/he will reply, it will take more time. But, that one way (one-to-

one), maybe morning when I come to work, they were still online,
but, it depends on luck, if they are still there (in the office), they will
reply…….

(R1, Ariani)

As a summary, the findings demonstrated two significant cross-cultural code-switching challenges high-context GVT members encountered; 1) language constraints and 2) different meaning of words or symbols that delay their switching behaviour and few of the respondents also highlighted the timing differences caused the challenges in their cross-cultural code switching process. Even though the main language used was English, the lack of competencies caused the high-context GVT members to delay their switching process. Furthermore, the online communication become more challenging when the words or symbols used by the counterpart are being misinterpreted which cause difficulties for high-context GVT members to convey the information. However, high-context GVT members stated that they were able to overcome the language struggles after several online communication sessions with their counterparts despite the timing differences that make them to sacrifice extra hours to ensure the communication and the knowledge sharing process went smoothly.

4.7 Summary

This chapter explains the findings of this study and discusses in detail the answers to all the research questions. The first finding describes the cross-cultural code-switching process that occurs in three distinct phases: phase 1 - initiation, phase 2 - switching, and phase 3 - internalisation. The next findings describe four cultural factors and reasons that lead high-context GVT members to change their communicative knowledge sharing behaviours. Finally, the challenges GVT members with high context encounter when changing their communicative behaviour are described.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings of my research on the cross-cultural code-switching in global virtual teams, specifically among high context individuals working in a global virtual team (GVT) work environment in Malaysia. The discussion highlights the unique transitions of communicative behaviour of high-context GVT members when they communicate with their low-context GVT members. This chapter also elaborates the cultural factors and reasons for the cross-cultural code-switching behaviour of high-context GVT members and the challenges in adjusting their communicative behaviours. This chapter also discusses in detail the implications of the study to the body of knowledge, as well as practical and methodological contributions.

5.2 Discussion

The discussion of the findings is divided into three major parts. The first part discusses the overall patterns of GVT development of knowledge-sharing and cross-cultural code-switching in three distinct phases: (a) Phase 1 – Initiation: An introductory session, (b) Phase 2 – Switching: Convergent communicative behaviour, and (c) Phase 3 – Internalisation: The closure of effective cross-cultural code-switching. The discussion will continue by elaborating the cultural factors that influence the cross-cultural code-switching process, such as upfront communication, expressiveness, time

urgency, as well as agenda-oriented communication. The next findings relate to the four main reasons for cross-cultural code-switching during knowledge-sharing, such as accommodating different communication platforms, accommodating different communication purposes, overcoming language constraints, and avoiding miscommunication. The final part of the discussion focused on the cross-cultural code-switching challenges that high-context GVT members encounter that delay their switching behaviour. The challenges include language constraints, different interpretations of words/symbols, and timing differences. Figure 5.1 captures the overall findings of the study, followed by the discussion of each finding in the next section.
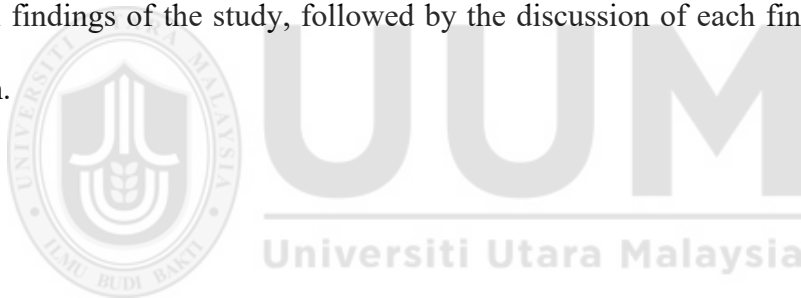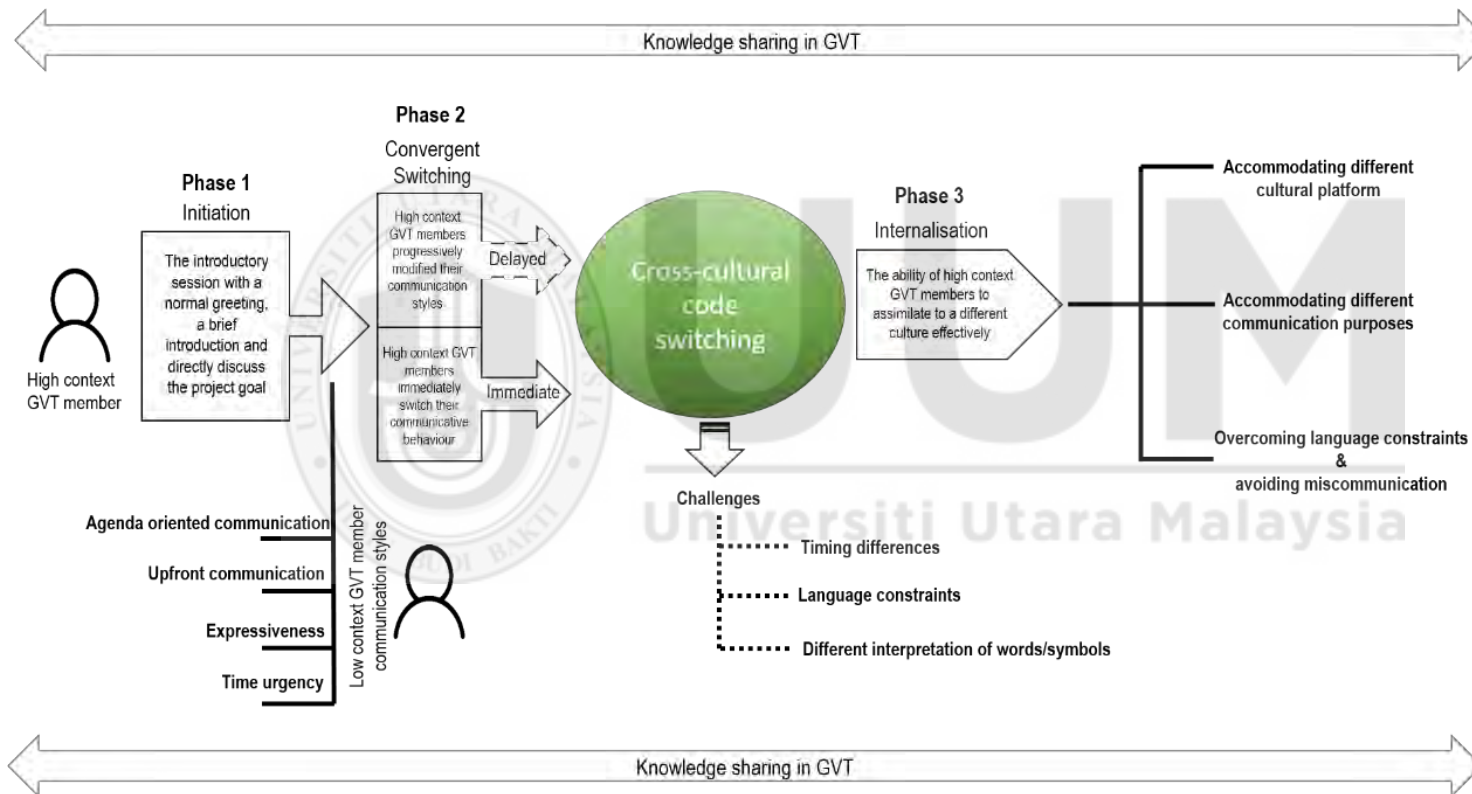
Figure 5-1 Overall findings

5.2.1 Overall patterns of GVT development for knowledge sharing and cross-cultural code switching

In his study on cross-cultural code-switching, Molinsky (2007) focused on individual psychological challenges in adapting to a foreign culture in a single interaction. Later, Molinsky (2013) focused on capturing the process of managing and overcoming challenges in foreign cultural interactions via a cultural retooling process. In a specific knowledge-sharing context, Ahmad and Widén (2018) and Ahmad and Barner-Rasmussen (2019) focused on the code-switching of languages in a GVT environment among professionals during a knowledge-sharing session. Meanwhile, Aichhorn and Puck (2017) investigated the barriers of code-switching to successful communication in virtual teams. Recently, Jarrell (2020) explored the experiences of American team managers in their daily knowledge-sharing activities among team members with diverse cultural perspectives. However, none of the past studies incorporated cross-cultural code-switching and knowledge-sharing process in a single study and emphasised a specific cultural context, such as high context and low-context cultures. Thus, to further explore the overall patterns of knowledge-sharing process and cross-cultural code-switching in specific high-context cultures, researcher applied two cultural theoretical frameworks to illustrate the understanding of cross-cultural code-switching among high-context GVT members in a specific communication context, i.e., knowledge-sharing. The frameworks were (a) Hall's high context and low-context culture, and (b) Molinsky's cross-cultural code-switching framework.

