

RHETORICAL SENSITIVITY  
AND  
COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE:  
A TEST FOR CONVERGENT VALIDITY

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by  
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### ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates convergent validity between rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence. The two constructs appear conceptualized in almost exactly the same the same way. Where a rhetorically sensitive person balances noble self and rhetorical reflection, a competent communicator balances socio-communicative orientations assertiveness and responsiveness, with respect to the communication situation. Testing for convergent validity safeguards against scientific redundancy, helping to avoid rediscovering findings already established. Also, applying conceptual framework to rhetorical sensitivity that leads to a clearer fit of measures through communication competence may significantly assist in further development. A Pearson's correlation coefficient is employed to obtain results. There are statistically significant measures, but convergent validity was not evidenced.

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## CHAPTER 1

### RATIONAL

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter identifies the heuristic reasoning of the research. It identifies the relationship behind the problem and the objective. It also, relates theoretical implications to previous work done in the field of communication by citing methodological issues, and major theoretical consequences. A statement of the problem, research question, significance, stated objectives, and definition of terms are provided.

#### 1.2 RATIONALE

Due to the focus on rhetoric, this thesis deems it necessary to initially explore the relationship between communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity, as related to adaptation theory. Adaptation theory indicates goal seeking communication, as to stimulate intended meaning within an audience (McCroskey, 2006). This approach involves desired responses of receivers from sources of messages; thus, communicatively instrumental. It may be the case that communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity simplify Aristotle's concepts concerning a source's need to adapt to an audience; however, he was not in a position to apply appropriate measures during his time.

Rhetorical sensitivity (Hart & Burks, 1972) has been recognized from the beginning as instrumental communication, and is closely related to adaptation. This

construct depicts five basic elements of communication describing the rhetorically sensitive individual as: (1) tries to accept role-taking as part of the human condition, (2) attempts to avoid stylized verbal behavior, (3) is characteristically willing to undergo the strain of adaptation, (4) seeks to distinguish between all information and information acceptable for communication, and (5) tries to understand that an idea can be rendered in multi-form ways (Hart & Burks, 1972, p. 1). More recently, Knutson and Posirisuk (2006) state that “the rhetorically sensitive person avoids rigid communication patterns, adapts to the situation and context, and balances self and other, conditions often associated with intercultural communication effectiveness” (p. 206).

Equally related to rhetoric and adaptive communication is the construct of communication competence. “Competent communicators are flexible, able to adapt their communication to meet the demands of different situations” (Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006, p. 4). Furthermore, Allen and Wood (1978) define communication competence with four elements; (1) developing a repertoire of communication acts, (2) selecting from that repertoire the most appropriate communication acts according to criteria, (3) implementing these communication choices effectively through verbal and nonverbal means, and (4) evaluating these communication attempts according to elements of appropriateness and effectiveness. They also suggest adapting to the communication parameters as necessary in competent instrumental communication situations.

Aristotle’s focus on communication competence was the concern with rhetoric. The focus on rhetoric may be very related to the current development of the field of communication. Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of discovering in a

particular case what are the available means of persuasion” (McCroskey, 1982, p. 1). This definition of rhetoric may be exactly what the present-day definition of communication competence is. Goal seeking instrumental communication being the case, effective sources concerned with self and audience, in respect to the rhetorical situation, likely interpret and adapt messages to stimulate intended meaning (McCroskey, 2006). Ultimately, what we may have been measuring all along is Aristotle’s needs for adaptation.

According to adaptation theory, instrumental interpersonal communication, among others, is a major portion of Aristotle’s concept of rhetoric (McCroskey, 1982). The investigation of this thesis exists within the province of rhetoric, as instrumental communication clearly identifies the need for a source to adapt to a receiver. If a source is evaluated as communicatively incompetent, or rhetorically insensitive, a receiver may be unwilling to interact, or even give much attention to a source at all. Thus, a competent, or rhetorically sensitive communicator, worthy of attention is likely one that is able to rhetorically adapt to an audience, demonstrating competence.

Within the context of adaptive instrumental communication, cognitive flexibility links with communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity as critical elements (Hullman, 2007). Cognitive flexibility relates to rhetorical sensitivity in the sense that a source behaves appropriately when “willing to undergo the strain of adaptation,” and “avoid rigid stylized communication” (Hart & Burks, 1972, p. 1; Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980; Paulsen & Eadie, 1984; Knutson, 2006). As a condition of communication competence, there is a strong relationship with cognitive flexibility and appropriateness of behavior (Hullman, 2007). A competent communicator must

know what skill to perform at a given time and situation when communicating competently (McCroskey, 1982). Both of these constructs, rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence, incorporate the element of appropriate flexibility when adapting to others.

Beyond flexibility, the way others perceive a source's adaptability is also related to the appropriateness of communicative behavior, evaluated both by the source and other (Hullman, 2007). It is predicted that if a person is able to adapt in communication events, that person should also have strong interactive interpersonal skills, a condition associated with communication competence, and rhetorical sensitivity (Hullman, 2007). Hart and Burks (1972) identified a characteristic of the rhetorically sensitive individual as "able to determine the difference between all information, and information acceptable for communication" (p. 1). Communication competence refers to a person's ability to make selections from a repertoire of the most appropriate communication acts according to criteria (Allen & Wood, 1978). All of these factors of adaptation are identified as elements of both rhetorical sensitivity, and communication competence (Hart & Burks, 1972; Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980; Paulsen & Eadie, 1984; Knutson, 2006). The ability to choose appropriately from a repertoire of skill and knowledge, as to demonstrate the stimulation of intended meaning is what we are dealing with (McCroskey, 1982).

Instrumentally appropriate and flexible social exchanges are most effective, because of their ability to adapt to new conditions and to increase confidence in partners' future actions (Palmatier, Dant & Grewal, 2007). Flexibility and willingness to adapt to new conditions are part of successful instrumental, interpersonal relationship norms (Palmatier, Dant & Grewal, 2007). When uncertainty is high,

specifically in initial relationships, these instrumentally appropriate relationship exchanges prove most effective. Adaptation and flexibility facilitate interpersonal communication effectiveness. If adaptation requires flexibility, then it follows that flexibility demonstrates instrumental interpersonal skill and knowledge of alternative appropriate communication styles, and should significantly contribute to communication effectiveness. Both rhetorical sensitivity (Hart & Burks, 1972) and communication competence (Allen & Wood, 1978; Barbour, 1978) report such observable operations as most interpersonally effective.

As an example, Levine, Aune, and Krystyna's (2006) data reveals, to no avail that interpersonal adaptation plays a major role in intimate interpersonal relationships. As a relationship intensifier, most of the results indicate adaptation to increase as desirability of relationships increases. In this respect, adaptation is found as a contributor to longer lasting relationships (Levine, Aune, & Krystyna, 2006). These factors of adaptation are identified as strategic, interpersonal, and relationally reinforcing. Clearly, these factors of flexibility are instrumental and rhetorical, and adaptation to receivers in specific plays a significant role.

As an example in a more social setting, interactional synchrony (Kimura & Diabo, 2006), or social harmony (Knutson, 2006), is a rapport often evaluated from interpersonal communication perspective related to social adaptation. Kimura and Diabo (2006) report the interactional synchrony measurement is how individuals adapt in society. They provide a variety of ways to observe appropriate and flexible instrumental interaction intended to produce successful interpersonal relationships. Their results remind us that genuine interactions geared toward social harmony provide for most effective synchrony, and are attributed to one's adaptability.

Communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity are both geared towards such influential social interaction, and in turn focused on social adaptation.

Another example, applying a denoted definition of argumentation, strategic maneuvering is adapting to audience demands as a contributor to a ‘fully-fledged’ argumentative strategy (Eameran & Houtlosser, 2006). This is recognized as methodological rhetoric, which influences the outcome of particular dialectics. These strategies emerge as an individual’s advantage at a certain stage of the discourse in a systematic, coordinated, and simultaneous exploitation of the available means of social influence (Eameran & Houtlosser, 2006). It is clearly presented in their research that rhetorical communicators adapt to the ‘other’ as interactive participants, and a communicator cannot be rhetorical, or competent unless the audience shares a level of similar understanding with the source. More specifically, these strategic operations can be observed when a topic is chosen to adapt to the other. Sometimes the adaptation is realized “by emphatically adopting the other party’s arguments” (Eameran & Houtlosser, 2006, p. 386). The ability to avoid stringent communication styles and to know which alternative messages to use when approaching an audience is directly related to both communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity. They both consider the self, the other, and the situation at hand in an effort to adapt.

As a more fundamental example, these operations of instrumental goal seeking communication are observed as interviewees’ adaptation to anticipated employer’s expectations. While there is a variety considerable predictors of occupational effectiveness, individuals involved in a mock training program were able to effectively express complex, flexible, and sophisticated plans for job interviews (Burgoon, Berger & Waldron, 2000). In these mock interviews, performed at the end

of the training program, successful subjects demonstrated increased knowledge and skill when adapting descriptions of their qualifications for the jobs they were seeking, probably due to an increased repertoire of alternative communicative referents, and flexibility (Burgoon, Berger & Waldron, 2000).

During initial social interactions, similar to those of job interviews, individuals reduce uncertainty about intentions by producing clear message meanings that are appropriate to the social situations (Berger, 1997). This is not dissimilar to rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence. When discussing personal disclosures, Burgoon, Berger, and Waldron (2000) point out discussion strategies of peer leaders that are able to adapt to their audience are more credible, and are able to stimulate willingness to communicate. As a more specific example, when these leaders competently implement effective conflict management tactics they are perceived as individuals whom increase the mindfulness of undesirable behavior by shedding light on potential hidden assumptions, leaving little to question.

Scrutinizing these undesirable behaviors allows them to better communicate the positions of self and other, and develop arguments that are adapted to the communication participants (Burgoon, Berger & Waldron, 2000; Sillars & Wilmot, 1994). “These individuals devoted a greater proportion of their cognitive effort and more of their conversational time exploring their partners’ previous arguments, comparing and contrasting them with their own arguments, and creating novel plans of action that integrated the objectives of the partners when possible” (Burgoon, Berger & Waldron, 2000, p. 119). While the present thesis is not directly concerned with the operations of conflict, Burgoon, Berger, and Waldron’s (2000) research does stand as another example of the adaptive operations of self, other, and the situation –



just as communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity. Without the necessary repertoire of communication knowledge and skill to establish awareness, adapt messages, and behave flexibly, thought processes manifesting appropriate behaviors may not lead to more successful communication (Burgoon, Berger & Waldron, 2000).

