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INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF PERSONALITY FACTORS ON PERCEIVED COMMUNICATION MOBILITY OF NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING THAI PROFESSIONALS IN INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES

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Abstract

Communication mobility has been suggested as an element of the complex construct of professional communicative competence, with a shared core of English in the oral mode, for professional international communication. This study aims (1) to investigate the possible correlation between the perceived level of communication mobility, and the influence of the personality factors of non-native English speaking Thai professionals in international companies, and (2) to identify the conditions in which this desirable quality may be developed. The researchers are interested in gauging the level of communication mobility, as well as looking for the possible relationships between its development and the personality factors of these professionals, such as age, work experience, and the frequency of English language use in their daily lives and in the workplace. The responses to the specifically designed questionnaire were obtained from 54 Thai professionals working in international companies. The findings revealed that the participants were effective users of communication mobility, and only the frequency of English language use in their workplaces can explain the variance of their perceived communication mobility.

Keywords: communicative competence, communication mobility, personality factors, Thai professionals, non-native English speakers

Introduction

A number of factors, including increased globalization, information overload, the ease with which communication technologies can be used, and the growth of international relations have resulted in the existence of a global community. This means that more companies and countries, as well as individual professionals, need to collaborate internationally on a wider scale. For these reasons, successful access to a shared language faculty, in this case, Business English, is of major importance. According to Kankaanranta (2010), this professional domain of language users strives for more efficient use of resources such as time and money, and overall win-win scenarios among business partners.

In a pragmatic sense, there are specific requirements for communicative competence, which are dictated by the specific context of intercultural professional communication. Compared to an interpersonal mono-cultural context, the chances of misunderstandings in such a context increase, as cross-cultural discourse elements do not always meet the expectations of the speakers. The professional sphere gives rise to even greater complexity, as it adds additional contextual dimensions including linguistic and non-linguistic characteristics (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Here, mistakes in communication are not only embarrassing, but also seemingly unacceptable, as they can cause professional problems, as well as having possible financial consequences. This could allow communicative mastery to become a specific professional strategic resource.

According to a large number of studies conducted in Thailand, these problems seem unavoidable when Thais as non-native English speakers have to communicate in the English language in a variety of professional contexts. The related research was conducted in an unspecified professional context (Nimnuch, 2011) as well as in the areas where successful communication is crucial, such as

international air service (Anantawan, 2010; Chenaksana, 2005; Krisananon, 1999; Tangniam, 2006); foreign relations (Lumchan, 2004); engineering (Bhundhuchareon, 2002; Sintipong, 2008) and others. Although there is one positive study of the Thai tourist industry, regarding the high competence levels in speaking and listening of the employees engaged in the industry (Pasitwilathum, 2005), it is outnumbered by studies which claim the opposite result (Charunsri, 2011; Samakkhetgarn, 2008; Yhouyhen, 2008). Moreover, a number of Thailand-based studies suggest a greater need for oral communication (Charunsri, 2011; Haekawee, 2010; Pingyoad, 2005; Sopon, 2001; Yudthana, 2000).

With that in mind, the present study focuses on the oral mode of international professional communication. The word *professional* is employed instead of *business* communication, as the area of non-personal international encounters nowadays has both commercial and non-commercial aspects. Additionally, the predominant mode of international professional communication is either oral (Kankaanranta, 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2007; Wozniak, 2010) or multimodal, which presupposes an interplay between writing and speaking (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Raimaturapong, 2006).

In the particular context of international professional communication, professional communicative competence is seen as a complex construct, in which the shared core of the English language is inseparable from a wider range of other skills and abilities. For the purposes of this study, we have adopted an understanding of communication as an interactive social activity (Harris, 1987) and a communicative situation as the specific time, place, activity and people involved in a dialogue, which makes it not only unique (Harris, 1987), but also dynamic (Celce-Murcia, 2007). For the same reason, we have suggested that the research done on communicative competence may be, in the most general terms, grouped into four sections: the structural components of communicative competence; the individual factors influencing the personalized character of communicative performance, the nature of the communication context, and communication mobility.

Literature Review

Structural components of communicative competence

The nature of communicative language ability (CLA) involves not only knowledge or competence in the language concerned, but also the capacity to implement this competence (Widdowson, 1983). Bachman (1990), and later Bachman and Palmer (2010) suggested that CLA consisted of three components: language competence, strategic competence, and the psychophysiological mechanisms involved in the actual execution of language. Douglas (2000) modified Bachman's model for language for specific purposes by adding the notion of background knowledge. Furthermore, the conceptual framework for professional communicative competence has been defined to specify the expected outcome in the workplace for experimental sciences. Ezeiza (2009) developed the general configuration of the domain-specific communicative framework, consisting of ten variables: communication context, communication aim, discourse subject, focus, communication mode, audience, media and support, process and operations involved, communicative language activities, and text types. The major components of this framework for domain-specific communication include personal and social skills, instrumental skills, functional skills, special discourse-writing knowledge, knowledge of the criteria behind academic and professional styles, and specific lexical-semantic knowledge. The present study therefore builds on Ezeiza's (2009) framework elements, specifically oral communication and background professional knowledge gained via work experience.

