

DEFINING THE COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE FROM
THE PERSPECTIVE OF THAI EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWERS

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by

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Defining the Components of Communication Competence from the Perspective of
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ABSTRACT

Although employment interviews have been a focus for research since the 1970s, most interview studies have focused on how the communication styles/behaviors affect interviewers' hiring decisions (Carl, 1980; Fletcher, 1990; Gallois, Callan, & Palmer, 1992; Gifford & Wilkinson, 1985; Hollandsworth, Kazelskis, Stevens, & Dressel, 1979). I have been unable to find any published research which directly questions what communication competence is from the interviewer's point of view. This dissertation examined the concept of communication competence in a Thai organization context. In this research, the 28 banking and financial recruiters from 14 organizations were interviewed using the narrative approach. This study shows that the concept was defined by five C: content, confidence, cooperation, control and character. In order to be competent communicators, one does not only need to have knowledge and skills, but the candidates should also hold a morality such as integrity. Overall, 4 components of communication competence (cognitive, behavioral, psychological, and morality) emerged which revealed slight differences as compared to other Western scholars, such as Cooley and Roach, Hymes, McCroskey, and Spitzberg.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, as part of a news broadcast, National Public Radio reported that a Russian applicant who possessed the advertised qualifications failed in seventeen job interviews because she did not know the appropriate behavior for American interviews (Hershkop, 2009). The following is part of the story that was broadcast which included an interview conducted with a university professor (Andrew Molinsky, Brandeis University International Business School) who has developed a training program targeted at assisting individuals such as the Russian job applicant:

Molinsky: They don't know the script; they don't know the rules.

Reporter: That's Andrew Molinsky, the professor who created the Brandeis program. Molinsky says even when workers are qualified, if they don't know what the norms are, they can end up looking socially incompetent, like a Russian engineer he worked with. She had 17 unsuccessful job interviews. Molinsky says she was extremely qualified.

Molinsky: But she kept failing on the interview and she would get feedback that she wasn't a great fit.

Reporter: The rules for appropriate behavior, says Molinsky, in a traditional Russian interview, are to be honest, modest and serious. The engineer told him smiling was inappropriate.

Molinsky: All this silly, friendly behavior, if you smile in my culture like this, you look like a fool.

Reporter: But in our culture, it gets you a job.

Molinsky: That's right, or at least it gives you a chance.

This story reveals that employing an inappropriate communication style can have a great impact on hiring decisions. What might be competent in some cultures might be considered incompetent in other cultures.

Communication competence has been studied by a variety of scholars for many decades. The concept of communication competence has been applied to different contexts, such as health, education, and organizations (Cegala, Coleman Thoesen, & Warisse Turner, 1998; Kerksen-Griep, 2001; McCroskey, 1982). However, in the area of organizational communication, few communication competence studies have investigated the employment interview situation. The selection interview is part of organizational anticipatory socialization, the first stage of the “organizational assimilation process” (Jablin, 2001). Jablin identified three stages to the assimilation process: “organizational entry”, “assimilation”, and “disengagement/exit.” Most organizational communication scholars research the middle stage, after the employees have already entered the company. There is a lack of research on the pre-entry stage.

Given that communication skill is listed as an important criterion used by interviewers making hiring decisions, followed by grade point average, work experience, and academic accomplishments (Tschirgi, 1973), studying communication is essential. Maes, Weldy, and Icenogle (1997) focused on verbal communication as an important criterion for interviewers to use in the employment decision-making process. Thus, it is very important to study communication competence in job interviews. Although various studies have attempted to investigate the impact of communication skills on employment decisions in order to show how

important it is to be a competent communicator during an interview, no research has directly studied how interviewers view communication competence. In particular, the concept of communication competence is absent from research concerning interviews in the Thai context.

Although no studies ask interviewers about their perceptions of communication competence, some studies conducted in a Western interview context have investigated how different communication styles/behaviors affect hiring decisions. In Western cultures, the communication research on job interviews has revealed that assertiveness is considered competent. Gallois, Callan, and Palmerz (1992) noted that “nonassertive candidates were judged to be lacking in confidence and incompetent in their social interactions” (p. 1056). Interviewers tend to favor and hire interviewees who exhibit an assertive communication style (Gallois et al., 1992). Assertiveness is one of the characteristics that Westerners value highly. It is a behavior that is associated with honesty and sincerity (Alberti & Emmons, 1982).

Although assertiveness is considered an indicator of competence in Western cultures, this communication style might not be valued in the Thai interview context because of cultural differences. Thailand is one of the Asian cultures, most of which share characteristics of femininity, collectivism, and high context communication style, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. These tend not to favor the notion of assertiveness. Moreover, Thailand is a Buddhist country. Thais hold values, such as harmony, modesty, and *kreng jai* (consideration), which can influence Thai people’s judgments of an assertive style.

Expressing these values during professional communication situations (such as a job interview) is mandatory. Thai people oftentimes are exposed to this cultural

expectation and etiquette as of university entrance. By that point in their lives, they will have learned how to communicate properly, such as being humble, speaking softly, and not arguing with an interviewer. During the job interview, interviewers can assess their applicants' working skills, family background, and social interaction ability. Although an individual could have a connection that might give an advantage to him/her, one still needs to get through the interview process.

However, in a world of globalization, Thai people might not be sure which behaviors should be used when communicating with their counterparts. What are the appropriate manners? Companies in Thailand not only work and communicate with people domestically, but also internationally. In days gone by, one could just follow the general cultural values of a particular country, and this would work most of the time. But today, it is not that easy because businesses not only deal with people in the country, but also people outside the country. Additionally, sub-cultures are constructed within any company, with these sub-cultures divided by many layers of complex cultural values. It can be difficult for an applicant to decide which communication style should be used— what kind of values one should represent when interviewing with a particular company. Two individuals who have met for the first time have to take a risk on guessing what communication style their counterpart prefers. Using an inappropriate communication style can lessen the potential that a job offer will be received.

Personnel interviewers might be looking for someone who can interact with international clients. A passive manner might not be preferred for those who are going to deal with international businesses. In dealing with foreigners, an interviewer might prefer or expect an assertive communication style.

According to Dawley and Wenrich (1976), disagreeing passively and actively is a verbally assertive behavior. Moreover, “asking good questions” is an important behavior that applicants should exhibit (Alberti & Emmons, 1982, p. 183). However, this idea might not fit with the Thai context where people value *hai kiat* (respectfulness). The characteristic of respectfulness seems to contrast with the idea of assertiveness. One can show respectfulness by not revealing their point of view if that viewpoint is opposite from their counterpart’s (Niratpattanasai, 2004). Niratpattanasai (2004) stated that Thai subordinates can show their respectfulness by not correcting their supervisor’s ideas, even when those ideas are wrong. Asking questions might be interpreted as implying criticism. Asking questions in the classroom can be interpreted as the equivalent of a teacher not explaining things clearly. Thus, asking questions in an interview might not be appropriate in the Thai interview context.

However, recent research on international companies in Thailand indicates that managers prefer assertive behavior. As found by Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999), Thai managers prefer that their subordinates talk to them directly. Moreover, Sriussadaporn’s (2006) research indicates that there are problems in communication between Thai subordinates and their expatriate bosses because of cultural differences in their communication styles. Thai employees in this study tended to communicate in an unassertive manner. They did not express how they truly felt. However, “expatriate bosses expect their staff to show respect for them by being punctual and being straightforward and honest” (p. 343). As a result, these international companies might search for assertive employees in order to solve this problem.

While contemporary Thai companies might prefer job applicants who exhibit assertive behavior, there might still be a bias in favor of those who have an Asian cultural background so that they can work well with their coworkers. In doing business in Asian countries, business people oftentimes put an emphasis on relationships rather than tasks (Hofstede, 1991). Thus, the companies might want a person who embodies Asian values, such as respectfulness. As a result, it is difficult to tell what kind of communication style employment interviewers will prefer.

Although communication competence has been studied for many years, the existing literature reveals that the interview context has not been directly investigated. Moreover, few communication competence studies have been conducted in a non-Western cultural business context. The concept of communication competence might be defined differently from a Thai perspective. As a result, the purpose of this research is to define what communication competence is from the perspective of contemporary Thai interviewers. In the following sections in this chapter, first, I will explain what motivates me to explore communication competence in employment interviews in Thailand. Next, I attempt to justify the need for research focusing on communication competence in the employment interview context. Then, I will explicate the importance of the current study. In the third section, specific terms used in this study are defined. Finally, this chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Statement of the Problem

In the world of globalization, one cannot be sure which behaviors one should use when communicating with counterparts. As our world is now changing and becoming smaller, people from different countries can easily influence one another. People communicate not only with members of their own cultural group, but also

people from different cultures. Asian people in this new generation might have learned about Western cultures through the media and overseas travel. As a result, it has become even harder for people in the same ethnic group to share the same culture. One cannot assume that a Thai person will have only the Thai culture as a reference point. As a product of the influence of the media and overseas education, this Thai person might exhibit a mixture of Thai and Western cultural values.

Normally, before an employment interview, a job applicant will (or at least should) research the employing company. That research might include seeking information from family members, friends, or even acquaintances who work for, or have worked for, the company. Although one can gain knowledge in this way, one cannot fully rely on that information or be assured that, if the advice received is followed, a job offer is guaranteed. Heterogeneous cultures exist even within a single company. As a result, this makes it difficult for all human beings to have a common system of communication and a language to acquire the traits of that culture. For example, in a Thai company, each employee brings different traditions from his/her home to the company. Employees bring the values that they share with their family or the dialogues that they have with their university colleagues. Although the employees might all be Thais, they have different ways of communicating and using language, making it hard for the various employees of an organization to act in accord with one cultural definition. There are various “mini” cultures within an organization. Although people have the shared concepts of language and traditions, they might communicate differently because of their individual cultural experiences.

I consider myself to be someone who has been influenced by the media and overseas education. Owing to such experiences and background, I have multiple

identities within me. Studying abroad in the US and Japan has influenced who I am now. I hold many different cultural values within me. As a result, my communication style has been influenced. I can be assertive or respectful based on the situation. The burning desire in doing this research was influenced by my sister when she applied for a job. My sister is not a typical Thai lady. She is confident and does not hesitate to speak what she thinks. After she graduated, she was looking for a job and went on some interviews. My mother and I were very excited and wanted her to succeed. My mother sought advice from a friend of hers who has worked in human resources as a personnel interviewer for more than thirty years. Her friend mentioned that a respectful communication style is very important in a Thai job interview. She prefers to hire individuals who exhibit this value. Before my sister went on any interviews, my mother reminded her of Thai traditional values—be humble and respectful and do not be overly confident. This advice was at odds with my sister's beliefs and personality—she has an independent and unique character. This situation made me wonder about how one should really interact with an employment interviewer whom one has just met. What is considered communication competence in contemporary Thai employment interview culture?

Although employment interviews have been a focus for research since the 1970s, most interview studies have focused on how the communication styles/behaviors affect interviewers' hiring decisions (Carl, 1980; Fletcher, 1990; Gallois et al., 1992; Gifford & Wilkinson, 1985; Hollandsworth, Kazelskis, Stevens, & Dressel, 1979). I have been unable to find any published research which directly questions what communication competence is from the interviewer's point of view. The answer to this question is crucial to efforts to educate today's job seekers.

Although a few studies have focused on organizational communication competence in Thailand, that work has not investigated the pre-entry stage of organizational functioning.

Purpose of the Study

To fill the knowledge gap created by this situation, this study attempts to explore the process of constructing the concept of communication competence. Specifically, I intend to investigate interviewers' perspectives on communication competence (RQ 1), find out how the interviewers evaluate their applicants (RQ 2), and search for the components of communication competence in order to create a communication competence instrument (RQ 3) for future study. The next section discusses the contributions of this study.

Significance of the Study

The current study will offer theoretical and practical implications for the study of communication competence. This research will contribute to our understanding of Thai professional communication in several ways.

First, this study will offer a well-defined concept of communication competence from a Thai perspective. This has theoretical implications for the concept of communication competence, in particular within the employment interview context. Communication competence has been defined by a variety of Western scholars in other contexts but little has been done pertaining to the context of employment interviews within an Asian culture. One result of this proposed research will be an enhanced understanding of communication competence from a Thai perspective.

Second, this research will reveal components of communication competence in the Thai business context. This study will not only offer benefits to organizational communication but also to organizational communication in a non-Western cultural context. As mentioned earlier, few communication studies have investigated communication competence in the pre-entry stage.

Third, this study will suggest/propose a communication competence instrument, which will benefit future research. Scholars can employ this instrument to explore the relationship between communication competence and other variables, such as job performance in Thailand. Moreover, researchers can use this instrument in measuring communication competence before and after employees enter a company.

Fourth, the proposed research will offer recommendations concerning communication competence that can be incorporated in Thai textbooks, raising awareness of the elements of communication competence relevant to the Thai employment situation. Thai students will become more competitive by learning communication competence in the workplace in the world of globalization.

Last, I expect that the results can be applied to practice in the employment interview context. This study will provide guidelines for better interview performance. On the other hand, interviewers can use the communication competence scale when evaluating and recruiting. Especially, in this economic crisis, companies have a vested interest in employing the most qualified people they can. The current study will benefit both interviewers and interviewees.

Definition of the Terms

Communication Competence/Communicative Competence

While the term “communication competence” is still debated, I chose to use definitions offered by Hymes (1979) and Spitzberg (1983). Hymes, a sociolinguist, was the pioneer who developed this concept, initially referred to as “communicative competence”. Although Hymes and Spitzberg are from different fields of study (the first a sociolinguist and the latter a communication scholar), they employed similar definitions of communication competence. Both defined communication competence as an ability that occurs when one uses appropriate behaviors in interacting with another in conversation. The concept of communication competence will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

Employment/Job Interview/Selection Interview

The employment interview is an occasion when interviewers or employers can gain information from applicants for a position. This process is one aspect of selecting suitable employees (Berk, 1990; Jackson, Hall, Rowe, & Daniels, 2009). An employment interview usually has two interview processes: the screening interview and the selection interview. According to Berk (1990), the screening interview is used for screening out unqualified applicants. In this first stage, the interview questions are general questions such as position and company. If the applicants pass this first step, they will be called for another interview, which is usually the selection interview. The selection interview is “the most in-depth interview” (Berk, 1990, p. 4). According to Deluca and Deluca (2004), the selection interview involves “talking to the manager to fill the position” which “is typically thought of as a job interview” (p. 120). For this

study, the terms “employment interview,” “job interview,” and “selection interview” will be used interchangeably.

Assertiveness

Assertiveness has been defined as “self- expressiveness, standing up for one’s rights or other more general interpersonal verbal responses to assertive situations” (Linehan & Egan, 1979, p. 245). Dawley and Wenrich (1976) suggested that “disagreeing passively and actively” is a verbal communication for training to be assertive (p. 57). Moreover, Alberti (1977) explained that assertiveness cannot be defined by only the behavior that the speaker uses. They explained that “a particular act may be at once assertive in behavior and intent (you wanted and did express your feelings, aggressive in effect (the other person could not handle your assertion), and non-assertive in social context (your subculture expects a powerful ‘put-down’ style)” (p. 354). Although these definitions are more than thirty years old, the basic understanding of what it means to be assertive and the behaviors involved in being assertive have changed very little over the years. According to Wanzer and McCroskey (1998), an assertive person is “someone willing to take a stand and use effective and appropriate communication to advocate or defend her or his position” (p. 44).

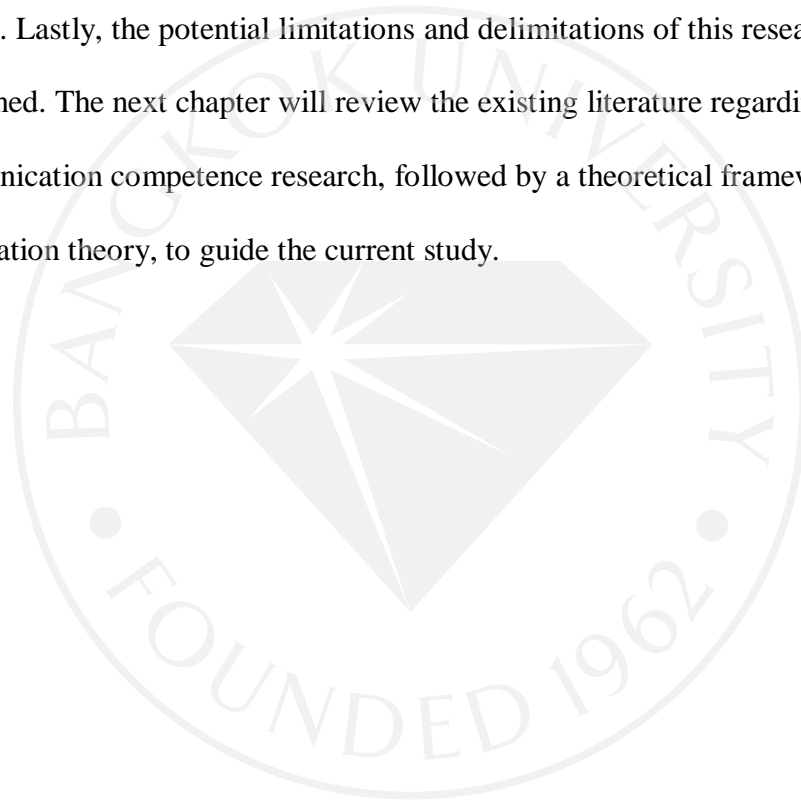
Limitations and Delimitations of this Study

This research will limit its scope of exploration to Thai interviewers’ perceptions of white collar applicants. This might not directly inform other groups of applicants. Although I will be able to interview professionals who are experienced in conducting employment interviews and gather information about their experiences, these cases might not be applicable to other employment situations. However, this

study will provide a deeper understanding of a particular group—Thai interviewers—to those who research on Thai culture.

Summary: Chapter One

This chapter identified the importance of studying communication competence and the need for research to focus specifically on the area of interviews. Specific terms, including communication competence and employment interview, were defined. Lastly, the potential limitations and delimitations of this research were mentioned. The next chapter will review the existing literature regarding communication competence research, followed by a theoretical framework, self-presentation theory, to guide the current study.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For decades, many studies have explored the topic of communication competence (Cegala, McGee Socha, & McNeilis, 1996; Cegala, McNeilis, & McGee Socha, 1995; Kerssen-Griep, 2001; McCroskey, 1982). Many of these studies are related to the context of health communication and instructional communication. However, a few studies have explored communication competence in the area of organizational communication, especially in a job interview situation. Few of these studies, however, explore communication competence in a non-Western cultural context. This literature review is divided into five sections: 1) the concept of communication competence in general, 2) communication competence concepts and components in organizational communication, 3) communication competence in Western and Asian contexts, 4) the communication competence scale, and 5) the theoretical framework.

2.1 Communication Competence

In this section, the concept of communication competence will be discussed from the point of view of various Western scholars. Communication competence will be explored from two different perspectives: cognitive and behavioral. Although treated as separate perspectives, some scholars (e.g., Cooley & Roach, 1984; Hymes, 1979; Spitzberg, 1983) have argued that both cognitive and behavioral views are needed to define communication competence.

Within the discipline of communication, there are a wide variety of definitions for communication competence, resulting in a “lack of definitional and theoretical consistency” (Wiemann & Backlund, 1980, p. 186). Communication competence or

communicative competence is usually defined based on one of two points of view: cognitive and behavioral. According to the cognitive perspective, competence is viewed as “a mental phenomenon distinct and separated from behavior, as characterized by linguistic distinction between competence and performance” (Wiemann & Backlund, 1980, p. 187). In the linguistics field, the concept of communication competence is separated from performance. There is “linguistic competence,” and then there is “linguistic performance” (Hymes, 2001, p. 54). According to Hymes, “Linguistic competence is understood as concerned with the tacit knowledge of language structure, that is, knowledge that is commonly not conscious or available for spontaneous report but necessary implicit in what the (ideal) of speaker-listener can say” (p. 54).

The idea of linguistic competence was developed by Chomsky (1965). He believed in the idea of “universal grammar.” He argued that there is a language device in the human brain which helps to produce language in grammatical structure (Chomsky, 1973). For Chomsky (1965), competence is “the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of his language” (p. 4). In Chomsky’s (1965) point of view, the speaker-hearer is ideal:

In a completely homogeneous speech community, [the speaker-hearer] who knows [that community’s] language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his [sic] knowledge of the language in actual performance [is considered to be competent]. (p. 3)

However, behaviorists view communication competence differently. As Wiemann and Backlund (1980) observed, “behaviorists use a wide range of terms to indicate possession, including knowledge, skill, ability, awareness, use, and performance” (p. 189). According to Larson, Backlund, Redmond and Barbour (1978), communication competence is “the ability to demonstrate knowledge of the communicative behavior socially appropriate in a given situation” (p. 24). Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) and Wiemann (1977) proposed a similar view of communication competence: the former identified competence as “the ability to adapt messages appropriately to the interaction context” (p. 63). The latter defined competence as the ability to choose “communicative behaviors” (p. 188). Both stress that good communicators are sensitive to the context or situation. However, Wiemann (1977) pointed out that “interpersonal goals” (p. 198) and the concerns of face between interactants influence perceptions of competence. Wiseman (2002) also agreed with this idea. He stated “competent communication consists of behaviors that are regarded as effective and appropriate” (p. 209).

Regardless of whether one adopts a cognitive or a behavioral point of view, most communication competence scholars place emphasis on goal orientation and effectiveness ideologies (Jablin & Sias, 2001). Parks (1985) acknowledged the importance of goal orientation and asserted that communication competence is “the degree to which individuals perceive they have satisfied their goals in a given situation without jeopardizing their ability or opportunity to pursue their other subjectively more important goals” (p. 175). Most scholars agree with this idea. O’Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann and Wiemann (1997) also stated that goal orientation is a part of communication competence. They defined communication competence as “the

ability of two or more people jointly to create and maintain a mutually satisfying relationship by constructing appropriate and effective messages” (p. 20). However, not every scholar agrees with the above idea. McCroskey (1982), who operates from a cognitive point of view, argued against this definition for two reasons. First, he disagreed with the idea of goal-oriented competence. He theorized that, even when one cannot accomplish the goal, one can still be competent. According to McCroskey (1982), “one may be effective without being competent and one may be competent without being effective” (p. 3). This means that the concept of communication competence does not consider the outcome.

Similar to the distinction made by Chomsky, McCroskey viewed competence and performance as two separate concepts. The fact that one can perform well does not imply that one has competence. McCroskey (1982) pointed out that some people possess knowledge competence in communication, but they cannot perform that knowledge. For instance, some individuals know languages they are not able to speak. Instead, he suggested a broader definition of communication competence as an “adequate ability to pass along or give information; the ability to make known by talking or writing” (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988, p. 109). In summary, communication competence is viewed by two contrasting ideas—behavioral and cognitive. The former considers the outcome, and the latter does not.

Although most scholars contend there are two sides to communication competence, Hymes (1979) and Spitzberg (1983) had a different view, arguing cognitive and behavioral components are interconnected. Hymes (1979), who is a sociolinguist, disagreed with McCroskey’s separation of knowledge from

performance. For Hymes (1979), competence should be defined in terms of “the abilities of individuals” (p. 41). Hymes (1972) explained:

I should take *competence* as the general term for the capability of a person...

Competence is dependent on both (tacit) *knowledge* and (ability for) *use*. ...

The specification of *ability for use* as part of competence allows for the role of noncognitive factors, such as motivation, as partly determining competence. In speaking of competence, it is especially important not to separate cognitive from affective and volitive factors.... (pp. 282-283)

Hymes argued that one has to have the ability to perform appropriately. In order for the person to perform well, one needs knowledge of appropriate behavior. A competent communicator needs to have both knowledge and skill. According to Cooley and Roach (1984), “Hymes’s formulation allowed for the inclusion of cognitive, social, and other non-cognitive factors as explicit, constitutive features of competence” (p. 18). Spitzberg (1983) also agreed with Hymes’ idea. Spitzberg argued that communication competence is the combination of skill, knowledge, and impression. He defined competence as “an impression resulting from behaviors of the relational interactants, the context within which [those behaviors] are enacted, and the characteristics of the individuals involved” (p. 326). His five assumptions within the definition of communication competence are: 1) “Competence is contextual” (p. 324). 2) “Competence is referenced by appropriateness and effectiveness” (p. 324). 3) “Competence is judged according to a continuum of effectiveness and appropriateness” (p. 325). 4) “Communication is functional” (p. 325). 5) “Competence is an interpersonal impression” (p. 326). He considered cognitive/knowledge and behavior/skill to be related.