Intimate relationships, interview procedures, and social leadership are all examples of practical applications of rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence. As social interactions continue to take place, expected and unexpected situational exigencies are likely to emerge which may demand immediate response (Burgoon, Berger & Waldron, 2000). Faced with such situations, sources are probably able to bring messages under conscious control, and adapt them instrumentally to audiences, as to stimulate intended meaning. If so, then appropriate, flexible, and adaptive styles of communication are necessary parts of a sufficient condition for achieving positive interpersonal relationship outcomes. Communication competence, among other things, is knowing when, how much, and when not to produce messages. Rhetorical sensitivity, among other things, is an ability to differentiate between all available information and information acceptable for communication. However, this thesis suspects them as too related and finds it necessary to investigate the operations of the two constructs for convergent validity. Both are related to Aristotle's adaptation in ways that are strikingly similar to each other.

It may be the case that the two constructs are committed to scientific redundancy – attempting to measure the same true scores under different names. Both rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence seem to simplify Aristotle's adaptation theory. Both describe an appropriately flexible communication style that depicts an individual possessing the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective,

due in large part to adaptability. Both consider the self, other, and the situation. Both are concerned with instrumental communication on an interpersonal level within a variety of communication settings. For nearly forty years both constructs have been applied across a variety of settings adherent to operations that mimic each other.

Rhetorical sensitivity (Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006) and communication competence (Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999) have recently been applied to the cross-cultural communication between the U.S.A. and Thailand, and adaptation prevails as central to interpersonal, intercultural communication effectiveness. This is probably due in part to how Kim (2007) reminds us that cross-cultural adaptation theory is the conduit between an understanding of intercultural communication effectiveness and interpersonal adaptation. Generally defined, cross-cultural adaptation theory identifies the entire development between an environment and an individual new to that environment (Kim, 2007).

This kind of adaptation is suspected to require sensitivity. More specifically, the cultural sensitivity that allows us to tolerate (not necessarily accept) what we believe to be wrong derives from our cultural upbringing (McCroskey, 2006). “The tools for our communication, both verbal and nonverbal, are provided to us by our culture. Unfortunately, if we take our tools to another culture, they will have limited effectiveness – or may be completely ineffective” (McCroskey, 2006, p. 150). For these situations that require extraordinary appropriate flexibility, it should be no surprise that scholars focus on the cross-cultural adaptive processes. Both rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence constructs have been applied to the operations of two different cultures, Thailand and the U.S.A., and the constructs are

defined almost exactly the same; however, throughout their development over the last 30-40 years they produce drastically different results.

When the construct of rhetorical sensitivity was applied cross-culturally as another attempt to develop and apply a measuring instrument that produces teachable results, Knutson and Posirisuk (2006) applied what is referred to as THAIRHETSEN. Stemming in part from the work of Hart, Carlson, and Eadie's (1980) RETSEN2, the scale was modified to fit cross-culturally between the U.S.A. and Thailand. While their research provides the best measurement of rhetorical sensitivity, it is inconsistent with past research.

As an example, the operations of the sub-dimensions of the rhetorical sensitivity do not match up. Rhetorical reflection and the suspected opposite noble self are the two sub-dimensions of the construct of rhetorical sensitivity (Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980). A rhetorical reflector is "a chameleon-like person who believes that satisfying the needs of another is the best means of achieving some desired communication outcome," while the noble self represents more of an "I take care of myself first" attitude (Eadie & Paulson, 1984, p. 390; Darnell & Brockriede, 1976). Findings indicate that when adapting to Thai culture, one ought to understand that Thai relationships appear to initially operate under a sub-dimension of rhetorical sensitivity - specifically rhetorical reflection, focusing predominantly on the needs of the other - and over time relationships progress as more rhetorically sensitive, balancing self with the other (Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006). However, the discovery of noble self increasing over time in the U.S., as an example, is reported inconsistently. The work of Eadie and Paulson (1984) suggests that U.S. American's decrease noble self over time. This may be due to differences in instruments. RETSEN2 (Knutson &

Posirisuk, 2006) stems from RETSEN (Eadie & Paulson's, 1984); however, neither application has yet to produce strong measurement.

These dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity – rhetorical reflection and noble self – are very similarly defined as the dimensions of socio-communicative orientation – assertiveness and responsiveness (Mottet & Beebe, 2006). Assertiveness and responsiveness have been found to strongly predict communication competence the same way as rhetorical reflection and noble self predict rhetorical sensitivity. An individual scoring high in both assertiveness and responsiveness, with the ability to appropriately apply either style, is an individual able to demonstrate communication competence (Richmond & McCroskey, 1992).

Conceptually, someone who appears to express emotional states through verbal and nonverbal behavior would be termed responsive: one who controls the expression of such states would be termed nonresponsive. A person who shows a tendency to state opinions or beliefs with assurance, confidence, or force would be termed assertive rather than nonassertive (Snively, 1981, p. 133).

Individuals scoring high on assertiveness tend to adopt communication styles which require more intense communication. Individuals who are assertive tend to desire control of communication situations and may be perceived in an insensitive manner (Patterson & Beckett, 1995). Responsive individuals, on the other hand, maintain goal seeking communication behaviors intended to stimulate others to disclose. Failing to stimulate such disclosure, the responsive individual has relatively little to respond to (Patterson & Beckett, 1995). By stimulating the other's disclosure

of such information concerning their affective and cognitive state, they are uncertain how to determine their next communication strategy, whatever that may be (Patterson & Beckett, 1995). The individual able to balance both assertive and responsive skills, however, should be perceived as communicatively competent (McCroskey, 1982).

Similar to a noble self, the individual scoring high in assertiveness and low in responsiveness is aggressive; similar to rhetorical reflectors, the person low in assertiveness and high in responsiveness may be perceived (at least in the U.S.) as submissive; and similar to the rhetorically insensitive individual, the person low in assertiveness and responsiveness is clearly noncompetent (Martin & Anderson, 1996; Richmond & McCroskey, 1992). Communication competence has produced consistent results - reliability of .92, and validity over .80 (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988).

Shortly before Knutson and Posirisuk (2006) applied their research to Thailand, Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1998) applied communication competence in Thailand within the organizational context. The ultimate results of Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1998) reflect that Thai communication competence, in addition to honor for senior's and respect for their experience, is reflected with "boon" (merit), "ba-ra-me" (prestige and influence), and "metta" (compassion), and display behaviors consistent with "Orn nork Khaeng nai" (soft outward, firm or hard inside) (Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1998; Komin, 1991). All of these are agreeable to valuing social harmony (Knutson, 2006). In other words, a competent communicator in Thailand may also display behaviors of both assertiveness and responsiveness, as competent communicators are appropriately, and

flexibly able to stand up for their own rights and opinions, while maintaining the ability to confirm emotions, and empathize with others.

Clearly both of the rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence constructs operate within the context of adaptation. They are both instrumental and rhetorical. Both of them are concerned with the operations of self, other, and how to be effective within and across communication situations. Both of them are focused on goal seeking communication, as to stimulate intended meaning within an audience. It may be the case, then, that communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity are attempting to measure the same concept – simplifying Aristotle’s concepts concerning a source’s need to adapt to an audience. To be sure, this thesis proposes to perform convergent validity testing, as to avoid future scientifically redundant findings.

It is believed that rhetorical sensitivity is conceptualized as representing the same concept as communication competence, but rhetorical sensitivity has experienced weak measures. This thesis posits that because of parallel conceptualization and stronger measures, communication competence provides clearer results. There have been evident inconsistencies through the development of rhetorical sensitivity (Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980; Eadie & Paulson, 1984; Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006). Communication competence has experienced far more consistent measures. Thus, it is suspected to provide a clearer concept of rhetorical sensitivity, safeguarding from potential findings already established.

It is not uncommon for two similar concepts to exist at the same time. Rhetorical sensitivity may continue to build stronger instruments, as to get closer to the true score, while communication competence may begin to produce clearly different findings than that of rhetorical sensitivity. Rhetorical sensitivity may

continue to determine distinct behavioral differences between its sub-dimensions, while communication competence may continue to evolve into other new and upcoming communication paradigms. Rhetorical sensitivity may eventually undergo research investigations that produce pedagogical results that contribute to intercultural communication effectiveness, while communication competence may continue to clarify Aristotle's needs to adapt to an audience. Rhetorical sensitivity measurements may someday set it clearly apart from the rest of the related theories in the field of communication.

...Then again, rhetorical sensitivity may end up reproducing only the same findings as communication competence has already overwhelmingly established. Then, after extraordinary amounts of time and great effort, all that rhetorical sensitivity will have had produced would be results scientifically redundant to that of communication competence. This thesis offers its efforts as a safeguard against such wasted efforts, placing attention to efforts which counteract potential methodical idleness. The efforts of this thesis question whether or not the two concepts are actually measuring the same concept. If they are not, then the field of communication will know better that rhetorical sensitivity beholds greater value, still left untapped. However, if it is the case that significant convergent validity does exist, the field of communication will know better how to measure the sought after concept of rhetorical sensitivity, go on to reconceptualize the construct, and avoid waste of great effort and time.

### 1.3 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

This thesis suspects that the constructs of rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence are committed to duplication of findings under different

titles. Both operational definitions seem to share significant conceptual reasoning and description. For example, the dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity, specifically noble self and rhetorical reflection, are described to operate nearly exactly as assertiveness and responsiveness, dimensions intimately related to communication competence. High assertiveness and responsiveness – clearly dimensions of socio-communicative orientation – have been repeatedly recognized as significant attributes of communication competence. Noble selves seem to be assertive, while rhetorical reflectors seem to be responsive. Furthermore, individuals willing and able to demonstrate the knowledge and skill necessary to balance self with other, in respect to the communication situation, seem to operate interchangeably between competent communicators and rhetorically sensitives.

However, through the development of rhetorical sensitivity there exist inconsistent findings. This is may be due to vague conceptualization. When vague conceptualization exists, research findings harbor measurement difficulties. These difficulties, for example, weak validity (Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980), are not likely due to measurement inadequacies; such as, miscalculations and misapplication of research design. Rather, they are more likely attributed to insufficient operationalization of a construct's concept. This thesis suspects rhetorical sensitivity to have developed with vague conceptualization, likely due to ideological problems (Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980; Eadie & Paulson, 1984).