My findings identified three distinct phases of cross-cultural code-switching by high-context GVT members during a knowledge-sharing process in a virtual workspace. The first phase was an initiation, which was the introductory communication process between high-context GVT members and low-context GVT members. The second phase was the switching phase that involved a convergent communicative behaviour of high-context GVT members. In this phase, the findings revealed two switching modes: delayed and immediate switching high context member portrayed. The closing of cross-cultural code-switching process among high-context GVT members showed an internalisation phase which demonstrated the effectiveness of cross-cultural code-switching in a knowledge-sharing process in a GVT environment. In many GVT studies, researchers used different communication process models, such as classic communication models by Adler (1991), Buchanan and Dawson (2007), Hunsaker and Hunsaker (2008), Shah and Barker (2017) as the groundwork to explain how GVT members communicate in a virtual environment. However, in this research, a communication process by Adler (1991) was used as the main communication model. Adler illustrated a communication process that starts with a sender encoding the message or information via a technology platform, and, on the other side of the world, the receiver with the same technology platform decoded the message. During message transmission, the message can be lost, which leads to a delay in communication. Other communication barriers, such as miscommunication, can also take place.

5.2.1.1 Phase 1 – Initiation: An introductory session

It is crucial to be able to communicate in a way an audience can easily understand the message. In any communication process, an introductory session is common and important so that the message can be delivered correctly. An introductory or ice-breaking session also indicates the beginning of effective or ineffective communication between two different parties. In line with past studies, my present study discovered that an introductory session was the inception of a typical communication process of communication in global virtual teams. The session began with a normal greeting and a brief introduction of team members and project or task goals to achieve. As the communication relied on communication technologies, such as email, video conferencing, or audio conferencing, the greeting was brief with minimal personal information. As explained in the previous chapter, there were two types of work in a GVT work environment: ongoing tasks and project-based tasks. For each type of work, my study identified marginal differences in terms of how GVT members, especially high context members, initiated the conversation with their counterpart.

For high-context GVT members who were working in a project-based task, the communication started with self-introduction and a brief detail about each team member skillsets and their roles in the project. The ice-breaking session was also conducted formally to the point that high-context GVT members learnt and understood about their counterpart communicative behaviour. Gibson and Manuel (2003) identified the ice-breaking session as an establishment of effective multicultural communication and the point where team members start to build trust among them.

They added that when the cultural differences are significant among the team members, the communication could be more challenging. In this study, the introductory session was kept simple, brief, and straightforward among high GVT members so that they could elude miscommunication or misinterpretation at the early stage of the project.

On the hand, for high-context GVT members who were working in an ongoing task, the introductory session was done via a training or workshop session. Since the same team members had been working together for some extended period, the introductory session was more casual and more towards a "get-to-know" session to build rapport to facilitate trust development. This research finding was consistent with the earlier finding by Warkentin, Sayeed, and Hightower (1997) and Beranek (2000) that revealed that a training session enhanced the relationship and trust of virtual team members. Consistently, Hill and Bartol (2016) demonstrated that a training session in dispersed teamwork is one of the ideal ways to understand team members' behaviour and overcome collaboration issues related to cultural differences.

In addition to how team members communicate in a GVT work environment, whether in a project-based or ongoing task, the frequency of communication plays an important role and influence the cross-cultural code-switching performed by high-context GVT members. According to Marlow, Lacerenza, and Salas (2017), one of the key elements in their proposed communication process framework is communication frequency. They described communication frequency as the volume of communication over some various communication-mediated technologies, such as emails, phone calls, audio and video conferencing, as well as face-to-face interactions. My findings revealed that the

communication activities among GVT members were not restricted to a one-off communication during the ice-breaking session. However, the communication continued via various communication platforms mainly to discuss the project or task and share common goals with all team members. The high frequency of communication then facilitated the high-context GVT members in understanding their low-context GVT members' different communication styles. It also helped the former to adjust their communication styles to fit their counterpart and, at the same time, helped mould high context cross-cultural code-switching behaviour.

5.2.1.2 Phase 2 – Switching: Convergent communicative behaviour

The introductory session helped high-context GVT members to get to know the team members, which also helped them to switch their communicative behaviour when sharing knowledge flexibly. In this phase, the communication was driven towards project or tasks given to the team. Interestingly, none of the past studies of code-switching focused on the communication of high context culture in a GVT environment.

Specifically, in this study, researcher discovered a unique pattern of cross-cultural code-switching process that differed from Molinsky's original process. High-context GVT members, in this study, switched their communication styles in two different states: delayed and immediate switching. A delayed switching occurred when high-context GVT members gradually adjusted their communication styles to fit their low-context GVT members. The switching took place during the knowledge-sharing process, and high context members began their communication by embracing the high

238

context communication styles. The delayed happened because they needed time to make themselves feel comfortable before communicating with their counterpart. This finding is aligned with the recent findings by Zakaria, Yusof, and Muton, (2020) that identified a typical communication pattern for high context individuals in a GVT work environment. Their preferred communication styles were polite, subtle gestures, silence as a sign for disagreement, and a heavy usage of non-verbal cues, such as emoticons or emoji, to indirectly express their feelings. A recent study by Kauffmann and Carmi (2019) identified that trust and communication as the preconditions for collaboration in a virtual environment. Thus, the delay in high context switching behaviour was an elusive act to develop trust and rapport in communication before high-context GVT members switched their communicative behaviour. A narrative of one of the participants demonstrated that a polite introduction helped him build a good relationship and gain trust. The trust and good relationship facilitated the cross-cultural code-switching of high-context GVT members and helped them gain the confidence to switch and be more direct in their communication. Moreover, high-context members adjusted their communicative behaviour confidently when the information was valuable to the project or task and had to be delivered without being misunderstood. This situation required high-context GVT members to switch and be more direct to enable their counterparts to obtain the first-hand knowledge accurately.

I also discovered that the type of work influenced high-context GVT members to switch their behaviour. In an ongoing task, for high-context GVT members, the introductory session via training or workshop sessions caused them to delay their switching to build a good rapport with their counterpart. The casual talk provided high-

context GVT members ample time to understand their low-context GVT member's communication styles, thus, allowing them to share knowledge smoothly. This finding is in line with that of Saunders and Ahuja (2006), who observed that ongoing teams developed good social relationships and deeper trust, which enhanced team performance and aided the teams to complete their tasks together successfully.

Moreover, delayed switching also indicated a transition of communication styles from being a passive to an active listener/communicator and together with years of experience working in a project or ongoing task, high-context GVT members gradually increased their confidence in the cross-cultural code-switching process. The fluid transition of the communication styles among high-context GVT members occurred in multiple communication platforms they utilised to communicate throughout the knowledge-sharing process. High context members in a GVT work environment flexibly adjusted their communication styles to fit the low-context members, as well as to fit the communication platforms. Massey, Hung, Montoya-Weiss, and Ramesh (2001) elaborated the communication styles and cultures in global virtual teams and used Gudykunst, Ting-toomey and Chua (1988) classics stylistic modes to explain in detail. Their explanation on the communication styles in GVT is consistent with my findings. The elaborate style was a high-context GVT member's preferred way of writing emails. At the same time, they also utilised a direct communication style when communicating via audio/video conferencing. The live session via audio or video conferencing tools necessitated that high-context GVT members be direct so that the information they delivered was well-understood by the counterpart. Besides that, the

unfavourable feedback received from low-context members had helped high context members to shape and flexibly switch their communication styles.

Immediate switching in this study refers to an abrupt adjustment of high context communication styles in which high-context GVT members were fully immersed in low-context communication styles in their communication before the project commenced. Based on the findings, we observed that high-context GVT members working in a project type of work tended to swiftly switch their communicative behaviour and maintained the same communication styles in different projects assigned to them. Several reasons for their immediate switching can be offered, and one of them was the importance of the information to their counterpart. A direct communication helped ensure the information was well-understood by low-context GVT members who were direct communicators themselves. For them, the information should be precisely and straightforwardly communicated. Knowing the importance of communicating information directly and accurately, high context members who had several years of experience working in multiple projects with low-context members believed that direct communication was imperative. Cakula and Pratt (2021) highlighted that when working with low-context culture individuals, tasks and goals became a priority. The delivery of correct information helps provides a rational solution, and problem-solving activities are done based on facts.

Another reason why high-context GVT members switched immediately was due to the working context and the use of technology-based communication. Since high context members rely on written, nonverbal communication to convey a message, the meaning of their communication is deeply rooted in the information they convey, and only

partial of the information is explicitly stated. This communicative behaviour could cause a miscommunication as low-context culture relies on the directness of the message conveyed. Thus, to accommodate the differences, high-context GVT members tended to be direct and straightforward. Also, such a communication style was appropriate because the high-context GVT members understood their counterpart's communication styles. According to one of the participants, his experience working in a multinational organisation had shaped his communication style. As the organisation was using a straightforward communication style, he had to switch his communicative behaviour to fit the organisation immediately. Several respondents also indicated that they immediately switched once they knew about the low-context communication style. To become an effective communicator, they had to accommodate to the communication style of their audience. The immediate switching of high-context GVT members occurred in both communication settings: verbally during the audio or video conferencing and non-verbal communication through emails. Communication technologies high context members used to communicate indirectly influenced their switching behaviours, especially when they attempted to understand their counterpart's communication styles. For example, all information uttered during audio or video conferencing was said straightforwardly, and the central attention of the communication was the information to help complete the task and achieve the goal of the team. High context members conveyed the same communication style in email communications; emails were purely textual and contained concise statements without any sign of formality. As 80% of the communications in GVT was done via email (Holtbrügge & Berning, 2017), high-context GVT members presumed that direct

communications in the email were inevitable. According to Montoya-Weiss, Massey, and Song (2001), although an organisation can provide various communication technologies to GVTs, it must perceive that the technology can influence GVT member's communication styles, and the information can be interpreted differently by low-context GVT members. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that promptness in high context members' communication facilitates the delivery of robust information when sharing knowledge to overcome miscommunication issues among high context and low-context GVT members.