Individual factors influencing the personalized character of communicative performance

A host of psychophysiological and experiential personality factors have a tendency to affect communication, including general personality factors (Eysenck et al., 1985); the desire for control (Skinner, 1996); the willingness to communicate (McCroskey, 1970); intercultural communication apprehension (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997); interethnic communication apprehension (ibid.); trait

emotional intelligence (Petrides, Furnham & Mavroveli, 2007); and procrastination, fear of evaluation, fear of errors, perfectionism (Gregersen & Horwiz, 2002). There are also a number of socio-biographical factors, (Dewaele et al., 2008) such as the effectiveness of their skills, their attitudes, and personality traits, which all play a vital role in a successful interaction, particularly in terms of cross-cultural communication (Zakaria, 2000). Onwuegbuzie, Daley and Bailey (1999) maintained that socio-biographical factors (i.e. age, academic achievement, prior history of visiting foreign countries, prior high school experience, experiences with a foreign language, perceived scholastic competence, and perceived self-worth) directly affect an individual's foreign language anxiety in an academic setting, which undeniably influences their communicative competence. In the present study, the personality factors in terms of socio-biographical variables include age, work experience, frequency of English language use in daily life, and especially the workplace, which is most closely related to professional context.

The nature of the communication context

The communication context is currently widely considered to be a multimodal interactional communication practice (Young, 2010), where the top-down communicative intent and sociocultural knowledge intersect with lexical and grammatical resources to express messages and attitudes, and to create coherent texts (Celce-Murcia, 2007). Moreover, the analysis of the major models of sentence production in a second language (Marina, 2011) also supported the idea that both linguistic factors (e.g. interplay between or inside the languages, linguistic distance, and proficiency) and non-language factors (e.g. behavioral task demands, age, the access to procedural memory) should be also taken into consideration. This is due to resource availability requirements, which may influence the process of speech production. Both approaches suggest the multimodality of the resources used by the participants in situations which required face-to-face oral communication. Young (2008, 2009) grouped them in the following categories: identity, verbal, and interactional

resources. In the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) model, Guduknyst (1993, 1995, 2002) established a causal relationship between the management of uncertainty and anxiety, and effective communication. Among other components in this model, he also listed situational processes, which refer to the variables involved in a particular interaction.

A further analysis of the qualitative research on the needs of professionals in the field of oral international communication reveals a great number of other cited skills, such as interactional skills, rapport building, and the ability to ask for and provide clarifications (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002); accuracy, directness, clarity, making the recipient feel good (Kankaanranta, 2010); adjustment to the decisive role of corporate culture (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002); immediacy in high-speed discussions and the ability to explain complex decisions made in the course of the discussions (Rogerson-Revell, 2007); and adaptability and flexibility (Raina & Pande, 2012), while others call for abilities such as coping with ambiguity, time pressure, and stress in real-life situations (Kaminskiene & Januilene, 2006).

According to the three-dimensional, intercultural model of communicative competence established by Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman (1978), the ability to deal with psychological stresses, and qualities such as being open-minded and patient, are possibly inherent. However, an ability to establish and maintain relationships, such as language skills, an interest in learning, being easy to talk to or humble and respectful, and the ability to deal with different communication styles by having a flexible communication style can be partially learned. Lingard and Espin (2004) maintained that communication skills can be taught and retained through teaching and practice, although personality factors (i.e. gender, age, language and attitude) directly affect performance levels.

Communication mobility

In the vast context of international professional communication, which includes the physical, spatial, temporal, historical, social, interactional, institutional, and political frames of

practice (Young, 2010), all three areas (communicative competence, personality factors and the nature of the communication context) as discussed in the previous sections, come together in a complex interplay. Any one of these areas can be a possible source of a communication breakdown, which may create a problematic situation in need of resolution (Marina & Smirnova, 2013).

The demands of such a case may yet point at the need of some additional qualities to manage the three areas which employ the available resources for speech production (Marina, 2011). Young (2008, 2009) suggested the existence of the multimodality of identity, verbal, and interactional resources which can be employed in a face-to-face, oral communication situations. Marina (2011) observed that apart from linguistic factors (language proficiency, interplay between or inside languages, and linguistic distance), both external and internal non-linguistic factors (behavioral task demands, age, and the efficiency of procedural memory), influenced the speech production process. The success of a 'here and now' professional communicative event may depend on those factors to a great degree.