Cooley and Roach (1984) also expressed a similar view. They defined communication competence as “the knowledge of appropriate communication patterns in a given situation and the ability to use the knowledge” (p. 25). There are five concepts in their definition: communication patterns (i.e., the entire range of communication behavior: language structure from below the sentence level to larger levels of discourse, turn-taking, and the like, and nonverbal behaviors), appropriate behaviors (i.e., cultural determination—each culture sets forth rules that determine which of the many possible communication patterns are acceptable and appropriate for any given situation), situational constraints (i.e., physical, psychological, and interactional features that make one event distinguishable from another and that, somewhat redundantly, render the event significant to the participants), and ability to use (i.e., those individual factors for which psychological constructs account, such as intelligence, motivation, personality, empathy, and the like that enable a member to process, retain, and use socio-cultural knowledge to produce appropriate communication behavior.

This viewpoint is appropriate for the job interview setting. One needs to have both behavioral and cognitive communication competence because of the goal orientations in organizational communication, especially in a job interview. A job interview context tends to require both cognitive and behavioral competence. Interviewees have to be aware of appropriate behaviors and also be able to carry out appropriate behaviors. Interviewers tend to look at the performance, which requires both cognitive and behavior competence. This is especially true of those candidates who apply for positions that require them to use their communication skills to interact with clients.

The concept of intercultural communication competence has been viewed by scholars as much the same as interpersonal communication competence. The ideas of appropriateness and effectiveness are typically mentioned. However, there is a greater focus on “contextual factors”. Intercultural communication competence has been defined as “the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants’ multiple identities in a specific environment” (Chen & Starosta, 2008, p. 219). According to Chen and Starosta, the competent communicator “must know not only how to interact effectively and appropriately with people and environment, but also how to fulfill their own communication goals by respecting and affirming the multilevel cultural identities of those with whom they interact” (p. 219). Intercultural communication competence studies agree that “competence is a social judgment, which requires an evaluation by one’s relational partners of one’s communication performance” (Koester, Wiseman & Sanders, 1993, p. 7). Wiseman’s (2002) ideas follow the arguments of Hymes. Wiseman (2002) stated that “ICC (*intercultural communication competence*) involves the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures” (p. 208).

2.2 The Components of Communication

A review of communication competence models reveals that there are more than just cognitive and behavioral dimensions to competence. Motivation has been considered a component of communication competence by some scholars, even though it is not mentioned in the definitions associated with the concept.

Behavioral Component. Behaviors or skills are considered part of communication competence, especially by those scholars who focus on interpersonal

communication situations (Rubin & Martin, 1994; Wiemann, 1977). Different behaviors are listed as composing the behavioral dimension. (See Table 2.1.)

Table 2.1: Behavioral Components of Communication Competence

Behaviors Component	Examples
Wiemann's (1977) model	
1) affiliation/support	"eye behavior", "the alternation and co-occurrence of specific speech choices which mark the status and affiliative relationship the interactants" and "head nods" (p. 198)
2) social relaxation	"general postural relaxation" (p. 198)
3) empathy	"verbal responses indicating understanding of and feeling for the other's situation"(p. 199)
4) behavioral flexibility	"verbal immediacy cues" (p. 199)
5) interaction management skills	"interruptions of the speaker are not permitted" (p. 199).

(Continued)

Table 2.1 (continued): Behavioral Components of Communication Competence

Rubin and Martin's (1994, p. 39) model	
1) self-disclosure	"I allow friends to see who I really am"
2) empathy	"I can put myself in others' shoes"
3) social relaxation	"I am comfortable in social situations"
4) assertiveness	"when I've been wronged, I confront the person who wronged me"
5) interaction management	"My conversations are characterized by smooth shifts from one topic to the next"
6) altercentrism	" I let others know that I understand what they say"
7) expressiveness	" My friends can tell when I'm happy or sad"
8) supportiveness	" I communicate with others as though they're equals"
9) immediacy	"My friends truly believe that I care about them"
10) environmental control	" I accomplish my communication goals"

Rubin and Martin (1994) offered components that are different from those identified by Wiemann (1977). They pointed, in particular, to the importance of self disclosure, assertiveness, expressiveness, and altercentrism. First, self disclosure was described by Rubin and Martin as the “ability to open up or reveal to others personality elements through communication” (p. 34). Assertiveness was defined by Rubin and Martin as “feeling with the other” (p. 34). Expressiveness was defined as “the ability to communicate feelings through nonverbal [and verbal] behaviors” (p. 36). Lastly, altercentrism was defined as an “interest in others, attentiveness to what they say and how they say it, perceptiveness not only of what is said but also what is not said, responsiveness to their thoughts, and adaptation during conversation” (p. 36). In other words, social relaxation, empathy and interaction management seem to be the behaviors that are agreed upon among scholars.

Cognitive Component. Cognitive development has been shown to have an effect on the effectiveness of communication. Studies reveal that people who are cognitively complex tend to be effective in communication (Hale, 1980; Hale & Delia, 1976). Hale and Delia (1976) viewed cognitive complexity as a function of the number of dimensions available to a person when forming an impression of another person or event. McCroskey (1982) also held a similar view on this. He stated that cognitive development involves “knowledge and understanding” (p. 5). He gave an example of a competent communicator as one who is capable of “analyzing an audience, determining an appropriate response to another’s interaction behavior, and selecting appropriate appeals. . .” (p. 5). This means that, in order to be competent, one should obtain some knowledge of how to display appropriate behaviors. There are various cognitive components (see Table 2.2) to communication competence.

Table 2.2: Cognitive Components of Communication Competence

Cognitive Component	Examples
Cegala's (1981, p. 114) model	
1) self-perceptiveness	"In my conversations I pay close attention to what others say and do and try to obtain as much information as I can"
2) perceptiveness of other's behaviors	"I am keenly aware of how others perceive me during my conversations"
3) attentiveness	"I listen carefully to others during a conversation"
Spitzberg and Hecht's (1984, p. 581) model	
1) the knowledge of others	"I knew the other person very well"
2) conversation	"the conversation was similar to other conversations I have had before"
3) topic	"I was unfamiliar with the topic of the conversation"

(Continued)

Table 2.2 (continued): Cognitive Components of Communication Competence

Cognitive Components	Examples
Duran and Spitzberg's (1995, p. 262) model	
1) anticipation of contextual variables that might potentially influence one's communication choices	
2) perception of the consequence of one's communication choices	
3) immediate reflection	
4) general reflection upon the choices one has made	

On the other hand, Cegala (1981) spoke of “interaction involvement.”

Interaction involvement is described as “the extent to which an individual partakes in a social environment” (p. 112). For Cegala, there are three sub-categories of interaction involvement: self-perceptiveness, perceptiveness of other's behaviors, and attentiveness. Duran and Spitzberg (1995) also agreed with this idea, although offering a slightly different perspective. They added “reflection” to their concept of the cognitive domain. Reflection is the “process of reflecting upon a performance with the objective to improve one's self presentation” (p. 270).

Duran and Spitzberg (1995) argued that “the cognitive dimension of competence is a set of mental processes that include several abilities: the ability to perceive situational variables that have the potential to influence one’s communication choices” (p. 261). They stated “cognitive communication competence should also be related to feelings of self-efficacy” (p. 263). Self-efficacy refers to “a knowledge construct with motivational consequences: the more an actor believes him- or herself capable (thus, knowledgeable) of performing adequately, the more motivated he or she is” (p. 263).

Overall, the cognitive components identified by these scholars are categorized according to broad contexts. In contrast, Spitzberg and Hecht (1984) identified more specific components, which were composed of three items: knowledge of others, knowledge of conversation, and knowledge of topic. However, they did not elaborate on specific areas, such as organizational communication, instructional communication, and health communication.

There is still a lack of research on communication competence in an organizational context, especially during a job interview. One significant exploration of this topic is *Developing a Model of Communication Competence for Organizations* by Wright (1991) who developed a cognitive component that was context-specific within organizational communication settings. His cognitive component is identified differently from that of other scholars (e.g., Rubin & Martin, 1994; Wiemann, 1997). While others consider interaction management to be part of the behavioral component, Wright (1991) considered interaction management to be part of the cognitive component. In his model, the cognitive component is composed of five categories: appropriateness, interaction management, perspective taking, response

repertoire, and language structure. Wright (1991) argued that one should obtain knowledge in each of these five categories in order to be competent. Summing it up, most scholars agree that there is cognitive component to communication competence.

Motivation Component. Not many scholars have identified motivation as a component of communication competence. Among those who have are McCroskey (1982), Payne (2005), Spitzberg and Hecht (1984), and Wright (1991). Spitzberg and Hecht (1984) viewed motivation as “a function of rewards and costs in a given conversational context with a specific other” (p. 576). On the other hand, McCroskey (1982) viewed it as “attitude and feelings of the learner about the knowledge and behaviors acquired in the [cognitive and behavioral] domains” (p. 6). He named this domain the affective domain. According to McCroskey (1982), communication competence involves the negative and positive attitudes of communicators. In Spitzberg and Hecht’s (1984) motivation component, there are three factors: “self-rewards (e.g., ‘I had expected the conversation to be enjoyable’), other-rewards (e.g., ‘I knew before the conversation that the other person would not be enjoyable to talk to’), and conversational rewards (e.g., ‘I had nothing to fear about the conversation’)” (p. 581). According to Wright (1991), the motivation components can be divided into two parts: intrinsic motivation (e.g., “motivated by a need to efficiently fulfill job duties”) and extrinsic motivation (e.g., “motivated by a desire to meet other’s expectations”) (p. 172). Wright (1991) argued that competent communicators were motivated by either internal or external factors. This idea might not fit with defining the components of communication competence from an interviewer’s point of view. Interviewers cannot know what internal or external motivations exist for each interviewee.

According to Light, Beukelman, and Reichle (2003), motivation is part of the psychosocial factor. They argued that the psychosocial factor affects how people attain argumentative and alternative communication competence (AAC). There are four subcomponents of the psychosocial factor : 1) motivation to communicate (i.e., “drive to communicate influenced by the belief that the goal [i.e., communication] is important and valued and that it can be attained), 2) attitude toward AAC (i.e., “ideas about AAC charged with emotion (positive or negative) which predispose use of AAC (or nonuse) in particular social situations”), 3) communicative confidence (i.e., “self-assurance based on the individual’s belief that he or she will communicate successfully in specific situations”), and 4) resilience (i.e., “capacity to prevent, minimize, or overcome the damaging effects of adversities; capacity to compensate for problems and recover from failures”) (p. 14).

Light et al. (2003) asserted that AAC was influenced by two categories of factors: intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors. There are two subcomponents of intrinsic factors: 1) “knowledge, judgment and skills” (i.e., linguistic, operational, social and strategic) and 2) “psychosocial factors.” For extrinsic factors, there are “communication demands” (i.e., social roles and interaction goals) and “environmental barriers and/or supports” (i.e., policy, practice, attitude, knowledge and skill) (p. 5).

As is clear, the components of communication competence vary from scholar to scholar. Overall, communication competence can be divided into three parts: behavior, cognition, and motivation. The concept of competence and the definition of each of the parts might be different from a Thai point of view. According to Cooley and Roach (1984), there is a need for communication competence research from a

cross cultural perspective. Most researchers and research concerning communication competence, except for Hymes, “have specified competence in terms of white, middle class, behaviors” (p. 14).

2.2.1 Organizational Communication Competence and Interview

The components of organizational communication competence were viewed differently. Some scholars tend to agree with breaking down communication competence into two categories (cognitive and behavioral), but some identify three components. Payne’s (2005) scale, for example, has three components: motivation, knowledge, and skills. Each component has three sub-components: empathy, adaptability, and interaction management.

Specific to Thai organizations, Srissadaporn-Charoengam and Jablin (1999) argued that there are two components of organizational communication competence: “strategic communication knowledge and tactical communication skill. The authors developed a survey based on these two components. In Srissadaporn-Charoengam and Jablin’s (1999) model, their cognitive components are related to Thai cultural characteristics which consist of low individualism and high emotional control (e.g., social harmony, deference, conflict avoidance, control over expression, experience of emotion), low masculinity (e.g., non-assertive, noncompetitive), high power distance (e.g., deference to rank, respect for authority, follow protocol), high uncertainty avoidance, tactfulness, politeness, correct form of address, and level of intimacy. For the cognitive component, there are two main subfactors: empathy (e.g., listen to one’s subordinates, supervisors, and coworkers for everything and respond without interrupting or giving criticism) and cognitive complexity (e.g., can discuss or argue about an issue on which one has knowledge).

The literature review reveals that some studies of communication competence have been conducted in organizational settings. Most of these studies have investigated the competence of individuals already employed by a company (Matveev, 2004; Matveev & Nelson, 2004; Payne, 2005; Snavely & Walters, 1983; Srissadaporn-Charoengam & Jablin, 1999). For instance, in *Differences in Communication Competence among Administrator Social Styles*, Snavely and Walters (1983) studied a public school organization. They distributed Wiemann's communication competence questionnaire to 323 co-workers and found that communication style has an effect on the evaluation of communication competence. Administrators who used a responsive style (expressive and amiable) were judged to be competent as compared to those who had a low responsive style (analytical and driven).

For selection interview research, only one study could be found (Hunter, 2001). That study used McCroskey's (1988) broad communication competence scale to measure interviewees' perceptions. Hunter's study sought to measure the relationship between the communication behavior of interviewers (willingness to communicate, self-perceived communication competence, and socio-communicative style) and applicants' perceptions of the credibility of the interviewer (competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill).

In his research, Einhorn (1981) sought to identify successful communicative behaviors in job interviews, using pre- and post-interview surveys to assess interviewers' impressions of applicants (i.e., whether the applicant's personality characteristics indicate that he/she is well suited for this particular job). The results of the study showed that interviewers had lower impressions in the post test survey.

Einhorn (1981) interpreted this finding as meaning that the communicative choices of applicants affected interviewers' hiring decisions. He used the classical rhetoric theories of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero to define effective/ineffective communication behaviors. He found differences in the identification styles of applicants, support for arguments, organization of speech, speech style, delivery, and the images conveyed. For example, with regard to identification style, successful applicants clearly stated their career goals and "spoke enthusiastically" (p. 221). In comparison, when applicants used "ambiguous terms such as 'pretty good' or 'fairly well'" they "[appeared] indecisive, unassertive, and lacking in confidence and competence" (p. 225). Another example is the images projected. Successful interviewees presented themselves as "dynamic individuals" by "speaking at a rapid rate, gesturing, meaningfully, and smiling often" (p. 227). This gave the interviewers a positive image of them as enthusiastic. Moreover, "initiating comments, interrupting the employers, using unequivocal language, and asking when hiring decisions" would be made can be interpreted as a positive form of "assertiveness" (p. 227). Although this study provides useful implications for job interview studies, it might be missing points because the results were analyzed by the researchers instead of job recruiters. It would be better to ask employment interviewers' for their judgments because they are the ones who communicate with the applicants. They would know whether an interviewee's communication behaviors would fit well with the company's culture or not. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) suggested that an interactant would assess communication competence in a more appropriate manner than a third party, i.e., the researcher. They argued "[the] interactant is the only person who knows whether his or her conversational objectives were achieved, and the conversational partner is in

the best position to know whether such goals were obtained via appropriate interaction” (p. 94). A decade later, Bretz, Rynes, and Gerhart (1993) revealed that interviewers were concerned about communication cues such as articulateness (e.g., “the applicant’s ability to orally communicate in an effective, orderly manner”), appearance (e.g., “the applicant’s hygiene, apparel, demeanor, posture, and body language displayed during interview”), general communication skills (e.g., “the applicants’ ability to communicate clearly but without specific mention of articulateness”), and self-confidence (e.g., “the candidates belief in his/her abilities”) (p. 317).

Most studies of hiring interviews have attempted to investigate the correlation between the communication behaviors/styles and the hiring decision. They were concerned about the behavioral components (such as nonverbal communication, verbal communication, and communication styles) that affected an interviewer’s hiring decisions (Carl, 1980; Fletcher, 1990; Gallois et al., 1992; Gifford et al., 1985; Hollandsworth et al., 1979).

Hollandsworth et al. (1979) tried to find a relationship between communication cues and the employment decision. They distributed a survey to 338 people who conduct interviews within a university setting. The results showed that appropriateness of content, fluency of speech, and composure were major factors that influenced interviewers’ hiring decisions.

According to Hollandsworth et al. (1979), the loudness of an interviewee’s voice tended to have a great effect on the outcome in American interviews. The researchers defined “loudness of voice” as speaking “with clarity and appropriately loud without whispers or shouts” (p. 362). However, Thai interviewers might prefer

candidates who are soft-spoken. This is because Thais consider people who are loud as being aggressive. It is impolite to use a loud voice with an interviewer, especially with someone who is older than the interviewee. Thus, interviewees tend to keep their voice at a medium level. If they want to say something or talk to someone who is not nearby, they have to walk toward that person.

Another verbal cue is pausing. According to Carl (1980), American interviewees who responded to questions in one minute or less were interpreted as being ambitious, confident, well-organized, and intelligent. These traits were what most interviewers preferred. Long pauses prior to answering questions were viewed negatively. Asher (2004) suggested job candidates should “sell yourself, be positive and confident, and don’t hold back on representing your abilities” (p. 317) However, this idea is, arguably, not applicable in the Thai context. It is better to have pauses during speech because pausing means that one is thinking before speaking. Thus, most Thais like people who speak slowly and who articulate each word clearly. Moreover, in the American culture, speaking in a monotone voice is viewed negatively (Carl, 1980). The opposite view is more common in a Thai context. Thai people tend to appreciate monotone voices because they value harmony. Thus, do not like to express and will even hide/suppress their feelings. Moreover, Thai people value modesty. Research conducted in the mid-1990s found that Thai employees tended to use a humble presentation of self Stage (1996).

Nonverbal communication can affect decision-making in job interviews as well (Carl, 1980). In a job interview in the US, it is important for interviewees to maintain eye contact with the interviewer. A study conducted by Burkhardt, Weider-Hatfield, and Hocking (1985) showed that interviewees who used an appropriate level

of eye contact were considered to be effective communicators. They conducted their study by showing 120 male and female undergraduates who were enrolled in a basic communication course in a large southeastern university videotapes of job applicants who maintained either appropriate or inappropriate eye contact. According to Burkhardt et al. (1985), the appropriate eye contact interviewee was the one who “established eye contact throughout most of the interview,” and the inappropriate applicant was the one who “established eye contact for two or three seconds with the interviewer only six times during each interview” (p. 6).

In the American culture, maintaining eye contact is believed to reflect one’s honesty and confidence (Carl, 1980). However, Thais hold a different view. Thai people want another person to look at them while speaking, but not look directly into their eyes. Looking at a person’s eyes can be deemed impolite, especially when younger people have direct eye contact with older people. Thus, Thais usually look at one’s face as a whole while talking.

In American interviews, hand gestures are important in the job interview. Carl (1980) stated that hand movement indicates “ambition, self-confidence, self-organization, intelligence and sincerity” (p. 15). One study stated that an interviewee who moves his/her hand 15 times or less in a 5-minute interview is likely to be hired (Carl, 1980). In contrast, using hand gestures is viewed as inappropriate in Thai interviews. Thai people are expected to be *Sam Ruam*. *Sam Ruam* means not to express how one feels. This includes in gesture and speech. The only gesture that Thai people use frequently is when they greet. *Wai* is a hand gesture that Thai people have used to greet one another for decades. One will put both hands together and bow. Young people usually lower their head more when they greet older adults than when

speaking with someone of the same age.

Moreover, there are some prohibited gestures. Using an index finger to point at things is rude. One usually uses four fingers (index, middle, ring, and little fingers) to indicate the direction. Using the lower part of the body is considered disrespectful. Feet are the lowest part of the body. One should not use one's feet to point at things or put his/her feet on a table or chair because it can be interpreted as rude (Segaller, 2005). Therefore, in an interview, Thai candidates have to keep their feet positioned flat on the floor. They cannot cross their legs while sitting.

Dam's (2003) study also revealed that American interviewers prefer interviewees who show their curiosity by asking questions. However, young Thai people are expected to be *Kreng jai*. *Kreng jai* means that one is considerate. According to Srissadaporn-Charoengam and Jablin (1999), *Kreng jai* is viewed as "an extreme reluctant to impose on anyone or disturb another's personal equilibrium by refusing requests, accepting assistance, showing disagreement, giving direct criticism, challenging knowledge or authority, or confronting conflicts in situation" (p. 384). *Kreng jai* is one of the Thai values that people have. Because of *Kreng jai*, Thai applicants tend to be reluctant to ask questions. Moreover, asking questions can be viewed as incompetence. This might be explained in light of a Thai classroom, where students do not ask their teachers questions because it can be implied as "criticism that the teacher failed to explain matters properly" (Knutson, 1994, p. 8).

Although most scholars did not focus on communication competence, they revealed that assertive behavior is considered competent, and that exhibiting assertiveness has a great impact on recruiting decisions made by interviewers. Assertiveness and confidence tend to be favored by an interviewer (Amalfitano &

Kalt, 1977). Gallois et al. (1992) tried to discover whether applicants' communication styles have an effect on an interviewer's hiring decisions. They tested this by showing a video of applicants who had different communication styles: aggressive, assertive, or nonassertive. They found out that the interviewers tended to select the applicant who demonstrated assertive behavior. According to Buzzanell and Meisenbach (2006), interviewers in the US tended to hire male interviewees who used assertive behavior and females who displayed rational and unemotional characteristics. However, in the research of Gallois et al. (1992), the interviewers chose female applicants who displayed assertive behaviors.

Assertiveness tends to be a behavior that is preferable in Western and international organizational communication nowadays (e.g., Alberti & Emmons, 1982; Gallois et al., 1992; Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999).

Assertiveness was considered one of ten communication competence dimensions in Rubin and Martin's study (1994). Alberti and Emmons (1982) suggested that applicants display assertive behaviors during a job interview by "asking good questions" (p. 183).

To sum up, these studies are helpful in developing my interview questions (such as whether loudness of voice, hand gestures, and assertiveness are important factors that affect an interviewers' evaluation of communication competence). Moreover, although the research reviewed here provides useful information for exploring communication behaviors in employment interviews (especially concerning behavioral competence), these studies failed to fully address the cognitive component, that is, the kind of knowledge that the interviewees have to possess in order to be a competent communicator during an employment interview. Moreover, there is little

research on communication competence evaluations during selection interviews, an important stage before an employee enters a company.

2.3 Communication Competence in Western and Asian Context

While the research shows that assertive behavior is crucial to competence during interviews, these studies were conducted in Western cultural contexts. Communication competence can vary according to cultures. As Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) argued, “Communicative competence implies knowledge of cultural, social, and interpersonal rules for acceptability of behavior” (p. 67). Assertiveness might be considered competence by Westerners, but it might be considered inappropriate and a sign of incompetence among Asians. Nagao’s (1991) study supported this idea. Her research sought to discover whether there are differences in the perception of assertiveness between an individualistic country and a collectivistic country. The survey questionnaires were distributed to 109 Japanese and 118 American students who attended their home country university. The results showed that Japanese students perceived assertive behaviors as incompetent. On the other hand, American students held the opposite view. This research revealed that culture has an influence on communication style. This study can be applied to Thailand because, as compared with Japan, Thailand has similar cultural values, such as femininity, collectivism, and high context communication. Moreover, Thai specific values and beliefs and the hierarchical structures of societies tend to influence communication styles. These labels might influence what is considered as communicatively competent.