Communication competence, on the other hand is a construct that has experienced clearer measurement, reaching reliability of .92, and validity over .80 (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). While the construct of communication competence has experienced its share of developmental awkwardness –



operationalization difficulties – it has experienced success in application in past research. Because of consistency of findings, and the strong relationship with rhetorical sensitivity, this thesis considers the construct of communication competence as the best for reconceptualizing rhetorical sensitivity. To achieve more productive results, in pursuit of a better understanding of what may be Aristotle's adaptation theory, it is proposed to apply research design similar to recent work of the two constructs.

Therefore, this thesis seeks to measure the suspected convergent validity with a research design that also mimics the likes of communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity, applying instruments within Thailand. Understanding how to adapt communicatively with intercultural effectiveness is critical. Adaptation constructs are likely among, if not the most, salient constructs applied to this setting. Both rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence operate under the category of adaptation, and have both been applied cross-culturally to Thailand within the last decade. Because of such recent work done cross-culturally with rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence within Thailand, it is beneficial to conduct this research cross-culturally. That way, samples may reach as close as possible to the same subjects. If we are setting out to test for convergent validity, it is probably good to approach the same general samples as past work.

If significant convergent validity is revealed, it will indicate that the past efforts of researchers of rhetorical sensitivity may have rediscovered operations already established. It indicates efforts committed to scientific redundancy. To safeguard against this, the efforts of this thesis propose a test of convergent validity.

Testing for validity will allow us to better understand rhetorical sensitivity as uniquely valuable, or clearly in need of reconceptualization.

#### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

After considering the important role that adaptability plays within the paradigm of instrumental, interpersonal communication, it is clear that an understanding of operations greatly assists in intercultural relationship cohesion. When an individual is willing to adapt and demonstrate knowledge and skill from a repertoire of available message designs, understanding this process is valuable. Scholars like Aristotle have most likely been investigating instrumental rhetorical operations as they apply to social interaction for thousands of years.

As intercultural investigations continue to develop in the field of communication, and specifically adaptive intercultural communication, generating observably sound and usable scientific research results is just as critical as conceptualizing heuristically valuable concepts. While the thought process from which derives theoretical reasoning is useful, it often leaves us without teachable procedures. The subsequent measurement of concepts, however, more often leads to pedagogical results. Sometimes, such concepts are not as clear as needed to produce sound measurements. That is why a clear idea of what is being measured is necessary. Rhetorical sensitivity has experienced such measurement difficulties in its development (Hart & Burks, 1972; Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980; Hart & Eadie, 1984).

Now, rhetorical sensitivity with its sub-dimensions and communication competence as it relates to socio-communicative orientation, seem to mimic each other in a way that is suspicious. However, though the construct of rhetorical sensitivity has yet to produce pedagogical results, the present thesis does not suspect

measurement inaccuracies. Rather, it attributes ideological vagueness to inconsistent results. While it is certain that the objective of this thesis is NOT a critique on past work, it does however recognize other closely related constructs that have experienced clearer measurement, as potentially able to produce more accurate results – specifically communication competence (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988) and socio-communicative orientation (Richmond & McCroskey 1990). Throughout the development of rhetorical sensitivity, and communication competence and socio-communicative orientation, convergent validity is suspected to be taking place.

The concept of rhetorical sensitivity (Hart & Burks, 1972; Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980; Eadie & Paulson, 1984; Knuston & Posirisuk, 2006) clearly mimics the likes of communication competence (Allen & Wood, 1978; Barbour, 1981; McCroskey, 1982; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988, McCroskey, 1990), in that they both describe effective instrumental adaptive communication. The dimensions of socio-communicative orientation (assertiveness and responsiveness), as they relate to communication competence, mimic the likes of noble self and rhetorical reflector. The dimension of noble self and assertiveness are defined alike in respect to one's self, while the dimensions of rhetorical reflector and responsiveness are defined alike in respect to the other. Past research has already determined that assertiveness and responsiveness relate to communication competence (Richmond & McCroskey, 1990) just as noble self and rhetorical reflectors relate to rhetorical sensitivity (Spano & Zimmermann, 1995); both competent individuals and rhetorically sensitive individuals balance their two opposing dimensions. Therefore, this project aims to test for existing convergent validity, as to offer a better fit of measures.

RQ1: Are the constructs of rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence actually measuring the same concept?

RQ2: Are the sub-dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity (noble self/rhetorical reflector) actually measuring the same concepts as socio-communicative orientation (assertiveness/responsiveness)?

### 1.5 OBJECTIVE

1. To perform cross-cultural research within Thailand, testing for existing convergent validity of constructs between rhetorical sensitivity, communication competence, and socio-communicative orientation, as they operate within the interpersonal setting.
2. To perform research that mimics the likes of recent research with the same constructs, as to come as close as possible to tapping into nearly the same samples. Designing the research this way assists in measuring for convergent validity more accurately.

### 1.6 SIGNIFICANCE

If it is the case that these constructs are committed to duplicating finds, than the field of communication may find itself in a better position to reconceptualize and measure the construct of rhetorical sensitivity. It is clear that the rhetorical sensitivity construct has never undergone strong measures. It is also clear that the communication competence construct has experienced strong significant measures. Because of this difference, it is suspected by this thesis to be able to clarify ideological vagueness potentially causing poor measurement of rhetorical sensitivity.

This project posits that these developmental problems associated with the construct of rhetorically sensitivity are not suspected as measurement inaccuracies,

but rather places the center of attention on conceptual vagueness. While the attempts to measure the concept of rhetorical sensitivity have undergone peer reviews followed by refereed publications, the information produces inconsistent outcomes. One thing is for certain, the original five elements of rhetorical sensitivity formulated by Hart and Burks (1972) have most likely not been operationalized, probably due to their vagueness. This project, then, assigns such inconsistencies to ideological uncertainty.

Ultimately, the dimensions involved with the construct of rhetorical sensitivity suspiciously mimic other, more recent research manifesting sound measurements; such as, communication competence, and socio-communicative orientation. The purpose arises, then, to perform convergent validity measurement, testing the construct of rhetorical sensitivity with communication competence and socio-communicative orientation, in light of discovering a better fit of measures. This thesis, then, may provide significant grounds to reconceptualize and measure rhetorical sensitivity, as there is little agreement between the current elements of rhetorical sensitivity as it stands. It follows then, that, because of the anticipated relationship communication competence and socio-communicative orientation share with rhetorical sensitivity, the reconceptualization is believed to lead to clearer results. It may be the case that the constructs parallel each other in a way that produces a concept already established.

If test results do not indicate convergent validity, then there may be something left to discover about rhetorical sensitivity that genuinely contributes to both interpersonal communication and intercultural communication effectiveness. Future research may be designed as to experiment with subjects. Such an experiment ought to focus on reported differentiation of communication behaviors between the

dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity. This reported differentiation would likely clarify specific behaviors associated with instrumental interpersonal and intercultural relationships as they progress over time. By making clear distinctions of behaviors associated with the dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity, teachable, interpersonal, intercultural communication effectiveness would be more likely to emerge sustaining strong measurement. Safeguarding against scientific redundancy will significantly benefit future investigations. Making sure that communication scholars are not re-inventing the wheel is important to the progress of such adaptive, instrumental, interpersonal, and intercultural investigations.

#### 1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Rhetorical Sensitivity:

[T]he rhetorically sensitive person avoids rigid communication patterns, adapts to the situation and context, and balances self and other, conditions often associated with intercultural communication effectiveness” (Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006, p. 206).

Rhetorical Reflection:

[T]he rhetorically reflective person relinquishes their personal goals and adapts completely to their relational others (Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006, p. 206).

Nobel Self:

[T]he noble self displays a rigid type of communication attending exclusively to their personal goals (Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006, p. 206).

Communication Competence:

“First, competence involves knowledge, skill, and motivation. The competent communicator must possess sufficient levels of communication knowledge, have the ability to display that knowledge in ongoing interaction situations, and be motivated

to do so. Second, the assessment of communication competence depends on effectiveness and appropriateness criteria. Effectiveness is the ability to accomplish interpersonal goals and objectives. Appropriateness is the ability to communicate in accordance with situational and relational constraints” (Spano & Zimmermann, 1995 p. 18).

“Communication competence is best conceived as interaction which accomplishes personal objectives in an interpersonally appropriate manner” (Spitzburg 1983, p. 325).

“To be competent, an individual must be able to perceive contextual cues in various situations and adapt his or her behaviors and message strategies to that particular context” (Duran & Kelly, 1985, p. 112).

Communication competence; (1) developing a repertoire of communication acts, (2) selecting from that repertoire the most appropriate communication acts according to criteria, (3) implementing these communication choices effectively through verbal and nonverbal means, and (4) evaluating these communication attempts according to elements of appropriateness and effectiveness (Allen & Wood, 1978).

A competent communicator is one that possesses access to a repertoire of communication alternatives; is skillful when determining the most appropriate form and content of messages; is able to apply instrumental communication to meet the needs of self and others – without interfering with others goals; is conscientious of communicative situational and environmental elements; is able to adapt and take appropriate roles; and understands there are many ways to communicate many different ideas.

Assertiveness:

“Assertiveness concerns a person’s ability to make requests, actively disagree, express positive or negative personal rights and feelings, initiate, maintain, and disengage from conversations, and stand up for one’s own self without attacking others.

Assertive persons communicate in a manner that helps them maintain their self respect, satisfy personal needs, pursue personal happiness, and defend their rights without impinging on the rights of others. Assertiveness, thus, is a person’s ability to state opinions with conviction and to defend him or herself against verbal attack”

(Klopf, 1991, p. 135)

Responsiveness:

“Responsiveness concerns a person’s sensitivity to the feelings of others as they are verbalized. Responsive persons are good listeners, are able to make others comfortable in speaking situations, are cognizant of the needs of others, are helpful, sympathetic, warm and understanding, and are open as communicators. Without giving up their own rights, they are responsive to the rights of others. Responsive people are not submissive, however, which is to say, they do not give up their rights and defer readily to others” (Klopf, 1991, p. 135)



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is proposed as the objective of this thesis to test and measure the convergent validity potentially existing between rhetorical sensitivity as it relates to communication competence and socio-communicative orientation. To do this, it is necessary to first observe a developmental chronology of rhetorical sensitivity. This will include difficulties the construct has experienced, where it is today, and development of dimensions. Next, there is an overview of a developmental chronology of communication competence, followed by socio-communicative style/orientation. These sections also include difficulties the constructs have experienced, where they are today, and development of dimensions. Also, the gaps within the research are filled, relating all constructs together by recognizing the likelihood of scientific redundancy. Finally, the hypotheses and a model are provided, as to offer clear direction and a simple understanding.