Some researchers have outlined the necessary conditions for developing such adaptive communicative competence in different professional education and training environments (Novolodskaya, 2005) and some didactic formulas and strategies to develop communicative competence in language learners have been suggested. Based on the suggestion of Tareva (2007), Smirnova (2013) has created the notion of *communication mobility* in foreign language oral communication for students majoring in Economics. Later, the concept was included in the wider context of international research in English for occupational purposes and problem-based methodology (Marina & Smirnova, 2013). *Mobility* is a new concept, which has been widely used, for some time, in a number of scientific areas including psychology, education, and economics, as well as some professional areas. However, mobility as an education term in the area of communication has not been investigated yet, and has been introduced very recently by the Russian researchers in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Communication mobility refers to the ability to solve communicative problems in different communicative encounters through the use of particular strategies and tactics (see Table 1) (Marina & Smirnova, 2013). In her initial research, Smirnova (2013) stated that a possible positive correlation existed between the increased level of communication mobility among Economics students, their ability to identify the uncertainty in the context of intercultural dialogue, and the ability to find ways to successfully overcome it. Furthermore, Marina and Smirnova (2013) outlined seven strategies in more detail, which in their opinion, could equip non-native English speakers with useful tools – apart from their English language proficiency and domain-specific knowledge – for managing intercultural communication in a more efficient way.

Table 1: Communication mobility: Strategies and tactics

	Strategies		Tactics
1.	Diagnostic: Identifying and assessing a communicative situation	1.1	An ability to understand if he or she has a problem in communicating with a person or people in a particular workplace situations
		1.2	understand what the problem is about (the participants, location, time, changes in circumstances etc.)
		1.3	understand if it is easy or difficult to solve the problem
		1.4	understand the nature of the problem (e.g. professional, cross-cultural, language knowledge etc.)
		1.5	predict how the situation will develop.
		1.6	react quickly to solve a problem

Table 1: Communication mobility: Strategies and tactics (continued)

	Strategies		Tactics
2.	Schema search: Reactivating communication experience (professional, interpersonal, intercultural) in a new environment	2.1	An ability to compare new communication situations with those that have been experienced previously
		2.2	use previously successful communication problem strategies and solutions
		2.3	identify in which ways a new situation is different
		2.4	discard stereotypes, and habitual modes of communicative behavior
		2.5	overcome a state of uncertainty and frustration caused by an inability to solve communication problems by using familiar methods
		2.6	accept responsibility to apply new solutions to new communicative problems
		2.7	react quickly to solve a problem
3.	Observation strategy: Gaining problem solving experience from observing instances of problem solving in communicative situations	3.1	An ability to analyze how other people have solved similar problems
		3.2	think about other options they could use to solve their communication problems
		3.3	evaluate how my own options differ from the observed means of solving the problem
		3.4	identify the best option to solve the observed problem
		3.5	analyze something quickly during the observation

Table 1: Communication mobility: Strategies and tactics (continued)

	Strategies		Tactics
4.	Individual active strategy: Searching for a solution to a problem by obtaining information from communication partners	4.1	An ability to identify the communication difficulties caused by a lack of knowledge
		4.2	look for the solution to a communication problem by asking a communication partner/s for immediate help
		4.3	seek assistance from a communication partner/s in finding the sources of missing information
		4.4	identify the steps required to solve this particular type of problem
5.	Interactive strategy: Finding a solution to a problem by working with communication partners	5.1	An ability to formulate possible options of overcoming communication difficulties
		5.2	collaboratively search for the solution to a communication problem: 5.2.1 in the external environment
			5.2.2 in the experiences of a partner or partners
			5.2.3 in the experiences of other people
		5.3	collaboratively design an algorithm to solve a problem
		5.4	react quickly and find a solution
6.	Implementation strategy: Implementing a devised solution	6.1	An ability to apply the found solution to solve a communicative problem.

Table 1: Communication mobility: Strategies and tactics (continued)

	Strategies		Tactics
		6.2	monitor and self-monitor the communication process with the aim of solving communication problems.
		6.3	reject ineffective solutions.
		6.4	return to one of the above mentioned strategies in case of ineffective communication.
		6.5	react quickly during a conversation.
7.	Analytical strategy: Analyzing the effectiveness of an applied solution	7.1	An ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented solution.
		7.2	compare several problem solving options with the goal of finding the optimal method to use in future.

Still, there has been no in-depth research conducted on any of the factors that may influence communication mobility development, as well as to further explore the issue of its teachability. It seems important to raise the question of how to help structure an educational approach which guarantees students or future workforce sufficient communication skills to respond successfully to the demands of their academic and professional lives.