The findings of this study verify the finding by Zakaria (2016), who observed an emerging behavioural pattern among high context people in an online message in a decision-making process. The changes in behaviours were based on purpose, situation, and people that reflect the context-based mode of online communication styles. In line with the findings of this study, the distinct communicative behaviour of high-context GVT members throughout the knowledge-sharing process demonstrated the flexibility of high context communication styles. The change in communicative behaviour was to ensure that high-context GVT can deliver the information and at the same time preserve the meaning of the information. The switching process—whether delayed or immediate—indicates that intercultural communication styles in a virtual environment are fluid. It also showcases a versatility of high context communicative behaviour in a global virtual working environment (Zakaria, 2016).

5.2.1.3 Phase 3 – Internalisation: The closure of effective cross-cultural code switching

The closure of the effective cross-cultural code-switching showcases the high-context GVT members' ability to assimilate to a different culture and become an effective communicator. In this phase, high-context GVT members were able to connect with their low-context GVT members by sharing and exchanging work-related and non-work-related knowledge, such as their family and the latest news. They also shared common topics. The good relationship high-context GVT members built with their low-context counterparts facilitated an effective knowledge-sharing process in a global virtual environment. This is consistent with the study by Ahmad and Widen (2018), who demonstrated that knowledge sharing as a knowledge-centred activity is potentially highly dependent on social interactions and personal networks in the organisation.

The present study showed that high-context GVT members successfully developed a good rapport with low-context partners that enabled them to share and exchange common things. Besides that, the small talk helped shape the high-context GVT members' confidence to communicate effectively with their low-context GVT members. The good social interactions among team members help to develop trust and social networks, and team members are more likely to share more than just work-related knowledge (Noorderhaven & Harzing, 2009). According to Rice, More, and D'Ambra (1995), face-to-face communication remains the "gold standard" in knowledge sharing despite the emergence of communication technologies, and the frequency and utilisation of multiple communication platforms to maintain

communication in global virtual teams help make the knowledge sharing between two contextual cultures (high-and low-context) more relevant. They fully utilised the communication technologies, such as video conferencing with the presence of the face, so that they could achieve the "gold standard" in knowledge sharing. Moreover, the findings of Noorderhaven and Harzing (2009) showed that social interactions acted more than just a communication channel; they helped team members to interact with other team members better, especially in an informal setting. This is in line with my findings whereby participants who worked in an ongoing task demonstrated a close relationship with their low-context GVT members. They also made jokes with their counterparts and exchanged topics of common interest, such as holiday plans, travelling experience, and video games. The closeness also facilitated high-context GVT member's confidence to make a personal request and get the team approval for that request.

On a different note, the good relationship built over time helped not only to develop confidence in sharing and exchanging information, but it also helped develop trust to share more than just work-related knowledge (Hooff & Ridder, 2004). The confidence of the high-context GVT members developed during the sharing of non-related work information eased the switching process. It helped the high-context GVT members to be direct, straightforward, and precise when communicating with the low-context GVT members. The communication of the high-context team members gradually changed from formal to casual, which indicates that they were comfortable in cross-cultural communication with a group of people known to have a direct and explicit communication style.

5.2.2 Cultural factors that influence the cross-cultural code-switching process

The study revealed four cultural factors that influence the cross-cultural code-switching process among high context GVT members, and those factors are the reflection of low context communication styles. The cultural factors were upfront communication, expressiveness, time urgency as well as agenda-oriented communication. The present study significantly contributed to the field of intercultural communication and cross-cultural management literature by providing a better understanding of communication styles for high context GVT members that were highly influenced by their counterpart and the fluidity of high context GVT members' communication styles in accommodating a contradict communicative behaviour.

From classical point of view by Gudykunst (1996), individualistic is group of people that resembles a low context culture such as explicit and direct in their communication, meanwhile, collectivistic is a group of people that very much dependent on the context of the communication and implicit in their communication. Hall stated that people from different context of culture use both communication styles, however, one tends to lead and influence the whole communication process. Findings from my study clearly indicates that cross-cultural code-switching process that happens to high context team members was highly influence by low context communication styles as post-switching process show high context become more direct and explicit in their communication in all possible communication medium used in the virtual working environment. High context GVT members starts their communication with high context initial communication styles orientation that emphasize on implicit communication, rely on non-verbal communication, very much context dependent

246

which mirror a collectivistic communication style. However, the transformation of high context communicative behaviour was apparently among those who works in project-based type of work compared to routine task as the switching began before the project initiated.

Saunders, Slyke and Vogel (2004) believe that the time visions affect the GVT performance and impact the teams in terms of meeting the deadlines. For project based, meeting the deadlines is crucial and it indicate the completion of series of activities to complete several different tasks within the timeline. Findings from this study aligned with Saunders et al (2004) earlier study on the time vision in GVT work environment. They stated that the deadlines reflected a monochronic cultural value. As the focus is solely on the task and the deadlines, the communication is direct, avoiding non-task related conversation and the focal point is on the assigned task.

High context GVT team member's communication was changed from context based to content based (Zakaria & Cogburn, 2010). For high context GVT members working on an ongoing task, the early communication was depending on the environment in which the communication took place. If the communication was conducted via video or audio conferencing, the communication will be indirect and subtle. They prefer to be the audience rather than communicator. However, as they gain confidence in their communication, the context-based conversation was gradually converted to content-based communication in which the communication focusing on the messages they need to deliver to low context GVT members. The communication was more direct and straightforward as the communication involves a decision-making process. Meanwhile, for high context GVT team members, the communication was a mixture

of context and content-based depending on people, prior experience, and platform in which the communication took place. The communication was content based when high context GVT members was new to the team and project and they became an observant in order to grasp the pattern and communicative behaviour of low context GVT members. As they move to new projects; some remain the same team members and some with new team members, the communication change to be more content based and the key focus is the information they need to deliver to other team members. Besides low context GVT members' communication styles influence on high context GVT members' communicative behaviours, team members' seniority level influence the switching process. The communication that involves the top management and senior team members requires the high context GVT members to swiftly adjusted their communication styles and put more focus on the content of the message to delivered. This pattern of communicative behaviour among high context GVT members was reflected in all possible communication platform, verbally and written communication. As Holtbrügge and Berning (2017) elaborated the communication style of high- and low context culture via computer-mediated communication (CMC), my study identified a contradict findings. As they emphasize on the usage of special characteristics and emotions in email communication among high context culture, my study, on the other hand, revealed that email communication among high context GVT members was direct, content-based and no utilization of specific characters or emoticons were reported. This communicative behaviour indicates a fluidity of high context GVT member's communication styles in written communication. They avoided flowery words, employing less commas and full stops, their emails are direct,

precise, and transparent; and these were consistent with low context culture communication styles.

In a different point of view, Holtbrügge and Bernin (2017) explained about level of formality in communication between two contexts of cultures. A typical high context culture emphasizes on formality in both verbal and written communication; and the communication focusing on the social context of the relationship. Findings from my study are in line with Holtbrügge and Bernin research in which, high context GVT members working on an ongoing task put emphasize on the formality in their first meeting with the counterpart GVT members either verbally or written communication. They are embracing the high context culture communication styles by being polite, and properly addressed their team members during the meeting. The formality in the beginning of communication helps to develop a good impression and gradually build a rapport between high context GVT members and their counterpart.

The good impression in the early communication reflected the collectivistic culture. It is known that collectivistic culture always put emphasize on the group dynamics and the pleasure of working among collectivistic individual comes from group achievement (William B Gudykunst & Ting-toomey, 1996; Pinto & Araújo, 2017). For example, R1 made the decisions on behalf of her US counterpart because the situation requires her to finalize the decisions. Even though R1 stated that her US counterpart did not dominate in the decision-making process, as her concern as individual from collectivistic culture to avoid hurting others, R1 immediately informed her counterpart on the decision they made so that the US team members are well informed on the decision. Meanwhile, another obvious traits of high context GVT

members is they also put focus on the mutual relationship and prioritize on the good relationship (Cohen, Wu, & Miller, 2016). R5 who works closely with team members from Ireland and US use common interest in gaming as discussion topic for them to get to know each other and develop a rapport. The sharing helps to build a good relationship for a long term and as a result, they keep in touch with each other to talk about their interest. This example is in line with Bhawuk (2009) that stated individuals from collectivistic culture nurture the relationships and maintain it for a long period of time.