2.3.1 Asian VS. Western cultures: femininity, collectivism, high context

National cultural qualities, such as femininity and collectivism, can affect how one interacts in an organization (Hofstede, 1985). Sorod’s (1991) study revealed that,

in comparison to 40 countries examined by Hofstede (1980a, 1984), Thailand is low on individualism and low on masculinity. Masculinity can be explained as “assertiveness, the acquisition of money and things, and not caring for others, the quality of life, or people” (Hofstede, 1980b, p. 46). On the other hand, femininity is more nurturing. Both men and women are not expected to be assertive (Hofstede, 1980b). Hofstede argued:

Individualism implies a loosely knit social framework in which people are supposed to take care of themselves and of their immediate families only, while collectivism is characterized by a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups; they expect their in-group (relatives, clan, organizations) to look after them, and in exchange for that they feel they own absolute loyalty to it. (p. 45)

Feminine or low masculine countries tend to focus on more relationships and feelings as compared to masculine countries (Hofstede, 1991). In masculine countries, such as the US, the UK, and Australia, “men are supposed to be assertive, ambitious, and tough,” and “women are supposed to be tender and to take care of relationships” (p. 96). On the other hand, in feminine societies, such as Thailand, South Korea, and Indonesia, people of both genders are expected to be modest and solve conflicts by compromising and negotiating. Feminine values have a great impact on how one negotiates with others in business. The style of negotiation in feminine countries emphasizes harmony as more important than expressiveness (Hofstede, 1991). Hofstede (1984) explained that, “in masculine cultures these political/organizational values stress material success and assertiveness. In feminine cultures, they stress other

types of quality of life, interpersonal relationships, and concern for the weak” (p. 390).

Collectivism, as a business orientation in Asian countries, is based on relationships rather than the outcome. Collectivistic cultures tend to be concerned with group opinions as compared to individualistic countries (Hofstede, 1984). Numprasertchai and Swierczek (2006) indicated, as members of a collectivistic culture, Thai business negotiators are more focused on relationships. Consensus and harmony are considered to be successful in negotiations by Thai negotiators as compared to international persons. This study revealed that assertive behavior might not help or benefit business negotiations in these contexts.

Moreover, the low and high context society can impact how people communicate with one another. Most Asian countries tend to be high context societies. Their communication styles are indirect (Gudykunst, 2000). Deng (1992) stated that “collectivistic, or high context, cultures manifest a preference of indirect and covert communication styles, an obedient and conforming behavior, a clear group identification, and a priority of group interest and harmony” (p. 38). Punturaumporn and Hale (2002) revealed that one of the Thai styles of negotiation was indirect communication, marked by “silence, avoiding face-to-face interactions and delaying tactics” (p. 21). However, in low context societies such as the US, people tend to speak directly and to the point (Gudykunst, 2000). In *Workplace Communication*, Kinnick and Parton (2005) investigated the communication skills that new employees used on the American TV show *The Apprentice*. Their analysis revealed that the corporation owner (and show host), Donald Trump, preferred a direct communication style. For example, he suggested that his employees needed to “deal directly with the

boss whenever possible” and “stand up for yourself—if you don’t no one else will” (p. 437). As a result of this characteristic, assertiveness might not be a behavior that is preferred by interviewers.

2.3.2 Thai culture: Thai values and belief, hierarchy, stereotype of gender

Thai culture can influence the definition of communication competence (Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999). In this subsection, I will first discuss a study that shows how values and beliefs influence the concept communication competence. Later, I will talk about how hierarchy and stereotypes of gender can affect competence.

As Thai culture values harmony and modesty, Thai people might not value assertive behavior. According to Punturaumporn and Hale (2002), the Thai negotiation style emphasizes conflict avoidance. Moreover, Stage (1996) indicated that Thai employees tend to use a humble presentation of self. The result of Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin’s (1999) study, entitled *An Exploratory study of communication competence in Thai organizations*, revealed that Thai cultural values greatly affect what is considered communication competence. Because Asians value harmony, both subordinates and supervisors prefer to communicate in ways that avoid conflict. Knowing how to avoid conflict with others is considered communication competence for Thai workers. Workers in Thai organizations tend to “place a very high value on a person’s ability to speak in a gentle, calm, and thoughtful manner” (p. 412).

Thai people value modesty and tend to devalue people who employ highly confident characteristics. They dislike people who act superior or act differently from them. I believe that this concept of modesty comes from the teaching of the Buddha.

Buddhism teaches Thais not to boast as boasting conveys the message that one is superior to others. In Buddhism, one should not brag or make other people feel inferior. Modesty is a behavior that Thai people consider to be an effective communication style (Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999). As result, Thais tend to be unassertive. According to Sriussadaporn (2006), “Thai managers reported that a majority of Thais were not confident about clearly expressing themselves or speaking up in front of their bosses” (p. 335).

Furthermore, Buddhist beliefs can affect the Thai communication style. The third precept of the five precepts of Buddhism (Snelling, 1991, p. 48), “refrain from telling the lies,” includes not saying bad things about others and saying things that will hurt other people’s feeling. Thus, expressing one’s feelings is discouraged. Thais do not want to hurt other people’s feelings. They give a lot of value to words. They believe that words cannot be taken back after being spoken, so they are careful what they say. As a result of that, they are not straightforward. They will write or talk in circles before sending an intended message, or sometimes they let listeners figure out the intended message by themselves. Sriussadaporn’s (2006) research showed that “Thai employees tended to say what they thought their bosses wanted to hear and rarely argued even though they had different opinions” (p. 334).

Moreover, Thailand is a hierarchical society (Hofstede, 1991). Power distance exists in society. Power distance is “the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 1980b, p. 45). This social construct affects how people communicate with one another. In countries where power distance prevails, subordinates are expected to use certain communication styles to show respectfulness to their supervisors or superiors

(Hofstede, 1991). Wise (1997) defined power distance in Thailand in terms of respect and status. Wise (1997) explained that “respect is accorded to age, experience and demonstrated wisdom” (p. 17) whereas “status [is] determined by position, age and, to some extent, seniority” (p. 33). In Wise’s (1997) terms, wisdom is kind of social empowerment in the sense that it strengthens or promotes one’s status. Wisdom “[is] measured not only by intelligent decision-making and effectiveness, but also by having harmonious relations up and down the hierarchy” (p. 33). The concept of face is also central for communicative behaviors in workplace. Subordinates have to “respect their [superiors’] dignity, praise their efforts” (p. 17). In sum, power distance is defined by age, status, experience, and wisdom. Stage (1996) indicated that when Thai employers talked to Thai subordinates, they had to be sensitive of “the words used, the situation, who else is around, and the position of the person with whom one is speaking; everything said and not said is important” because this can impact “all future interactions with the other person, both in terms of work or social relations” (p. 75). Moreover, Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin’s (1999) research demonstrated that

For Thais, communication competence was associated with knowing when, where and with whom to express respectful manners in the organization, knowledge of chain of command communication, knowing how to communicate with and honor senior organizational members and show respect for their experience. . . . (p. 409)

Lastly, gender is one of the factors that affects what is considered competent communication. Thai culture reveals the female stereotype as being “meek”,

obedient”, and “soft-spoken” (Wise, 1997, p. 37). Thai women “should speak in quiet voices”, and “without interruption”, and also “avoid displaying anger” (p. 38).

However, in the world of globalization, as there are more Thai companies who have to deal with international clients and more foreign companies in Thailand, the cultures involved in Thai organizations become diverse. Thus, this might affect communication competence. Stage’s (1999) research indicated there was less power distance in American-Thai subsidiary companies in Thailand. The subordinates stated that they have a power in making decision by themselves unlike in local Thai companies, the supervisors is the one who has authority. Furthermore, management studies (Kidd, Niratpattanasai, & Jürgen Richter, 2000; Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999) have revealed that there is a need for assertive behavior because business people not only deal with people in the country (fellow Thais), but they also have to interact with the international business companies. Hendon’s (2001) study, entitled *How to negotiate with Thai executives*, indicated that Thai business negotiators employed assertive strategies when they wanted their clients to pay more for the negotiators’ products/services.

Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin’s (1999) study also revealed that supervisors preferred their subordinates speak directly to them. Giving complete information and asking questions are considered competent forms of communication from a supervisor’s point of view. The authors explained that this might have occurred because most supervisors had studied abroad in the US. This experience might have influenced their business culture.

One study was found that indicated there is a problem in communication between Thai subordinates and their expatriate bosses (Sriussadaporn, 2006) because

of cultural differences in their communication styles. This research found that Thai employees tended to communicate in unassertive ways. They did not express how they truly felt. However, “expatriate bosses expect their staff to show respect for them by being punctual and being straightforward and honest” (p. 343). As a result, these international companies might be well advised to search for assertive employees in order to address this discrepancy.

As a result of the world of globalization, we cannot be certain what communication styles are considered competent. Job applicants might have to engage in assertive behavior because Thai interviewers in international companies might prefer this communication skill rather than a more passive style.

This review of the literature reveals that little research has focused on communication competence within employment selection interviews, especially in a Thai context. The review of research also shows that differences in cultural contexts can have a great impact on what behaviors are considered to be competent. This literature review demonstrated that communication competence in the employment selection interview in Thailand should be researched.

2.4 Communication Competence Scale of Measurement

The Communication Competence Scale was first created by Wiemann (1977). It was used for people to evaluate others' communication competence. This measure was developed through reference to a variety of theories focusing on the areas of: 1) human relationships, 2) social skills, and 3) self-presentation. Originally, there were 57 items evaluated using a five-point Likert-type scale. Perotti and DeWine (1987), in their research, mentioned only 36 items. This scale was tested with the students who participated in a basic speech communication class. A factor analysis

revealed only one factor, but Wiemann (1977) described four theoretical factors as composing the scale (i.e., general competence, empathy, affiliation/support, behavioral flexibility, and social relaxation). The reliability of the scale, using Cronbach's alpha, was reported as .96.

Cegala (1981) proposed a self-perceived scale. This instrument used a seven-point Likert-type scale, with response items ranging from "very much like me" to "not at all like me." Based on factor analysis, eighteen items were derived from an initial list of 100 items. This scale was tested with 668 undergraduate students enrolled in undergraduate communication classes. This scale was created from the literature of Goffman (1963) which identified the concepts of "attentiveness" and "perceptiveness." In the factor analysis, an Eigenvalue of 1.0 was employed in identifying factors. Three factors were found: perceptiveness (reliability = .88), other-oriented perceptiveness (reliability = .86), and attentiveness (reliability = .87).

Spitzberg and Hecht's (1984) self-report scale is similar to Cegala's (1981). Three factors emerged in their research: motivation, knowledge, and skills. This five-point Likert-type scale (response options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) was distributed to 180 people. The explained proportions of variance were satisfaction with self ($R^2 = .16$), satisfaction with other ($R^2 = .26$), and satisfaction with the communication ($R^2 = .27$). The reliabilities ranged from .63 to .82.

Later, Rubin and Martin's (1994) Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (ICCS) was found to have ten factors. The ICCS was developed from an instrument originally developed by Rubin, Perse, and Barbato (1988), and Rubin and Rubin (1989). There are 30 items on the ICCS. Two hundred forty seven students who were taking an introductory communication class completed the instrument. The

reliabilities were relatively low: self-disclosure=.63, empathy = .49, social relaxation=.63, assertiveness=.72, interaction management=.49, altercentrism=.41, expressiveness=.46, supportiveness=.43, immediacy= .45, and environmental control=.60. McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) developed a self-measurement scale for communication competence called a “Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC)” (p. 111). The SPCC measures what a person thinks of his/her own communication competence in twelve situations (e.g., public presentations, meetings with friends or acquaintances). This scale has been used in a variety of studies (e.g., Hunter, 2001, McCroskey & Baer, 1985; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). The SPCC scale consists of 12 items. It was tested with a sample of 344 college students. The reliability was: public = .72, meeting = .68, group, .67, dyad, .44, stranger, .87, acquaintance = .84 and friend =.78. The total reliability was .92 (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988).

Although the instruments that have just been described have each provided methodological contributions to communication competence research, the scope of each is too broad for the purposes of this research project, with its focus specifically on the context of an employment selection interview. Additionally, all were guided, in their development, by the communication biases prevalent within the Western-cultural context. Therefore, they do not appear to be appropriate for this research.

A few scales have been developed that focus on organizational communication competence. Monge, Backman, Dillard and Eisenburg (1982) created the Communicator Competence Questionnaire (CCQ) which was an “other-oriented scale” (p. 508). This scale has been used in many organizational communication studies (e.g., Madlock, 2008; Salleh, 2007). For instance, Madlock (2008) used this

scale to test the relationship between the leadership style, communicator competence, and employee satisfaction.

In *Communicator competence in the workplace*, Monge et al. (1982) examined this scale using two samples: 1) 220 employees (198 supervisor-subordinate dyads), and 2) 60 staff members (53 supervisor-subordinate dyads). The instrument employed 12 items and a 7-point response scale (*YES!*, YES, yes, ?, no, NO, *NO!*). Seven items focused on behavioral skills, such as being able to express one's ideas clearly, having a good command of the language, and being easy to understand. The remaining 5 items focused on decoding skills, such as listening, responding to a message quickly, and attentiveness. Some items on this instrument were adapted from Wiemann's (1977) scale. The Monge et al. scale consisted of two sub-subscales: encoding and decoding. The reliability using Cronbach's coefficient alphas were .87 (encoding) and .85 (decoding) for supervisors and .85 (encoding) and .81 (decoding) for subordinates.

As with the more interpersonally focused scales, once again, this instrument was developed largely through reference to extant literature. Additionally, although the focus of the instrument was on organizational communication, the items composing the instrument itself were not context-specific.

A decade later, Wright developed a scale which is context-specific. Although Wright's scale has a specific organizational context, it is not a culture-specific scale. Each culture has different kinds of communication styles. Research reveals people from different cultures perceive the concept of communication competence differently (Hwang, Chase, & Kelly, 1980; Nagao, 1991). For example, in *An intercultural examination of communication competence*, Hwang et al. (1980) reported that

Chinese Americans and native Chinese have different perceptions of competence as assessed using a communication competence scale.

Srissadaporn-Charoengam and Jablin (1999) created a specific scale for use in the Thai context. They assumed that there are two components to organizational communication competence. Their scale was created by drawing information from the literature. After their measurement was developed, they engaged in a pilot test by giving a preliminary questionnaire to five Thai graduate students at a university located in southwestern Thailand. Then, they interviewed these students in an effort to clarify the design, instructions, and items. Later, the scale was given to ten workers in Thailand to assess its validity.

Their study focused on subordinates and supervisors' judgments. The instrument was included in a questionnaire that was distributed to 14 organizations (413 people). Their instrument employed a five-point Likert-type scale and originally had 80 items. After conducting a factor analysis, they were able to reduce the instrument to 21 items. The reliability was .88 using Cronbach's alpha and most items had standard deviations in the range of .60 and .90. Since this survey was largely based on the authors' reliance on literature, it seems reasonable to raise questions concerning the validity of this instrument as a measurement of competence.

Although this communication competence scale seems to have useful implications for conceptualizing communication competence in a Thai context, one cannot assume that communication competence in a Thai interview has only two elements. Owing to different contexts, more elements should be considered. In order to discover what these elements might be, use of an in-depth interview method, which has been used in various communication competence studies in different fields

(Cegala, Gade, Broz, & McClure, 2004; Cegala et al., 1996; Cegala et al., 1995; Kerssen-Griep, 2001; McCroskey, 1982; Worley, Titsworth, & Worley, 2007), seems warranted.

Few organizational communication studies have sought to define the concept of communication competence (Matveev, 2004; Matveev, & Nelson, 2004; Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam, & Jablin, 1999). Matveev and Nelson's (2004) study investigated the perception of American and Russian managers on communication competence in cross-cultural contexts. They measured the relationship between communication competence and the performance of an organizational team. Matveev (2004) sought to define the concept of intercultural communication competence. He used in-depth interviews which were conducted in a semi-structured method. He interviewed 21 native Russian and 19 American managers. Using the networking approach, he asked "How do you view an interculturally and communicatively competent member of your work team?" (p. 57). He let them give examples to clarify the concept. Although Matveev's questions can help to identify the concept of communication competence, my respondents might not be familiar with the terminology. Instead, it might be more appropriate to ask "what are the most important communication skills for an interview applicant to have?"

Cegala et al. (1996) avoided jargonistic terminology in their questions to participants in their study to find out the exact components of communication competence. In *Components of Patients' and Doctors' Perceptions of Communication Competence During a Primary Care Medical Interview*, Cegala et al. asked open-ended questions such as "what are the most important communication skills for a doctor to have?" and "what are the most important communication skills for a patient

to have?” (p. 9). They used these questions to interview “27 patients and 15 family practice residents at an outpatient clinic associated with a large, Midwestern, university medical school and hospital” (p. 27).

In conclusion, most communication competence scales have focused on interpersonal communication. A few organizational communication competence instruments have been developed. Even though there is one intriguing communication competence scale that has a Thai cultural context, it was not based on Thai literature review, and the focus was not on communication between a manager and his/her subordinates. Thus, there is a need for creating a communication competence scales in job interview.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

According to Cooley and Roach (1984), a theory for studying communication competence must have these following criteria:

1. Be characterized by abstractness, explicitness, empirical relevance and logical rigor, if it is to explain behavior and contribute to useful assessment;
2. Be responsive to issues of culturally specific instantiation of competence, the impact of the culture on behavior, and the salience of one culture’s norms to members of another culture; and
3. Specify the relationship between competence and performance. (p.15)

Self-presentation theory, according to Goffman (1959), meets those abovementioned criteria. Many scholars (e.g., Cegala, 1981; Wiemann, 1977) have employed self-presentation theory as an approach to study communication competence. According of Goffman (1959), when an individual meets someone,

she/he presents herself/himself according to who she/he believes she/he is or the way she/he wants to be perceived by others.

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) described each individual as a performer on the stage. He viewed everyday communication as a performance, with each individual having a role that they have to play. A person's performance was viewed as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (p. 15). Further, Goffman explained that "a performance is 'socialized,' molded, and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented" (p. 35). In other words, when applying this theory to interview scenarios, some interviewees who apply for a position behave according to their assumptions about the company's culture and the requirement of the position. Moreover, the sorts of communication competence that they would demonstrate depend on their beliefs, values, and assumptions about others' expectations.

How one decides to perform is also based on the setting, appearance, and manners. Setting is an "expressive equipment," such as "insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like" (p. 24). Appearance refers to "those stimuli which function at the time to tell us of the performer's social statuses" (p. 24). Manners are "those stimuli which function at the time to warn us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the oncoming situation" (p. 24). These three are parts of what Goffman (1959) called a person's "front." Front is viewed as "the expressive equipment of a standard kind of intentionally [wittingly] or unwittingly

employed by the individual during his performance” (p. 22). People often expect setting, appearance, and manner to go together.

According to Goffman (1959), individuals consider settings, appearances, and manners when performing. People might be more suspicious of others’ performances in settings such as employment interviews, when people are more likely to perform their ideal self or perform based on their perceptions of others’ expectations. In less formal settings, such as home, people are less likely to be suspicious of others’ performances. How they present in public might be different from private. Goffman (1959) set an example of backstage performance. What they give in public may not be according to their true feeling. Some people suppress their true emotion because they have the task to accomplish their personal goal.

Goffman (1959) stated that there are two kinds of performers: “cynic” and “sincere” (p. 18). “Cynic” is the one who puts a mask on and does not show how one truly feels. “Sincere” is the opposite person. However, it is hard to find the genuine person because of social reasons. Goffman (1959) employed the concept of face in his theory. He stated that people do not express how they truly feel because they want to save their faces or the faces of others. They do not want to feel embarrassed using inappropriate gestures; or they do not want others to feel ashamed on what they are doing.

People often expect others to treat them in a reciprocal manner, i.e., to respond in kind. The one who acts according to this expectation tends to create a positive impression. People can make a positive impression when their front occurs according to what other people expect. At initial meetings, individuals typically experience greater uncertainty concerning what behaviors should be performed. The performer

will look for cues such as nonverbal behavior and verbal behavior. Status or social rank can also have an influence on decision-making. How a person performs is based on the information he/she obtains from his/her counterpart(s). Interactants use or infer knowledge from past experience to make choices concerning the behaviors that can be appropriately exhibited when interacting with someone. Interactants tend to adjust behaviors according to what they think their counterpart expects them to do.

On the other hand, not conforming to others' expectations can result in a negative impression. Goffman (1959) illustrated this with two situations. One is when the performer does not have knowledge of the culture. Thus, the "front" tends to stabilize because of "stereotyped expectations" of people in a society (p. 27). Another type of situation is an uncontrollable circumstance. An interactant might use "unmeant gestures" (p. 51). In this situation, someone might unintentionally create a negative impression.

Goffman (1959) highlighted the importance of first impressions, especially in the workplace. People have to make choices as to the impression they wish to establish. Power forces, such as politics, structures, and cultures, influence how one chooses to perform in public. As Goffman explained, "a competent performance by someone who proves to be an impostor may weaken in our minds the moral connection between legitimate authorization to play a part and the capacity to play it" (p. 59). In an interview context, people are less likely to believe that a performance genuinely reflects a person's actual self. An interviewer is trying to determine whether the interview is just "a competent performance" or demonstrates "a competent person." Even if someone successfully impresses the interviewer, the interviewer still must assess whether the performance is genuine. In other words,

whether the person is truly competent or just acts competently because of their interest in gaining employment.

Goffman's theory can be applied to research within the Thai context. Thai people give a high value to face. One has to *hai kiat* other people. According to Niratpattanasai (2004), *hai kiat* is defined as "showing respect, honour, and sometimes 'giving face' to someone else" (p. 53). This idea is connected with Goffman's concept of face and an interactant's front stage area. Thus, in a Thai interview context, competent communicators might be those who communicate in a respectful manner.

The prior to the perspective of a Thai, for this current study, I will use Goffman's theory to guide my exploration of who is considered a competent communicator from perspective of a Thai employment interviewer. What are the criteria for competent communicators? Are interviewers aware of an interviewee's self-presentation? How do interviewers determine whether or not an interview performance is genuine? How do they evaluate people they have just met for the first time and with whom they interact for only a short period of time?

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the concept of communication competence from the standpoint of Thai employment interviewers?

Research Question 2a: What are the dimensions/qualities that interviewers focus on when assessing the competence of their applicants?"

Research Question 2b: What cues do interviewers focus on when trying to determine whether an applicant has presented his/her actual self?

Research Question 3: What are the components of communication competence in the context of Thai employment interview?

Summary: Chapter Two

This chapter reviews extant research concerning communication competence in general and, more specifically, in organizational communication contexts. Through this review process, the paucity of research concerning communication competence in the context of organizational employment interview communication has been identified. With an aim of understanding the concept of communication competence in Thai interview and creating a communication competence scale, the current research attempts 1) to define the concept of communication competence from the interviewers' perspectives; 2) to thematize the components of communication competence from the interviewers' point of view, and 3) to create a communication competence scale. Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory is used as the primary theoretical framework guiding the current research. In Chapter Three, details about the research methods, participant recruitment, research procedures, and data analysis will be provided

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to define the concept of communication competence in the context of Thai employment (selection) interviews and to identify the components of communication competence. In order to obtain a situated understanding of communication competence within the Thai cultural context, personal interviews were conducted with Thais who are experienced employment interviewers. This approach is called an “ethnographic survey” (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 167). Thus, this study used a qualitative research methodology to collect data relevant to the three research questions.

Data Collection—Interview Method

Qualitative approaches to research offer many advantages. Internal thoughts, emotions, and prior behaviors are not observable (Patton, 2002). However, an interview is a great instrument for gaining an understanding of a “social actor’s experience and perspective” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 173) and “the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 1991, p. 3). As Lindlof and Taylor (2002) explained, “the qualitative interview is an event in which one person [the interviewer] encourages others to freely articulate their interests and experiences” (p. 170). Moreover, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) advised that how competent one is can be assessed by either interactant (in this case, the recruiting interviewer or the applicant). Although communication competence can be assessed by the interviewer(s), the interviewee(s), and the observer(s), the interviewer or interviewee should be the one who rates competence instead of third-party observers (researchers). Spitzberg and

Cupach argued that the “interactant is the only person who knows whether his or her conversational objectives were achieved, and the conversational partner is in the best position to know whether such goals were obtained via appropriate interaction” (p. 94). Thus, in order to be able to answer my research questions, I chose to use the interview method to uncover the concept and dimensions of communication competence from the perspective of employment interviewers.