The study

The purposes of this study are to identify the level of perceived communication mobility of non-native English speaking Thai professionals in internationally operating companies, and to examine the correlation between the development of communication mobility and the personality factors of the professionals involved, such as age,

work experience, and the frequency of English language use in daily lives and in their workplaces. The scope of the study was to conduct a survey of the perceived level of communication mobility among Thai professionals in international companies in the Bangkok metropolitan area. All of the participants have to use a combination of the Thai and English languages as a medium of communication in their respective workplaces. The research enquiries are designed as follows:

1. What is the perceived level of communication mobility among Thai professionals?

2. How does the perceived level of communication mobility correlate with the personality factors of Thai professionals, in terms of socio-biographical variables including age, work experiences, frequency of English language use in their daily lives and in their workplaces?

3. Which of personality factors may predict the perceived level of communication mobility of an individual professional?

Methodology

To process detailed information, and to gain a greater understanding of the development of communication mobility and its relationship with the variables, a quantitative method was employed.

Participants

A purposive sampling method was employed to select the participants in this study. The participants consisted of 54 Thai native speaking professionals from four international companies in the Bangkok metropolitan area. These international companies were Thai, Japanese, Korean, and German. Out of the overall number, 43 of the participants were female. The age group, work experience, and the frequency of their English language use in daily life and in the workplace are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants' information

Participants' information	Percent
Age group (years)	
21-28	31.50
29-36	33.30
37-44	16.70
45-52	9.30
53-60	9.30
Work experience (years)	
1- 8	50.00
9-16	20.40
17-24	16.70
25-32	11.10
33-40	1.80
Frequency of English language use in daily life	
Every day	27.80
Almost every day (5-6 days)	38.80
Once a week	13.00
Once a month	3.70
Never in a month	16.70
Frequency of English language use in the workplace	
Every day	33.30
Almost every day (5-6 days)	46.30
Once a week	9.20
Once a month	5.60
Never in a month	5.60

Research Instruments

To accomplish the objectives of this study, a questionnaire was built on the structural components of communicative competence, individual factors and the nature of the previously discussed communication context. The questionnaire included three

parts: (1) enquiry into sociobiographical data; (2) items based on the predominant mode of international professional oral communication and (3) the communication mobility strategies based on Marina and Smirnova's (2013) framework. It was designed in English, and then translated back into Thai. The questionnaire was used to collect information regarding the personal background of the respondents, such as gender, age, work experiences, the frequency of English language use in daily life and in their workplace, and self-perceived communication mobility. With regard to the perceived level of communication mobility of Thai professionals in internationally operating companies, seven strategies were defined: (1) diagnostic strategy, (2) schema search strategy, (3) observation strategy, (4) individual active strategy, (5) interactive strategy, (6) implementation strategy, and (7) analytical strategy (see Table. 1). A five-level Likert scale was employed with the following description: 5.00 - 4.21 as a very good user; 4.20 - 3.41 as a good user; 3.40 - 2.61 as a fair user; 2.60 - 1.81 as a poor user; and 1.80 - 1.00 as a very poor user.

Data collection procedure

The present study was conducted at the end of 2012. The questionnaire was administered to the four internationally operating companies. This procedure lasted two weeks.

Data analysis

In order to investigate the correlation between the perceived communication mobility and personality factors, the collected data was analyzed using SPSS as follows: (1) Descriptive statistics, such as percentage, standard deviation, and mean were employed to analyze the demographic information of the participants; (2) Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to establish significance of the correlation among variables in the study; (3) An independent t-test was used to identify the differences between the variables in the study; and (4) Multiple regression analysis was used to estimate which personality factors contributed to the development of communication mobility.

Results

The analysis of the perceived communication mobility and personality factors of non-native English speaking Thai professionals in international companies has been divided into three parts as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the perceived level of communication mobility among Thai professionals?

The mean and standard deviation of the perceived communication mobility of Thai professionals in international companies are 3.46 and .584 respectively, and on average, their level of perceived communication mobility is good (see Table 3). The analysis of each strategy showed that, according to mean and standard deviation of five strategies out of seven (Strategies 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6) the participants considered themselves to be using them at a good level. The levels of the perceived ability to use the analytical (Strategy 3) and observational (Strategy 7) strategies are at a fair level. The mean of the two strategies are 3.36 and 3.37, and the standard deviation is .649 and .695, respectively.

Table 3: Thai professionals' perceived communication mobility

Communication mobility of Thai professionals	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Level of Ability**
Strategy 1: Diagnostic strategy	3.50	.608	Good
Strategy 2: Schema search strategy	3.56	.645	Good
Strategy 3: Observation strategy	3.36	.649	Fair
Strategy 4: Individual active strategy	3.48	.729	Good
Strategy 5: Interactive strategy	3.48	.627	Good
Strategy 6: Implementation strategy	3.52	.626	Good
Strategy 7: Analytical strategy	3.37	.695	Fair
Communication mobility of Thai professionals	3.46	.584	Good

Research Question 2: How does the perceived level of communication mobility correlate with the personality factors of the participants in terms of socio-biographical variables?