5.2.3 Cultural reasons for cross-cultural code-switching during knowledge-sharing

In my study, both parties in a GVT (high-and low-context team members) were virtually connected via various communication platforms; high-context GVT members showed more tendency to adjust their communication styles to accommodate the multiple communication platforms. They utilised the rich media, such as video conferencing, to communicate. The media was combined with other communication media, such as audio conferencing, email, instant messenger tools, and a direct phone call (Ramesh & Dennis, 2002; Velez-Calle et al., 2020; Zakaria & Yusof, 2020) . Hill and Bartol (2018) revealed that people working in virtual teams preferred to use communication tools they were comfortable with. The selection of communication platforms shapes high-context GVT members' communication styles. My research findings revealed that an email platform allowed high-context GVT members to

flexibly switch their communicative behaviour to cater to the people and the purpose of the communication to make the communication more effective.

Based on the recent statistics published by SHRM (2020), emails are still the most popular communication platform in global teams because it helps overcome language barriers. Besides that, email helps high-context GVT members with language incompetency convey the information without feeling nervous and stutter. If the purpose of the communication is to provide work details, the email will be lengthy, elaborative, and supported with a visual aid for better understanding. Thus, the email communication provides extra time for high-context GVT members to craft the email so that the information they want to share is well-delivered. The email can also be crafted to be persuasive communication. Also, frequent communication with low-context counterpart helps high-context team members understand and modify their communication styles to fit the style of the low-context team members.

Moreover, recent research conducted by Hill and Bartol (2018) found that team members' performance did not depend on the selection of technologies they used to collaborate; instead, the performance depended on how they used the technologies. My study showed that high-context GVT members portrayed a good teamwork performance because of their flexibility in accommodating the communication styles in different communication platforms. As the communication platforms play an important role in a GVT work environment, high-context GVT members flexibly adjusted their communication styles to accommodate different communication purposes in GVT. They modified their communicative behaviour to fit specific purposes, such as decision-making, problem-solving, and progress updates, that

251

directly affected their work performance. Working together on different projects with different team members across the world had helped high-context GVT members function and communicate effectively in a culturally diverse situation. This also allowed high-context GVT members to perceive low-context GVT member's communication styles and later comfortably modified their communication styles to fit communication purposes.

In a recent study, Presbitero (2021) showed that the familiarity and comfortability with other team members allowed them to share information, display a good interest in communication, and promote a friendly and effective virtual work environment. This is in line with high-context GVT members working in a routine task type of work. They used the training session to develop and maintain the rapport throughout the process. The good relationship facilitated information sharing because they were able to create an effective work environment. The sharing behaviour was not limited to work-related information; once they were able to create and maintain a good relationship, they shared nonwork-related information, such as hobbies, family, and general topics.

Saunders and Ahuja (2006) described temporary teams as teams in a global virtual team with a time-bound goal. On the other hand, ongoing teams often require different tasks to accomplish with recurring goals that evolve over time. Their description of a team is aligned with my findings on the type of work high-context GVT members did, which were project-based (temporary teams) and routine tasks (ongoing teams). These two types of teamwork carried the same communication purpose, i.e., to effectively share information among team members to complete the project or assigned tasks.

Moreover, the information shared facilitates the decision-making process (Daim et al., 2012). Specifically, in my study, high-context GVT team members working on a project tended to focus on the tasks needed to be completed and the goals to accomplished. They were able to immediately switch their communicative behaviour to ensure the work can be completed within the given time frame. On the other hand, high-context GVT members involved in routine tasks with low-context GVT members fostered the relationship first and then emphasis on cohesive communication among team members. Thus, high-context GVT members working in routine tasks delayed their switching behaviour. Regardless of the type of work, high-context GVT members in my study demonstrated a cross-cultural code-switching behaviour. However, the pace of their switching behaviour, i.e., whether it was immediate or delayed are different.

These switching behaviours support the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) that emphasises the adjustment people make while communicating. My finding is also consistent with the recent finding of Presbitero (2021) that looked at the influence of cultural intelligence (CQ) and the impact of interpersonal process effectiveness within global virtual teams. His study found that people with high CQ levels were most likely to adjust and suit their communicative behaviour to overcome the dissimilarities in a culturally diverse context. My findings also revealed that all respondents successfully adjusted their communication styles to fit the different communication purposes and people. The adjustment process happened in a convergence mode in which high-context GVT members accommodated low-context

GVT member's communication styles to ensure the communication would be effective while eliminating misunderstanding at the same time.

My findings showed that some high-context GVT members working on a project-based type of work immediately switched their communication styles to fit the low-context style. They swiftly switched their styles before the project initiation and maintained the same communication styles in current and future projects. According to Pekerti and Thomas (2003), this behaviour exhibits task-based communication behaviour directed toward task accomplishment. High-context GVT members working on a project are more explicit and open in their communication. They are also willing to initiate communication and express their opinions confidently to eliminate any misunderstanding, resulting in communication satisfaction and enhanced team productivity (Pekerti & Thomas, 2003).

My findings showed that high-context GVT members consistently working in routine tasks with their low-context team members exhibited a relationship-based communication that emphasises building the relationship over time. The switching of their communicative behaviour was delayed because the communication would be effective and of better quality after establishing a good rapport among them (Pekerti & Thomas, 2003). They initiated the communication but embraced the high-context cultural norms, such as a polite introduction, and addressed the team members formally. The switching of communicative behaviour was deferred until they gained the confidence to be direct and explicit in their communication. The switching behaviour was driven by the importance of the information to be shared with their counterpart as well as the fear of misunderstanding about the information. The finding

is in line with a recent study by Presbitero (2021), who revealed that the familiarity and comfortable feeling when communicating with other GVT members facilitated effective information sharing and the development of a friendly virtual work environment.

5.2.4 Cross-cultural code-switching challenges

My study identified three main cross-cultural code-switching challenges among high-context GVT members, namely language constraints, different interpretations of words or symbols, and time differences. The main and recurrent challenges high-context GVT members mentioned was language constraints due to several factors, such as English proficiency, grammatical issues, and the low-context counterpart's strong accent. (Davidavičiene et al., 2020; Jarrell, 2020; Mirzayeva & Soliyev, 2020) stressed that language and the absence of body language and facial expression are barriers in a GVT work environment that make the communication among team members more challenging that could possibly lead to a misunderstanding. Binder (2007) also stated that different native languages could possibly generate misunderstanding, and for an individual to address the personal concern in another language is another challenge. The Globalization Partners and the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) conducted a survey that revealed that more than 43% global teams participated in the survey stated that language barriers were one of the key challenges they faced (SHRM, 2019).

Specifically, in my study, the language constraint that impeded the cross-cultural code-switching behaviour among high-context GVT members was the English language

proficiency in both verbal and written communication. Some of the high-context GVT members shared their struggle when writing an email, especially in the early year of their involvement with the global virtual team. The lack of vocabulary sometimes made communication more difficult. They had to put an extra effort to translate the email from the low-context counterpart to understand the content before replying. In a similar vein, Lee, Panteli, Bülow, and Hsu (2017) found that because of the difficulty in talking English made people use email to deliver information. The lack of English mastery and the feeling of embarrassment made them refuse to speak English; thus, the email communication 'protected' non-native speakers from feeling weak and embarrassed.

Besides the language proficiency, the strong accent of the low-context GVT members challenged high-context GVT members from engaging in cross-cultural code-switching behaviour. To make sure the information they received from their counterpart was correct, they had to repeatedly ask to the extent that they had to utilise the translator tool to translate the English language into the counterpart's language. Smal and Jogeva (2016) found that a lack of language was one of the obvious blockers in virtual communication. They reported that a strong accent of the native speaker badly impacted the communication because they had to double-check the correctness of the information, delaying the communication.

Another factor that makes the cross-cultural code-switching process challenging is the use of technology. Hill and Bartol (2018) emphasise that team performance in GVT depends on how team members use the technologies. Davidavičiene et al., (2020) also maintain that the media use in GVT is the major issue to the team because of the

256

culturally diverse working environment. Different cultures carry different values and perceptions that affect the choices of communication medium used in a GVT work environment. Yet, technologies are the key element in team communication. My findings showed that email communications led to misinterpretation issues because of the words or symbols used. To convey information, the low-context counterpart tended to use specific symbols, such as exclamation marks. However, the excessive use of specific symbols caused high-context GVT members to misinterpret the information, leading to confusion in understanding the meaning of the email.

However, the email communications of high-context GVT members in my study were fluid. The high-context members were able to adapt to the email communication style of the low-context counterpart. Regardless of the pace of the cross-cultural code-switching behaviour, the high-context GVT members demonstrated high adaptation when communicating via email. The polite and lengthy email could change to a straightforward and compact email to effectively deliver the information to other team members. This is in line with the study by Holtbrügge, Weldon, and Rogers (2013), who reported working and communicating via email allow an individual to be more adaptive to the email communication to fit the cultural background of the email receiver.