Participant Recruitment

The process of recruiting participants began with family friends who met the requirements of my research (i.e., native Thais with work experience with Thai companies and who possess experience in the role of employment interviewer). These participants were interview experts who have been working for companies as interviewers for more than 2 years. I chose this group of people because I believed that they could answer my two research questions. I considered at least 2 years as being an acceptable minimal level of work experience. After two years, an employee should be familiar with his/her job and have encountered, in the interest of this research, a wide enough diversity in interviewee approaches to the employment interview so as to be able to reflect on the different forms of communication competence (and incompetence) displayed. Moreover, I chose to recruit participants who had worked in private organizations located in Bangkok because I think that they would represent a global culture. Expanding beyond those first few individuals, I began to recruit more people by personally calling organizations in Thailand and asking to talk to employees who possessed experience as interviewers or worked as human resource managers. During the recruiting process, I stated my participant criteria in order to be certain that I obtained this particular group. I told them about

my research and offered to share the results of my finished research project. My contact person at each company was provided with the following information:

I am conducting a study of communication in job interviews, and I would like to interview one of your interviewers who has been working for you for at least 2 years. The information I am provided will, I hope, help to enhance communication in job interviews. After I have finished my research, I can share my findings with you. Would it be possible for me to contact and make an appointment with one of these employees?

After this initial recruiting attempt, I tried to use the “snowball” technique (Glesne, 2006, p. 35). I asked each participant to introduce me to other interviewers they know. However, that approach did not work well in this situation as my contacts did not have time, and given the nature of the Thai culture, people were reluctant to bother someone else because of the time consuming nature of the interview process. Thus, I decided to call and/or e-mail all of my relatives and friends, soliciting their assistance. After making initial contact, I met each person individually at their company or wherever they preferred to meet.

At this point, I had only about ten participants. Fortunately, during the recruiting time, I attended several events that afforded me opportunities to interact with family friends who had connections with the financial industry. After explaining the nature of my research, many of these individuals graciously agreed to contact potential participants for me. Eventually, 28 experienced interviewers agreed to sit for an interview with me.

Description of Participants

According to Lindlof (1995), “assessing interviewees” is crucial for the interview. He suggested that one should choose interviewees who have “appropriate experiences in the cultural scene,” “the ability and willingness...to articulate [their] experience[s] in the interview context” (p. 178) and “time [so that] they can be devoted to being interviewed” (p. 179). In this study, 28 Thai interviewers, between thirty and sixty years of age, who work for Thai organizations in Bangkok were recruited as participants. Despite my avowed interest in interviewing only individuals with at least two years of professional experience as an interviewer, one participant had only one year of experience. I decided not to exclude her because she provided valuable information from the perspective of someone at the entry level.

I chose this group of people because I sought to uncover hiring interviewers’ perceptions of the communication competence needed to perform white collar work in financial industry fields. I was particularly interested in the communication skills sought in individuals who would fill positions in sales, marketing, banking, finance, and IT-support. These kinds of positions require certain communication skills in order to deal with clients, whereas blue collar employees might not need advanced communication skills as their positions focus more on physical tasks.

With respect to the issue of sample size, although Patton (2002) stated that “there are no rules for samples size in qualitative inquiry” (p. 244), Creswell (1998) suggested that ten people would be a great sample size for phenomenological research. My sample size of 28 more than satisfied Creswell’s recommendation and, I believe, lends credibility to the research.

My participants have worked for their current employer and in a position that requires them to conduct employment interviews from a minimum of one year (one participant) to more than ten years. Most of my participants work for Thai organizations that have foreign shareholders. Only one of the organizations represented by my participants was staffed entirely by Thais.

I conducted interviews with recruiters from entry, mid- and high-level positions in their organization. In most instances, I was directed to mid-level and high-level interviewers because of their greater experience. My organizational contact expressed concern that an entry-level interviewer could not answer my questions and this might present a bad image of the company. For this reason, I do not have an equal number of participants from each level of the organization. A total of fourteen organizations, all located in Bangkok, are represented in the participant pool. I interviewed eight human resources recruiters, two involved in high level position recruiting, four in mid-level position recruiting, and two in mid-level position recruiting. Twenty line managers were interviewed. Six were involved in high-level position recruiting, thirteen in mid-level position recruiting, and one in entry level position recruiting. Eleven female and seventeen male recruiters were interviewed. Most of the organizations (11 out of 14) represented by the participants are Thai organizations that have at least one foreign shareholder. Only one organization was 100% Thai owned. Among the other organizations, two are Japanese organizations, and one is a Singaporean firm. Most interviewees (26) are Thai, but one Singaporean, and one is a Japanese recruiter. I decided to interview these two foreign participants because they were capable of making the final hiring decision for their organization.

After interviewing 25 people, I noticed that the pattern of information being uncovered had begun to repeat itself. I interviewed an additional 3 people in order to further test this perception. As no new patterns emerged I stopped at that point. Schensul et al. (1999) argued that “sampling bias” should not be an issue if a researcher reaches an “informational saturation point” where there is “sufficient redundancy” (p. 262). At 28 interviewees, I believed that I had reached that point.

Narrative Approach

In this study, I employed a narrative approach to encourage informants to articulate their experiences in their own words and to provide a context for their explanations (Schensul et al., 1999, p. 138). By using a narrative approach, I was able to gain more information as compared to only asking narrowly-focused or closed questions. The narrative approach encourages participants to disclose more. This helps create a thick description. The concept of a “thick description” is associated with the interpretive theory of culture employed by Geertz (2000) to interpret the meaning of cultural semiotics as rituals. The cultural concept of Geertz (2000) refers to a web of semiotics. Geertz explained, “Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (p. 5). Because culture involves webs of significance, there are many layers of interpretation that ethnographers have to make. In order to gain a better understanding on one’s culture, one must be able to provide a thick description which is comprised of numerous structures of meaning, layered upon themselves. Anthropological writings include “own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (p. 9) and

“are themselves interpretations, and second and third order ones to boot” (p. 15).

Thick description is an interpretation of an interpretation.

Not only does a narrative approach enhance thick description, I believe that a narrative approach put my participants at ease when I asked them to tell a story as compared to only asking questions because a narrative approach provides space for respondents to talk freely about the topic under discussion. Moreover, I could ask follow-up questions concerning the story they shared. This made our interactions more like conversations than strictly interviews. Thus, this narrative approach could give another benefit which could make the participants feel relaxed.

Respondent Interview

My research interview not only used a narrative approach, but I also employed a respondent interview method. The purpose of the respondent interview is “to clarify the meanings of common concepts and opinions” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 178). Lindlof and Taylor explained that, in a respondent interview, “respondents are usually asked to express themselves on an issue or situation, or to explain what they think or how they feel about their social world” (p. 178). As I was interested in defining the concept of communication competence in the Thai context, this was a great tool for helping answer my questions.

I used semistandardized/semistructured interviews instead of an unstandardized or unstructured approach. Mason (2002) suggested that interviewers should use semistructured interviews. He argued that there is no research that does not have a structure to it. One should not just ask random questions. Moreover, according to Schensul et al. (1999), using a semistructured interview helps to “identify factors, variables and items or attributes of variables for analysis or use in a survey” (p. 149).

Semistructured interviews consist of open-ended questions that are followed by probes (Schensul et al., 1999). I believed that I could gain more information from semistandardized interviews because they allow for flexibility. More structured interviews might not help me gain other information. Using a semistructured interview method helped me “follow up [on] their specific responses along lines which are peculiarly relevant to them and their context, and which you [may] not have anticipated in advance” (Mason, 1996, p. 40). Thus, I was not rigid in terms of following an interview guide. I observed the interviewee’s manner and demeanor and adjusted my words and phrases accordingly. I planned on the need to form new questions during each interview so as to take advantage of the information that emerged in the field.

All of my interviewees were asked to answer open-ended questions in Thai, which is their native language. For example, I would ask them: “What are the most important communication characteristics for interviewees to have?” I used open-ended questions because it encouraged the interviewees to freely express how they feel using their own words (Patton, 2002).

I did use what Patton (2002) has called a “general interview guide approach.” According to Patton (2002), when conducting this type of interview, interviewers typically prepare the interview guide before entering the setting in order to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each respondent. The interview guide indicates topics or subject areas which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elicit and illuminate a particular subject. The guide also indicates the sequence of the topics that the researcher wishes to pursue.

Approximately twenty questions were designed by the researcher. Questions one and two were adapted from the research of Cegala et al. (1996) and Wright (1991). Each question listed on the guide was developed using a precise and polite language. I tried to use a language that would be familiar to interview respondents (i.e., not employ jargon), and I sought to ask open-ended, neutral questions while showing respect for my respondents' knowledge level. I did not initially use the word "competence" because there is a debate concerning the meaning of that term. Competence in Thai is *pasitipap*. Instead, at least during the early phases of the interview, I used the word *dee*, meaning "good". However, I used *pasitipap* in question 29 to see if, from the participant's perspective, *dee* and *pasitipap* have similar meanings. Patton (2002) stated that "how a question is worded and asked affects how the interviewee responds" (p. 353). If questions are not clear, interviewees might be confused, uncomfortable, ignorant, or hostile. Thus, they might be reluctant to give answers (Patton, 2002). Using the term "competence" in the first question might confuse the participants because of the complexity of the term. I believe that, for the first question, using *dee* rather than *pasitipap* resulted in more useful information.

For each question, I prepared additional probes and alternative wordings for the same question. Some probes were also prepared in advance. The intent of a probe is to help an interviewee recall information related to his/her answers (Schensul et al., 1999). For example, I prepared, in advance, probes that sought information concerning why and how the participant recognized that an interviewee was a great candidate for a job. I believe that this helped me gain information to create a thick

description. I also pre-planned probes that might be used if an interviewee did not understand a question.

I employed three types of questions: nondirective, directive, and closing. I sought to word the questions as clearly as possible because vague questions can have a great effect on responses (Glesne, 2006). The difference between nondirective and directive questions is that “nondirective questions are the preferred way to help people talk freely about themselves and the scene” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 202). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) explained that one usually starts by asking nondirective questions when using a narrative approach. For example: Can you think of a time when you had an excellent candidate that you interviewed and tell me why you think that person was an excellent candidate?

Once the nondirective question is answered, the interviewer can seek greater depth of information through the use of directive questions. Therefore, during my interviews, first, I started with nondirective questions, such as questions about their background and how they recruit people. Then, I asked directive questions about the concept of communication competence and its characteristics. Lastly, I concluded by asking about the participant’s age and other sensitive demographic questions. I ended my interview with closing questions by asking if there was anything that they would like to add.

Interview Setting. I met each participant at his/her company or wherever he/she preferred to meet. The fact that the participant controlled the selection of interview location contributed to his/her feelings of comfort with the interview process. It is important to be aware of the interviewee’s level of comfort because he/she is the source of data. The way a researcher treats an interviewee can affect the

data positively or negatively. To avoid a negative impact, Glesne (2006) suggested that one should be aware of the interviewee's time, location, and patience because those factors can help make the interviewing process less stressful, especially for the interviewee. I ended my interview with closing questions by asking if there is anything that the interviewee would like to add. Lastly, I concluded by using demographic questionnaire from Sorod (1991) to ask the participants' ages, and other sensitive demographic questions.

Interview Procedures

The interviews lasted approximately 15 to 50 minutes. All of the interviews were tape-recorded using a digital voice recorder. I used all the questions in appendix A as a guide for conducting each interview. Two people preferred to be interviewed by phone, and two other people preferred to not be tape recorded. In two additional situations, problems with the tape recorder interfered with a comprehensive recording of the interview. So, these six interviews were captured via written notes made during and after the interview.

Individual Interviews. Most interviews were conducted individually. There was one participant who preferred another person to come to help her answer the questions because she felt there might be some areas that she might not be able to answer. When comparing individual and group interviews, it is better to use individual interviews rather than a focus group when the informants are experts (as was true with this research). Interviewing them individually acknowledges their expertise more than group or focus group interviews. Moreover, in an individual interview, the ideas expressed by one interviewee do not affect the ideas expressed by

another. In a focus group, one person's opinions can influence the opinions expressed by others.

Beginning Interviews. At the beginning of each interview, I engaged in small talk with each participant before asking questions. I sought to make my participants feel like they were having a conversation with me rather than having an interview. I sought to establish conversations in a polite way. An awareness of the informants' culture helps the research "avoid violating principles of polite conversation" (Schensul et al., 1999, p.136). First, I started with general topics about their demographic information and their jobs. The interviewees were asked:

1. What is your title?
2. How long have you been working as an interviewer?
3. How often do you conduct interviews?
4. Are you the sole hiring decision-maker?

Then, I asked each interviewee to discuss his/her job responsibilities and how he/she recruited people. Next, I asked opinion questions concerning each participant's perception of communication competence. After that, each informant was asked to tell stories about the candidates he/she has interviewed who has good and bad communication skills and was asked about his/her evaluations of these individuals.

I then asked general to specific open-ended questions (see Appendix A). For example, I asked if nonverbal communication is important in the job interview. If the informants considered it important, I asked what kind of nonverbal communication is important.

During the interview. As a researcher, I was attentive to and focused on my interviewees. I tape recorded or took notes when interviewing (fieldnotes). The tape

recorder was used to “capture the interview more or less exactly as it was spoken” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 187).

In the interview, I tried to create a good rapport by demonstrating interest in the interviewee’s viewpoint and work (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In order to create good rapport, one needs to explicate the purpose of interviewing to his/her interviewee. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggested that the interviewer discuss “participant self disclosures,” such as asking about families and careers (p. 190). According to Seidman (1991), interviewers can build rapport by sharing their own experiences with the interviewees. Interviewers can create an “I-Thou relationship.” In this relationship, the interviewer must show “respect, interest, attention, and good manners” (Seidman, 1991, p.74). Berge (2001) stated, in his ten commandments of interviewing, that it is important to show respectfulness.

Moreover, the researcher must observe the interviewee’s behavior during the interview. Mason (2002) recommended that interviewers be aware of interviewee “verbal and nonverbal cues” (p. 73). During the interview, it is important to understand the meaning of these cues. Interviewers should be able “to recognize when people become bored, tired, angry upset, embarrassed” (p. 75).

After each interview, I wrote journal entries concerning each interview process. In the journal, I wrote an audit trail: writing down time and place of the interview and the length of time for the interview. I also reflected on my reactions to the interview. In writing the results, all the participants were given pseudo names, and so as to insure participant anonymity, the name of their organization is not revealed.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the researcher plays an instrumental role in the research. Therefore, the relevance of the findings is greatly influenced by their decisions throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing of reports (Patton, 2002). There is not going to be a language problem because I used the Thai language for the interviews and am a native speaker of Thai.

I did member checking by talking about and sending emails concerning my main findings to my participants and asking them if my interpretation matches what they stated in their interview. Glesne (2006) and Patton (2002) encouraged researchers to conduct member checks which involve sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with the research participants to make sure you are representing them and their ideas accurately.

For my data, I not only used the interviews but also fieldnotes, such as my journals and documents from the participants if available (their interview materials). Using multiple sources (triangulation) when collecting and interpreting data improves the credibility of the investigation (Brantlinger, Jiminez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005; Maxwell, 2004; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

Data Analysis

I transcribed all of the taped interviews so as to get a thick description. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) recommended that the interviewers transcribe interviews themselves because they (the interviewers) are familiar with the “speech patterns, references to people and place” of their interviewees (p. 205). For research questions one and two, I read and re-read the transcripts and used other data from documents and notetaking during the interviews to create a thick description. Then, I looked for

common meanings if they emerged in the interviews. In this section, I used the language of participants and my own interpretations to create a thick description. For research question three, the focus of the analysis was on the components of communication competence in job interviews. I identified the themes that were evident in the data by grouping common statements or ideas. I did this by using notecards. Moreover, I also used the data from the transcripts and my journal and notes from the fieldwork to interpret my data. All data were used to create an ethnographic survey.

Summary: Chapter Three

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the methods that were used to examine the concept of communication competence within the context of Thai employment interviews. This chapter demonstrated the research methods—an interview method and a factor analysis method—used in this study. Specifically, a detailed description of the rationales for using these two methods, the means of participant recruitment, the description of participants, the research procedures, and the data analysis techniques were provided. The remaining chapters will present the results of the data analysis, the conclusion and implications concerning the results, and finally the suggestions for the future studies which are related to or based on this dissertation.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings that are relevant to the three research questions posed in Chapter Two. The first question asked: What is the concept of communication competence from the stand point of Thai employment interviewers? The second asked: What are the dimensions/qualities that interviewers focus on when assessing the competence of their applicants? Associated with the second research question is the question: What cues do interviewers focus on when trying to determine whether an applicant has presented his/her actual self? The final research question asked: What are the components of communication competence in the context of Thai employment interviews?

Before answering these questions, the typical procedure used for employment interviews in Thailand should be described. First, the applicants have to fill out an application form and, in some instances, must complete a test. After that, they have a first interview with a human resources recruiter who looks at the applicant's overall background and performance (either on previous jobs or on the test, if one was given). Then, the candidates are sent to speak with a "line manager". Typically, this is the person who will be their boss or supervisor, if they are hired. The line manager will ask more specific questions relating to knowledge on the field and oftentimes is the one who makes a hiring decision. Thirteen out of fourteen organizations represented in my data pool give more weight to the second interview. Most hiring decisions were made by the line manager. Only one of the organizations I consulted included the human resources recruiters in the final decision making, but for all, the initial

screening of candidates occurred at the level of the human resources recruiter. Thus, candidates must perform well in both interviews.

Findings of Research Question 1: What is the concept of communication competence from the standpoint of Thai employment interviewers?

The concept of communication competence was defined slightly differently by each of my twenty-eight interviewees. Five themes emerged across their responses: content, confidence, cooperation, control, and character. For financial service industries in Thailand, candidates are considered to be high in communication competence if they display these five c.

Twenty-four of my interviewees noted paying a lot of attention on the content of an interviewee's answers. Most of the interviewers (26) commented that they focus on both knowledge and skills. Candidates are not only expected to know the answer but also to be able to perform. In order to be considered competent, an interviewee is also expected to answer in a certain way. Over half of recruiters (12 out of 20) and most human resources recruiters (6 out of 8) stated that communicatively competent interviewees are those who are able to speak in a certain way.

Candidates' speeches (i.e., their responses to questions) have to be concise and to the point. Almost fifty percent of line managers (9 out of 20) preferred to hire someone who speaks directly and to the point. Khun Nopakaow (pseudonyms are used for all of the respondents mentioned in the dissertation), who has more than ten years experience as an employment interviewer, said "Straight to the point. Not flowery or watery. That kind of thing. Because only smart people will speak short and precise and understandable." She provided an example of someone who applies for a stock broker position: "it is very important [for him or her] to speak loud and clear

and not soft speaker. My telephone is a very expensive one. So, the other side should be able to hear you. If someone called you and asked [for information], you should be able to say ‘today is 90 baht’. How much do you want?’ As she spoke, Khun Nopakaow stressed every word loudly and clearly. She explained that, for her, precise speech indicates how smart an interviewee is:

“Sometimes I can even tell that this guy is smart or not. Because these people sometimes cannot summarize. Particularly new generation, they just talk and talk. They cannot focus on the main point or bullet point. But, bright ones will be able to organize their answers. Just getting them to talk about themselves can tell a lot.”

Another interviewee with 10 years experience who works in an IT department, Khun Pong, said “when we are talking, we can understand one another. They can tell their experience. Their answer goes to the point. They do not go around the bush.” Khun Pong told me that some candidates memorize their résumé. They will present only about three minutes to him. He told me that he does not like a candidate to present him/herself in that way: “This is like they are reading the power point for me. They do not give me more clarification. In each bullet point, they do not tell their outstanding qualities.”

Khun Tookta, who has 20 years of experience as a human resources recruiter, described similar preferences. She stated that “how they answer the questions—it has to be clear and direct to the point. When I meet [candidates with] sales [backgrounds], they are used to selling things. They will present their qualities for so many. But, their answer is not direct and to the point.”

Not only do the interviewers expect interviewees to respond to questions in short and precise answers, the candidates are also expected to be able to narrate their story. Concreteness of words is one thing in particular for which some interviewers (4) look. When a candidate provides reasons for answering a question in a particular way, those reasons should be logical and have support. Khun Sree, who is a senior vice president, said “if it [the topic we are talking about] is deeper, they must have support in numbers. For example, if I give them a case, like if I want them to manage this department, they should be able to tell me about the cash flow. The numbers that they use must have reliable support. Not just saying it out of nowhere.” On the other hand, Khun Somkid, who is a first vice president of human resources, said “for a good communicator, there must be good logical thinking because how to make people understand what you say? You have to understand the logic. If you can have that, your answers can be concise, clear, to the point.”

There were some recruiters (10) who focused more on understanding. For these recruiters, communication competence was evident in the interview if the interviewer and the interviewee understood one another. For example, one recruiter explained that a competent interviewee is

“someone [who] makes sense when speaking. For example, if I asked whether you have eaten, you can answer that you have or have not. That is all I want. They do not have to make an answer to be so perfect. They have to give answers that match my questions. But there is a person who cannot answer. They do not understand. I want something simple and want them to answer directly and to the point.”

Similar to foreign supervisors, both the Japanese and the Singaporean managers put an emphasis on language. As one of these managers told me, if he cannot understand a candidate or he/she cannot understand him when they are speaking on the telephone, then the interview is finished. Mr. Peter, a Singaporean supervisor, said “they have to be able to understand what I am saying [in English] because our company operates on a multinational level, like doing business in London....” In addition, a Thai recruiter who works in a Japanese company said

“... another thing is language. If they can communicate well and the boss understands, they will be impressed. Talking. When you have experience in talking, you will know. If one cannot express how they feel in words-- language is a medium that allows us to communicate with one another. Otherwise, if you do not understand, when the boss tells you to do something, you might give him something else. That can create damage. For Japanese organizations, when someone makes a mistake, there is a report, either orally or in writing. Thus, clear communication is important.”

One human resources recruiter explained that a sequence is used to assess whether an applicant is good or not. An interviewee who does not tell a story in a chronological order is considered as a poor interviewee. She explained that “sometimes I ask them something, and they give an answer that does not match with the question I asked. When they explain something, it is not in sequence. I have to ask follow-up questions so that I can understand [their story]. Like what did you do? Sometime it is confusing.”

Both inexperienced and experienced candidates are expected to have knowledge of the field. The content of their answers will show whether they have that

knowledge or not. Line managers, in particular, expect job applicants to know technical terms. Moreover, some interviewers (6) expect interviewers to have knowledge of the company.

Organizations that deal with foreign customers expect job applicants to know English. A Singaporean boss said “Language is a key. Your ability to present your ideas. The ability to differentiate yourself.” He also said that an applicant does not have to have good English. But, he/she should be able to communicate: “They have to be able to analyze and discuss in English. They also have to be able to give their opinions” said he.

The Thai recruiters also noted being conscious of an applicant’s English accent: “When I interview employees for an international job, it is important to understand them--whether they have a good accent or not. Because, you know, when you are a stock broker, you have to talk on the phone a lot and count numbers. So, [I look at] their accent or the clarity of the words.” Heavily accented speech can contribute to misunderstandings. However, accent is a point for attention for another reason. As one human resources manager explained, accent can represent the image of the company: “If the applicant knows the content of the job but the way is doing is not appropriate [then there is a problem]. If he does not speak clear Thai but he can speak English, but like someone who is born in China, I will not be sure if he would fit with my image or my culture.”

Confidence is important for the applicants. Confidence involves how they present themselves and how they answer questions. Twenty-one interviewers prefer their candidates to be confident. Khun Manee, a human resources recruiter said: “this new generation, I think they are very confident. I feel that they are excellent. They are

good in a variety of ways. When I ask them a question, then they will ask me questions back. These youngsters are attentive. They have a lot of knowledge. Some people graduated from finance or economics programs; they have a lot of knowledge in that area. And most of them have honor.” Khun Paitoon, a recruiter with four years experience at the entry level, expressed a similar point of view: “The more you have is good. But you have to know how to communicate in a soft way because we are in a Thai culture.” Khun Paitoon explained that “soft way” means expressing yourself in a polite and respectful manner. The interviewee should present himself to be soft on the outside but strong on the inside.