The relationship between the characteristics of the participants, which include age, work experience, and the frequency of English language use in their daily lives and in their workplaces, and the communication mobility of Thai professionals in internationally operating companies were both examined. The findings showed that there was no relationship between age and perceived communication mobility in general, and furthermore that there was no relationship between age and the use of each strategy (see Table 4), and that there is no relationship between work experience and the perceived communication mobility in general, as well as no relationship between work experience and each of the strategies (see Table 5).

Table 4: The relationship between age and the perceived communication mobility of Thai professionals

Communication mobility of Thai professionals	Age (years)	Mean	S.D.	F-test	Sig.
Strategy 1:	21-28	3.48	.306	2.274	.075
Diagnostic strategy	29-36	3.70	.385		
	37-44	3.09	.986		
	45-52	3.27	.742		
	53-60	3.83	.799		
Strategy 2:	21-28	3.55	.439	1.785	.147
Schema search strategy	29-36	3.75	.443		
	37-44	3.08	.958		
	45-52	3.63	.896		
	53-60	3.69	.752		

Table 4: The relationship between age and the perceived communication mobility of Thai professionals (continued)

Communication mobility of Thai professionals	Age (years)	Mean	S.D.	F-test	Sig.
Strategy 3:	21-28	3.33	.547	1.571	.197
Observation strategy	29-36	3.41	.478		
	37-44	2.96	.932		
	45-52	3.56	.740		
	53-60	3.76	.699		
Strategy 4:	21-28	3.45	.522	2.330	.069
Individual active strategy	29-36	3.68	.389		
	37-44	2.89	1.045		
	45-52	3.64	1.071		
	53-60	3.80	.927		
Strategy 5:	21-28	3.47	.487	1.679	.170
Interactive strategy	29-36	3.57	.458		
	37-44	3.04	.889		
	45-52	3.67	.817		
	53-60	3.77	.703		
Strategy 6:	21-28	3.42	.484	1.103	.366
Implementation strategy	29-36	3.46	.512		
	37-44	2.96	.882		
	45-52	3.40	.693		
	53-60	3.40	.825		
Strategy 7:	21-28	3.38	.626	.659	.624
Analytical strategy	29-36	3.50	.618		
	37-44	3.06	.950		
	45-52	3.50	.707		
	53-60	3.30	.758		
Communication Mobility	21-28	3.45	.402	1.912	.123
of Thai professionals	29-36	3.60	.330		
	37-44	3.01	.917		
	45-52	3.53	.808		
	53-60	3.69	.685		

Table 5: The relationship between working experience and the perceived communication mobility of Thai professionals

Communication mobility of Thai professionals	Work experiences (years)	Mean	S.D.	F-test	Sig.
Strategy 1:	1-8	3.62	.397	.928	.455
Diagnostic strategy	9-16	3.42	.941		
	17-24	3.22	.656		
	25-32	3.47	.609		
	33-40	4.00	.000		
Strategy 2:	1-8	3.63	.479	.749	.563
Schema search strategy	9-16	3.39	.922		
	17-24	3.51	.725		
	25-32	3.48	.649		
	33-40	4.43	.000		
Strategy 3:	1-8	3.44	.478	1.009	.412
Observation strategy	9-16	3.13	.896		
	17-24	3.22	.717		
	25-32	3.43	.674		
	33-40	4.20	.000		
Strategy 4:	1-8	3.64	.459	1.195	.325
Individual active strategy	9-16	3.20	.894		
	17-24	3.22	1.037		
	25-32	3.57	.852		
	33-40	4.00	.000		
Strategy 5:	1-8	3.63	.427	1.305	.281
Interactive strategy	9-16	3.13	.888		
	17-24	3.41	.629		
	25-32	3.56	.779		
	33-40	3.33	.000		
Strategy 6:	1-8	3.54	.473	1.998	.109
Implementation strategy	9-16	3.00	.834		
	17-24	3.20	.509		
	25-32	3.47	.776		
	33-40	2.80	.000		

Table 5: The relationship between working experience and the perceived communication mobility of Thai professionals (continued)

Communication mobility of Thai professionals	**Work experiences (years)**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**F-test**	**Sig.**
Strategy 7:	1-8	3.57	.583	1.462	.228
Analytical strategy	9-16	3.18	.902		
	17-24	3.17	.500		
	25-32	3.25	.880		
	33-40	2.50	.000		
Communication mobility	1-8	3.59	.358	.999	.417
Of Thai professionals	9-16	3.22	.866		
	17-24	3.30	.659		
	25-32	3.48	.697		
	33-40	3.75	.000		

Overall, the frequency of English language use in daily life has significant correlation with the perceived communication mobility of the Thai professionals in the study ($F_{4,53}$= 4.429*, p=.004) (see Table 6). That is, the level of perceived communication mobility of the professionals who use English language every day ($\overline{X}$ = 3.78) is higher than that of the professionals who use the language only once a month ($\overline{X}$ = 2.47). When the analysis was performed on the frequency of English language use in daily life for each strategy, only the first four strategies correlated significantly with the frequency of the language use, as follows: diagnostic strategy ($F_{4,53}$= 4.429*, p=.004); schema search strategy ($F_{4,53}$= 5.542*, p=.001); observation strategy ($F_{4,53}$= 3.587*, p=.012); individual active strategy ($F_{4,53}$= 3.979*, p=.007).