#### 2.2 RHETORICAL SENSITIVITY

Hart and Burks' (1972) rhetorical sensitivity argues that the instrumental, or rhetorical, approach best promises to facilitate human understanding and to effect social cohesion....

Published, June, 1972, Hart and Burks advanced the construct of rhetorical sensitivity (RS). This construct depicts five basic elements of communication describing the rhetorically sensitive individual as: (1) tries to accept role-taking as

part of the human condition, (2) attempts to avoid stylized verbal behavior, (3) is characteristically willing to undergo the strain of adaptation, (4) seeks to distinguish between all information and information acceptable for communication, and (5) tries to understand that an idea can be rendered in multi-form ways (Hart & Burks, 1972, p. 1). These elements were conceptualized as a means to apply practical instrumental communication to social interaction (Hart & Burks, 1972). The focus introduced a frame of mind promoting successful interpersonal relationships.

However, this thesis questions the construct of rhetorical sensitivity as produced without necessary methods of observation, as to provide evidence for claims – such as measuring instruments that may have provided teachable applications. While qualitative approaches of research like Hart and Burks' (1972) often produce useful information, teachable behaviors go noticeably absent, likely due to vagueness of operationalization. The dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity (RS) were later advanced by Darnell and Brockriede (1976) by the addition of two bi-polar dimensions, namely rhetorical reflection (RR) and noble self (NS). A rhetorical reflector is “a chameleon-like person who believes that satisfying the needs of another is the best means of achieving some desired communication outcome,” while the noble self represents more of an “I take care of myself first” attitude (Eadie & Paulson, 1984, p. 390; Darnell & Brockriede, 1976).

Together, Hart, Carlson & Eadie (1980) developed and implemented what is now referred to as the RHETSEN scale. This research began in 1975, but was not complete until 1980. During this process, it is claimed that seven thousand subjects completed questionnaires – most of which data produced little reliability and validity (Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980). The research explains the difficulties in the initial

stages as associated with the measuring instrument's lack of validity. After revising RHETSEN, the validity was still in question, but was possible that sufficient face validity had been established in part III of its revision, as far as academic standards demanded.

Hart, Carlson, and Eadie (1980), designed the scale to measure such communication phenomena, as a tool to better quantify the characteristics of the suspected continuum. RHETSEN is intended to measure "who the rhetorical person is, why they hold the attitudes they do, and what theoretical results can be revealed about RS from its results" (Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980, p. 1). "Measuring a total of 262 Ohio University Students, a total of 75 items were initially generated resulting in only 17 usable items" (Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980, p. 3). After administering the scale later to over 800 University students, communication related attitudinal features emerged; such as, high RS measurements correlated with political and religious conservatism. Also, high RS scores were associated with students that resided in suburban and rural areas that attended private institutions. Ultimately, however, the scale was not up to par with academic demands (Hart, Carlson & Eadie, 1980). This result may be related to insufficiently operationalizing the RS construct. Hart, et al., (1980) state that the scale "is more of a measure of interpersonal ideology than an inventory of enacted behaviors" (Hart, et al., 1980, p. 1).

While this style of thought is stimulating, other academicians may question what exactly was being measured. Hart, Carlson, and Eadie (1980) specifically declare a conceptual definition, provided in the research, indicating "Rhetorical sensitivity is a particular *attitude* toward encoding spoken messages. It represents a

way of thinking about what should be said and, then, a way of deciding how to say it” (p. 2). The project declared that “rhetorical sensitivity is not focused on behavior” (p. 2). Rather, the rhetorically sensitive person is one whom considers the operations of communication in a way that produces the delivery of effectively encoded messages.

Contrarily, the original work of Hart and Burks (1972), does suggest that the rhetorically sensitive person adheres to behavior – most specifically in the second and third elements (attempts to avoid stylized verbal behavior, and is characteristically willing to undergo the strain of adaptation). What may be causing part of the confusion here is that delivering encoded messages is behavior, and that which likely accounts for a majority of variance during social interactions. It may be very difficult to make even the slightest inference about attitudes if there is little focus on observable behaviors.

Kelly, Phillips, and McKinny (1982) questioned, among other constructs, the heuristic value of rhetorical sensitivity as it relates to assisting the instructional environment. “These statements do not identify particular behaviors, however; nor do they specify norms productive of a nosology” (p. 211). “It maybe that feelings do not motivate choices. A person might be fearful of speaking, but realize it is necessary to learn to do it. On the other hand, a person may be aware of personal inadequacies at speaking, and not be anxious about it at all” (p. 216). “Still others may be fearful about speaking, but be excellent performers” (p. 216). “Up to now we had been begging the question by believing if measurement defined a problem a person would agree to having it” (p. 216).

After a five year research project rendering virtually invalid measures Hart, Carlson, and Eadie, (1980), Eadie and Paulson (1984) continued investigations more directed at observations of behaviors associated rhetorical sensitivity. While the field of communication studies may compliment such elaborate and thorough research design, questions about rhetorical sensitivity remained unanswered. Unfortunately, Eadie and Paulson (1984) conducted the research project using the same RHETSEN scale previously proven to produce weak validity. Weak validity usually necessitates reconceptualization, not further use of scales already proven to provide little to no valid data. What exactly was meant by rhetorical sensitivity lingered in question.

Addressing the concept of rhetorical sensitivity, Faulkerson (1990) points out a clear relationship with audience adaptation. “It appears to amount to little more than the application of the most basic of rhetorical precepts – audience adaptation – to the interpersonal setting” (p. 6). “Reduced to its essentials their advice is altogether conventional: effective interpersonal rhetors analyze the situation and select from their repertoire of behaviors those that promise to be maximally adaptive; hence, the larger the repertoire of behaviors with which the rhetor feels comfortable, the greater the potential for adaptation” (p. 6). “The whole thrust of the rhetorical sensitivity concept seems to be to free rhetors of adaptational restraints in order to enhance the effectiveness of social interaction – but without explicitly identifying needed limits to such freedom (either by making a case against some types of behavior or by specifying unacceptable consequences)” (p. 7). Fulkerson (1990) reveals that rhetorical sensitivity pays little, or no attention to the complexity of the ‘other’ and thus constricts the repertoire of the rhetor’s adaptability.

In 1993, McClish points out that a specific weakness of rhetorical sensitivity maybe that the appropriate application of rhetorical sensitivity dimensions (RR, RS, NS) may each have an appropriate place for complex situations and contexts. It has clearly not been recognized when these characteristics are effective and appropriate. It may be the case, like many other constructs in communication, that each dimension has its suitable place. Those places have yet to be identified. Addressing this issue of complexity of application, McClish (1993) goes on to also equate communication competence with rhetorical sensitivity through the likes of appropriateness and flexibility, pointing out that both constructs concern self with others in social situations and the ability to effectively design instrumental communication messages.

In 1995, Spano and Zimmermann point out a clear and evident redundancy of description between communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity. “First, competence involves knowledge, skill, and motivation. The competent communicator must possess sufficient levels of communication knowledge, have the ability to display that knowledge in ongoing interaction situations, and be motivated to do so. Second, the assessment of communication competence depends on effectiveness and appropriateness criteria. Effectiveness is the ability to accomplish interpersonal goals and objectives. Appropriateness is the ability to communicate in accordance with situational and relational constraints” (p. 18). “Rhetorical sensitivity is conceptually consistent with communication competence in that the rhetorically sensitive communicator accomplishes goals within the constraints of a given social situation. In addition, the situational based nature of rhetorical sensitivity aligns it more closely with flexibility than other related competence dimensions. The relationship between rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence is particularly evident when

contrasted with noble self and rhetorical reflector constructs. The noble self is unable or unwilling to adapt to situational cues due to excessive concern for self. The rhetorical reflector, on the other hand, relinquishes self goals by adapting completely to situational cues and relational others” (p. 20).

In 1998, House, Dallinger, and Kilgallen recognized redundancy of rhetorical sensitivity and socio-communicator style when researching androgyny. “One approach to communicator style that readily parallels current notions of gender is found in the work of Hart and his colleagues on rhetorical sensitivity” (p. 13). Results revealed that rhetorically sensitive individuals were undifferentiated between masculine and feminine, noble selves were correlated with masculinity, but, counter intuitively, rhetorical reflectors were found to be androgynous – able to be flexible in their style of communication. However, House, Dallinger, and Kilgallen (1998) also applied the RHETSEN scale, and announce difficulties deriving from its use.

After turning quite dormant for nearly ten years, maybe due to its lack of conceptual clarity, Knutson et. al (2006) revived the construct. In 2006, as another attempt to develop and apply a measuring instrument that produces teachable results, Knutson (2006) devised what is referred to as THAIRHETSEN. Stemming, in part from the work of Hart, Carlson, and Eadie’s RETSEN (1980), the scale was modified to fit cross-culturally between the U.S.A. and Thailand. The scale was translated into Thai, and back-translated into English appropriately.

To address the issue of the rhetorical sensitivity operational definition, Knutson and Posirisuk (2006) state that “the rhetorically sensitive person avoids rigid communication patterns, adapts to the situation and context, and balances self and other, conditions often associated with intercultural communication effectiveness”



(p. 206). Knutson, and Posirisuk (2006) also observe that “competent communicators are flexible, able to adapt their communication to meet the demands of different situations,” and apply quantitative methods to the research of rhetorical sensitivity (p. 4).

In relation to the development of the theory of rhetorical sensitivity, Knutson’s (2006) results produced some inconsistent findings with past rhetorical sensitivity. Knutson’s (2006) results reveal that the factors RR and RS increase isomorphically among Thai subjects, while the factor NS did not load. For relationships lasting durations of at least six months, Thai subjects initially operate interpersonally by adopting RR behaviors. However, as sufficient time passes (six months), Thais increase RR while developing appropriate RS behaviors, noticeably avoiding NS; thus, suggesting that RS is not likely the middle ground of RR and NS.

What this reveals is that RR and NS are probably not poles on a continuum. If it were a continuum, RS would increase only as RR decreased – the two elements would not increase at the same time. NS did not even load, but as one polar element on a continuum increases, the other must decrease. That is not the case with Knutson and Posirisuk’s (2006) application of THAIRETSEN. Hence, RR and NS are not likely bi-polar factors, as Darnell and Brockriede (1976) initially claimed.