There were some interviewers (7) who did not express a preference for confidence; one even noted that interviewees who lack confidence can still be seen as competent. Khun Sunee, who has ten years experience as a recruiter and who works in a Japanese owned bank, said “I might choose both of them. One who is not confident, I will use her in the company. For the one who is confident and pretty, I will send them to deal with customers.” Moreover, Khun Sunee mentioned

“Now the world has changed. We have to give them a chance. If they are confident, I have to adjust myself. Although, in the past, I went to [my own] interview with an air of humility, for today’s world, they still need to give me respect. But, I have to adjust myself and listen to them because the world has changed. We have to use a middle way.”

That said, a shy person is not preferred. Khun Nopakaow, a middle level recruiter, explained that

“Being shy, too shy. It is not ok. If they are too shy, they won’t ask their boss questions, and then, it is very difficult for shy people to make progress. They

do not ask questions. And even though they do not understand, they will still continue doing a job which is bad. And I think it is not a good attribute. And if this person is too shy, they cannot do the manager job.”

Khun Nopakaow told me that candidates should have a good balance. They should not be too shy or too confident. It is not good to be too confident and boast about one’s accomplishments or abilities. Moreover, it is not good to be too shy and not look people in the eye. “Being honest because, when you are doing an interview, you have to look at the interviewer, and people who do not look into the eyes of others does not mean that they are timid. Or if they are, they have to change their personality. Otherwise, they would not get a job.”

In Thai organizations, there is a limitation of confidence. Khun Napat, a recruiter with fifteen years experience, said

“too confident—that is aggressive. Confidence is knowing who you are, what you want. Knowing your topic so you can answer intelligently. It means that you are prepared. You do not have to worry. Am I going to say the right thing or the wrong thing? But overconfidence means you are bragging. You are showing off. You put them [the listeners] not at ease.”

Khun Napat also explained the meaning of aggressiveness: “when you are too pushy. You make people uncomfortable. If you are able to read the other person...you know. What is their style? What are they able to accept, you know? If you say things or behave in such a way that you make the other person feel uncomfortable, then that is not it [i.e., not competent].”

Most interviewers have views similar to those of Khun Napat. Confidence involves letting the interviewer know that you are knowledgeable but not showing off.

Khun Sree, a recruiter for middle level positions, also agreed with this idea, but he added that one who is confident should respect others, especially those who are older.

Khun Sree said

“it is a good thing to have a point of view. It is a positive thing. But one should be flexible. One should be able to listen. Being confident is a good thing. One should have their own thoughts. It is great thing to have leadership. But, it is bad thing if one does not listen to anyone. One should be flexible, especially in a meeting. One should not be too confident. One should know their position: who they are? There is a hierarchy in this company. The young should listen to the adults.”

There were recruiters who expressed the view that an overly confident person is someone who has a high ego. Most interviewers viewed this as a negative behavior and as a behavior that would result in them not choosing a particular applicant. That said, one recruiter did admit that she might take such an applicant into consideration if there seemed to be a good reason for this person’s high ego: “If he has high ego but he has a reason. I might consider that. But if he is irrational and he thinks that he is the best, [I would not].”

One IT recruiter expressed regretted that he had chosen an overly confident candidate for a position. He confessed that this mistake created difficulties. He had learned from this experience and would not choose this kind of person again. He stated that:

“In my opinion, it is hard to work with this kind of person because he/she has a high ego. They will have a problem with their coworkers. They cannot get along with their colleagues. If, in their position, they have to work with

members of their team and other teams, I would not... I want someone who is confident, but they should be open. Some people think that their answer is always correct. For example, $1+1=2$ but there is another way like $3-1=2$ too. If they defend themselves on something that is not important, it is a waste of time. We have to be careful.”

However, there were interview participants (4) who expressed preferences for candidates who demonstrate a level of aggressiveness. A 30-something year old high level position recruiter stated that candidates should be confident and aggressive. He explained that aggressive is not *gawraow*. Aggressive is

“They answer more than you want. They want to come out to do something. I do not want someone who calls customers only once a week. Aggressive people are not waiting. That person should be someone who calls the customers every day. Like I show them what do I want.”

Another middle age male human resources recruiter said,

“There is a different definition for the word aggressive. There is aggressive that means *gawraow* and aggressive that is active. For *gawraow*, that is dysfunctional aggressive which is not good. But for functional aggressive, like active, that is okay. During an interview, I [typically] do not see much [aggressiveness]. But we will see after, like marriage, you will see when you live together for a while.”

The foregoing statements reveal that entry and middle level position interviewers prefer someone who is confident but still cares for others, as demonstrated by listening to others’ opinions.

As a third theme, in their comments most of the participants (20) focused on cooperation. Not only must an applicant have the characteristics that fit the position and the organization, he/she must be able to work well with others. Candidates have to be able to work with their team. One recruiter said

“I also look at the teamwork—if he can get along with others. If he shows that he cannot get along with people, then it will be difficult. At the end, when you are working, it is all team work. You cannot run this [business] alone. We might test him if he believes in teamwork or not, or if he is a one man show. I don’t believe in the one man show thing.”

The fourth criterion that the interviewers noted looking at is control. A candidate should demonstrate emotional control and work control. Some recruiters (12) voiced the expectation that interviewees should demonstrate emotional control. They want someone who is stable. Moreover, a competent interviewee is someone who demonstrates emotional balance. He/she should not be too serious or too relaxed.

“...Some person looks lively when they are speaking. Some person looks so serious. He is telling a joke, but he looks very serious... If you have to negotiate with the customers but you do not take things seriously, you look everything as funny [that is not good]. Some people have a habit like saying things in a funny way. It is *galatesa*. [You have to know people, place and time].”

One high level position recruiter stated that he not only looks at IQ but EQ (i.e., emotional quotient).

With respect to work control, the degree of control needed varies according to position. One head of human resources said:

“For senior [hires], we accept someone who is going to control the team and create someone for us. For junior [hires], I expect someone to work for us and then grow. What we are lacking in the market right now is someone who works well and can manage people. They [Most people nowadays] can’t create [mentor or nurture] people. For the high level, if they can come and manage and create people, [that applicant] has high values. He does not have to be so good at work, but if he can create people, that is good.”

In order to predict employee performance, the interviewer might ask about an applicant’s previous work experience. For example, for upper management candidates, an executive vice president explained that he was interested in:

“How many subordinates does he have in his previous work? For these four to five people who work under me, they each have different numbers of subordinates. Some have 100 workers, others 300 workers or 40 to 50 people. If I have to hire someone, first, he has to have experience. Second, how many subordinates has he managed—like 300, okay. If he manages only 40-20, it is not okay. I consider this as a major issue [in hiring decision making].”

This speech shows that, for a high level position, to be successful an applicant has to be able to manage the team. For middle level managers, the candidates have to show that they can work independently. As one participant explained, “I want someone who can make a decision. I do not like someone who relies on others, like ‘up to you’. How can they make a decision when they do the job? In this kind of job, when you are dealing with the customers, you have to decide what to do on your own.”

Oftentimes, work control is measured during a three to four months probation period. One recruiter explained that:

“One should be patient. Some people during the four months probation, I told them what to do. It is a lot of work. Some candidate did what I told. But, some complained that it is too much. Some was quiet, did not say a thing. But they submitted their work late. I prefer someone who works hard. They should be patient.”

In addition to knowledge and performance of the work, competence was defined by the participants in this research as involving morality and ethics. Five interviewers mentioned that the candidate should not only be good at work but also be a good person. Four other interviewers focused on integrity. Thus, competence in Thailand involves at least two kinds of performances: work performance and the kind of performance that suggests personal integrity. One high level recruiter noted that he is a Buddhist. He likes to hear that Buddhist principles are very important: “Maybe not the five [precepts] specifically, you know. I do not mind if they drink at a party, but [I do mind if they] steal, cheat, and lie. That is ethics. They have an affair, I don’t care. They drink, I do not care. But not too much.”

Another mid level interviewer agreed with this idea. She tries to ask questions that uncover what a candidate’s ethical principles are. She told me that she would set a situation for them. For example, she might ask: “‘if you know one client, but he is your friend’s client, what would you do?’ If he said ‘open another account for a volume.’ I think this is stealing.”

Another ethical principle that was mentioned concerned deception. A white lie is not good. An entry level recruiter said

“When communicating with people, oftentimes, one wants to hear good/nice things. It can impress another person when they are working together. Sometimes saying things nicely but it is a lie is not good. It would not show the truth like a mirror that can reflect him. But we should know how to say something so that he can see his drawbacks and he can improve himself. You have to know the way to talk to him in a positive way. And make him feels good.”

From this, one can deduce that telling the truth is an important moral principle that Thai job candidates should demonstrate.

The last “c” identifying a theme uncovered in this research stands for character. Twenty-three of the recruiters interviewed as part of this project noted paying attention to character. The candidates must have the kind of character that fits the position. In banking and the financial industry, there are various departments. Data analysis suggested dividing comments into two groups: comments focusing on hires who will have to deal with customers directly, often called “front”; and comments focusing on hires who will not have to deal with customers, e.g., support staff involved with IT, analysis, or research. One middle level position recruiter pointed out

“There is a front office mentality. There is a back office mentality. There is someone who will be suited as a research analyst. And there is somebody else who can sell to customers. So, it is a personality thing... [For front desk employees], you have to be outgoing. Something like extrovert. Less modest. But not full of air--hot air. If a person comes in and does not look you in the eye, is very shy about what he or she wants to say, can that person get a

message across? They can't express themselves. Then, that person is suited to something behind the computer. Less client facing...[for] analyst. Something in the background. Meticulous to detail and a bit of a pessimist. The kind of person that is maybe suited to managing the company's risk. On the other hand, guys who are verbally expressive, very confident, almost cocky. You might want those people to try their hands as salesmen. You sell whatever the product is to people. Or even better, you have your own idea. You have your own instinct. A gut feeling. That is very important in this business.”

Another Thai recruiter for a Japanese organization agreed with the above statement.

“For a credit analyst, they are from accounting. Thus, they have their own character. Someone who likes working with computers, they have to do the input... For marketing, they will have another kind of character. Like I said earlier, for your future, if you want to work, you have to be able to present yourself like what you have for selling us...”

Yet another Thai recruiter who works for another Japanese organization said

“Personality should not be weird. For example, for a guy who has pierced ears and tattoos [is weird].”

For this recruiter (as well as some others), appearance is defined as a reliable indicator of personality. If an applicant for a position presents a physical appearance (in terms of jewelry, tattooing, or, conceivably, clothing) that is not “traditional,” then the applicant’s personality probably follows suit and is different from what is normatively expected. Interviewers first judge the appearance of an interviewee. Most financial industry recruiters prefer a professional business look. The way an applicant dresses not only conveys information about the applicant’s character but also shows

how much respect a candidate has for his/her interviewer and for the interview process. One of the middle level recruiters explained:

“The way they [applicants] dress [is important] as well, but not the expensive stuff. They have to dress [professionally]. We think that the way that they dress for an interview can tell how much respect they have for the interviewers...

Another human resources recruiter commented on the specific look that his organization wants: “In here, the look is important. The candidates have to be clean. The shirts have to be inside their pants. They cannot wear flip-flop. Their hair, not colors like blond color. They have to be neat and clean for this bank.”

What an applicant is wearing can be interpreted as indicating how well other organization members can work with the candidate in the future. If it seems that it is hard to change a candidate's dress style, she would not hire that person. One human resource recruiter stated that

“There is a difference in each company. For an advertising company, they might want a creative style. But for servicing, like Banking, for us, we are a big bank. We have a uniform. We expect our employees to look good. Look trustworthy. Thus, when a candidate comes through the door, I will assess how well they can accept the company's culture. If a lady came, and she was wearing a fitted shirt and shorts, I would tell her that it is not polite.”

Not only should most candidates display a conservative appearance, almost all of the recruiters (24 out of 28) interviewed as part of this research also expressed a preference for candidates who behaved in a conservative or traditional manner, such as showing polite and respectful manners. This is important because an employee's

manners represent the company image. One executive vice president said “First of all, they walk in. Their physical appearance has to be appropriate. No shorts or sandals for positions in banking. Smile and greet you. Do not sit down before you do. It is important because they represent you. First impression is important.”

However, there are some front-line workers whose appearance is of less concern, such as call center workers:

“In some jobs, like the call center, I don’t look at how they look. I look at how they talk. I do not want someone who talks fast and has an accent [which deviates from Thai standard pronunciation]. They have to talk at a slow pace. Sometimes I close my eyes to listen. Their mood has to be calm. For the counter, they have to be polite. There are different people coming to the bank from ordinary citizens to the seniors.”

From data analysis, both men and women are expected to present the same appearance and engage in similar behaviors. Few participants identified any different expectations. However, there were two participants who stated that women are more aggressive. I asked them how they feel about that. Both of them said it was good, i.e., that there was nothing wrong with women being more aggressive. Another human resources recruiter said that men do not talk much. If an applicant wants to work in a position where he/she will have to deal with customers, that person will have to be able to talk. A quiet person would not be suited for this position. However, there was one case that revealed the recruiter wanted female candidates to wear skirts. This recruiter described a situation in which a candidate came to an interview wearing pants. Although she was not dressed as the recruiter would have preferred, in this

instance, the hiring decision was not affected because the candidate fulfilled other criteria, such as experience and educational background.

For high level positions, over half of the recruiters (5 out of 8) involved in such hires prefer that a candidate present evidence of leadership. Khun Krit, who is an executive vice president of a Thai bank, stated that communication skill is important for leadership.

“He has to have good communication skill. He has to be able to communicate. He has to be able to explain the job and have knowledge about the work. He must have the skill that he can teach the subordinates—he can communicate with them. He does not have to have communication skills similar to those needed for sales because that is not his position. He has to only communicate with people in the organization. But he must have the skill to convince a subordinate to finish the work project within a certain period of time. Or if the subordinates are not good, he must be able to see what are the things that the subordinates are lacking. He has to be able to tell what is lacking, and if he wants cooperation, how he should be able to help or communicate with them. [He should know] how to use *pradej* and *prakhun*. He should not just dictate without listening to the subordinates. If you are too bossy, the subordinates might not cooperate. You have to have *pradej* and *prakhun*. When you tell them to do something, you should be a part of doing it. For example, this march, I have involved in approval the loan. My subordinates have to work overtime. From morning to 9 pm, they have to work Saturday and Sunday as well. We have overtime compensation. It is not enough because some people want to be with their family. They might not cooperate. Thus, I have to say

that ‘please help’. They come and help. Thus, you have to use many skills in communication such as negotiating and convincing or persuading to have the same agreement and work with us overtime during weekends.”

This statement demonstrates that communication skill is very important. For a Thai leader, there is a distinctive style. The supervisor has to be concerned with how subordinates might feel. He/she has to put him/herself into the subordinates’ position and talk in the way that is not a command. Khun Krit told me that he tried to come into the office on the weekend in order to show his subordinates that he cared for them. In order to create *pradej and prakhun*, one should not only tell their subordinates what to do but should take actions that demonstrate concern and be a part of their work.

Leadership tends to be a characteristic of a high level position. However, a recruiter for one organization indicated that his organization looked at leadership skill at all levels. Experienced human resources recruiter Khun Tiparat told me that, for a new graduate, she can measure his/her leadership during the trial. After interviewing, she will give a project to the candidates to do in groups:

“For example, in a group assessment, some persons like to show that they have leadership ability. But, no one should dominate the team. Each should be open for other colleagues to be able to discuss. Each should be open for others. No candidate should consider only his or her own opinions. That is too much. Thus, if we hire him, he would not listen to others because he does not listen to others. He is too aggressive. That is negative.”

Overall, character is looked at slightly differently in different job positions. For junior positions (entry level), employees are expected to do their job and work

well with others. For higher positions, employees are expected to be able to manage the team. The results reveal that one who has to deal with customers is expected to exhibit different characteristics during the interview than someone who will not be dealing with customers.

Although there are different characteristics in each position, most applicants must exhibit characteristics that fit the organization's culture. From the data analysis, I found that a successful candidate must exhibit politeness and respectfulness while interviewing. These are the characteristics that one should have. As one human resources recruiter said,

“it [respectfulness] is a basic etiquette. You do not have to be humble in all cases, but you should not show your power. You should not show your ego. Or show up your superior all the time because what you get is a reflection from others. But, if you are humble at all time, they might respect you less. You should have some balance, but at the beginning, when you first come, you should not show you're superior.”

One interviewer complained that “in the new generation, Thais don't have *hanseng* (ending words which show politeness) when they ask you what do you think. You say *krub* or *ka*. But some people now they just cut it short which is no *krub* and *ka*. That is not nice.”

For most middle level position interviewers (11 out of 13), candidates should show respect.

“We would look for someone who has *samakarawa* (respectfulness). For *line* [a line manager], if you think that you are excellent and you look at *line* like he/she is stupid, you do not have *samakarawa* to the boss. The boss [without

samakarawa] cannot manage as well. This is what we need to look at.

Attitude, for example, you have a doctoral degree but your boss has a bachelor degree. How do you look at him if he tells you what to do? Will you be obedient? Nowadays there are a lot of people who has a master's or doctoral degree but they are so proud. I am a doctor. Who are you? You are just a bachelor's degree. I will not listen to you. But you know what? They have more experience than you do.”

High level positions require respectfulness. Most high level position interviewers (6 out of 8) want applicants to display confidence and also respect them (the interviewer) at the same time. A high level position recruiter said

“But when you are working with the boss you have to give him respect. Some people have high qualifications but he will have to work with the boss who does not speak English clearly and graduates in the country. But he graduated from an ivy league school. But these people have a lot of experience. He should not look down at them. I have to teach him. When I meet him during the interview, I will ask ‘what if your boss is a woman, can you accept that?’ Some people said that they do not like or they never work with woman before. Some, I see that he has high confidence. [I asked] what if you get refused, how do you feel? But I would not say that too much confidence, I would not say that I cannot accept that. But when they are working in the organization for a while, he sees the environments and the organization and if he has that high confident and he cannot accept that. At the end, he will leave the organization. He has to change himself. He cannot focus on himself only. He has to live with others.”

My research did reveal that some recruiters (7) prefer candidates to give different opinions or to disagree, but in a respectful way. As one middle level recruiter explained:

“Age does not matter. I give them the freedom to think. They can tell/suggest me if I did something that it is not good from their point of view but I have to be able to them too. We have to meet half way...”

Another high level recruiters said,

“But if you have too much [aggressiveness], Thai culture says that is not good. The seniority, the one who has the high level, is always right. That is not right. It is a mixture of both. It is an art. The way of communicating—how to talk to the senior when you know that he is not right. But how are you are going to talk to him to make him understand. You have to slowly convince him. Or you go and say directly that he is wrong. It has to be like this. This is a style. Most Thais do not like aggressive.”

Not only should a person’s characteristics fit the position, some organizations search for specific characteristics or personal values that match the organization’s values. Most interviewers will look at the candidate specifically and, then, look back at the team to see if this person can work with the organization. For example, a human resources interviewer with 20 years experience said “if she is too humble, for example, if she said ‘[I will do] whatever you said’. I have to use my imagination like how can this person be with my team or organization. Does she fit with our organization?”

Some line managers (7 out of 20) look at the whole organizational culture as well. For example, Khun Korn, a recruiter for a Japanese organization, said “Japanese

people are loyal. They work in a group. They do not like conflict. They like to work in a group as a team.” Thus, he tries to find candidates who have those values. Another recruiter who has worked for a Japanese company since he was a staff member and who is now the head of a department wants someone who will work for the organization for a long period of time because of the culture of organization.

“The longer we stay, the more they [Japanese] trust us. Thus, there is a good thing in Japanese people. After they trust (*wangjai*), they will let us do the job (*waijai*). Therefore, they want the applicant who is going to come and work with us to have this kind of attitude. They are not a job hopper. Like they just want to try to see what a Japanese company like. Is working with Japanese people like what they dream of?”

However, from the analysis, I found that most line managers look at how a person fits the job and the team more than looking at the organization. For example, a recruiter who searches for high level position employees will ask a candidate if he/she is able to have a female boss.

The first research question pointed attention to the concept of communication competence, as described by Hymes (1979), Spitzberg (1983) and Cooley and Roach (1984). Overall, the results of the data analysis suggest that employment interviewers are very much attuned to looking at an applicant’s knowledge and performance within the interview. In order to be considered as competent, interviewees are expected to answer an interviewer’s questions in a certain manner. At the same time, subtle differences exist in exactly what is being sought as, for example, line managers focus on team players while upper-level recruiters look for fit with the organization as a whole. We now turn attention to the next research question.

Findings of Research Questions 2a and 2b: What are the dimensions/qualities that interviewers focus on when assessing the competence of their applicants? What cues do interviewers focus on when trying to determine whether an applicant has presented his/her actual self?

A majority of the participants in this research (21 of 28) use nonverbal cues and verbal cues to evaluate interviewee competence. For nonverbal cues, appearance is important. Some interviewers (8) use physical appearance to decide whether an applicant is appropriate for hire. They also observe how applicants look and the way applicants behave once they walk in. A high level position recruiter said

“First of all, they walk in. Their physical appearance has to be appropriate. Not shorts and sandals for banking. Smile and greet you. Should not sit down before you do. It is important because they represent you. First impression is important. Then, I will see their specialization. Do they know their stuff? They need to know their stuff...the market.”

There are exceptions. Two recruiters indicated paying more attention to knowledge than to appearance. However, the applicants have to dress in a conservative style. For example, a Thai recruiter who works for a Japanese organization said

“if you want to work, you have to be able to present yourself like what you have for selling us. People will present differently like how they dress. How they prepare themselves. For some ladies, she might look the most beautiful on that day. They should be well prepared so it can make an impression. But, I see someone who is studious. They won't care much on how they look. But their education background information will show that they are a first class

honor. Thus, we know how to use them. Although they do not physically look distinguished, we can use them. When you have a lot of experience, you can see from how he is saying and how he is doing. Body language can tell us who that person is. I will choose person from that.”

After observing an interviewee’s appearance, a recruiter will use questions to assess how competent the candidate is. One of the participants explained that the interview is like a dating process. Another participant revealed that the time that follows decision making is like a new marriage. The organization and the new hire might not know their true selves until they interact. Most people said that they cannot know who they are, but they can predict. Some people assume that they know themselves, but they change over time after they get hired.

Most of the interviewers indicated that they use open-ended questions to measure applicant competence. Their questions can be categorized into three groups: questions relating to personal information, questions about the work, and questions on unrelated work topics. How the candidates respond to the questions indicate how competent or incompetent a candidate is.

For the personal questions, most human resources interviewers noted they ask in depth questions about applicant family background because they believe that this information can tell them so many things, such as who interviewees are or how they will fit in the organization. *Khun Pong*, a human resources recruiter with four years experience, said

“After I start interviewing this person, when I ask them questions, first, I will see if they can understand my questions or not. And I will look at the answer. How they conduct the answer. Do they cover something? For example, if we

want to ask about family, some people have *Pom* (inferiority complex). They will not talk about their family, like what their father or mother does. He or she will talk only about him/herself. This makes me wonder whether this person has a problem with their family. From my experience, oftentimes, his/her father and mother are divorced. The way that they answer can tell a lot. Another example, I interviewed one lady--she graduated with a first class honor. But when she talked about her family's background, she said that his father is a construction worker and his mother too. She is the daughter of construction worker. When I heard this, she did cover her background. I think she is sincere/honest. And when I ask about her study, she said that she helped her parents work as a constructor while she was studying. It makes me realize that she is open. She does not cover things although she comes from not [a good background] family. She has to upgrade herself... Some person might talk about others. They do not say that they are not perfect. They will blame others. This is something that I can use as a predator like what he/she is going to be if he/she comes and work with me..."