Table 6: The relationship between frequency of English language use in daily life and the perceived communication mobility of Thai professionals

Communication mobility of Thai professionals	Frequency of English language use in daily life	Mean	S.D.	F-test	Sig.
Strategy 1: Diagnostic strategy	Every day	3.88	.369	5.850	**.001***
	Almost every day	3.56	.348		
	Once a week	3.43	.607		
	Once a month	2.50	.000		
	Never in a month	3.02	.918		
Strategy 2: Schema search strategy	Every day	3.97	.351	5.542	**.001***
	Almost every day	3.57	.409		
	Once a week	3.55	.712		
	Once a month	2.55	.101		
	Never in a month	3.08	.939		
Strategy 3: Observation strategy	Every day	3.76	.304	3.587	**.012***
	Almost every day	3.28	.592		
	Once a week	3.43	.647		
	Once a month	2.60	.000		
	Never in a month	2.98	.897		
Strategy 4: Individual active strategy	Every day	3.88	.319	3.979	**.007***
	Almost every day	3.43	.587		
	Once a week	3.60	.894		
	Once a month	2.20	.000		
	Never in a month	3.13	1.01		
Strategy 5: Interactive strategy	Every day	3.69	.398	2.381	.064
	Almost every day	3.48	.547		
	Once a week	3.67	.616		
	Once a month	2.58	.118		
	Never in a month	3.17	.932		
Strategy 6: Implementation strategy	Every day	3.53	.412	1.977	.113
	Almost every day	3.43	.570		
	Once a week	3.29	.527		
	Once a month	2.40	.000		
	Never in a month	3.13	.959		

Table 6: The relationship between frequency of English language use in daily life and the perceived communication mobility of Thai professionals (continued)

Communication mobility of Thai professionals	**Frequency of English language use in daily life**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**F-test**	**Sig.**
Strategy 7: Analytical strategy	Every day	3.67	.495	1.705	.164
	Almost every day	3.45	.650		
	Once a week	3.36	.627		
	Once a month	2.50	.000		
	Never in a month	3.06	1.014		
Communication mobility of Thai professionals	Every day	3.78	.239	4.429	**.004***
	Almost every day	3.47	.423		
	Once a week	3.49	.617		
	Once a month	2.47	.000		
	Never in a month	3.08	.909		

The data reflected a significant correlation between frequency of English language use in the workplace and perceived communication mobility of the Thai professionals in general ($F_{4,53}$= 5.492*, p=.001). Moreover, the frequency of English language use in the workplace has significant correlation with the first six strategies as follows: diagnostic strategy ($F_{4,53}$= 4.520*, p=.003); schema search strategy ($F_{4,53}$= 7.017*, p=.001); observation strategy ($F_{4,53}$= 5.043*, p=.002); individual active strategy ($F_{4,53}$= 4.216*, p=.005); interactive strategy ($F_{4,53}$= 3.724*, p=.010; implementation strategy ($F_{4,53}$= 3.487*, p=.014).

Table 7: The relationship between frequency of English language use in the workplace and perceived communication mobility among Thai professionals

Communication mobility of Thai professionals	Frequency of English language use in workplace	Mean	S.D.	F-test	Sig.
Strategy 1: Diagnostic strategy	Every day	3.79	.359	4.520	.003*
	Almost every day	3.49	.488		
	Once a week	3.47	.617		
	Once a month	2.83	.577		
	Never in a month	2.61	1.456		
Strategy 2: Schema search strategy	Every day	3.88	.380	7.017	.000*
	Almost every day	3.55	.465		
	Once a week	3.63	.818		
	Once a month	2.57	.143		
	Never in a month	2.53	1.350		
Strategy 3: Observation strategy	Every day	3.72	.329	5.043	.002*
	Almost every day	3.24	.580		
	Once a week	3.48	.782		
	Once a month	2.93	.577		
	Never in a month	2.33	1.172		
Strategy 4: Individual active strategy	Every day	3.80	.343	4.216	.005*
	Almost every day	3.46	.652		
	Once a week	3.56	.953		
	Once a month	2.80	1.039		
	Never in a month	2.33	1.222		
Strategy 5: Interactive strategy	Every day	3.66	.359	3.724	.010*
	Almost every day	3.49	.566		
	Once a week	3.67	.656		
	Once a month	3.06	.822		
	Never in a month	2.39	1.229		
Strategy 6: Implementation strategy	Every day	3.56	.448	3.487	.014*
	Almost every day	3.34	.541		
	Once a week	3.56	.518		
	Once a month	2.93	.924		
	Never in a month	2.33	1.222		