Furthermore, concerning the U.S. American sample, Knutson and Posirisuk (2006) reveal that as time passes in interpersonal relationships, NS increases. After cross cultural analyses of students from a western state university, U.S.A., involving 400 surveyed students, U.S. Americans initiate relationships with the characteristics associated with NS. Over time, these behaviors increase. This finding directly conflicts with that of Eadie and Paulson’s (1984) U.S. American sample, that is to say



that “raters perceived no differences in these variables for the intimate situations seems to indicate that noble selves abandon this strategy as relational expectations mature” (p. 404). This suggests that the NS factor decreases over time.

Evidently, the construct of rhetorical sensitivity was popular in the 1970s, but it had no measurement. This may have been due to overriding more popular topics in the field, diverting attention away from such development. Hart, Carlson, and Eadie attempted to make things clearer in 1980 with RHETSEN, and the additional factors of RR and NS. Nevertheless, the concept sustained little, if any valid measurement. During 1984, Eadie and Paulson derived almost unusable information from a well designed project by a second use of RHETSEN. By 2006, Knutson and Posirisuk’s cross-cultural findings greatly assisted in revealing clear evidence of how previous research harbored unmistakable inconsistencies. However, it too left rhetorical sensitivity with room to improve measurement.

This thesis posits that these developmental problems associated with the construct of rhetorically sensitivity are not suspected as measurement inaccuracies, but rather places the center of attention on conceptual vagueness. While the attempts to measure the concept have undergone peer reviews followed by refereed publications, the information produces inconsistent outcomes. One thing is for certain, the original five constructs formulated by Hart and Burks (1972) have most likely not been operationalized, probably due to their vagueness. This thesis, then, assigns such inconsistencies to ideological uncertainty.

The identified dimensions involved with the construct of rhetorical sensitivity suspiciously mimic other, more recent research manifesting sound measurements; such as, communication competence, and socio-communicative style/orientation. The

purpose arises, then, to perform convergent validity measurement, testing the relationship between the constructs of rhetorical sensitivity, communication competence, and socio-communicative orientation, in light of discovering a better fit of measures. This is an attempt to clarify a need to reconceptualize, or not, as there is little agreement between the current elements of RS as it stands. It follows then, that, because of the anticipated relationship communication competence and socio-communicative style/orientation share with RS, the reconceptualization is believed to lead to clearer measurements. It may be the case that the constructs complement each other in a way that produces scientific redundancy not yet considered.

### 2.3 COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

The construct of communication competence dates back, at least, as far as 1969 as demonstrated by Krauss and Glucksburg. These scholars focused on speaker-listener interaction. “This view of speaker-listener interaction suggests that in constructing a message a speaker must perform two rather subtle informational analysis: (1) of stimulus array, in order that [her or] his message will take into account those attributes of the referent which distinguish it from nonreferents; and (2) of this listener, in order that a message may be formulated which is compatible with the listener’s knowledge and capabilities” (Krauss & Glucksburg, 1969, p. 256). “When a source uses a referent that does not enable listeners to select the correct referent, he [or she] is demonstrating [her or] his lack of appreciation of the fact that a good name must take into account the knowledge the listener possesses” (Krauss & Glucksburg, 1969, p. 264). In other words, a competent communicator is one that takes into account both available and appropriate information, as to stimulate the intended meaning within a receiver. Krauss and Glucksburg (1969) conclude by recognizing,

among other things, that there is more to take into account than the speaking-listening interactions when evaluating competence; such as, nonverbal communication.

Throughout the 1970s educators realized the importance of possessing skill and knowledge while engaging in communication. “Comprehensive literacy suggests that an individual has the full repertory of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences needed to function effectively and comfortably in most communication situations” (ERIC Report, 1978, p. 337). One must achieve sufficient mastery of both the internal and external symbolic environment – both conceptually and behaviorally (ERIC Report, 1978). Central to communication competence “is the concept of control, which suggests that competency is a function of the communicator’s ability to exert influence over physical and social surroundings,” such as, “ goal specification, information acquisition, prediction making, strategy selection, strategy implementation, and environmental testing” (ERIC Report, 1978, p. 341).

Any definition of communication competence ought to refer to a range of skill and knowledge that function as an array of available communication acts (Allen & Wood, 1978). Interactions include more than one function, and thus interaction involves multiple purposes (Allen & Wood, 1978). “The competent communicator is capable of performing a wide variety of communication acts involving both verbal and nonverbal behaviors in contexts that are often fluid in terms of role reversal and multidimensional in terms of function” (Allen & Wood, 1978, p. 288).

Four elements were suggested to depict communication competence; (1) developing a repertoire of communication acts, (2) selecting from that repertoire the most appropriate communication acts according to criteria, (3) implementing these communication choices effectively through verbal and nonverbal means, and (4)

evaluating these communication attempts according to elements of appropriateness and effectiveness (Allen & Wood, 1978; Connolly & Bruner, 1974). As an example, what is important in expressions of feelings to a family member may be quite different from those expressed to a colleague, within different situational parameters. A competent communicator is one that is skilled and knowledgeable, demonstrating appropriate alternatives of communication, and is one able to adapt to a variety of unique situations.

Communication competence is the ability of a person to demonstrate understanding of a communicative behavior which is socially appropriate in a given situation. This means that the person must be able to choose among a repertoire of communication behaviors in order to successfully achieve his or her goals during an interaction with another person within the constraints of the situation. A person must both know what to do and be able to behave appropriately. Interpersonal competence is the ability of an individual to interact effectively with other people. This refers to the ability to accomplish interpersonal tasks, to evoke the responses he or she desires, and to interpret social situations and to adjust flexibly to them. Logically the more competent interpersonally a person is, the more effective he or she will be in accomplishing what is wanted with others. (Barbour, 1981, p. 46).

Becoming “less egocentric, less turned inward, more perceptive of others, and more alert to the ways that those we interact with think and feel and behave” likely leads to more competence (Barbour, 1981, p. 49).

Communication competence is also defined “as the ability and willingness of an individual to participate responsibly in a transaction in such a way as to maximize

the outcome of shared meaning” (Littlejohn & Jabusch, 1982, p. 29). Of course, shared meaning is limited, regardless of competency levels of communication participants, but has been categorized into four interdependent components: process understanding, interpersonal sensitivity, communication skills, and ethical responsibility (Littlejohn & Jabusch, 1982). These four components require a constant state of analysis. Such “analysis is the key to communication competence,” likely because the competent communicator is in a constant state of questioning (Littlejohn & Jabusch, 1982, p. 32).

This process of analysis is realized interpersonally as “one assesses behavioral options and makes conscious choices about how to act in a given relationship” (Littlejohn & Jabusch, 1982, p. 34). Concerning sensitivity, a competent communicator “watches for environmental cues,” is “attentive to interaction flow and aware of the need for appropriate interaction management,” and is able to “discover accurately the meanings and feelings of others” (p. 34). To do this, a competent communicator involves “self-monitoring,” which “involves being aware of and accounting for one’s own feelings,” while on the other hand, is also concerned with the well-being of all other participants committed to the situation (Littlejohn & Jabusch, 1982, p. 35).

Probably one of the most pivotal points in the development of communication competence was McCroskey’s (1982) contribution to a greater understanding of how to approach communication competence. A distinct difference exists between skill and competence, and “knowing how does not always result in appropriate behavior and appropriate behavior is not always tied to understanding of that behavior” (McCroskey, 1982, p. 4). Though there may be access to a repertoire of

communication knowledge and skill, competent communicators may not always behave appropriately. On the other hand, individuals may behave appropriately, but the demonstration of that behavior does not always represent actual communication competence – sometimes individuals behave appropriately, but don't always understand why that behavior is appropriate. Certainly there exists a distinction between competence and skill, and that skillful communicators are not always competent. "Competence and performance are not the same thing – that is to say, knowing is not equal to doing" (McCroskey, 1982, p. 4).

While we must be careful to differentiate between competence and skill, behavior is the key to understanding communication competence (McCroskey, 1982). Here, communication competence is "the ability of an individual to demonstrate knowledge of the appropriate communicative behavior in a given situation," stemming in part from Barbour's (1978) previously discussed definition. The key of this definition is the "demonstration of appropriate communication behavior" (p. 2). As an example, 68% of patients who sued against their physician associated difficulties with communication, not practice (Avtgis & Polack, 2007). "The better we understand the functions of communication, and the motivations associated with these functions, the better we will be able to instruct people in recognizing such behavior and adapting accordingly" (Spitzburg, 1983, p. 327). Further research investigations should focus on "why many people at least some of the time seem to "know" what constitutes appropriate performance, but do not choose to engage it" (Pearson & Daniels, 1986, p. 100).

From this focus, the realization of perceived, versus actual, competence emerged. "Many of the most important decisions people make concerning

communication are made on the bases of self-perceived competence rather than actual competence” (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988, p. 110). For this reason, it is believed that “often it is more important to know what a person believes his/her competence level is than to know what the person’s actual competence level is. People make decisions about whether or not to communicate based, at least in part, on how competent they believe they are to communicate well” (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988, p. 110). As an example, recognizing the influence of self-perceived competence in listening skills, while there was no change in listening performance over time, students’ self-perceived listening competence increased (Johnson & Long, 2007). As another example, in respect to organizational satisfaction, “subordinates perceiving their supervisors’ behaviors as both relationship and task oriented demonstrate highest levels of satisfaction (Madlock, 2008).

Beyond this finding, sensitive communicators seem to possess a meta-knowledge of communication events (Duran & Kelly, 1985). “High cognitively complex individuals form more differentiated impressions of others and are better able to role-take than low cognitively complex people” (p. 116). “Cognitive competence is the ability to perceive salient contextual cues that serve to indicate the appropriateness of one’s various communicative tacts” (Duran & Kelly, 1985, p. 117). This “social confirmation is the ability and desire to understand and meet other’s expectations during social interactions. Empathy, warmth, and ability to role-take mark the socially confirming person. It is likely that the person who scores low on social confirmation is not sought out for social interaction,” and evidences social interaction ineffectiveness; hence, one who is communicatively incompetent. (Zakahi & Duran, 1985, p. 58).