The use of symbols or different words, especially in email communication, tends to cause misinterpretation, leading to misunderstanding. This is because email communication is a text-based communication and conveying important information in a text form is challenging because of the lack of nonverbal cues. Thus, high-context GVT members must understand the meaning of the email first before replying to it

because a text-based format lacks emotion. For example, the exclamation marks in an email can be interpreted differently. However, the email recipient needs to understand the meaning of the symbol in the whole email conversation. This finding supports Smal and Jogeva (2016) and Al Zain, Vasilache and Incze (2018), who stressed that project managers should read the nonverbal cues to make sure they can effectively communicate and manage the teamwork virtually.

 The third challenge that my study identified is time differences. This challenge causes temporal distance that could reduce team performance because of the lack of real-time collaboration (Conchúir, Holmström, Ågerfalk, & Fitzgerald, 2006). The time differences can also cause ineffective information delivery as both parties need to accommodate two different time zones and different working times. In this study, to accommodate the time differences, some of the high-context GVT members reported that they had to continue working at home to communicate continually and complete the task within the same day. However, for GVT members with a significant time zone difference, emails became the main medium for them to communicate, causing communication delays because they had to wait for between eight and twelve hours for a response from their counterpart. My finding is aligned with the survey result by the Globalization Partners and Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM). The survey reported that the biggest challenge facing global teams in 2019 was collaborating across time zones and scheduling work across different time zones. The delay in communication due to time differences caused a delay in the high-context GVT switching behaviour. High-context GVT members who emphasised relationship-building needed some time to understand and get familiar with the low-context GVT

members' communication style. However, to understand the different communication styles, they had to accommodate the time zone difference, delaying the cross-cultural code-switching behaviour.

5.3 Implications to Theory and Practice

This research focuses on the knowledge-sharing process in a global virtual team environment that emphasise cross-cultural code-switching behaviours among high-context GVT members. The theoretical implications inform cross-cultural management and international management in that they further extend the understanding of cultural behaviours in a virtual context. The findings of this study also offer practical recommendations for multinational companies that rely on global virtual teams to execute projects effectively by promoting relevant training in collaborative and intercultural communicative behaviours. High-context GVT members will also benefit from the research findings as they will understand the effective communicative behaviour when communicating with low-context GVT members in a virtual work environment. The following outline theoretical and practical implications further.

5.3.1 Theoretical implications

The main findings highlight a linear process of the switching of communicative behaviour of high-context GVT members. The findings also highlight the cultural factors that influence the switching behaviour, and researcher conclude that high-context GVT members flexibly switch their communicative behaviour to

accommodate the different communication styles in a virtual workspace. The overall findings contribute to the cross-cultural management and international business literature based on three theoretical implications discussed in the following section.

Firstly, the findings of this study contribute to the extension of Hall's cultural context theory in a virtual context that primarily focuses on high-context cultural behaviour in global virtual teams. Secondly, the findings of this study bridge Molinsky's cross-cultural code-switching model with intercultural communication theory that focuses on high-context communicative behaviour in a virtual workspace.

Hall's high-context and low-context cultures were used as the basis of this research. However, most past studies on this cultural context were conducted in a face-to-face setting (Barkai, 2008; Chen et al., 2011; Croucher et al., 2012; Gudykunst & Ting-toomey, 1996; Holtbrugge et al., 2012; Kapoor et al., 2003; Kawar & Jordan, 2012; Kim et al., 1998; Nishimura et al., 2008; Salleh, 2005) and very few focused on the virtual context (Jarrell, 2020; Würtz, 2005; Zakaria & Cogburn, 2011; Zakaria, 2016; Zakaria & Yusof, 2020).

Cultures inevitably play a crucial role in cross-cultural communication, and it is important for global virtual team members to understand the various communicative practices and how these cultural differences influence the knowledge-sharing process in their work environment. Interestingly, this study found that high-context GVT members flexibly switched their communicative behaviour to be effective communicator. As Hall's high-context and low-context set of communication styles are significantly different, these differences influence the communication process,

leading the following questions to be asked: Why do high-context GVT members switch their communicative behaviour, and what are the cultural factors that influence high-context GVT members to switch their communicative behaviour?

The findings of this study showed that low-context communication styles not only affected the switching behaviours of high-context GVT members, but they also shaped high-context GVT members' communication styles and the way they communicated during the entire knowledge- sharing process. They were no longer seen as a typical high-context individual whose communication was indirect, implicit, subtle, layered, and nuanced. Conversely, high-context GVT members portrayed a concise, straightforward, explicit, and clear communication style. The findings also showed high-context GVT members' ability to assimilate to a different culture effectively to become effective GVT team member in a culturally different working environment.

Even though non-verbal communication was completely missing in virtual teams, this study revealed that high-context GVT members could communicate effectively with their low-context counterpart without depending on non-verbal cues to understand the meaning of the words. This study also showed that despite the absence of non-verbal language, high-context GVT members were able to adjust their communicative behaviour and maintain their communication styles. As the switching of high-context GVT members' communicative behaviour was primarily driven by low-context communication styles and external factors, such as communication platforms, communication purposes, and language constraints, this study indicated that, despite the cultural differences between team members, information sharing in global virtual

teams could still be carried out effectively because the culture was found to influence the way people function in a global virtual team.

This study also revealed the tensions and frustrations experienced by virtual team members because of communication breakdown, which could be addressed effectively by the flexibility of the communicative behaviour of high-context GVT members in facilitating cross-cultural communication in a virtual workplace. In the age of digitalisation, cultural diversity should not be the factor that prevents people from communicating competently with other people from different cultures if they have adequate cultural knowledge and are able to adapt to different communication styles in a more versatile manner (Molinsky, 2009).

Secondly, besides Hall's high-context and low-context cultural theory, this study utilised Molinsky's cross-cultural code-switching model as a foundation. Thus, the next theoretical implication of this study extends Molinsky's cross-cultural code-switching model with ICC theory that primarily focuses on the cross-cultural code-switching process of high-context GVT members in a virtual workspace. Molinsky's previous study (Molinsky, 2013) highlighted the cultural retooling process—a process in the immediate term that illustrates how an individual learns about new cultural behaviours to function in a foreign culture effectively. However, the focus of his study was to explore how an individual manages and handles internal conflict during the cross-cultural adaptation in foreign cultural interactions in a non-specific context of communication. Although it offers an interesting insight on how people can profile their own trajectories during the cultural adaptation process and provides micro patterns and process of cultural adaptation, the study was conducted in a face-to-face

context using students as a sample with no specific communication purpose. In the current study, the data were gathered from individuals in a high-context culture who actively participated in the actual global virtual team's knowledge sharing within the organisation. Hence, it provides rich insights into a cross-cultural switching process in a virtual workplace, specifically in knowledge-sharing activities. As knowledge sharing is important to any organisation, all parties involved in the process must be willing and motivated to participate. If the knowledge-sharing process happens in a culturally diversified context, such as a GVT, all team members should accommodate and be more culturally aware of the different communicative behaviours, especially in a digital context.

The third and final theoretical implication is in relation to intercultural communication in GVT. A past study by Zakaria and Cogburn (2010) discovered a cultural behavioural pattern in high-context and low-context cultures in online intercultural communication. However, they used a secondary dataset from archived email messages as data. Although the study's outcome demonstrated that culture matters in online intercultural communication, the usage of secondary data did not represent the actual corporate context. Hence, in this current study, in-depth online interviews with high-context GVT members were used to collect the primary data, contributing to a better understanding of high-context and low-context cultural behaviours in a virtual work environment.

Finally, my findings offer interesting insights into the switching behaviour in a new workplace norm, i.e., global virtual teams. The three distinct cross-cultural code-switching phases discovered in this study enhance the cross-cultural adaptation

literature in a virtual workspace. The overall process of cross-cultural code-switching

phases of high-context GVT members in the knowledge-sharing process portrayed the

dynamic switching process in a digital platform highly influenced by cultural values.

As Zakaria (2016) highlighted, the three distinct patterns of communicative behaviours

in GVT, namely high-context, low-context, and switching, finding from this current

study showed the emerging of switching behaviours in virtual intercultural interaction.

Adjusting communicative behaviour was based on purpose, situation, and people to

achieve effective intercultural communication. Moreover, this finding also

demonstrated that even though cultural values could be adapted in a digital context,

adapting to different cultural values did not change one's ingrained communication

styles.

5.3.2 Practical Implications

The findings of the present study showed the dynamic cross-cultural code-switching

of high-context GVT members in a virtual workspace. The study also highlighted the

flexibility of high-context GVT members in their switching behaviours to

accommodate different communication platforms and communication purposes and

overcome language constraints due to its context. Thus, the overall findings have

practical implications for global human resource (HR) managers and GVT leaders and

high-context GVT members in multinational corporations.