Table 7: The relationship between frequency of English language use in the workplace and perceive communication mobility among Thai professionals (continued)

Communication mobility of Thai professionals	Frequency of English language use in workplace	Mean	S.D.	F-test	Sig.
Strategy 7: Analytical strategy	Every day	3.56	.539	1.351	.265
	Almost every day	3.38	.681		
	Once a week	3.30	.447		
	Once a month	3.00	.866		
	Never in a month	2.67	1.53		
Communication mobility of Thai professionals	Every day	3.73	.241	5.492	.001*
	Almost every day	3.44	.481		
	Once a week	3.55	.684		
	Once a month	2.85	.658		
	Never in a month	2.44	1.271		

Research Question 3: Which of personality factors may predict the perceived level of communication mobility of an individual professional?

The characteristics of the participants which included age, work experience, and frequency of English language use in daily life, and in the workplace, were analyzed in order to see whether or not any of them could predict the level of perceived communication mobility among Thai professionals.

Table 8: Analysis of variance between the characteristics of Thai professionals and their perceived communication mobility

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	5	6.105	1.221	4.889	.001*
Residual	48	11.989	.250		
Total	53	18.094			

The findings in Table 8 show significant correlation between the characteristics and perceived communication mobility

($F_{(5,53)}$=4.889*). Thus, it means that the characteristics of the Thai professionals as a whole can explain the variance between the characteristics of Thai professionals and their perceived communication mobility.

Table 9: Regression analysis and Standardized Regression Coefficients of the characteristics of the Thai professionals and their perceived communication mobility

Characteristics of Thai professionals	**Communication mobility**			
	b	**β**	**t-test**	**Sig.**
(Constant)	3.415		**8.553***	.000
Age	.056	.121	.749	.457
Work experiences	-.050	-.097	-.599	.552
Frequency of English language use in daily life	-.070	-.167	-1.049	.300
Frequency of English language use in workplace	-.185	-.343	**-2.097***	.041
R = .581				
R^2= .337				
$R_{adjusted}$ = .268				

** statistically significant at .05 level*

According to Table 9, the frequency of English language use in the workplace is positively correlated with perceived communication mobility (R = .581), with a multiple correlation of .581. As a result, only the frequency of English language use in the workplace can explain the variance of communication mobility among Thai professionals in international companies by 33.70%

To summarize, only one variable of the analyzed characteristics, which is frequency of English language use in the workplace, was able to predict the perceived communication mobility of Thai professionals in international companies.

Discussion and Conclusion

In order to answer the research questions, the findings of this study have been divided into three parts, as follows:

The perceived level of communication mobility of Thai professionals

On average, Thai professionals in international companies perceived their level of communication mobility at a good level, even if the average 'good' level demonstrated by the participants (3.46) was closer to the lower end of the band assigned to a 'good' user (4.20 - 3.41) (see Table 4). It is worth noting that out of the seven strategies outlined in this research, the most developed strategies are those that do not require any interactive and collaborative problem-solving actions, such as schema search (Strategy 2) and implementation (Strategy 6) as reported in Table 10. The two strategies presuppose an analysis of one's own experience for a solution to the situational communicative problem, and the consecutive application.

Additionally, the data for the strategies that require either individual action in the form of searching for help, or information from other sources, include observation (Strategy 3), individual active (Strategy 4) and interactive (Strategy 5), as well as the analytical (Strategy 7) strategies show the lower level of communication mobility development. In addition, observation (Strategy 3) and analytical (Strategy 7) strategies are the weakest at the fair level.

Table 10: Overall view of the research results

	Variables	**Communication Mobility Strategies** (Mean max at 5.00)**							
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Overall
		good (3.50)	good (3.56)	fair (3.36)	good (3.48)	good (3.48)	good (3.52)	fair (3.37)	good (3.46)
1.	Age	*-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.	Work experience	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Frequency of EL use in daily life	*+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
4.	Frequency of EL use in workplace	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	**+**

* The "**+**" sign indicates a found positive correlation of the variable with the perceived communication mobility, and the "**-**"sign indicates a found negative correlation of the variable with the perceived communication mobility.

** (1) Strategy 1: Diagnostic strategy; (2) Strategy 2: Schema search strategy; (3) Strategy 3: Observation strategy; (4) Strategy 4: Individual active strategy; (5) Strategy 5: Interactive strategy; (6) Strategy 6: Implementation strategy; and (7) Strategy 7: Analytical strategy

One may argue that due to the self-report mode of the research, the data may not reflect the actual level of communication mobility, which is still to be measured. However, even a positive perception of oneself as being communicatively mobile may affect an individual's actual communicative performance as maintained by Onwuegbuzie, et al. (1999). Additionally, McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) stated that self-reporting is an approach to measuring communication competence, which is very useful in assessing how competent a person thinks they are, as opposed to how competent they actually are. More importantly, the perception of their proficiency will reveal the causes, or the outcomes of such perceptions.