For Khun Pong, how a candidate responds to questions about private information can be used to measure that candidate's attitudes. He expressed the belief that such responses indicate who a candidate is. Not talking about their family background can be interpreted as "this person has a problem or something that they think is a weakness." The line manager who works for the same organization as Khun Pong also noted looking at the same thing:

"About their attitude, I look at their attitude, whether it is negative or positive. I prefer someone who has a positive point of view. And, their attitude toward

the problems, I often ask about their family background. For example, how many siblings do they have? How important is family for them? Are they living together or separate? Are they from a warm family? These are important. Their attitude is important. For example, the political issue, if they have a mindset, which party they are in, and they have made a decision [or a judgment] right away, that is not good. I think in every issue, one should be able to find the best way that can work with both sides.”

This line manager thinks that information about family can be applied to other working situations. He told me that it can be used especially with big projects. If a candidate has a positive attitude about his/her family, he/she must have positive attitudes about other things too. This would affect on his/her work projects. He/she should have the attitude that he/she can solve any problem.

Another experienced human resources recruiter told me that she might evaluate it as positive if the candidate goes to visit his/her family (assuming he/she is from another province). She explained that such behavior can be interpreted as competence.

“She likes to take care of her family, her mother. She sends money home. She wants to take care of her dad. She is worried. She wants to be there. I will see how warm her family is. Or she is with her sister. She will drive her sister to school. This is cute. Or when she has a problem, who is she talking with?”

This can indicate the value of interviewees who match the organization. This organization is family oriented. They want someone who does not focus on only himself/herself but on others too.

However, most line managers (18 out of 20) do not touch much on an applicant's private information. The interviewers only ask about this to find out if an applicant can work within the organization. For example, they asked "if you get married, will you be able to work late at night" because, in some organization, employees have to work until 9 pm or might even have to spend over night at the company. One who has a family might find such requirements difficult.

The person who comes from a good family background is a plus because of the connections that they have. For banking, it is good to have such connections. Khun Pipat, a mid-level recruiter with 15 years experience, said "Because you have a significant surname, sometimes that works for you. Sometimes that works against you. In a commercial bank sense, yes, your contacts are great. Daddy's friends and contacts are great." It is a surplus to have networking. For family background, if a candidate has connections, most recruiters, especially for security departments, view this as an advantage because they know those who are our target customers. Moreover, most people who can buy stocks must have a certain amount of money.

Some interviewers (4) indicated that they ask about the candidate's personal story, such as their education, activities, and hobbies, to see if the candidate matches with the job. One interviewer touched on candidate interests:

"...His interests. What do you do over the weekend? What are your personal interests? If someone who has personal interests which are related to the job, it will be good because, when they work, they will be happy in what they do. But if you think that this guy is opposite to the job, it might be hard to change his behavior. We have to see that also. The family--it is not important. But we might touch a little bit. Good family background can help on smoothness in

working. But I would not put that as a major issue to decide if that person should do that job or not.”

For questions about the job, most interviewers asked about their experiences and topics that related to company such what they have done in the past and why they chose this company? For example, Khun Pipat said

““Why do you want to come and work for this bank?’ ‘Well, any foreign firm will do. I don’t very much mind which foreign firm I work for.’ Bad answer. You want to come and work for the company that you’re interviewing for because of X Y Z. Give me a couple of reasons so that, basically, you are prepared to get your point across. Not being committed. It’s like in a golf shot out of a bunker. You have to be committed to get the ball out of the bunker. Otherwise, you will probably screw up and you stay in the bunker. That is basically it and less the personality thing. The guy spends 20 minutes scratching his head. Does not know how to sit or, you know, keeps not being able to get his point across. Does not look to you in the eyes is a language thing.”

Most interviewers can find out if they truly have knowledge of the field or not.

Most recruiters have more experience than the candidates. They can ask for more details of their experiences and find out if they are competent or not. One can see from the statement below that the interviewer does not admire candidates who think that they are competent.

“Oh! They boast a lot. Usually these people, sometimes they graduate with honors, first class honors, first person in the class. All these. They worked hard. They should be proud of themselves. But sometimes you can tell.

Particularly not the new graduate. We will ask how many people were in your department before and, then, what kind of work. Very technical terms. And they will try to impress us with astonishing things. But, when we dig deeper, actually, they are not deep enough. That is dangerous for them because most people who are on the interview committee have like more than 10 years experience.”

Moreover, the questions that the candidates ask the interviewers can be a sign of applicant competence. Most interviewers prefer candidates who ask questions. An IT recruiter said

“The response, it should be interactive. I ask and they also ask me as well. Most of the time, the interviewee will be the one who answers. But, she shows that she asks questions back. For this position, we want this kind of person. I want to hire someone who shows something like this. Someone who has an interaction. She has a response.”

Another human resources recruiter pointed out that

“When I interview, if the conversation does not flow, if he does not ask any questions, it is only one way communication, if he stops, I have to stop because it means that he is not interested. If he does not ask question, it means that he does not demonstrate interest.”

Additionally, conversations about unrelated topics are used to measure applicant attitudes and to observe applicant communication skills:

“...there is one set of questions that we ask the candidates to respond to in English. This is a tricky question that can tell us about the candidate’s logic—the quality of their brain. Like [for example] ‘what kind of sports do you like?’

And, assume that you have to explain your sport to someone unfamiliar with that sport' ...”

In this situation, the recruiter was less interested in the candidate's answer to the question as in what that answer said about the candidate's English language skills.

For Khun Prommit, a high-level position recruiter, knowledge of the field is much less important than is communication skill:

“I will ask test questions about financial issues. They can answer or not—it is okay, but you can see their communication skill because, when you answer, you have to explain. Or some questions are not usual like some committee members will ask, ‘what is the last movie that you watched?’ Or, ‘Can you tell me about a movie that you watched?’ You can see if he can make the story understandable. [The applicant's answer] can prove his communication skill. It does not have to be about the movie, but you do have to choose a topic that he knows about. Like movies or sports.”

Most organizations accord decision making responsibility only to recruiters who are also supervisors. In these situations, the interviewer uses his/her judgment based on personal preferences, knowledge of the vacant position, and assessment of organizational fit. A few organizations (4 participants in this research) use the interview committee to evaluate interviewee performance. The same issues are of concern as when only one decision maker is involved; however, the final decision is a collaborative product.

My participants indicated that line managers often try to find the candidate whose culture or character is similar to themselves, their organization, and fits the job. As one IT recruiter explained:

“We want that kind of [confident] person to fit with our organization. But now, our organization has changed. We need someone who is more Thai. Now there is a problem because, sometime, they speak too direct or they are confident to speak out or think. Sometimes, an applicant’s behavior crosses the senior line of respect. So, it does not fit. Now, I have to find someone who would fit a Thai organization, but I have an American culture. So, now I have to find a way to mix these two cultures together. Now I have to find someone who will fit into these cultures. So, this is going to be my new experience to find someone who will fit with this organization.”

Another interviewer said:

“If she is soft spoken because she is *rieprroy* (proper), it is okay. Because her character seems likes she is fast. Although she speaks slowly, she might not work slowly like me. But for a sales person, if he/she speaks slowly, it might not work. She might not be able to approach the customer. A sales person has to be fast. It depends on the job position.”

As this statement shows, the position that is available plays a substantial role in defining applicant communication competence. One recruiter explained “Questions and answers—if it is what I like, I think he is good.”

One of the participants in this research described setting up a real situation to test candidate emotional control. This recruiter told me, after we had finished our interview, that:

“Sometime during an interview, I pretend to get mad. I can see a lot of things from that—whether they are being mindful and able to solve a problem or not. For example, [after they answer a question] I might say ‘how can you say

that?’ Some people do not say anything. But some avoid the conflict and give their reason in a calm way. I like that. I think the best way to solve a problem is to be calm.”

Two interviewers admitted to choosing someone because of the potential for this person to change the organization. For example, one human resources recruiter said

“Now we want youngsters who are good or can be full of fire to progress. She should be modern because there are a lot of changes outside. People who are old, they are not open to new things. Most of them are mature and they cannot follow the situation that happens outside like in this field, in the banking industry. He [a current employee] thought that he can follow, but then, he showed himself to be resistant. We want to blend the youngsters to work together. So that he can broaden their perspective and the youngsters can also learn from him.”

Most supervisors know who is competent to work for them. However, in one organization, the decision rested with the head of the department—a person who is Japanese. Mr. Fuji has the final authority, but he does not work with the candidates directly. Thus, the candidates who are chosen do not always fit the organization’s culture. A Thai recruiter for a Japanese organization said

“I sometimes know. I can sense. Some people I feel strange. I feel a little bit negative toward him [an applicant]. But when I talked to my boss, he likes him. When we hired him, he did not stay for long... Another case is that she is *Khunnue* (a lady from a good family). We need someone who is strong and can work hard. But, she looks like *Khunnue*, but Japanese often time like this

type. In the end, she did not stay long. I can tell who can work with me for long.”

For the interview committee, the hiring decision is made in group. The power is not with anyone person. Most interviewers will discuss the candidates, identifying those they believe to be satisfactory. Some organizations (3 represented in this research) have a form, typically involving rating scales, for interviewers to complete. The human resources recruiter will collect the completed forms and summarize the ratings. If most people agree in their assessments, the human resources recruiter will write an approval letter to hire this person. This approach was thought to be particularly appropriate when the person who will be hired will be relocated to other teams within the organization.

Among the participants in this research, most of the companies have a probationary period. One bank stood as an exception. Most of interviewers noted that they believe that they can see how competent an applicant is based how that person responds to questions. However, three recruiters did note that performance during the interview is not the only information used to assess competence.

Khun Krit, an executive vice president who interviews applicants for high level positions, expressed the belief that one cannot really tell if someone is the right applicant for the job until that person starts working for the organization:

“...This [interview] is only half an hour or an hour. You would not know until you work together. Sometimes you make a wrong decision. You do not always choose the best candidate. One person might be the best in some respects, but he does not have a good relationship with subordinates. It fails in the end.

They must have this skill. The best to see is when you working with them...”

Another recruiter who interviews middle level position candidates explained that

“It is difficult. We use knowledge to measure, but in a reality, they might not be able to perform. Knowledge is just a part of it. They have to be able to interact with co-workers and adjust to the environment. For example, imagine an employee who has a high level of knowledge but cannot interact with their team. It is difficult. Hiring involves risk taking (*wat daung*).”

Even a head of human resources said

“you can’t tell during the interview. The one who is good at talking, he will win. We will know after they come and work with us during the 3-4 months probation. We do not know yet. They have to work with us for a while. Then you will know something. You can see it from the evaluation. We look at the performance. Like potential—what else do we have?”

Another human resources recruiter also agreed with this idea.

“Attitude is difficult to look at. What we can use to measure is questions. You can use the questions to see the anger management. I also think that we can see someone’s attitude when that person is talking. But, if he can answer those questions, at least he knows like how he should think. But he might not be able to perform because attitude and performance are different things. Attitude is one thing. Behavior is another. But in 45 minutes, we see his thought that this is what we know that he should or should not think. For a guarantee, you have to see how they behave.”

Thus, these people do not believe that they can see the candidate’s true self during an interview. They need to see how the person performs during the probationary period.

Finally, five recruiters noted using connections or references as a means for discovering whether a candidate is truly competent. These recruiters told me that the financial industry in Bangkok is really a small society. They know one another and, as a result, can call others to find out who the candidates are.

The analysis of the data relevant to the research questions 2a and 2b revealed that most interviewers in this research use nonverbal cues and verbal cues to evaluate interviewee competence. For nonverbal cues, appearance is important. Interestingly, the comments that were offered did reflect some diversity in views as some interviewers (2) stated that they paid more attention to knowledge than appearance while other interviewers focused more on the looks. However, most of the interviewers believe that they can use open-ended questions (questions relating to personal information, questions about the work, and questions on unrelated work topics) to measure applicant competence. Attention is now turned to the final research question.

Findings of Research Question 3: What are the components of communication competence in the context of Thai employment interview?

To answer research question 3, I looked at the interview transcripts to identify common statements. These statements were highlighted and then written on notecards. Review of the notecards revealed that they could be sorted into four groups: cognitive, behavioral, psychological, and moral/ethical (see Table 4.1). Within each of these groups are positive (P) and negative (N) elements.

Table 4.1: Communication Competence Components

Competence Components	Items
Cognitive Component: Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The candidate knows the products or the market and answers right away. (P) 2. The candidate has a great knowledge on his job or the field such as technical terms. (P) 3. The candidate knows about the company. (P) 4. The candidate has a clear reason as to why they chose this company. (P) 5. The candidate understands what the interviewers say. (P) 6. The candidate does not have a clear career objective. (N)
Behavioral Component: Responding to the questions (e.g., confident, politeness, respectfulness)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. The candidate has a good response when interviewing such as asking me questions. (P)

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (continued): Communication Competence Components

Competence Components	Items
	<p>8. The candidate is overly confident in a way that might mean he/she cannot get along with others. (N)</p> <p>9. The candidate is confident when they are talking. (P)</p> <p>10. The candidate is bragging. (N)</p> <p>11. The candidate speaks politely such as ending with <i>ka</i> or <i>krub</i>. (P)</p> <p>12. The candidate sits too comfortable. (N)</p> <p>13. The candidate shows that he/she is superior. (N)</p> <p>14. The candidate does not speak in a time sequence. (N)</p> <p>15. The candidate can present him/herself well. (P)</p> <p>16. The candidate can communicate in a way that helps me to understand him/her. (P)</p>

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (continued): Communication Competence Components

Competence Components	Items
Conservative/Appropriate Appearance	<p>17. The candidate appears to be fast in doing things. (P)</p> <p>18. The candidate is a fast thinker. (P)</p> <p>19. The candidate shows his/her determination and interest. (P)</p> <p>20. The candidate provides reliable support in an argument. (P)</p> <p>21. The candidate shows hesitation when answering questions. (N)</p> <p>22. The candidate has a good accent. (P)</p> <p>23. The candidate speaks softly. (P)</p> <p>24. The candidate is self centered and does not care for others. (N)</p> <p>25. The candidate wears flip flops and has colored his/her hair blond. (N)</p> <p>26. The candidate dresses formally in a conservative style for an interview. (P)</p>

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (continued): Communication Competence Components

Competence Components	Items
Low context	<p>27. The candidate has a tattoo and one earring. (N)</p> <p>28. The candidate speaks clearly and directly to the point. (P)</p> <p>29. The candidate is too talkative. (N)</p> <p>30. The candidate gives too many details. (N)</p>
Psychological Component: Emotional Control Attitude	<p>31. The candidate is stable. (P)</p> <p>32. The candidate has a negative attitude. (N)</p> <p>33. The candidate has a good attitude toward work, such as a “can do” attitude. (P)</p> <p>34. The candidate cannot control their emotion. (N)</p>
Moral/Ethical Component	<p>35. The candidate is honest. (P)</p> <p>36. The candidate displays integrity. (P)</p>

Summary: Chapter Four

The purpose of this chapter was to answer the three main research questions. This chapter revealed that a competent interviewee displays five “c” qualities: content, confidence, cooperation, control, and character. Moreover, this research demonstrates that recruiters use interview questions to assess out how competent

interviewees are. Lastly, four components of communication competence (cognitive, behavioral, psychological, and moral/ethical) were found in this study. The next chapter will discuss these findings.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to explore the concept of communication competence. Goffman's (1959) theory is useful at this point. For the Thai employment interview context, communication is a performance. Each individual has a role to play. A person has to choose which character or role to play with recruiters. Goffman claimed that humans were socially constructed. Specifically, he argued that "a performance is 'socialized,' molded, and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented" (p.35). In order to be considered as a communicatively competent candidate, interviewees who apply for a position must behave according to the expectations of the company's culture and the requirements of the position. Moreover, the sorts of communication competence that they demonstrate depend on their beliefs and values about others' expectations.

The results reveal that, within the context of employment interviews conducted for organizations located in Thailand, interviewers lean toward an understanding of communication competence that is in line with the ideas espoused by Hymes (1979), Spitzberg (1983), and Cooley and Roach (1984) as opposed to the positions advocated by Chomsky (1965) and McCroskey (1982). As was noted in Chapter 2, one of the debates surrounding the concept of communication competence concerns whether the concept is based on knowledge only or is best understood as combining both knowledge and skill/performance. Hymes (1979), Spitzberg (1983), and Cooley and Roach (1984) are among those scholars who believe that communication competence is defined by the combination of knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge (cognitive and behavioral components), while Chomsky

(1965) and McCroskey (1982) advocate a different view. They argued that competence can be understood through a focus solely on knowledge. The results of this research reveal that, at least within the context of employment interviews conducted within organizations located in Thailand, the definition of the concept is closer to the former position than to the latter. In essence, the recruiters who participated in this research tend to look at an applicant's knowledge and performance within the interview, including whether the interviewee speaks in a clear and concise way.

5.1 The Definition of Communication Competence

The definition of the communication competence in this study matches most closely with the perspective advocated by Dell Hymes (1979). Competence, according to Hymes, should be viewed as "the abilities of individuals" (p. 41). Hymes (1972) explained:

I should take *competence* as the general term for the capability of a person... Competence is dependent on both (tacit) *knowledge* and (ability for) *use*. ... The specification of *ability for use* as part of competence allows for the role of noncognitive factors, such as motivation, as partly determining competence. In speaking of competence, it is especially important not to separate cognitive from affective and volitive factors.... (p. 282-283)

The results of this research indicate that, within the context of employment interviews, to be considered communicatively competent, an interviewee has to demonstrate an ability to perform appropriately. In order to perform well, that person needs to be knowledgeable about the job and alert to the culture of organization.

At the same time, the concept of competence revealed by the participants in this research appears to reflect Spitzberg's (1983) views concerning impression formation. Spitzberg stated that communication competence involves a combination of skill, knowledge, and the impression created by the communicator. He defined competence as "an impression resulting from behaviors of the relational interactants, the context within which [those behaviors] are enacted, and the characteristics of the individuals involved" (p. 326).

The results support the relevance of the impression that is created. There are two related impressions that are of concern: what general impression did the interviewee create during the interview concerning the kind of person that he/she is, and what impression did the interviewee create during the interview concerning his/her ability to perform the job that is available. Most recruiters use the general impression an applicant creates in the interview, drawing from, for example, whether the applicant displays appropriate manners, to predict what or how that applicant is going to perform in the work situation. Some candidates are competent in some situations, but they might not be competent in other situations. This research reveals that the concept of communication competence has situational constraints. This finding is reminiscent of Singhal and Nagao's (1993) research. However, for this research, two different contexts are relevant: communication competence in the interview and communication competence in the work situation.

This idea fits well with Cooley and Roach (1984). They defined communication competence as "the knowledge of appropriate communication patterns in a given situation and the ability to use [that] knowledge" (p. 25). Job candidates have to use appropriate behaviors in various situations, such as during the

interview and, if hired, during the probationary period. However, one human resources recruiter acknowledged that it is impossible to be sure that someone is competent even after the probationary period. Each day brings the possibility for new situations and new challenges. Employees have to use appropriate behaviors in all situations.

Communicatively competent interviewees are not measured only by knowledge but also by outcome. Recruiters use their questions to try to determine an applicant's knowledge level. Moreover, they ask applicants about their work experience. They also look at the way an applicant presents him/herself. Does the applicant demonstrate any hesitation when talking? In this respect, the findings of this research raise questions about McCroskey's (1982) distinction between knowledge competence and performance competence. McCroskey pointed out that some people possess knowledge competence in communication, but they cannot perform that knowledge. For instance, some individuals know languages, but they are not able to speak those languages in a comprehensible manner. According to McCroskey (1982), "one may be effective without being competent and one may be competent without being effective" (p. 3). This means that, even though one cannot accomplish the goal, one can still be competent. Admittedly, one can certainly imagine an applicant who possesses job competence but who is not a capable communicator within the hiring interview process. Unfortunately for this individual, it is unlikely that he/she will receive a job offer, and thus, he/she will not be provided with the opportunity to demonstrate his/her job competence.

5.1.1 Content

Most interviewees are expected to have knowledge of the field. Moreover, some interviewers prefer candidates who are knowledgeable about their organization. However, someone who has only knowledge itself cannot be described as competent; one needs to be able to perform. Some interviewers prefer a candidate who talks only about the main points. They do not like a candidate who speaks in a flowery style or who provides very long answers to questions or who talks in circles. This suggests that, at least within the financial industry (the organizational context for this research), the preferred communication style is one that is low context in nature.

Most of the interviewers who participated in this research indicated they do not like interviewees who give long answers to questions, especially when those long answers reflect a negative point of view on something. Especially among line managers, the impression is that they want someone who speaks in a concise way. One has to be fast. This might be because of the nature of the job, such as security or money exchange. My impression was that there is a slight difference between human resources recruiters and line managers. Human resources recruiters expressed a desire for a conversation with an interviewee. During the fieldwork, the way they spoke with me was casual and exhibited fewer boundaries than was true when I spoke with line managers. The human resources recruiters indicated that their style of conversation with me was the same as the style they employ when interacting with a candidate. Most of them want an interviewee to talk as much as he/she can as this is revealing of what kind of person the applicant is. Some participants (primarily human resources recruiters) asked me to introduce myself and tell them about my dissertation in the same manner as they would start a conversation with a job applicant. However, for the

line managers, their preferred conversation is short and direct. When I asked them to describe an excellent interviewee, most line managers told me a story that lasted less than a minute.

Most recruiters wanted the candidate to speak clearly which appears to match with interview expectations in Western countries. Bretz, Rynes, and Gerhart's study (1993) revealed that recruiters paid attention to the candidate's articulation. Bretz et al. described "articulateness" as "the applicant's ability to orally communicate in an effective, orderly manner..." (p. 317). While this research is now somewhat dated, according to Hollandsworth, Kazelskis, Stevens, and Dressel (1979), the loudness of an interviewee's voice tends to have a great effect on the interview outcome in American interviews. The researchers defined "loudness of voice" as speaking "with clarity and appropriately loud without whispers or shouts" (p. 362).

All of the foregoing suggests that national culture has less of an impact on the definition of communication competence within Thai organizations than one might have expected. Thailand is a high context society. In high context cultures, people tend to write or talk in an indirect style. Sometimes they let their listeners determine the intended message for themselves. At least in terms of this research and the Thai financial industry, organizational culture and the interviewer's position within the organization (i.e., human resources recruiter versus line manager) appeared to exert the greater influence on the concept of communication competence.

5.1.2 Confidence

Confidence is a behavior that most Thai recruiters consider important for a competent communicator. One has to have his/her own way of thinking and be able to make decisions by him/herself. This person has to be confident in various ways such

as presenting ideas, selling products, and working with others. The results of this research revealed that this idea was similar to research results emerging from Western contexts. Many studies (Amalfitano & Kalt, 1977; Asher, 2004; Gallois, Callan, & Palmer, 1992) have found that most Western interviewers prefer confident interviewees. Asher (2004) suggested job candidates need to “sell yourself, be positive and confident, and don’t hold back on representing your abilities” (p. 317).

Khun Napat, a recruiter with fifteen years experience, explained that the right level of confidence is a balancing act:

“too confident—it is aggressive. Confidence is knowing who you are, what you want. Knowing your topic. So, you can answer intelligently. It means that you are prepared. You do not have to worry. Am I going to say the right thing or the wrong thing? But if it is overconfident, it means you are bragging. You are showing off. You put them [the listeners] not at ease.”

One must perform behaviors that convey confidence in a way that gives respect to others. One has to open to others’ opinions. Moreover, one should not show this behavior immediately when one does not agree with a senior executive. *Khun Prommit*, a high level recruiter, said

“But if you have too much [confidence], in the Thai culture is not good. . . . [Communicating with confidence] is an art. The way of communicating—how to talk to someone who is senior who you know is not right. How are you are going to talk to him to make him understand. You have to slowly convince him. Or you go and say directly that he is wrong. It has to be like this. This is a style. Most Thais do not like aggressive.”

This description of confident behavior does not neatly fit with the ideas of masculine and feminine communication styles that Hofstede (1991) described. Thailand is considered a culture that is relatively low on masculinity when compared with the 40 countries that were part of Hofstede's (1980a, 1984) work (see, also, Sorod, 1991). According to Hofstede (1980a), in a feminine culture (such as Thailand), neither men nor women are expected to be assertive. However, this research shows that Thai recruiters want someone who is assertive. One should have their own way of thinking. Nonetheless, a competent communicator still has to enact this behavior with a tone of respectfulness. This value relationships and respectfulness. People care about other's opinions and respect other people's thoughts and feelings, but at least within the context of the financial industry (the sector that was the focus of this study), there is nonetheless the need to be able to articulate one's own point of view.