Firstly, global HR managers and GVT leaders directly involved in a GVT working

environment require training in managing their members to communicate effectively

with other team members. This study pointed out that high-context GVT members explicitly experienced several switching phases in their cross-cultural code-switching. Hence, global HR managers and GVT leaders must handle the switching process efficiently so that the GVT members can maintain good interaction with other team members. Furthermore, since the study identified two different types of teams— project-based and routine task-based—the training global HR managers and GVT leaders receive could help them decide the suitable communication platforms to be used by GVT members in the project or routine task. This is because the choices of communication platforms play an important role in a certain switching phase. For example, in Phase 1: Initiation, the type of teams influences the introductory session, and with appropriate communication tools, not limited to a typical communication tool, such as emails, high-context GVT members will be able to break the ice effectively and help overcome some communication issues, especially for those who newly join the team. Moreover, as someone who administers and manages a global virtual team, global HR managers and GVT leaders are expected to be culturally intelligent since a virtual work setting is complex and more challenging than a traditional work setting (Zander et al., 2012). Thus, global HR managers and GVT leaders require training that can build and strengthen their cross-cultural competency. The pandemic COVID19 has converted a typical office workspace to a digital workspace. Helmold (2021) stated that virtual teams are now a new office concept that allows businesses and projects to run virtually in the most flexible way.

Besides that, global HR managers and GVT leaders need to embrace different GVT members' communicative behaviours and understand how they accommodate their

communication in a culturally different working environment. Such an understanding could encourage global HR managers and GVT leaders in developing strategies to effectively manage the GVTs in several aspects, such as cross-cultural communication, knowledge-sharing process, and decision-making process. They must know how to use various communication technologies and recognise the most appropriate technologies for their teams based on communication purposes and cross-cultural code-switching phases.

Secondly, the present study demonstrated that high-context GVT members be flexible in their communicative behaviour. Hence, they require cross-cultural training that could enable them to form and cultivate flexible communication styles. The training should concentrate on moulding high-context GVT members' global mindset, improve their cultural intelligence, and allow them to appreciate and comprehend the different cultural values of other team members. Furthermore, such training would help high-context GVT members enrich their interpersonal skills and effectively manage cultural diversity in a virtual workplace setting. Effective cross-cultural training would also help global HR managers and GVT leaders develop and reinforce GVT members' knowledge, awareness, and acceptance of other cultures in intercultural communication. Dousin and Sulong (2021) stated that cross-cultural competency relies on three cross-cultural pillars: cross-cultural sensitivity, cross-cultural awareness, and cross-cultural ability.

As the cross-cultural code-switching of high-context GVT members took place in three distinct phases, the cross-cultural training will equip them with appropriate strategies so that they can smoothly transition from one phase to another phase of switching. The

266

training not only helps high-context GVT members change their communication effortlessly, but it also helps them be more culturally aware so that they are consistent with the right culture and people. Zakaria (2016) suggested that reassessing the technology in relation to individual cultural values is needed so that the technology used in intercultural communication in a GVT is compatible and consistent. Thus, in line with Zakaria's suggestion, any organisation that applies global virtual teams as a common workplace setting is required to evaluate the potential and ideal technological infrastructure to be used in the GVT so that all GVT members can maximise the communication via the virtual workplace for any communication purposes.

To simulate an actual virtual working environment, the cross-cultural training should be conducted on various digital platforms for two reasons: (a) the findings identified five common communication platforms used in GVT, such as instant messenger tools, audio, and video conference, Skype, direct phone calls, and emails. Interestingly, each participant in this study stated that they used multiple communication platforms when they communicated with their counterpart, and (b) the different communication tools used in the GVT influenced high-context GVT members' communication styles. Thus, digital cross-cultural training through different communication platforms will enable high-context GVT members to improve their technological competency and use various communication technologies to communicate throughout the knowledge-sharing process effectively.

Besides that, as communication tools influence the way they interact with their low-context counterpart, the use of multiple communication platforms in training will

enable high-context GVT members to decide on the most suitable communication tools to share knowledge. For example, this study indicated that high-context GVT members involved in a routine task-based type of team relied on text-based communication tools, such as emails and instant messenger tools, to start the interaction. This is because they were still embracing high-context communication styles and began to progressively modify their communicative behaviour to fit the low-context GVT members. Hence, the utilisation of various communication platforms will help high-context GVT members break their typical communication styles. Instead of text-based introduction via email, they can make use of Skype or audio/video conferencing to introduce themselves to the team virtually. This will help them build their confidence in intercultural communication and overcome their anxiety due to a lack of English language proficiency. Bullard (2019) and Shachaf (2008) reported that effective use of technologies could mitigate intercultural communication issues.

Most past studies have indicated that organisations should conduct training programmes to educate GVT members about cross-cultural communication skills (Bischof & Eppler, 2010), teamwork effectiveness (Whillans, Perlow, & Turek, 2021), and cross-cultural competency (Gilson, Costa, O'Neill, & Maynard, 2021). Thus, this finding complements the suggestion of past studies by recommending that organisations should conduct such a training programme to high-context GVT members. Specifically, the cross-cultural code-switching training should foster the switching behaviour of high-context GVT members at different phases of switching. This is because this study found that the dynamic switching phase of high-context GVT members were influenced by several factors, such as culture, job demand,

communication technologies, and environment. Thus, appropriate cross-cultural code-switching training will benefit high-context GVT members to adapt and manage their switching of communicative behaviour and develop them to be effective communicator. The switching training should address different tips and techniques to adapt and manage the switching behaviour in every phase so that the switching process of high-context GVT members is smooth. Moreover, the training should emphasise the different uses of technological infrastructure in every switching phase because the correct communication technologies allow high-context GVT members to share and exchange knowledge effectively and eliminate the fear of delivering a wrong message to other team members.

5.4 Limitations and Recommendations: Directions for Future Research

Because studies are designed with a specific purpose, limitations and unexpected results could arise. There were several unexpected issues that occurred in this study. First, the initial plan was for the data to be collected physically. However, it was quite challenging to gather participants for a face-to-face interview because they had a full-time job and worked in different shifts. Alternatively, online interviews had to be conducted via several different communication platforms, such as Google Hangout and WhatsApp. As a result, the data collection was time-consuming, and it took place over a prolonged period, specifically two years. Future research should consider various communication platforms, such as Zoom meeting, Webex, Google Meet, or any other open-source communication platforms as it able to mimic an actual face-to-face interview session.

269

The next limitation is the sample size in this study that represents high-context cultures is small, and thus, it is unable to adequately reflect high-context cultures as a whole. Although researcher used a snowball sampling to facilitate the search process of qualified respondents, some of the potential respondents unable to commit to the online interview due to working time constraints. Besides that, the twenty-two respondents that participated in this study were insufficient to represent the types of GVT teams identified in this study: project-based and routine task-based. Yet, Boddy (2016) recommended a range of 20 to 30 interviews needed for a qualitative study. This limitation could be addressed by including high context GVT members from different countries within the Southeast Asia regions so that it will provide a wider and deeper understanding of the switching behaviours of high context GVT members in Southeast Asia regions. Furthermore, interviews with global HR managers and GVT leaders may provide additional and different insights into cross-cultural code-switching in global virtual teams. Global HR managers and GVT leaders are individuals involved in management. Thus, their input would offer a rich understanding of high-context GVT members' switching behaviours.

5.5 Conclusions

This study was initiated to discover the cross-cultural code-switching behaviour of high-context GVT members in knowledge-sharing activities in a virtual workspace. A qualitative analysis was utilised as the main research methodology. This study has met all the research questions and objectives outlined in Chapter 1, Section 1.3, and 1.4.

Molinsky's cross-cultural code-switching model (2007, 2013) was used as the base and was integrated with Hall's high-context and low-context theory (1975) and communication accommodation theory (1991) to develop the theoretical framework. These theories were used to illustrate the switching behaviour of high-context GVT members.

The findings showed a dynamic cross-cultural code-switching process of high-context GVT members in the knowledge-sharing activities that comprised three main phases: introductory session, dynamic switching sessions, and internalisation session. The introductory session showcased a typical high-context communication behaviour when a conversation was initiated. The session emphasised the formality and preferred communication without verbal cues, such as emails or text-based communication. In the next stage, high-context GVT members showed a converging communicative behaviour that demonstrated their communication flexibility. The transition they made from a typical high-context individual to an individual with dynamic communication styles ended in the closure phase, where they showed the ability to assimilate to different communication styles.

Despite the challenges high-context GVT members encountered throughout the switching process, the low-context communication styles played an important role in shaping their communicative behaviour. The switching and ability to adapt to the different communication styles allowed high-context members to accommodate a different communication platform used in communication and different communication purposes in GVT, overcome the language constraints, and address the communication breakdown of high-context individuals.