“Social confirmation refers to concern for the line and projected image of the other as well as attempts to make the other feel good, supported and important” (McKinney, Kelly & Duran 1997, p. 193). The individual that is more issue-oriented uses social confirmation behaviors, but also reflects appropriate disclosure, and social experience. The individual that is self-oriented “is negatively associated with social experience, social composure, social confirmation, articulation [appropriate use of language], and appropriate disclosure” (McKinney, Kelly & Duran 1997, p. 193). It is noted that the self-oriented individual is not necessarily selfish, but rather possesses “poor communication skills, [is] inexperienced, and [has] anxiety associated with confrontation” (McKinney, Kelly & Duran 1997, p. 193). Thus, a self-oriented individual is negatively associated with communication competence, while those able to focus on the issue and other are more closely related to communication competence.

Specifically, the social confirmation of a competent communicator “aids in the adaptation to the relational context by virtue of recognizing and confirming the projected social image of one’s partner” (Duran, 1992, p. 256). Dyadic disclosure is a measure of one’s sensitivity to these cues and “functions to provide information as to how one’s partner is presenting himself or herself and how the other is responding to the way the interaction is transpiring” (Duran, 1992, p. 256). Experiences with these social confirmations “lead to a refined social repertoire, and the refined social repertoire provides confidence to engage in novel social activities” (Duran & Kelly, 1994, p. 123). “In essence, social activities are the arena in which communication competence is learned, demonstrated, and evaluated” (Duran & Kelly, 1994, p. 123).



Wiemann's (1977) definition of communication competence reflects "flexibility, social relaxation, affiliation/support, empathy, interaction management, and general competence" (Downs, Smith, Chatham & Boyle, 1986, p. 120; Wiemann, 1977). Again, communication competence is knowing the appropriate communication strategy for a given situation, thus demonstrating flexibility and relaxation in the role of the communicator. However, in addition, the communicator has the ability to demonstrate understanding of the other individual involved in the interaction.

In this respect, the conceptualization and measurement of the Communication Adaptability Scale (CAS) is also recognized as closely related to communication competence (Duran, 1992). "In essence flexibility involves the adaptation of actions to the physical, social, and relational context. Therefore, adaptability provides a repertoire of behaviors that enables one to adjust to various communication contexts" (Duran, 1992, p. 255). Adaptability is "one component that aids in the effective and appropriate management of social interactions" (Duran, 1992, p. 255).

"Communicative adaptability, a component of communication competence, is conceptualized as the ability to identify socio-interpersonal relationships (ties/associations) and the adaptation of one's communication behavior to those contextual constraints" (McKinney, et al, 1997, p. 193).

Flexibility is "a person's awareness of communication alternatives, willingness to adapt to the situation, and self-efficacy in being flexible" – often referred to as communication competence (Martin & Anderson, 1998, p. 1). "This finding also provides additional support for the Cognitive Flexibility Scale in that people who are cognitively flexible have more confidence in their ability to communicate effectively, especially in new situations" (Martin & Anderson, 1998,

p. 6). Cognitively flexible individuals believe in their communicative success and make necessary changes to achieve goals for themselves and of others without interfering with long-term relational goals or goals of others (Martin & Anderson, 1998). Results also reveal a strong relationship between flexibility, communication competence, and assertiveness and responsiveness. These scholars refer to socio-communicative style when suggesting that future research ought to investigate the relationship between the flexibility and versatility of communication behaviors.

In 1994, the Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (ICCS) was developed (Rubin, & Martin, 1994). This study did apply the values of socio-communicative style to communication competence. Following the ICCS, research measured cultures that valued talking (like the U.S.) as an aspect of communication competence, and also applied socio-communicative style (McCroskey & Richmond, 1995). Related to the McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) findings of self-perceived communication competence as a predictor of behavior, “an alpha reliability of .91” was established (McCroskey & Richmond, 1995, p. 43). The communication style used consists of two dimensions, assertiveness and responsiveness. The assertiveness and responsiveness measure (ARM) used came from Richmond and McCroskey (1990), and found reliability alpha .89 for assertiveness, and .88 for responsiveness (McCroskey & Richmond, 1995). Such research reveals a strong predictive relationship between socio-communicative style/orientation and competence.

Applications to cross-cultural studies swiftly emerged with the perceived competence perspective - the U.S. and Australia share many competence similarities, even if the scores for Australia were lower than the U.S. (Barracough, Christophel & McCroskey, 1988); also, [U.S.] American and Micronesian students report themselves

to be different from [U.S.] Americans in their willingness to communicate more as a function of their self-perceived competence (Burroughs & Marie, 1990); contrarily, Swedish college students may simply be culturally more quiet than U.S. American college students; hence, the same communication apprehension, but less willingness to communicate – not less self-perceived communication competence (McCroskey, Burroughs, Duan & Richmond, 1990); with Finland and the U.S. it is noted that while willingness to communicate differed cross-culturally, self-perceived communication competence did not (Sallinen-Kuparinen, McCroskey & Richmond, 1991); within the US, Asian Americans held impressions of competence focused on caring and long lasting relationships, while Anglo Americans held recognition of individual needs (Collier, 1996); Zimmermann (1995) initially suspected international students enrolling in U.S. American colleges to better adjust to U.S. American life from self-perceived English speaking competence; however, findings suggested understanding of relationships, cultural norms, nonverbal behavior, and intentions of others, in respect to what is already considered normal to them were more contributive factors; for Thai learners of English, the differences between Thai and English native speakers in many features of nonverbal communication behavior can lead to a misunderstanding and miscommunication likely due to stimulated meaning from nonverbal vocalics (Damnet & Borland, 2007). Findings support the notion that “communication competence is at least to some degree culture specific” (Bolls & Tan, 1996, p. 211).

Clearly there are a variety of similarities and differences among cultures and co-cultures, but the point is that there is a constant focus on a repertoire of available alternative referents, as to be a competent communicator, capable of adaptation and positive relational outcomes. “Communication competence, in its narrow sense,

includes a set of abilities and knowledge that enables sojourners to engage in meaningful interaction with the host people” (Cui, Berg & Jiang, 1998, p. 72). It maintains predictive ability of its positive effect on social interaction and cross-cultural adaptation. These studies confirm previously discussed differentiation between actual and perceived competence as a basis for individuals’ decision making process, and the need for researchers to adapt cross-cultural measures to fit each unique culture (McCroskey, & McCroskey, 1988). Learning from the ethnocentric error of past research, it is clear; current cross-cultural research must adjust measures according to the culture.

By 1998, communication competence studies reached Thailand (Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1998). The research directly addresses the ethnocentric aspect of communication theory deriving predominantly from U.S. America, and Thai culture is approached from a Thai perspective. Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin (1998) translated questionnaires in format and content to fit Thai culture. “Behaviors that are understood as a reflection of competence in one culture are not necessarily understood as competent in another” (Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1998, p. 382; Cooley & Roach, 1984). “Among other things, results suggest that Thais who are perceived to be communicatively competent know how to avoid conflict with others; control their emotions; display respect, tactfulness, modesty, and politeness; and use appropriate pronouns in addressing others” (Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1998, p. 382).

Furthermore, “Thai culture emphasizes group interests and loyalty, modesty, and quality of life (rather than material success), status, and the use of appropriate communication rules and norms in interactions with people in different social strata”

(Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1998, p. 389). Thai culture is also identified as low individualism, low masculinity, high power distance, and high uncertainty avoidance. The ultimate results of Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin (1998) reflect that Thai organizational communication competence, in addition to honor for senior's and respect for their experience, is reflected with "boon" (merit), "ba-ra-me" (prestige and influence), and "metta" (compassion), ... "and display behaviors consistent with "Orn nork Khaeng nai" ("soft outward, firm or hard inside) (Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1998, p. 409-410; Komin, 1991). All of these are agreeable to valuing social harmony (Knutson, 2006).

#### 2.4 SOCIO-COMMUNICATIVE ORIENTATION

Most prominently developing in the 1980s was the construct of Socio communicative style. "Two primary dimensions of behavior were identified: assertiveness and responsiveness" (Snively, 1981, p. 132). The goal was to "find a simple but effective way in which to describe another person's communication behavior and then to react appropriately (with versatility) in an interpersonal relationship" (p. 132). Through realizing the behaviors of assertiveness and responsiveness, and the ability to be flexible to perform either style, "it may be possible for individuals to quickly and accurately describe and adapt to the communication behaviors of others with the goal of increased understanding and improved communication" (p. 132). Social style is the way a person is perceived as relating to other people (Klopf, 1991). "Socio-communicative style (SCS) refers to an individual's tendencies with regard to initiating with and reacting and adapting to the communication of another person" through "assertiveness and responsiveness" (Teven, 2005, p. 24). Many definitions of assertiveness and responsiveness seem to

describe the cognitive flexibility to consider alternative orientations other than their own, allowing for more effectiveness (Richmond, & McCroskey, 1990).

Assertiveness concerns a person's ability to make requests, actively disagree, express positive or negative personal rights and feelings, initiate, maintain, and disengage from conversations, and stand up for one's own self without attacking others. Assertive persons communicate in a manner that helps them maintain their self respect, satisfy personal needs, pursue personal happiness, and defend their rights without impinging on the rights of others.

Assertiveness, thus, is a person's ability to state opinions with conviction and to defend him or herself against verbal attack (Klopf, 1991, p. 135; Bolton, 1979; McCroskey, Richmond & Stewart, 1986).

Assertiveness "is a person's general tendency to be interpersonally dominant, ascendant, and forceful... aggressive people express their feelings at the expense of others, always needing to win an argument... they can be abusive, rude, and sarcastic, berating clerks and waitresses for poor service, and dominating subordinates and family members, and always having a final word in conversations" (Thompson & Klopf, 1991, p. 65; Infante, 1987; Bolton, 1979). "Assertive communicators are often very dominant, independent, and competitive. Assertiveness is "associated with instrumental competence, while responsiveness was associated with expressive competence" (Rocca, Toale & Martin, 1998, p. 446).

"Responsive communicators are often very empathic, friendly, and helpful" and "responsiveness involves being other oriented." (Rocca, Toale, & Martin, 1998, p. 446). "Responsiveness concerns a person's sensitivity to the feelings of others as they are verbalized. Responsive persons are good listeners, are able to make others

comfortable in speaking situations, are cognizant of the needs of others, are helpful, sympathetic, warm and understanding, and are open as communicators. Without giving up their own rights, they are responsive to the rights of others. Responsive people are not submissive, however, which is to say, they do not give up their rights and defer readily to others” (Klopf, 1991, p. 135; Bolton, 1979; McCroskey, Richmond & Stewart, 1986; Mottet & Beebe, 2006). Responsiveness is a person’s willingness and capacity to be sensitive to the communication of others, being good listeners, and making others comfortable in communication situations while recognizing their needs and desires (Thompson & Klopf, 1991). Responsive behaviors are relationship-oriented while assertiveness is associated with task-orientation (Thompson & Klopf, 1991).