The correlation between the perceived level of communication mobility and the personality factors of the professionals

Communication mobility was defined initially as an individual personality factor in which all of the variables pertaining to the personal and socio-biographical characteristics of the subjects may explain the variance between their perceived communication mobility and their actual communication mobility. However, a surprising finding was the fact that no correlation was found between age, work experience, and communication mobility either in general or for each strategy. More interestingly, the frequency of English language use in the workplace was found to correlate with communication mobility in general, and most individual strategies (1-6).

A number of previous studies (Dewaele et al., 2008; Onwuegbuzi et al., 1999; Zakaria, 2000) maintained that psychophysiological and experiential personality factors – skills,

attitudes, traits, age, academic achievement, prior history of visiting foreign countries, prior high school experience, experiences with a foreign language, perceived scholastic competence, and perceived self-worth – tended to affect communication. This study has found that the frequency of English language use in daily life, and in the workplace correlated with communication mobility in general, and some individual strategies. Specifically, in this study, only the frequency of English language use in the workplace affected the development of communication mobility. The findings are consistent with Ezeiza's (2009) framework elements, which established that specific communicative competence can be developed in a professional context.

The personality factors predicting the perceived level of communication mobility

The regression analysis and standardized regression coefficients reflected the prospective association between the variables. It showed that only one variable, the frequency of English language use in the workplace, may predict the perceived communication mobility level of Thai professionals in international companies. The fact may be due to the nature of the professional context of communication itself, which is characterized by the heightened problematicity (Marina & Smirnova, 2012; Smirnova, 2013), forcing participants of a communicative event into effective utilization of their linguistic and non-linguistic resources. Additionally, this may suggest that the nature of the communicative context rather than the individual characteristics shape the self-perception of communication mobility competence. The more often the English language is used in the workplace, the more possibility there is for the first six strategies to develop.

Thus, it may lead to the conclusion that communication mobility is a *situational* competence, which exists and can be taught only in a situational context. It should be noted that, according to the findings, the development of the analytical level (Strategy 7) did

not correlate with the frequency of language use in the workplace, or in communicative context encounters.

Teaching Implications

According to Lingard and Espin (2004), communication skills can be taught and retained through teaching and practice, although personality factors can directly affect a performance. The findings of the research may implicate some suggestions for teaching.

First, communication mobility can be developed in an individual, independent of their age or work experience. Second, it means that these strategies can be taught in a specifically designed context, which emulates certain key features of the workplace communication environment. Third, it also hints at the non-transferability of general English learning context, and uses for communication mobility strategy development to satisfy the requirements of the workplace. Thus, there may be a need for specific courses in the framework of English Language for Business Communication courses, which could be beneficial to students with different socio-biographical backgrounds. Finally, there are implications, which although may not be generalized due to the limited scope of the research, still point at the specific role of an instructional context for the development of analytical strategies. This strategy is cited as the most pivotal for successful problem-solving in communication (Walker & Leary, 2009). However, the findings revealed that this strategy may be difficult for professionals to develop naturally. Thus, special attention shall be paid to this particular strategy through instruction, especially in teaching English for occupational purposes or in company language training.

In addition, there are a great number of skills required for workplace communication teaching of which should be integrated into those courses. They may include interactional skills, rapport building, and the ability to ask for and provide clarifications (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002); accuracy, directness, clarity, making the recipient feel good (Kankaanranta, 2010); adjustment to the decisive role of corporate culture (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002); immediacy in

high-speed discussions and the ability to explain complex decisions made in the course of such discussions (Rogerson-Revell, 2007); adaptability and flexibility (Raina & Pande, 2012); and the ability to cope with ambiguity, time pressure, and stress in real-life situations (Kaminskiene & Januilene, 2006).

Understanding the nature of the specific competencies involved in professional communication in a foreign language can ensure success among interlocutors. The field itself may benefit from a more comprehensive investigation into the construct of communication mobility itself, which many deem to be more complex than it initially seems, as it is dependent only on the intercultural nature of the communicative situation. There is also a need to work out the assessment tools for gauging the level of communication mobility and teaching methods that can cross the boundaries of the problem based approach.

Limitations of the Study

The study is preliminary research on perceived communication mobility with a rather low number of participants (N = 55) and coming from a limited number of internationally operating Thai companies (N = 4). Consequently, the results and the interpretation are not meant to be conclusive and cannot be generalized to all Thai professionals in international companies. Due to the limited scope of variables defined for the research, a more detailed and comprehensive study may be needed to thoroughly investigate the interplay of factors (e.g. gender, language proficiency and educational background) involved in intercultural communication in a professional context.

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