In conclusion, the finding showed a dynamic communicative behaviour of high-context GVT members. They were able to demonstrate the ability to be flexible during knowledge-sharing activities in a virtual workspace. However, to date, switching behaviours have not been observed as an overall switching process in a GVT context. This finding is significant because it demonstrates that communication styles are not inert; instead, they are rather flexible. With the right communication tools, context, and factors, people can accommodate and assimilate to different communication styles while retaining their cultural values. The overall summary of this study is illustrated in Figure 5.2.
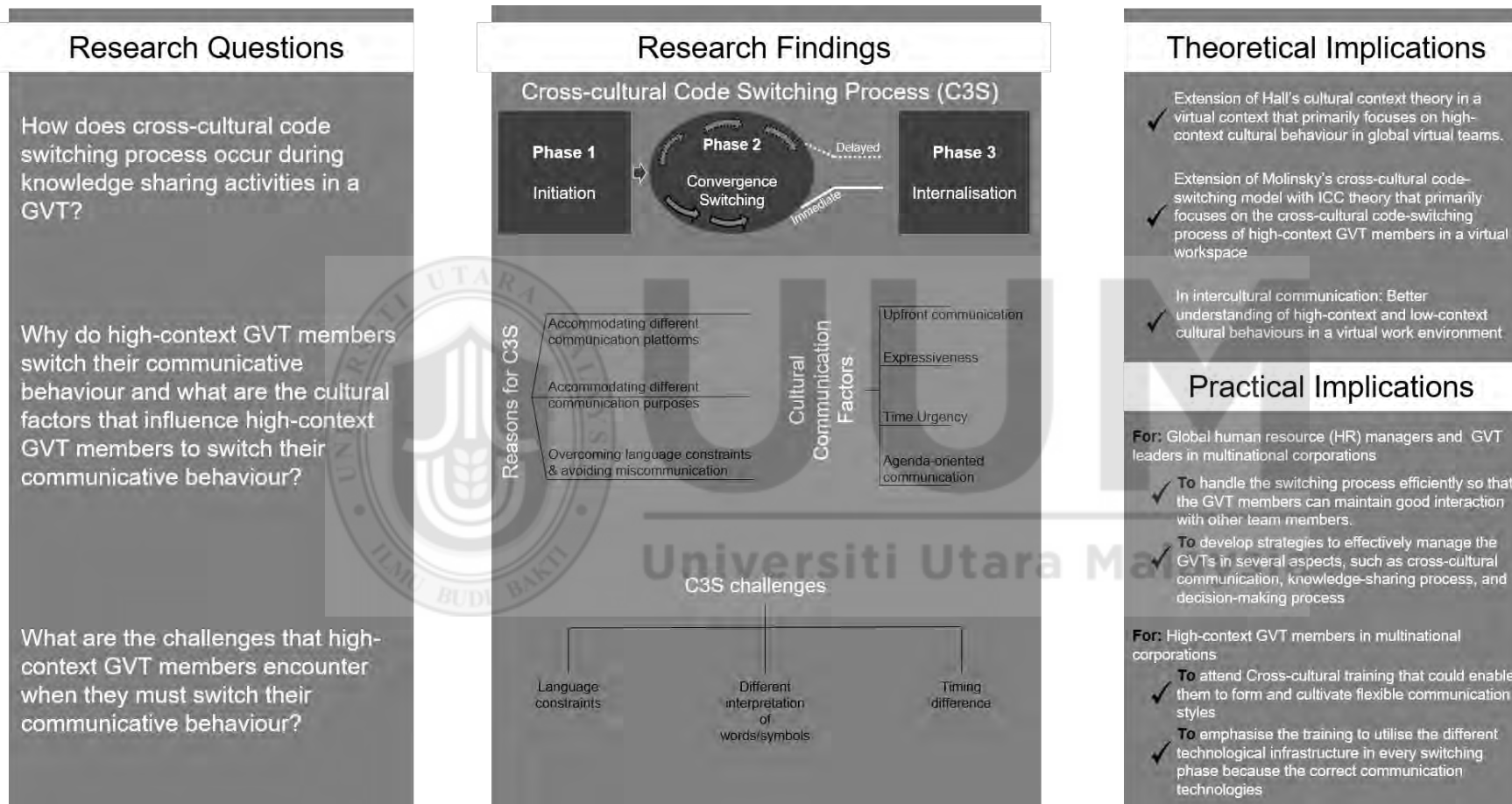
Figure 5-2 Overall summary

273

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

3. First of all, I would like to thank you and I appreciate your time and effort to participate in this online interview. Let me introduce myself. My name is Kirah. This interview will take about 60-80 minutes. How are you doing?

   - This interview is divided into 3 sections. In the first section, I will ask your communication styles when working in a GVT, next, I will be asking the knowledge sharing activity that happen in a GVT and in the last section, I will ask your behaviour in communication especially in a virtual work setting

4. Can I know how long have you been working here and your current position? Can you please introduce to me briefly about yourself and job scope in global virtual team? For e.g. you participate in all virtual meeting and involve in critical decision making

5. Can you please introduce your team members in the GVT? For e.g. where are they from?

SECTION 1

a) Communication styles (CS)

7. How do you communicate
   - With your colleagues?
   - With your superiors/subordinates

8. What type of medium you use to communicate? (e.g. email, videoconferencing, audio conferencing, social media).
   - Why do you choose such channels? Is it based on what is available or agreed upon or company's policy?

9. What is your style when you communicate virtually with your foreign team members?
   - What mannerism or what approach do you use? (For example, some people use a direct message while some write a lengthy message to get to their point). Can you identify and describe to me?
   - Do cultural differences influence your communication styles when you communicate with other people?

SECTION 2

b) Knowledge sharing (KS)

6. What is knowledge sharing in your work context?
7. What kind/type of knowledge that you share?
   - How do you decide to share knowledge?

- Why do you share knowledge? Is it task-related or it is because the knowledge is worth to share?
- Can you describe the process of knowledge sharing?
- Do cultural differences influence the way you share knowledge with other people?
8. Now, I would like to ask how you share knowledge virtually.
    - What communication channel you use to share knowledge virtually? Eg. Email, Google Drive, social media—WhatsApp, Telegram?
        i. Why you decide to use such channel to share knowledge?

    - What are the obvious differences when you share knowledge with your colleagues within the same department and when you share with foreign team members, virtually?
        i. Could you please elaborate?
        ii. Can you describe and explain the process of knowledge sharing via virtual environment occurs?
9. Can you describe your communication styles during knowledge sharing?
    - With your colleagues
        ii. Can you describe to me a bit about your communication styles when you share knowledge? (i.e –the style is more informal or you can be more open)
    - With your foreign team members
        iii. Can you describe to me a bit about your communication styles when you share knowledge? (i.e –the style is more formal)

SECTION 3

c) Cross-cultural code switching (CCCS)

2. Do you aware or feel the differences in your communication styles when you interact with people from different cultural background?
    - Can you give example or situation or share your experience?
    - Can you describe what are the differences in their communication style when they interact with you
16. When you commence the knowledge sharing, how do you adjust your communication styles with your foreign team member?
    - How do you adapt your communication style? For example:
        i. Verbal – When they being straightforward, what is your reaction? How you adapt it?
        ii. Non-verbal – When they use short and concise statement to share knowledge, what is your reaction? How you adapt it?
17. During the knowledge sharing, can you describe your communication styles?
    - Do you maintain your communication styles? Can you give specific examples?
    - But, if you adjust your communication style, can you describe and explain the process?
18. How you accommodate or fit in your communication styles compatible with your foreign team member?
    - Verbally
    - Non-verbally
    - Describe the process/provide an example

19. Anyway, do you aware or realize any situation/condition that indicates your communication styles is different from your foreign team member? Can you give example or explain in details?
20. I believe that culture has influence on our communication styles. What do you think? Do cultural differences give impact to your communication styles when you share knowledge?
21. Do you feel that you adjust your communication styles for the purpose of behaving in an appropriate manner?
    - If yes,
        i. When do you realize the adjustment process? Can you tell me when you realize it and how it happens?
        ii. Can you share with me the incident/situation?

22. After the knowledge sharing is done, can you describe your communication styles when you communicate with
    - Your colleagues within the same department
    - Your foreign team member after the project completed

23. Before we conclude this online interview, is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: Understanding the Process of Cross-cultural Code Switching of Global Virtual Teams in Knowledge Sharing

PhD Candidate Name: Nursakirah Ab Rahman Muton (900214)

Supervisor Name: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Asmat Nizam Abdul Talib & Assoc. Prof. Dr. Norhayati Zakaria

School: School of International Studies, College of Law, Government and International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010, Sintok, Kedah Darul Aman.

What the study is about: The general purpose of this research is to understand the cross-cultural code switching process by Global Virtual Team (GVT) member during the knowledge sharing activities. Since the knowledge sharing activity in a GVT involve interaction of people from diverse cultural background virtually, it is crucial to explore and further understand how people communicate and possibly switch their communicative behaviour during the knowledge sharing activity.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to participate in this study, we will conduct an online *or* face-to-face interview with you. The interview will include questions about your job scope in GVT project, how you communicate with other team members, how you share knowledge throughout the GVT project and how you adapt and accommodate the different communication styles. The interview will take about 60 minutes to complete. With your permission, we would also like to save the digital transcription of the interview.