Both men and women are expected to communicate in a confident manner. However, the value of modesty must also be preserved. Thai interviewers value modesty and tend to devalue people who employ highly confident characteristics. For example, one interviewer noted that she does not like boastful candidates:

“Oh! They boast a lot. Usually these people, sometimes they graduated with honors, first class honors, first person in the class. All these. They worked hard. They should be proud of themselves. But sometimes you can tell. Particularly not the new graduate. We will ask ‘How many people were in your department before?’, and ‘What kind of work did you do?’ Very technical terms. And they will try to impress us. But, when we dig deeper, actually, they are not deep enough. That is dangerous for them because most

people who are on the interview committee have more than 10 years experience.

The participants in this research expressed distaste for people who act superior or act differently from them. This concept of modesty comes from the teachings of the Buddha. Buddhism teaches Thais not to boast. One should not boast because it shows that one believes oneself to be superior to others. In Buddhism, one should not brag or make other people feel inferior. As Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999) noted in their research, modesty is a behavior that Thai people consider to be part of a competent communication style.

This is similar to Hofstede's (1991) description of feminine societies. In such societies, people from both genders are expected to be modest and solve conflicts by comprising and negotiating. Feminine characteristics have a great impact on how one negotiates with others in business. The style of negotiation in feminine cultures does not tend to be expressive as a greater value is placed on preserving harmony. However, in order to be considered competent, one has to act confident—it is just that this confidence must be expressed in moderation and with a dose of modesty.

Confidence in this study is somewhat akin to the characteristic of assertiveness which Western interviewers have reported as desirable (see, Buzzanell & Meisenbach, 2006; Gallois, Callan, & Palmer, 1992). The recruiters want someone who is confident in taking action, such as giving their point of view or making a decision. They should not be too compromising. *Khun Prommit* noted that one should not always agree with a senior employee if you think him/her to be wrong. This idea matches with assertive behavior. An assertive person can be viewed as “someone willing to take a stand and use effective and appropriate communication to advocate

or defend her or his position” (Wanzer & McCroskey, 1998, p. 44). Moreover, some interviewers want candidates to ask questions. “Asking good questions” is an important assertive behavior that applicants should exhibit (Alberti & Emmons, 1982, p. 183).

In this research, aggressiveness was viewed negatively by most of the participants. They equated aggressiveness with *gawraow*. An aggressive person is someone who has too much confidence and does not demonstrate respect for others by listening to their opinions. Admittedly, a slightly different view was articulated by four participants in this research. These four indicated that they think it is (or can be) good to be aggressive. For them, if one does not display aggressiveness, that person can appear inactive (i.e., lazy). Such individuals give the impression of doing everything at a slow pace. As one recruiter explained:

“There is different definition for the word aggressive. There is aggressive that means *gawraow* and aggressive that is active. For *gawraow*, that is dysfunctional aggressiveness which is not good. But functional aggressiveness, like being active, that is okay. But during an interview, I do not see much. We will see after. Like marriage, you will see when you live together for a while.”

Thus, the word aggressiveness seems to have two connotative meanings: one positive and one negative. Drawing on distinctions made between “aggressiveness” (generally considered by Western scholars as a negative behavior) and “assertiveness” (generally considered by Western scholars as a positive behavior), Alberti (1977) explained that assertiveness is close to aggressiveness. Assertiveness cannot be

defined by only the behavior that the speaker uses, but it will become aggressiveness when the listener cannot accept that the speaker's assertive behavior:

A particular act may be at once assertive in behavior and intent (you wanted and did express your feelings, aggressive in effect (the other person could not handle your assertion), and non-assertive in social context (your subculture expects a powerful 'put-down' style). (p. 354)

For me, although I have a mixture of Thai culture and American culture, I do not feel comfortable with aggressiveness. An aggressive person is someone who tries to dominate the conversation and pushes me too hard. I prefer a gentle way. For example, during the fieldwork, one of the participants wanted me to reveal the names of the other participants. I told him that I could not do that because of ethical considerations (i.e., the promise of anonymity). He continued to push me to provide that information. At one point, he posed a hypothetical question: "What if I were your brother or sister? Would you tell him or her?" I told him that I would not. The way he pushed me to tell him made me feel uncomfortable. As *Khun Napat* stated, someone is aggressive:

"when [that person is] too pushy. [Aggressive individuals] make people uncomfortable. If you are being able to read the other person on their ... you know—what is their style? What are they able to accept, you know? If you say things or behave in such a way that you make the other person feel uncomfortable, then that is not appropriate."

For another recruiter, however, aggressive is a positive thing. According to this recruiter:

“They answer more than you want. They want to come out to do something. I do not want someone who call customer only once a week. Aggressive people are not waiting. That person should be someone who calls the customers every day. Like I show them what do I want.”

Some of interviewers argued that an aggressive person is competent because such a person is not inert, i.e., lazy. An aggressive person is always active. However, this person must be sensitive when talking with customers. There is a line dividing appropriate aggressiveness (i.e., assertiveness) and inappropriate aggressiveness. If one is going to use an aggressive style appropriately, then one has to be sensitive to the person’s style and one also has to be attentive to the other person’s feelings.

Among the participants in this research, only four recruiters expressed a desire for aggressive behavior in an active way (not in a *gawraow* way so, presumably, the preference is for assertive behavior). High confidence is typically considered within the Thai culture as indicative of a person with a high ego. This concept of ego, or *Atta*, can be connected with Buddhism. Some recruiters stated that a person who exhibits a high ego often makes mistake because a high ego person will think that he/she does not need to listen to anyone else. Most recruiters pay much attention to this issue because of the potential effect on how someone gets along with coworkers.

5.1.3 Cooperation

Collectivism, as a business orientation in Thailand, emphasizes relationships rather than outcomes. This national culture affects how one communicates and how one defines the concept of communication competence. Collectivists tend to be concerned with group opinions (Hofstede, 1984). This is opposite from individualistic cultures. According to Hofstede (1980a):

Individualism implies a loosely knit social framework in which people are supposed to take care of themselves and of their immediate families only, while collectivism is characterized by a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups; they expect their in-group (relatives, clan, organizations) to look after them, and in exchange for that they feel they owe absolute loyalty to it. (p.45)

Numprasertchai and Swierczek (2006) observed that, as collectivists, Thai business negotiators focus on establishing and maintaining positive relationships. However, the participants in this research emphasized a need for employees who focus on both relationships and outcomes. They have to be able to work as part of a team, but they also need to be committed to getting the job done.

Entry and middle level position candidates have to be able to work with their team or people from other departments. Employees in high level positions should be able to work with their subordinates as part of a team and also must be focused on goal accomplishment. As *Khun Krit*, an executive vice president, told me: “when you [someone in a high level position] tell them [your subordinates] to do something, you should be a part of doing it as well.” This is different from individualist cultures where people work independently or the supervisor only directs the work of others without participating in that work himself/herself. Two research participants specifically stated that they do not believe in a one man show.

Cooperation is also found in Western studies, such as the study of Bretz, Rynes and Gerhart (1993). In this study, the recruiters mentioned preferring a candidate who has a cooperative attitude, with cooperative attitude (or “teamwork”)

defined as “the applicant’s perceived willingness to (or experience in) working with others in a cooperative manner” (p. 317).

5.1.4 Control

Feelings or emotions are very important. The candidate has to send the message directly to listeners in a way that does not harm other people’s feelings. Their emotions have to be controlled so as to not put relationships with customers or with coworkers at risk. The results of this research suggest that there are similar expectations for both men and women. That is different from Wise’s (1997) findings. In that study, Wise argued women should “avoid displaying anger.” This advice was not also provided to men. However, my research reveals that both male and female candidates need to exercise emotional control.

Buddhism has a great influence on this emotional control. The third precept of the five precepts of Buddhism (Snelling, 1991), “refrain from telling the lies,” includes an injunction against saying negative or harmful things about others (p. 48). Expressing one’s feelings is discouraged. Thus, Thais do not want to hurt other people’s feelings. They give a lot of value to words. They believe that words cannot be taken back after being spoken, so they are careful what they say. Thus, yelling at or even bluntly telling a person that he is wrong is not considered appropriate. Moreover, Buddhism teaches Thai people to be mindful at all times. Doing things in an emotional manner is not mindful. In order to create as little harm with words as possible, one needs to maintain self-restraint. Self-restraint is another concept that is important in Buddhist teaching. Wisdom will come when one is mindful. One of the participants in this research mentioned mindfulness [sati] and that he tries to practice this Buddhist teaching by controlling his emotions.

Another element of control is work control. For individuals who will be in high level positions, interviewees must present the image of someone who can control a work team. For middle level positions, applicants must present the image of someone who can do the work. Most of the participants in this research described the ideal candidate as someone who is independent when meeting customers alone. One recruiter explained:

“I want someone who can make a decision. I do not like someone who relies on others, like ‘up to you’. How can they make a decision when they do the job? Because in this kind of job when you are dealing with the customers, you have to decide what to do by your own.”

Not only does one need to be able to work well with others, but one must have a good moral or ethical character. Interviewers want someone who has a high level of integrity. Buddhism again plays an important role in this expectation. Buddhism teaches that we should focus on morality rather than material things (see, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, n.d.). Buddhists are taught to value what a person has done in good deeds rather than valuing the amount of money a person makes. In the timeless sayings of the lord of Buddha, “To avoid doing evil deeds, to cultivate good deeds, and purify one’s mind: this is the teaching of the Buddhas” (Chindaporn, 2004, p. 54). Given that the participants involved in this research are all involved with the financial industry, it is possible that they were even more conscious of the need to assess a candidate’s moral character than recruiters for another business sector might be.

5.1.5 Character

Most interviewers try to find candidates whose character fits with the organization’s culture and the job position. Not only are Thai interviewees expected

to speak clearly, concisely, and with confidence, they also have to behave in a polite and respectful manner. Moreover, they are expected to be able to have the kind of character that will fit with their team.

An applicant's personality needs to fit with the position that is available and the organization for which the candidate will be working. This revealed a similar outcome as Cable and Judge's (1997) study. This study found that interviewers have a tendency to hire applicants whose personality fit the organization. A candidate must present him/herself as confident and able to work independently when dealing with customers. Recruiters do not want someone who is not confident or who will have to depend on others for all decisions. At the same time, an individual who is too independent is not seen as entirely trustworthy because that person might try to do everything by him/herself and might not cooperate with his/her superiors and/or coworkers. Such behavior can negatively affect an organization, especially if the person occupies a high level position because such a person needs to be able to get the members of his/her team to work together.

Essentially, then, interviewers want someone who can work independently but who is also considerate of others' opinions and able to work as part of a team. This would appear to be a desire for someone who evinces a mixture of masculine and feminine characteristics. A candidate has to present him/herself as masculine on the outside, such as speaking with sufficient volume and clarity as well as in a confident way, but he/she must also have a feminine side in that he/she must be sensitive to the perspectives of others. Wise (1997) identified the "ideal" Thai woman as "meek", "obedient", and "soft-spoken" (p. 37), speaking in a "quiet voice" and not interrupting

others (p. 38). In contrast, in this research, recruiters expressed preferences for a strong independent person—whether that person is a man or a woman.

The need for clear, concise speech has already been noted and is associated with low context cultures. That speech must be presented in a polite and respectful way. For politeness, one can use *ka* and *krub* at the end of each sentence. For respectfulness, there is a different level depending on the status of the person with whom you are speaking. This use of language indicates that there is a power distance in the organization. Power distance is “the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 1980b, p.45). A high power distance was implied by much of what the recruiters involved with high level positions shared in their interviews.

Analysis of the data did indicate a difference in the style of communication between middle level positions and high level positions. For middle level position recruiters, it appears that a low degree of power distance exists. During the interviews, I found that recruiters hiring for middle level positions used the word *nong*, which means sister or brother, when calling their subordinates. The recruiters also referred to themselves as *Pee* (older brother or sister) while talking to me. In Thai culture, the approach of calling someone who is older *Pee* (sister or brother) followed by her name demonstrates that you consider him/her as your own brother/sister even though he/she is not your real brother/sister. This approach made our own conversations more comfortable, lessening the distance between us.

In Thai social practice, if a person with whom you are talking is your boss, you usually call him/her *Khun* because he/she has a higher status. Thus, this indicates that middle level subordinates might not want to create this power distance in an

organization. Most of interviewers called themselves *Pee* and used their nickname even though they are older than me by 10 to 20 years. Moreover, some of the middle level recruiters told me that they thought of their organization as being like a family, with all of the responsibilities that entails.

Normally, if you are talking to your boss, you would address him/her using the title *Khun*. In this way, one shows respect. Thai people have held the value of respectfulness at least since the period of a King Rama VI. His majesty created the *Sakdina* system. There are hierarchy levels of speech in the Thai language as a result of *Sakdina*. There are different ways of speaking when one is addressing the King, the Queen, or his/her majesty's family members. Talking to monks is different from communicating with ordinary people. There is a different language level among ordinary people depending on the person's position in society, age, and closeness (relationship). If you are close to a person, you might use his/her nickname. Although the *Sakdina* system is not strictly used anymore, Thai people still hold this value. Young people have to respect older people or someone who is higher in status, such as their boss and their teacher.

With three of the recruiters who focus on filling high level positions in their organization and who are over the age of fifty, I observed that the word that they used when referring to themselves during the interview was *pom* or *dichan*. The language that they used during our conversation was decidedly formal. Other high level position recruiters omitted using formal forms of address when I was talking to them. My interpretation of this situation is that they did not want to create a power distance between the two of us.

One middle manager stated that showing a high level of confidence can be interpreted as disrespectfulness. He explained: “One should be flexible, especially in a meeting. One should not be too confident. One should know their position, i.e., know who they are. There is a hierarchy in this company. The young should listen to the adults.”

As a family-oriented organization, most recruiters consider their subordinates to be their siblings and use *Pee* before each person’s name. Nonetheless, there is a high power distance. Thai subordinates usually have to listen and be obedient. They have to do what their bosses tell them. According to Niratpattanasai (2004):

in a meeting room, when the boss says something incorrect and you, as a subordinate, try to correct the statement immediately, there is a possibility that the boss might think that you did not *hai kiat* [respect] him or her... (p.54)

The participants in this research suggested that this expectation of silence in the face of a misstatement by one’s superior (or an older member of the organization) was no longer considered totally appropriate.

One human resources recruiter noted that one must have *samakarawa*, which means respectfulness. He explained:

“You do not have *samakarawa* to the boss. So, the boss cannot manage as well. This is what we need to look at. Attitude, for example, you have a doctoral degree but your boss has a bachelor’s degree. How do you look at him if he tells you what to do? Will you be obedient? Nowadays there are a lot of people who have a master’s or doctoral degree, but they are so proud. I am a doctor. Who are you? You are just a bachelor’s degree. I will not listen to you. But you know what? They have more experience than you do.”

According to the participants in this research, one should know *galatesa*, which means one should know people, be sensitive to timing, and be aware of place. A person needs to be aware of his/her status. As Wise (1997) explained, “status [is] determined by position, age and, to some extent, seniority” (p. 33). Based on her research, Stage (1996) indicated that, when Thai superiors talk to their subordinates, they have to be sensitive to “the words used, the situation, who else is around, and the position of the person with whom one is speaking; everything said and not said is important” because this can affect “all future interactions with the other person, both in terms of work or social relations” (p. 75). Clearly, all of these factors affect the definition of communication competence.

The findings of this research mirrored the results of Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin’s (1999) study. Based on their research, Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin observed that:

communication competence was associated with knowing when, where and with whom to express respectful manner in the organization, knowledge of chain of command communication, knowing how to communicate with and honor senior organizational members and respect show respect for their experience. (p. 409)

At the same time, this study reveals that the social structure of Thai organizations has changed (or is changing). The social structure of Thai organizations (at least within the financial sector) is transforming from a formal into an informal or family oriented organization for most high and middle positions (positions that would typically be occupied by people who range in age from 30 to 50).

Overall, the results show that the concept of communication competence, within the context of financial sector organizations, echoes the ideas articulated by Hymes (1979), Spitzberg (1983), and Cooley and Roach (1984). However, from this study, it appears that, in order to be communicatively competent, both the relationships and task outcomes must be taken into consideration. Values such as social harmony, respectfulness, and modesty still have an impact on the concept of communication competence. Thai people tend to control the expression of words and emotions. There is an old saying: “whoever likes you or hates you, let it go. Whoever praises or applauds you, ignore it. Whoever is bored and pesters you, stay patient. If your heart is peaceful and serene, that is enough.”

The nature of a person’s position in his/her organization and that person’s educational background might have a great impact on the concept of communication competence. From the demographic questionnaire, most line managers have been educated abroad in a country such as the UK and the US. This will have influenced their confidence to speak out in a variety of situations. Moreover, the nature of some positions can influence the position holder to be direct. Work in the financial industry has to be accomplished quickly. Most of the line managers that I interviewed did not have the time to speak with me at length, as compared to the human resources recruiters. Their conversation is short, direct, and to the point. They appeared to not have time for casual conversation and were much more task oriented in their demeanor.

5.2 Evaluation

Competent or incompetent interviewees were defined by their physical appearance and answers. To be successful, a candidate must perform in a manner that

meets the recruiter's expectations. According to Jablin (2001), the first stage of organizational assimilation is anticipatory socialization or pre-entry. There are two phases to this stage: the process of vocational choice/socialization and the process of organizational choice/entry. Jablin (2001) stated that people often develop their expectations from various sources of information, such as family, education, part-time employment, peers and friends, media, and the selection interview itself. From this study, most interviewees were assessed in comparison to the culture of the organization they would be joining. Candidates who were not hired were, among other things, individuals who displayed different cultural values, i.e., values that would not work compatibly within the employing organization. Only one recruiter indicated that it would be acceptable to act too aggressively or too timidly during the interview. That recruiter believed that it would be possible to teach this person once hired.

Asking questions can put a communicator and a receiver into different positions (hierarchy). Interviewers traditionally have more power within the hiring interview. Within the Thai culture, it would not be uncommon for an interviewer to ask an interviewee questions about his/her family, thus requiring personal disclosure on the part of the interviewee. Reluctance or unwillingness to respond might be interpreted as indicating incompetence. Within the United States, it is illegal to ask questions that are not clearly related to the requirements of the position. However, for Thai people, interviewers believe that not revealing information can reflect many things. One participant assumed that the reason that an interviewee did not want to talk about his family was because he had an inferiority complex (*Pom*). The

interviewer interpreted the candidate's behavior as indicating that he is ashamed of his background.

Most interviewers believe they have the right to ask about family or an interviewee's personal story. They do not consider this information to be private or to not relate to the job. They believe that asking about the family can tell them about the interviewee's values and relationships. For example, one human resources recruiter offered the following example:

“She likes to take care her family, her mother. She sends money home. She wants to take care of her dad. She is worried. She wants to be there. I will see how warm her family is. Or she is with her sister. She will drive her sister to school. This is cute. Or when she has a problem, who does she talk with?”

This interviewer liked this candidate because the candidate values her family. The interviewer used questions about the candidate's family to uncover the interviewee's value system as well as revealing something about how the interviewee approaches relationships. Most of the human resources recruiters interviewed for this research indicated using questions about family as a tool for predicting what kind of employee the person would be.

While family was important for the human resources recruiters, only one line manager appeared to ask about the candidate's family as a test of that person's attitude. This line manager explained:

“About their attitude, I look at whether they are negative or positive in their criticism. I prefer someone who has a positive point of view and positive attitude towards problems. I often ask about their family background. For example, how many siblings do they have? How important is family for them?”

Are they living together or separate? Are they from warm families? These issues are important. Their attitude is important. For example, the political issue, if they have a mindset which party they are in and they have made a decision [or a judgment] right away, that is not good. I think, in every issue, one should be able to find the best way that can work with both sides.”

This line manager indicated believing that attitudes about one’s family can suggest the attitudes the person will bring to other situations, including work. He argued that one’s attitude toward and relationship with family members can affect work performance and suggest the kind of relationship the person will have with coworkers.

One human resource recruiter asked questions not only about the applicant’s family but also about their current living situation. For example, this recruiter indicated asking questions about where the applicant lives and whether the applicant lives with other family members. She explained that if an interviewee does not have a place to live or is always moving, she would not choose that person. She said that is important in banking because banking involves money. Another human resource recruiter told me that he asks questions about their spending habits, including how they use their credit card(s). If an applicant spends too much money, that is something that will be a part of the hiring decision.

Most of the line managers focus on asking questions that relate directly to work. They focus on trying to find out if the candidate will fit with the job and the organization. They ask about previous work to find out about an applicant’s experience and see if that person can do the job. With respect to organizational fit, the interviewers often ask why the applicant is interested in working for their [the interviewer’s] organization. Not only do they look at how an applicant responds to the

question, but interviewers will consider whether a candidate asks the interviewer questions.

5.2.1 Truth or Lies

Most interviewers believe that they can determine whether a candidate's true self has been revealed in the interview based on how that candidate responds to the questions. They can tell if the candidate is "sincere" or "cynical". Most recruiters told me that the consistency of a person's answers indicates whether that person is being honest. In addition to the verbal, one recruiter mentioned looking at the applicant's nonverbal communication. She noted that eye contact can indicate if a candidate is telling the truth. Some interviewers said that they can sense if an interviewee is competent or not. One recruiter said that everything, including facial expression, language, and feelings have to go together. She told me that she reads an applicant's eye-contact, the words that the applicant speaks, and whether the applicant is speaking from the heart.

Because most line managers have ten to twenty years of work experience, they can recognize whether a candidate is bragging or not. Most of them use their network of contacts. They will ask friends in other companies about an applicant's skills, abilities, and attitude. The financial industry in Bangkok is a small community. Most interviewers have connections with other companies. Honesty and integrity are important, especially in the banking industry. Recruiters and line managers both will use their connections to obtain information concerning an applicant's integrity.

Most interviewers expect the candidates to be permanent employees. As a result, they are concerned about fit of character. They want to hire the kind of person who will fit in their organization. A person who does not act according to how they

feel is considered insincere or to be presenting a false face during the interview. One interviewer observed that interviewees act like they can control their emotions, but, when working, they cannot. As the recruiter explained:

“Attitude is difficult to look at. What we can use to measure is questions. You can use the questions to see the anger management. I also think that attitude can be seen when walking. If he can answer our questions, at least he knows how he should think, but he might not be able to perform because attitude and performance are different things. Attitude is one thing. Behavior is another. But in 45 minutes, we see his thoughts. For a guarantee, you have to see how they behave.”

For me, I think it would be hard to know the real self because I believe that there is no true sense of self. Buddhism teaches that things, including the self, are not permanent. Self is created when one identifies with his/her own thought/mind. For example, when a person identifies with a particular role, he/she will probably communicate in a manner that reflects what he/she thinks is appropriate for that role. However, when that person faces an unexpected situation, such as encountering another person who displays bad manners, he/she might react in a more emotional manner. This does not mean that this person is not sincere. People change how they behave according to the situation. For a newcomer to an organization, it might be easy for that person at the beginning. However, once he/she has developed deeper relationships within the organization, it might be harder for this person to interact in unemotional way, especially in a family-oriented organization.

Buddhist beliefs have a great influence on how Thais think about self. Buddhists believe there is no true sense of self. Things, including self, are not

permanent. Self is created when one identifies with their own thought/mind which is influenced by social environments or experiences. We cannot expect an individual to have only one identity. Each individual will change according to the factors around them. In *I and mine from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu* (n.d.), “atta” or “self”, what we call the ego, is discussed. The statement is made that “the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ can exist only for a certain period of time. It prevails all the time so long as the feeling of being ‘self’ is there. Then, it may vanish” (p.155) I believe that people can be changed by the environment in which they live. For example, people who are communicatively competent in the job interview might not be competent in other settings, such as teaching or leading, because they do not have that knowledge or those experiences. Knowledge is uncertain and arises from experience. One cannot predict what is going to happen because humans are unpredictable, as is society. The true self can only be seen as they encounter various work situations.

Within the more narrow context of the hiring interview, a communicatively “competent” interviewee is one who meets the interviewer’s expectations. If the interviewee knows what the interviewer’s expectations are and behaves appropriately according to that expectation, he/she will be viewed as communicatively competent. Admittedly, the communicatively competent interviewee might not be selected all the time because interviewers are looking not only for a person who has only good communication skills, but who has the ability to work well with other organizational members or, perhaps, has specific technical skills needed in the job.

5.2.2 Decision Making

The power of decision making is often given to a person who is a line manager. The line manager is the supervisor or the head of the department. This is

typically appropriate because the selected candidate will be working under direct command of the line manager. However, in this research, an interesting case emerged in one organization. Ultimate decision making power was with the Japanese boss. Even when the Thai recruiter did not like a candidate, she could not do anything because, for this organization, the authority resided with the Japanese boss.

On the other hand, some organizations use interview committees. This might be fairer to most candidates because the decision making does not rest with only one person. When an interview committee is used, the candidates will meet with a variety of people whose views will all contribute to the hiring decision. As a result, it should be easier for the candidate to work as a member of a team.

The culture of an organization is not created by the workers accidentally but is created by everyone working together. Hiring managers will choose candidates who they believe will be able to work for/with their team. A line manager will know the culture of their team the most. However, the world is changing. Some interviewers will try to search for new energy—employees who have the potential to change the organization's culture.

5.3 Communication Competence Components

Four components of communication competence were found in this study. Clearly, both behavioral and cognitive components emerged, similar to Western scholars (Cooley & Roach, 1984; Hymes, 1979; Spitzberg, 1983). However, two more components emerged. Thai people put a value on emotions or feelings. According to Light (2003), feelings are part of the psychosocial factor. In the case of this research, the important issue is the ability to control one's emotions. According to Miike (2007), for Asian people, "communication is a process in which we moralize and

harmonize [with] the universe” (p. 276). This research reveals that, in order to be competent, one has to have a great EQ and IQ, and that person has to also be a good person.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of communication competence in Thailand is influenced by cultural constructions of the organizations. Moreover, Thai specific values and beliefs and the hierarchical structures of societies tend to influence the concept of communication competence. Most of the participants in this research expressed a preference for interviewees who exhibit emotional control and respectfulness. A slight difference between Thais and Western perspectives of communication competence was found. In order to be considered communicatively competent, one has to be able to perform well both in establishing/maintaining relationships and on the tasks to which one is assigned. As a result, a competent communicator is someone whose knowledge and performance meets the recruiter’s expectations. There are expectations associated with any organizational position and that emerge from the need to hire individuals who will fit in the culture of the organization. Not only knowledge and performance, morality is an important for defining the concept for Thai people.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations

Only one business segment, that of the financial industry, served as the focus for this research. Additionally, all data were collected in Bangkok. Other white collar industries, such as government, manufacturing, or health care, might provide a different result. Additionally, data collected in other provinces (perhaps provinces less influenced by international business forces) might provide a different result.

Practical Implications

Based on the findings of this research, a job candidate in Thailand should have the five Cs in mind as he/she approaches an employment interview. First, he/she should have knowledge on the field, including content (c1) knowledge of the job, knowledge of the company, and knowledge about the market in which the company operates. He/she should be self-aware, being honest with himself/herself as to his/her abilities. In the Thai organizational context, job candidates are expected to be confident (c2) and to display a respectful character (c5). Lastly, the successful job candidate is likely to be someone who displays the ability to work with others. Cooperation (c3) is needed in most organizations. Especially in the Buddhist culture, one must have emotional control (c4) at all times.

I believe that the results of this research can help employers in Thailand to focus on key indicators of communication competence during not only the recruitment of future employees but the development of employees. In a world of globalization, job applicants to Thai organizations might not be sure which behaviors should be exhibited in an employment interview. Should an applicant to a company with international interests communicate in a manner that reflects Western practices or that demonstrates Thai sensibilities? The results can be applied to practice in the employment interview context. This study provided guidelines for better interview performance.

On the other hand, interviewers can use the communication competence scale when evaluating and recruiting. Especially, in this economic crisis, companies have a vested interest in employing the most qualified people they can. The current study will benefit both interviewers and interviewees. Moreover, this research offers

recommendations concerning communication competence that can be incorporated in Thai textbooks, raising awareness of the elements of communication competence relevant to the Thai employment situation. Thai students will become more competitive by learning about communication competence in the workplace in the world of globalization.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Protocol



Interview protocol

Warm-up and Introduction

Thank you for giving me time to meet you today. I am going to ask you some questions about applicant communication characteristics during the job interview? I would like to tape record our conversation. Is that ok with you? Your tape will be kept with me. I will not let anyone listen to it. Do you want to see the list of questions beforehand?

Interview

Demographic information

1. How long have you been working as an interviewer for this company?
2. What is your title?
3. How often do you conduct applicant interviews?
4. Who in the company do you report to?
5. Are you the sole hiring decision-maker?

The Concept of Communication Competence

1. In your opinion, what makes for a GOOD (communicatively competent) interviewee?

Probe: What are the most important communication characteristics for interviewees to have? (*Definition of the concept*)

2. Can you think of a time when you interviewed someone you would consider to be an excellent interviewee? Please tell me why you thought this person was an excellent interviewee? (*Narrative approach*)

What communication strengths did this person exhibit during the interview?

What do you typically look for in terms of applicant communication ability?

Is there any form of structure or set of questions that you use in a hiring interview?

Can I take a look? Would you mind if I make a copy? (*For document analysis*)

What do you usually ask applicants?

How do you know when someone is a good job candidate?

What are the clues that help you to distinguish good applicants from poor applicants? What do you look for in a job candidate?

Probe: Can you give an example of a candidate who displayed good communication characteristics?

3. Think now about a time when you interviewed someone who displayed very poor communication skills. Tell me about that interview. What, in particular, marked the applicant as a poor communicator?
4. In your experience, are there any differences in the communication skills displayed by male job candidates versus female job candidates?
 - a. Are there any particular communication strengths that you have found to be common among male job applicants? Are there any particular communication weaknesses that you have found to be common among male job applicants?
 - b. Are there any particular communication strengths that you have found to be common among female job applicants? Are there any particular communication weaknesses that you have found to be common among female job applicants?

5. Does the age of the applicant make any difference in his/her communication ability and/or handling of the job interview?

Position (Does position affect how one describes communication competence?)

1. Do you tend to interview more entry-level, mid-level, or upper-level (executive level) job candidates?
2. Is there a difference in your expectations for how someone will communicate in the interview when that person is applying for an entry-level versus mid-level versus upper-level job?
3. What are those differences?
4. Why?

Nonverbal communication (Is nonverbal communication one of the factors?)

1. Is a job candidate's nonverbal communication important to you?
2. What kind of nonverbal communication characteristics do you think are important for a candidate to display?
3. Is eye contact important? How important?
4. Are gestures important? What kind of gestures?
5. What about vocal quality—the loudness of a person's voice or other characteristics of his/her voice?
6. Does posture matter?

7. Are there any other nonverbal cues that you can think of that have either helped to impress you, in a positive way, or that have caused you to have a negative impression of a job candidate?

Verbal Communication (Is verbal communication a factor of communication competence?)

1. Is verbal communication, the words a person uses and his/her grammar, important for you?
2. What kind of verbal communication characteristics?
3. Is speaking politely important? How important? Describe “polite” speech for me. What characterizes polite speaking?

Communication Style (what kind of communication style consider as competence?)

1. Is communication style important for you? What kind of communication style characteristics do you prefer?
2. Is respectful communication style important? Are polite speech and respectful speech different things?
 - a. What does respect mean to you? (*The definition of respect*)
 - b. Can you give an example? Can you remember a very respectful candidate? How did he/she communicate with you? (*Narrative approach*)
 - c. Did you hire him/her? (*Hiring decision*)
 - d. Why? Why not?

- e. Can you remember someone you interviewed whom you would characterize as not being very respectful? Tell me about that interview.
 - f. Did you hire that person? Why/why not?
3. Is an assertive communication style important? How important?
- a. Can you give think of the candidate who was assertive during his/her interview?
 - b. Did you hire her/her?
 - c. Why? Why not?
4. Is a confident communication style important? How important?
- a. What does confidence mean to you? (*The definition of confident in Thai culture*)
 - b. Can you give an example?
 - c. Can you think of a situation when you reacted negative to an interviewee in large part because of his/her confidence? Tell me about that situation.
 - d. What are the limits of confidence?
5. Is a conflict avoidant communication style important? How important?
- a. Have you ever had a conflict with a candidate during an interview?

- b. Tell me about that interview.
- c. Did you hire him or her? Why?

Cognitive component

1. Do you think that an interviewee has to have some kind of specialized knowledge to be considered a good communicator?
2. What kind of knowledge must an applicant have?
 - a. Do you expect a job candidate to be knowledgeable about your company? What kinds of things should a typical candidate know?
 - b. What kind of job knowledge should a candidate demonstrate within the interview?
 - c. Must candidates be knowledgeable about the Thai culture? (If “yes”) What do you look for during the interview that demonstrates an applicant knows the Thai culture?
 - d. Which do you think is more important—knowledge about the job or knowledge about the culture?

Motivation component

1. Is attitude important when assessing a job applicant?
2. Why? /Why not?
 - a. What are some of the communication behaviors that you think reveal a person’s attitude?

- b. Is there an attitude that, if revealed during the interview, would automatically result in you not hiring that person?
- c. What constitutes a “good” attitude?

The concept of communication competence

1. Could you describe a communicatively competent interviewee for me please?
2. Does communication skill have a great influence on your hiring decisions?

How?

Ending Questions

1. As is obvious, my primary interest is in the communication skills displayed—or the lack of communication skills displayed—by job applicants. Can you think of anything that I should know about that area but that was not covered in my questions?
2. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for coming today. I appreciate it a lot. Can I call you to ask follow-up questions if I have any? Thank you so much.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol in Thai



Interview protocol

Warm-up and Introduction

ขอบคุณมากนะคะที่สละเวลาให้มาพบวันนี้
 คำถามที่นี่ยุ่จะถามในวันนี้เกี่ยวกับการสื่อสารในระหว่างสัมภาษณ์งานนะคะ
 นี่ยุ่ขออืดเทระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์ด้วยนะคะ คงจะไม่ว่าอะไรนะคะ
 นี่ยุ่จะเก็บเทปนี้ไว้เป็นความลับไม่ให้ใครเปิดฟัง
 ไม่ทราบว่าจะอยากจะถูกคำถามที่จะสัมภาษณ์ก่อนไหมคะ

สัมภาษณ์

ข้อมูลทั่วไป

1. คุณ...ทำงานในตำแหน่งผู้สัมภาษณ์คนที่มาสมัครงานที่นี้มากี่ปีแล้วคะ
2. ชื่อตำแหน่งว่าอะไรคะ
3. สัมภาษณ์งานบ่อยไหมคะ
4. ใครเป็นหัวหน้าที่คุณต้องแจ้งหรือรายงานคะ
5. ใครเป็นคนมีอำนาจตัดสินใจเลือกรับคนเข้าทำงานคะ

The Concept of Communication Competence

1. ในความคิดเห็นของคุณ อะไรที่แสดงให้คุณเห็นว่า
 ผู้สมัครงานเป็นผู้มีความสามารถในการสื่อสารดีมากคะ
Probe :
 ลักษณะสำคัญที่สุดสำหรับผู้สมัครงานที่มาสัมภาษณ์ต้องมีในการสื่อสารคืออะไรบ้างคะ
2. ลองนึกถึงเวลาทำการสัมภาษณ์ มีคนที่คิดว่าเก่งไหมเวลาคุณสัมภาษณ์
 ลองช่วยเล่าให้ฟังหน่อยได้ไหมคะว่า ทำไมคุณถึงคิดว่าเขาเก่ง
 มีจุดแข็งในการสื่อสารอะไรที่เขาแสดงออกมาในระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์บ้างคะ
 เวลาหาพนักงานที่มีความสามารถในการสื่อสารนั้นคุณมองด้านไหนคะ
 มีชุดคำถาม หรือ แบบฟอร์มที่ใช้ในการสัมภาษณ์ผู้ที่จะมาสมัครงานไหม
 อยากจะขอคุณหน่อยได้ไหม ขอถ่ายเอกสารเก็บไว้ได้ไหมคะ

ส่วนใหญ่จะถามผู้สมัครว่าอะไรคะ

คุณจะได้ยัง ใจว่าผู้สมัครนั้นดีพอที่จะรับเข้าทำงานคะ

อะไรคือตัวที่ช่วยแบ่งแยกผู้สมัครที่ดีหรือมีประสิทธิภาพออกจากผู้สมัครที่ไม่มีประสิทธิภาพ คุณต้องการผู้สมัครแบบไหนคะ

ช่วยยกตัวอย่างผู้สมัครงานที่คุณคิดว่ามีความสามารถในการสื่อสารที่โดดเด่นที่สุดได้ไหมคะ

3. คุณลองนึกถึงผู้สมัครงานที่มีความสามารถในการสื่อสารที่แย่มากที่สุดได้ไหมคะ
เล่าให้ฟังได้ไหมคะ มีอะไรที่ทำให้คุณคิดว่าผู้สมัครนั้นสื่อสารได้แย่มากที่สุด
4. ในประสบการณ์ของคุณ
มีความแตกต่างในการสื่อสารระหว่างผู้สมัครงานชายและผู้สมัครงานหญิงไหมคะ
 - a. มีจุดแข็งในการสื่อสารอันไหนใหม่คะที่คุณพบว่าพบได้บ่อยในผู้สมัครงานชาย
มีจุดอ่อนข้อใดใหม่คะในการสื่อสารที่คุณพบว่าพบได้บ่อยในผู้สมัครงานชาย
 - b. มีจุดแข็งในการสื่อสารอันไหนใหม่คะที่คุณพบว่าพบได้บ่อยในผู้สมัครงานหญิง
มีจุดอ่อนข้อใดใหม่คะในการสื่อสารที่คุณพบว่าพบได้บ่อยในผู้สมัครงานหญิง
5. อายุของผู้สมัครงานมีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องในการสัมภาษณ์เพื่อดูความสามารถในการสื่อสารของผู้สมัครบ้างไหม

The level of position (Does the level of position affect how one describes communication competence?)

1. ส่วนใหญ่คุณจะสัมภาษณ์ผู้สมัครงานในระดับไหนคะ
2. มีความแตกต่างระหว่างตำแหน่งงานใหม่คะ ในความคาดหวังของคุณ
จะแตกต่างกันไหมคะ
สำหรับคนที่สัมภาษณ์เมื่อเขาสมัครเข้าทำงานในระดับกลางและระดับสูง
3. อะไรบ้างคะ
4. ทำไมคะ

Nonverbal Communication (Is nonverbal communication one of the factors?)

1. สีหน้าท่าทาง-การแต่งกาย มีความสำคัญกับคุณในการสัมภาษณ์งานใหม่คะ
2. คุณคิดว่าลักษณะภาษากายเช่น สีหน้าท่าทาง-การแต่งกาย
ชนิดไหนที่สำคัญสำหรับผู้สมัครที่จะแสดงออก
3. การสื่อสารทางสายตา (การสบตา) มีความสำคัญใหม่คะ สำคัญอย่างไรคะ

4. ทำทางมีความสำคัญไหมคะ ทำทางชนิดไหนคะ
5. แล้วคุณภาพเสียงล่ะคะ ความดังของเสียง หรือ ลักษณะของเสียง
6. การวางตัวสำคัญไหมคะ
7. มีภาษาอะไรบ้าง ที่ทำให้คุณประทับใจในทางบวก หรือประทับใจในทางลบไหมคะ

Verbal Communication (Is verbal communication a factor of communication competence)

1. รูปแบบการสื่อสารของผู้สมัครงานมีความสำคัญไหมคะ
 อย่างเช่นการสื่อสารแบบตรงไปตรงมา
 หรือว่าการสื่อสารแบบประนีประนอมมีความสำคัญในระหว่างสัมภาษณ์งานไหมคะ
 สำคัญอย่างไรคะ
2. รูปแบบการสื่อสารแบบไหนที่คุณชอบ
3. การให้เกียรติสำคัญไหม คำพูดที่สุภาพกับคำพูดด้วยการให้เกียรติ แตกต่างกันไปไหมคะ
 - a. การให้เกียรติ หรือการเคารพคืออะไร
 - b. ช่วยยกตัวอย่างได้ไหมคะ จำผู้สมัครงานคนที่ให้ความเคารพได้ไหมคะ
 เขาสื่อสารยังไงคะ
 - c. ส่วนใหญ่คุณจะจ้างเขาไหมคะ
 - d. ทำไม หรือทำไมไม่จ้าง
 - e. คุณจำคนที่คุณสัมภาษณ์ เป็นคนที่ไม่ให้ความเคารพได้ไหม ถ้าให้ฟังได้ไหมคะ
 - f. คุณจ้างคนนั้นไหมคะ เพราะอะไร
4. การคุยแบบตรงๆ สำคัญไหมคะ สำคัญอย่างไร
 - a. คุณมีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรกับคนที่มีความยึดมั่นในความคิดเห็นของตนเอง
 การมีจุดยืนที่แน่นอน
 - b. ช่วยยกตัวอย่างคนที่มีความยึดมั่นในความคิดเห็นของตนเอง
 การมีจุดยืนที่แน่นอนได้ไหมคะ
 - c. คุณมีคนที่เคยสัมภาษณ์เป็นคนที่มีความยึดมั่นในความคิดเห็นของตนเอง
 การมีจุดยืนที่แน่นอนคะ
 - d. คุณจะเลือกเขาไหมคะ
 - e. ทำไม หรือทำไมไม่
5. การพูดแบบมั่นใจ มีความสำคัญไหมคะ สำคัญยังไง
 - a. ความมั่นใจหมายความว่าอย่างไรในสังคมไทย มีความหมายที่ดีหรือไม่ดีคะ

- b. ช่วยยกตัวอย่างให้หน่อยได้ไหมคะ
 - c. คุณเคยมีสถานการณ์ตอนที่คุณมีปฏิริยาต่อคนที่คุณสัมภาษณ์ที่มีความมั่นใจในตัวเองไหมคะ
 - d. ความมั่นใจมีขีดจำกัดไหมคะ อะไรบ้างคะ
6. คำพูดที่หลีกเลี่ยงความขัดแย้ง สำคัญไหมคะ อย่างไรคะ
- a. คุณเคยมีความขัดแย้งกับผู้สมัครงานระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์ไหมคะ
 - b. ช่วยเล่าให้ฟังหน่อยได้ไหมคะ
 - c. คุณได้จ้างเขาไหมคะ ทำไม

Cognitive Competence

1. คุณคิดว่าผู้สมัครงานต้องมีคุณสมบัติหรือความรู้เฉพาะด้านบางอย่างไหมคะ ถึงจะถือว่าเป็นผู้สื่อสารที่ดี
2. ความรู้แบบไหน ที่ผู้สมัครงานต้องมี
 - a. คุณคาดหวังที่จะให้ผู้สมัครงานมีความรู้เกี่ยวกับบริษัทไหมคะ อะไรที่ผู้สมัครงานควรจะรู้
 - b. ความรู้อะไรบ้างที่ผู้สมัครงานต้องมี ในระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์
 - c. ผู้สมัครงานต้องมีความรู้เกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรมไทยไหมคะ (ถ้าใช่) ในขณะที่สัมภาษณ์ คุณจะดูตรงไหน ว่าผู้สมัครงานรู้วัฒนธรรมไทย
 - d. อะไรที่คุณคิดว่าสำคัญกว่า ระหว่าง ความรู้เกี่ยวกับงาน หรือเกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรม

Motivation Component

1. ทักษะสำคัญต่อการเลือกผู้สมัครเข้าทำงานไหมคะ
2. ทำไมคะ ทำไมไม่สำคัญคะ
 - a. พฤติกรรมในการสื่อสารอะไรที่คุณคิดว่าบอกทัศนคติของคนได้คะ
 - b. มีทัศนคติอะไรไหม
ถ้าพบในระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์แล้วจะทำให้คุณเลิกจ้างคนคนนั้นโดยอัตโนมัติ
 - c. อะไรที่ทำให้คุณมีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อผู้สมัครงาน

The Concept of Communication Competence

1. ช่วยบรรยายผู้สมัครงานที่มาสัมภาษณ์ที่มีประสิทธิภาพในการสื่อสารที่ดี ได้ไหมคะ
2. ทักษะในการสื่อสารอะไรที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อการทำงาน

Ending Questions

1. ที่เห็นได้ชัดจากการสัมภาษณ์ น้อยสนใจเรื่องทักษะในการสื่อสาร
ยังมีอะไรที่ไม่ได้ครอบคลุมในคำถามไหมคะ
2. มีคำถามจะถามนุ้ยไหมคะ

ขอบคุณที่ให้นุ้ยพบและสัมภาษณ์ในวันนี้ นุ้ยขอโทรศัพท์มาถามได้ไหมคะ
ถ้ามีปัญหาอะไรหลังจากถอดเทป ขอขอบคุณมากค่ะ



Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire



Personal Information

Please identify your personal information. Your response will be used for academic practice only, nothing will be disclosed personally. Please place a mark on your answer and fill your answer in the blank where needed.

1. Sex: Male
- Female
2. Status: Single
- Married
3. Age: Less than 30
- 30-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- More than 55
4. Education: Less than B. A.
- B. A.
- More than B. A.
5. Have you ever gone to study in foreign countries?
- Never
- Ever (in what country? _____)
6. Have you ever received job training in foreign countries?
- Never
- Ever (in what country? _____)
7. Position: Your present position is _____

Years in this position	Less than 1 year
	1-5
	6-10
	more than 10
Total years of work	1-5
	6-10
	11-20
	more than 20

8. Supervisor: Your direct supervisor is (position) _____

9. Your company is owned by:

Thai 100%

Thai but join with foreigners- whose nationality is _____
-who owns _____%

Foreigner 100% whose nationality is _____



Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire in Thai



ข้อมูลส่วนตัว

โปรดบอกรายละเอียดส่วนตัวของท่าน คำตอบของท่านจะนำมาใช้เพื่อประโยชน์ทางวิชาการเท่านั้น
 ไม่มีมีการเปิดเผยเป็นส่วนตัวแก่ผู้ใดทั้งสิ้น กรุณากรอกบาทในช่องที่เป็นคำตอบของท่านและเติมข้อความในช่องว่างตามที่เว้นไว้

1. เพศ: ชาย
 หญิง
2. สถานภาพ: โสด
 แต่งงาน
3. อายุ: น้อยกว่า 30
 30-35
 36-40
 41-45
 46-50
 51-55
 มากกว่า 55
4. การศึกษา: น้อยกว่าปริญญาตรี
 ปริญญาตรี
 มากกว่าปริญญาตรี
5. เคยไปศึกษาต่อในต่างประเทศหรือไม่
 ไม่เคย
 เคย (ในประเทศ.....)
6. เคยไปอบรมดูงานในต่างประเทศหรือไม่
 ไม่เคย
 เคย (ในประเทศ.....)
7. ตำแหน่ง: ตำแหน่งในปัจจุบันของท่านคือ.....
ทำงานในตำแหน่งนี้มานาน น้อยกว่า 1 ปี
 1-5 ปี
 6-10 ปี
 มากกว่า 10 ปี
ทำงานมานานทั้งสิ้น 1-5 ปี
 6-10 ปี
 11-20 ปี
 มากกว่า 20 ปี
8. ผู้บังคับบัญชา: หัวหน้าโดยตรงของท่านคือ (ตำแหน่ง).....
9. บริษัทของท่านเป็นของ คนไทย 100%
 ร่วมหุ้นกับต่างชาติ คือ ประเทศ.....ซึ่งมีหุ้นประมาณ....%
 ต่างชาติ 100% คือประเทศ

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Educational Background

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2005- 2007	Ohio University, Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics.
2000- 2004	Bangkok University International College (BUIC), Bachelor of Art, Business English major
2002-2003	Kansai Gaidai University as an exchange student, Certificate in Japanese culture and language
1985-1999	Chitralada School, Liberal Arts, French major, High School Diploma

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