Your answers will be confidential. The digital interview transcriptions of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report or publication we make public we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with your current company. If you decide to take part, you are also to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researchers conducting this study are UUM Phd candidate: Nursakirah Ab Rahman Muton (900214) and UUM senior lecturers, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Asmat Nizam Abdul Talib & Assoc. Prof. Dr. Norhayati Zakaria. Please ask any questions you have now. If you feel especially concerned about the research of the interview procedure, you may contact Nursakirah Ab Rahman Muton at nsakirah@gmail.com or at (+60-12) 563-8384. You can reach Assoc. Prof. Dr. Asmat Nizam Abdul Talib at asmat@uum.edu.my (+604-928 8513) or Assoc. Prof. Dr. Norhayati Zakaria at yati@uum.edu.my or (+6017) 571-4834.

Thank you for your participation in this study and you will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

_____

I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

_____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview recorded.
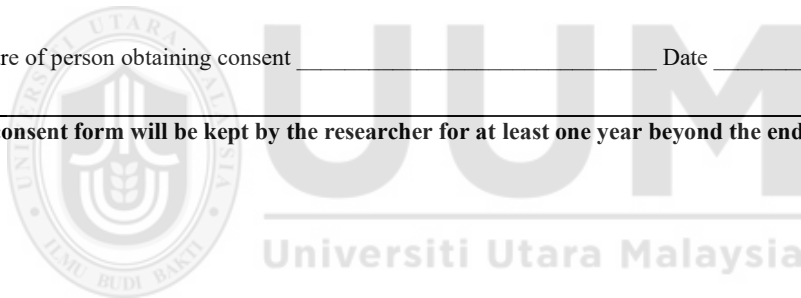
_____

Your Signature: _____

Your Full Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____ Date _____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least one year beyond the end of the study.

Appendix C

Qualitative Codebook

Codebook 1: Cross-cultural code switching.

Code	Definition	Sub-code	Purpose/Meaning of code	Verbatim examples
Initiation	**An introductory session** The communication starts with an introductory session, and all GVT members share a common aim, i.e., to achieve a project or task goal.		Illustrate how high context GVT members initiate the conversation with all GVT members	e.g., *This is where I will introduce my name, my role in the organization, the number of years in the industry, and the number of years in the company.*
Switching	**Convergent communicative behaviour** High-context GVT members accommodate their communication styles to fit their counterpart.	*Delayed*	Illustrate high context GVT members that progressively modified their communication styles to fit their low context GVT members. In this phase, the communication is normally initiated by the high-context GVT members, who still	e.g., *Usually in the meeting, the leader will start the conversation, and before we start the meeting, if we have issues, we will give the notes to her (leader).... so in the meeting, she will do*

		embrace the high-context cultural norms.	*the talking… .as for me, I usually introduce myself*
			e.g., When I was still new and fresh, I have almost zero knowledge and experience. At that time, I would just listen and understand what was being discussed.
Immediate		Illustrate high context GVT members immediately switch their behaviour and fully utilized the low context cultural styles. Within this phase, the switch of high context GVT members happens swiftly prior to a project initiation or task discussion.	e.g., *It depends on the audience…. with Europeans…. we will greet and get straight to the point…. we will discuss, first, the main issue…. problem statement …. the solution we have… we will see the improvement as well … if there is an issue, we will*

			immediately highlight it during the meeting.
			e.g., Direct to the point. No introduction, just say hi to the team members. Wait until five minutes max and proceed to the meeting agenda. Every meeting must have an agenda and open session to Q&A at the end of the meeting
Internalisation	**The closure of effective cross-cultural code-switching** High-context GVT members can assimilate to different communication styles	Illustrate high-context GVT members abilities to assimilate to different communication styles throughout the knowledge sharing session.	The ability of high-context GVT members to assimilate to a different culture and communicate effectively and casually to their low-context counterparts in a

knowledge-sharing
session.

e.g., *Sometimes when I forget to do it, they will scold me, and one of the team members, the most senior in charge of the production, always talks a lot… Marry. I always do work with her and she will scold and remind me to update the server…. Sometimes, I will do some jokes… She doesn't keep it in her heart, and after 2-3 times getting scolded by her, I finish my work first*

e.g. While waiting for others, I would say hello

			and ask them about their Christmas--where they plan to go in the long holidays …
			e.g. Relationship is important. When we deal with the same person for seven years, the relationship will start to develop on its own

Codebook 2: Cultural factors

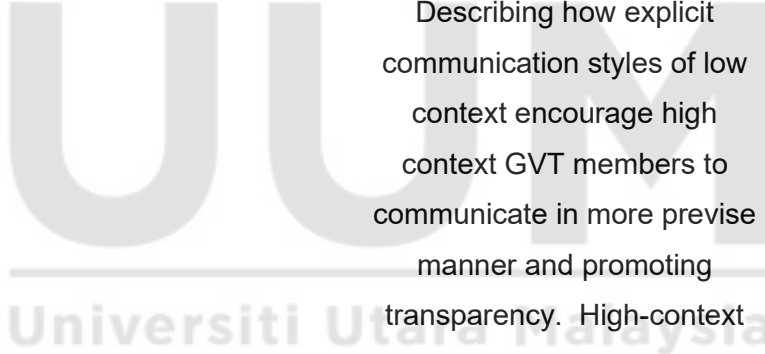| Code	Definition	Sub-code	Purpose/Meaning of code	Verbatim examples
Upfront communication	High-context communication style shifted from indirect and courteous protocols to straightforward statements.		Describing high context GVT members communicative behaviours that were highly influenced by low context GVT members. The direct communication styles of low context GVT members	E.g., *As for the communication style, I remain the same [direct] style… I am a direct person… throughout working with this company, as I mostly*

		influences high context GVT member to change their style to fit in with the conversation.	*communicate with the Germans, and I realize that the Germans, during the first meeting, they would be very direct and task-oriented*
Expressiveness	High-context communication style shifted from ambiguous and long-winded phrases to concise statements.	Describing how explicit communication styles of low context encourage high context GVT members to communicate in more previse manner and promoting transparency. High-context GVT members stated that low-context GVT members' openness and friendliness had influenced them to adjust their way of expressing their intentions and be more explicit.	E.g., *Being frank is important as well if you want to give feedback to your teammates…But the way you deliver the message is very important. You must be polite...*

Time urgency	High-context communication style shifted from laid-back attitude on time to time-consciousness and meeting datelines.	Describing how low context GVT members time urgency regarding works affects high context GVT member communications styles when communicating about work related topics. High context GVT members strategize their work routines and meetings so that they could stay in regular contact with low-context team members.	E.g., *Update after a conference call with a team from other regions … it is straight forward [communication]…this is because we will include our manager and top management in the progress report, that is why the communication should be business-oriented*
Agenda oriented communication	High-context communication style shifted from relationship oriented to task-oriented.	Describing how low context GVT members concern on the importance of agenda influences the way high context interact with other GVT members. High-context	E.g., *[If we have a discussion] with the Europeans, we will greet [each other] and get straight to the point. We will discuss: 1) the main*

306

| | | | | team members tend to follow the lead of low-context members and focus on work-related issues in their communication. | *issue, 2) problem statement, 3) what solution we have, and 4) what improvement we can achieve. If there is some concern or issue to raise, I will point out the issue without any delay…* |

Codebook 3: Cultural reason for Cross-cultural code switching.

Code	Definition	Sub-code	Purpose/Meaning of code	Verbatim examples
Accommodating different communication platforms	High-context GVT members adjusted their communicative behaviour according to the communication platform.		Depicting the purpose of high context GVT members adjusted their communicative behaviour to various communication platforms.	e.g., *My communication style usually changes depending on the audience whom I'm dealing with. My communication style is more formal during e-mail with the US and Israeli counterparts… For example, I had to discuss an issue with a colleague in the US*

| Accommodating different communication purposes | High-context GVT members modified their communication style to accommodate the particular purpose of the knowledge-sharing activity—whether decision making, job rotation, progress updates, or problem-solving. | Depicting the purpose of high context GVT members modified their communication styles to accommodate different knowledge sharing activities. | *who has faced a similar issue with the previous control head. His response to my lengthy e-mail was just one or two sentences. After a few e-mails back and forth, I decided to split my questions into a few e-mails and make them short for him to reply to all my questions properly.* e.g.; *When [working] with the UK or US team, they are very direct. [W]hen they [say] they don't like [something], they say it on the dot. When they [are] not satisf[ied], they say it immediately…Sometimes the language they use [is] harsh, especially when there* |

| Overcoming language constraints and avoiding miscommunication | High-context GVT members switch their communication styles to overcome language constraints and avoid misunderstanding. | Depicting the purpose of high context GVT members adjusted their communicative behaviours to address language constraints and avoid misunderstanding. | *is a mistake or anything…So when we [work] with the UK people, we have to really go straight to the point and they really know what they want…If they don't agree with our proposal during the knowledge-sharing session, they will straight away highlight [that]…* e.g.; *"Malaysians always use flowery words, but for the US team, it is better to talk straightforwardly because if we don't talk straightforwardly, they might understand differently".* |