To be able to adapt to the other’s needs in this way requires good listening skills, among other things, as to increase the repertoire of instrumental communication alternatives. It is the motivation to recognize the needs, desires, and to make others comfortable in communicating. Ultimately, the responsive dimension of socio-communicative style can allow for influential communication to become more effective (Mottet & Beebe, 2006). Allowing for affection needs to be met, tends to allow for an increase in available communication referents of both self and other; thus, leading to a more influential relationship (Mottet & Beebe, 2006). “Responsives seem only to encourage others to disclose. This is an obvious strategy for them to utilize. In the absence of disclosure, a responsive has relatively little to respond to. By allowing others to provide them with information about their affective and cognitive state, they are able to determine their next action, whatever that may be” (Patterson &



Beckett, 1995, p. 238). One may then expect a responsive individual to be flexible in terms of their strategic arsenal.

In other words, an assertive person is more likely to adhere to a stringent stylized communication, having access to a more limited repertoire of strategic alternatives. Conversely, one who is responsive would be expected to avoid a stringent adherence to stylized communication, allowing for more flexibility in message design, as to gather information from the other communicator. In respect to responsiveness, “in spite of the desire for disclosure [as to gather information] responsiveness may not be getting the information. As such, they may encourage others to no avail. At the same time, they may be faced with trying a variety of strategies on a hit and miss basis” (Patterson & Beckett, 1995, p. 238).

By observing communication patterns of SCS, adaptability can become more fluent (Cole & McCroskey, 2000). “Observers can gain insight into personality by taking note of (others) characteristic communication behavior” (Cole & McCroskey, 2000, p. 108). Clear measures of assertiveness and responsiveness produced results that assertiveness and responsiveness dimensions are not correlated McCroskey (1990). Ultimately, the relationship is that of adaptation. Understanding flexible socio-communicative style/orientation allows for a larger repertoire of available alternative message designs. After all, the issue at hand is in regards to instrumental goal seeking communication from a repertoire of available referents.

As an example, Paulsel, Richmond, McCroskey, and Cayanas (2005) applied the socio-communicative style construct to investigate healthcare relationships. “Assertive people are able to start, maintain, and end conversations based on their goals. Also, people tend to like responsive individuals initially but expect them to



stand up for their rights and beliefs as the relationship progresses” and “interpersonal trust was positively related to an individual’s responsive and assertive behaviors” (Paulsel, Richmond, McCroskey & Cayanas, 2005, p. 133).

As another example, Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond (2006) found that Machiavellian and credibility perceptions of supervisors were strongly correlated. “Machiavelli emphasized the need for maintaining a public appearance of virtue while practicing whatever means necessary to achieve one’s ends” (p. 129). These scholars found that “Machiavellianism related to nonverbal immediacy, assertiveness, and responsiveness. Supervisor Machiavellianism (A and B) were moderately associated with perceived nonverbal immediacy and strongly associated with responsiveness, but had only a small, non-significant positive association with assertiveness” (Teven, McCroskey & Richmond, 2006, p. 138). Their results suggest that supervisors who are seen as being high Machiavellian, even though they may not be, are likely to be highly ineffective.

As an intercultural example, McCroskey (2003) investigated the reasons why foreign U.S. instructors received typically lower student evaluations than domestic U.S. instructors based on three outcome measures—affect toward content, affect toward instructor, and learning loss. The research places reason on academic ethnocentrism – rather than racial, ethnic, or even foreign in general – suggesting that the U.S. holds different, well accepted, standards that may not be so well accepted in other cultures. “The differences in instructional outcomes observed between domestic and foreign instructors were meaningfully predicable on the bases of the instructor’s socio-communicative style” (McCroskey, 2003, p. 91). Results reveal that socio-communicative style dimensions (assertiveness and responsiveness) “can

meaningfully predict instructional outcomes for both foreign and domestic instructors” (McCroskey, 2003, p. 91). Clearly, instructional communication is instrumental, influential, adaptive, and the socio-communicative style is a major factor. Other intercultural research also suggests that assertiveness is far more associated with a need for control, or a rigid stylized communication style, rather than ethnocentrism, while responsiveness is more associated with tolerance for difference and disagreement (Wrench, 2005). This would fall in line with Knutson, and Posirisuk’s (2006) identifying the noble self dimension of rhetorical sensitivity as an interferer of intercultural communication effectiveness, with respect to a rigid stylized pattern of communication.

Ultimately, “the individual who possesses assertive and responsive skills should be described as competent. Likewise the person with high assertiveness and low responsiveness is aggressive; the person low in assertiveness and high in responsiveness is submissive; and the person low in assertiveness and responsiveness is noncompetent” (Martin & Anderson, 1996, p. 547; Richmond & McCroskey, 1992). Assertive communicators are more argumentative while responsive communicators are less verbally aggressive” (Martin & Anderson, 1996, p. 547). These results indicate that the the socio-communicative orientation construct is identifying dimensions of competent communicators. On top of that, communication competence also incorporates versatility, or in other words, flexibility – appropriately increasing or decreasing argumentativeness (Martin & Anderson, 1996).

More to the point is that communication competence emerges through a socio-communicative style that incorporates reported perceptions as responsive and assertive. That is why responsiveness and assertiveness are strictly associated with

core style elements of an individual's communication competence (Mottet & Beebe, 2006). These two dimensions clearly depict an individual that reacts, relates, and adapts to the other in communication situations (Mottet, & Beebe, 2006).

## 2.5 RESEARCH GAP

Evidently, the construct of rhetorical sensitivity was popular in the 1970s, but it had no measurement. This may have been due to overriding more popular topics in the field, diverting attention away from such development. Hart, Carlson, and Eadie attempted to make things clearer in 1980 with RHETSEN, and the additional factors of RR and NS. Nevertheless, the concept sustained little, if any valid measurement. During 1984, Eadie and Paulson derived almost unusable information from a well designed project by a second use of RHETSEN. By 2006, Knutson and Posirisuk's cross-cultural findings greatly assisted in revealing clear evidence of how previous research sustained unmistakable inconsistencies. However, it too left rhetorical sensitivity with much room for stronger measurement.

This thesis posits that these developmental problems associated with the construct of rhetorical sensitivity are not suspected as measurement inaccuracies, but rather places the center of attention on conceptual vagueness. While the attempts to measure the concept have undergone peer reviews followed by refereed publications, the information produces inconsistent outcomes. One thing is for certain, the original five constructs formulated by Hart and Burks (1972) have most likely not been operationalized, probably due to their vagueness. This thesis, then, assigns such inconsistencies to ideological uncertainty.

The notably identified dimensions involved with the construct of rhetorical sensitivity suspiciously mimic other, more recent research manifesting sound

measurements; such as, communication competence, and socio-communicative orientation. The purpose arises, then, to perform convergent validity measurement, testing the construct of rhetorical sensitivity with communication competence and socio-communicative orientation, in light of discovering a better fit of measures. This thesis is an attempt to test the need to reconceptualize, and measure rhetorical sensitivity, as there is little agreement between the current elements of RS as it stands. It follows then, that, because of the anticipated relationship communication competence and socio-communicative orientation share with RS, the reconceptualization is believed to lead to clearer measurements.

Clearly there is a relationship with audience adaptation and rhetorical sensitivity. “It appears to amount to little more than the application of the most basic of rhetorical precepts – audience adaptation – to the interpersonal setting” (Fulkerson, 1990, p. 6). “Reduced to its essentials their advice [Hart & Burks, 1972] is altogether conventional: effective interpersonal rhetors analyze the situation and select from their repertoire of behaviors those that promise to be maximally adaptive; hence, the larger the repertoire of behaviors with which the rhetor feels comfortable, the greater the potential for adaptation” (p. 6). “The whole thrust of the rhetorical sensitivity concept seems to be to free rhetors of adaptational restraints in order to enhance the effectiveness of social interaction...” (p. 7).

The construct of rhetorical sensitivity is evidently intimately related to social interaction adaptation. These elements were conceptualized as a means to apply practical instrumental communication to social interaction (Hart & Burks, 1972). The focus introduced a frame of mind promoting successful interpersonal relationships. This construct depicts five basic elements of communication describing the

rhetorically sensitive individual as: (1) tries to accept role-taking as part of the human condition, (2) attempts to avoid stylized verbal behavior, (3) is characteristically willing to undergo the strain of adaptation, (4) seeks to distinguish between all information and information acceptable for communication, and (5) tries to understand that an idea can be rendered in multi-form ways (Hart & Burks, 1972, p. 1).

The construct of communication competence was also linked directly to Aristotle's rhetorical adaptation. "This concern is not the unique province of contemporary times... In the time of Aristotle, concern with communication competence was the concern with rhetoric. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering in a particular case what are the available means of persuasion"... "his definition of rhetoric could almost pass as a contemporary definition of communication competence" (McCroskey, 1982, p. 1).

Adopting Thomas, Richmond and McCroskey's (1994) definition of socio-communicative style, Patterson and Beckett (1995) also relate socio-communicative style to adaptation, stating "[c]onceptually, socio-communicative style is used to reference an ability to initiate communication, as well as, to adapt and respond to communication of others" (Patterson & Beckett, 1995, p. 236; Thomas, Richmond & McCroskey, 1994). "Assertiveness refers to an individual's ability to utilize appropriate communication to support and defend his/her positions without trampling on others"... "responsiveness generally refers to a sensitivity to the communication of others and a willingness to adapt one's own communication accordingly" (Patterson & Beckett, 1995, p. 236).

This thesis aims to point out a clear and evident risk of scientific redundancy between communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity. “First, competence involves knowledge, skill, and motivation. The competent communicator must possess sufficient levels of communication knowledge, have the ability to display that knowledge in ongoing interaction situations, and be motivated to do so. Second, the assessment of communication competence depends on effectiveness and appropriateness criteria. Effectiveness is the ability to accomplish interpersonal goals and objectives. Appropriateness is the ability to communicate in accordance with situational and relational constraints” (Spano & Zimmermann, 1995, p. 18).

“Rhetorical sensitivity is conceptually consistent with communication competence in that the rhetorically sensitive communicator accomplishes goals within the constraints of a given social situation. In addition, the situational based nature of rhetorical sensitivity aligns it more closely with flexibility than other related competence dimensions. The relationship between rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence is particularly evident when contrasted with noble self and rhetorical reflector constructs. The noble self is unable or unwilling to adapt to situational cues due to excessive concern for self. The rhetorical reflector, on the other hand, relinquishes self goals by adapting completely to situational cues and relational others” (Spano & Zimmermann, 1995, p. 20).

The dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity advanced by Darnell and Brockriede (1976) are the additional two seemingly bi-polar dimensions, namely rhetorical reflection (RR) and noble self (NS). A rhetorical reflector is “a chameleon-like person who believes that satisfying the needs of another is the best means of achieving some desired communication outcome,” while the noble self represents more of an “I take

care of myself first” attitude (Eadie & Paulson, 1984, p. 390; Darnell & Brockriede, 1976).

Dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity – specifically noble self and rhetorical reflector – also seem to converge through socio-communicative orientation, as evidenced by Klopff (1991). “Assertiveness concerns a person’s ability to make requests, actively disagree, express positive or negative personal rights and feelings, initiate, maintain, and disengage from conversations, and standup for one’s own self without attacking others. Assertive persons communicate in a manner that helps them maintain their self respect, satisfy personal needs, pursue personal happiness, and defend their rights without impinging on the rights of others. Assertiveness, thus, is a person’s ability to state opinions with conviction and to defend him or herself against verbal attack” (Klopff, 1991, p. 135; Bolton, 1979; McCroskey, Richmond & Stewart, 1986).

“Responsiveness concerns a person’s sensitivity to the feelings of others as they are verbalized. Responsive persons are good listeners, are able to make others comfortable in speaking situations, are cognizant of the needs of others, are helpful, sympathetic, warm and understanding, and are open as communicators. Without giving up their own rights, they are responsive to the rights of others. Responsive people are not submissive, however, which is to say, they do not give up their rights and defer readily to others” (Klopff, 1991, p. 135; Bolton, 1979; McCroskey, Richmond & Stewart, 1986).

More to the point is that “competent communication is manifest in a socio-communicative style that includes being perceived by others as responsive and

assertive... responsiveness and assertiveness are presumed to represent core style elements of an individual's communication competence" (Mottet & Beebe, 2006, p. 300; McCroskey & Richmond, 1996). That is, these two dimensions have clearly described an individual's predisposition to react, relate, and adapt to the other in a variety of communication circumstances (Mottet & Beebe, 2006).

Eventually the construct of rhetorical sensitivity was applied cross-culturally as another attempt to develop and apply a measuring instrument that produces teachable results. Knutson (2006) devised what is referred to as THAIRHETSEN. Stemming, in part from the work of Hart, Carlson, and Eadie's RHETSEN (1980), the scale was modified to fit cross-culturally between the U.S.A. and Thailand. The scale was translated into Thai, and back-translated into English appropriately.

To address the issue of the rhetorical sensitivity operational definition, Knutson and Posirisuk (2006) state that "the rhetorically sensitive person avoids rigid communication patterns, adapts to the situation and context, and balances self and other, conditions often associated with intercultural communication effectiveness" (p. 206). Knutson, and Posirisuk (2006) also observe that "competent communicators are flexible, able to adapt their communication to meet the demands of different situations," and apply quantitative methods to the research of rhetorical sensitivity (p. 4).

Shortly before Knutson and Posirisuk (2006), Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1998) applied communication competence in Thailand within the organizational context. Their research, similar to Knutson and Posirisuk (2006), also directly address the ethnocentric aspect of communication theory deriving predominantly from U.S. America, and approach their study of Thai culture from a



Thai perspective. Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1998) note “behaviors that are understood as a reflection of competence in one culture are not necessarily understood as competent in another” (Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1998, p. 382; Cooley & Roach, 1984). “Among other things, results suggest that Thais who are perceived to be communicatively competent know how to avoid conflict with others; control their emotions; display respect, tactfulness, modesty, and politeness; and use appropriate pronouns in addressing others” (Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1998, p. 382).

Most effective was the methodology using the questionnaire. Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam, and Jablin (1998) also translated questionnaires in format and content to fit Thai culture. A variety of native, bi-lingual (English/Thai) Thais were selected to perform this task. After the translation, the questionnaire was reviewed by native Thai organizational leaders. This approach to the ethnocentric interference, concerning cross-cultural communication studies was most effective.

The ultimate results of Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1998) reflect that Thai organizational communication competence, in addition to honor for senior’s and respect for their experience, is reflected with “boon” (merit), “ba-ra-me” (prestige and influence), and “metta” (compassion), and ... “display behaviors consistent with “Orn nork Khaeng nai” (“soft outward, firm or hard inside) (Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam, & Jablin, 1998, p. 409-410; Komin, 1991). All of these are agreeable to valuing social harmony (Knutson, 2006).

Shortly before Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1998), Thompson and Klopf (1991) relate socio-communicative style to an intercultural setting. They also define socio-communicative style as “the way people relate to others” and utilize the

“two behavioral dimensions –communicative assertiveness and communicative responsiveness” (p. 65). The research asserts that not every culture values these elements the same way; however, cultural values of assertive and responsiveness usually influences the way members of the society behave when interacting with one another (Thompson & Klopf, 1991). While different cultures may value and apply the dimensions of socio-communicative style in different ways, the concept remains the same.

If it is the case that communication competence is the best fit, THAI RETSEN items should emerge as closely related to communication competence. One then might examine the relationship between communication competence and RS. Furthermore, if the components of communication competence are convergent with RS, they too ought to break down the same way as Knutson and Posirisuk’s (2006) cross-cultural research between the U.S.A. and Thailand.

It must be certain that this is an attempt to better measure things that are not clear. There is, undoubtedly a need to reconceptualize, as there is little agreement between the current elements of RS as it stands. It follows then, that, because of the anticipated relationship communication competence shares with RS, the reconceptualization is believed to lead to clearer measurements. Communication competence appears to be the best, as we are working with adaptive and effective persuasive rhetoric, or social influence/instrumental communication. Therefore, this thesis seeks to measure the convergent validity existing between RS, and communication competence and socio-orientation.

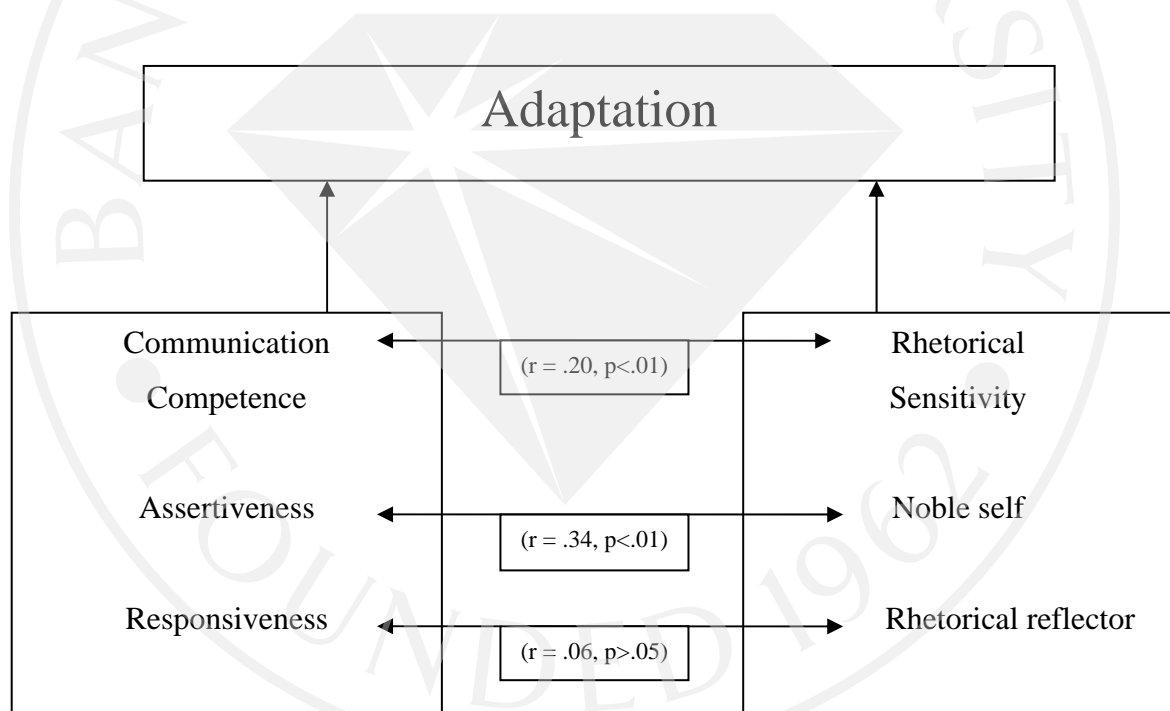
## 2.6 HYPOTHESES

H1: There is significant convergent validity between rhetorical sensitivity and self-perceived communication competence.

H2: There is significant convergent validity between rhetorical sensitivity dimensions of noble self/rhetorical reflector, and socio-communicative orientation assertiveness/responsiveness, respectively.

## 2.7 MODEL OF CONVERGENCE

Figure 1: Model of Convergence



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to investigate the convergent validity suspected to exist between rhetorical sensitivity, and communication competence/socio-communicative orientation. Details of methodology used to test for such convergent validity are depicted in this chapter. A unique aspect is the cross-cultural adaptation of measures, as to avoid ethnocentric instrumental application. Descriptions of subject selection and participation, the instruments employed, and a summarization of each step of carried out are provided.

#### 3.2 DESIGN & SAMPLING

As essentially quantitative in nature, this thesis issued three Likert questionnaires in pursuit of findings. The alpha reliabilities were: THAISPC .88, Assertiveness .76, Responsiveness .80, Rhetorical Sensitivity .68, Noble Self .79, and Rhetorical Reflection .69. Because of the cross-cultural element, each of the questionnaires issued in Thailand were translated into the culture's native language, Thai, and back translated into English by qualified academicians assisting with this thesis. This procedure has been widely recognized to assist in avoidance of ethnocentric error, which assumes cultural values and interpretations of instrumental items as stable across cultures. It therefore was expected to greatly increase validity of measurement, as to accurately test for convergent validity of related previous research performed in Thailand. To derive conclusions related to Thai culture, survey measures

were issued only to students enrolled at a university level in Bangkok, Thailand. The self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) was derived from McCroskey and Richmond (1996) and the socio-communicative orientation (SCO) measures were derived from Richmond and McCroskey (1990). Rhetorical sensitivity measures used THAIRESSEN (Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006). This research adheres to cross-cultural investigations, and comparative analysis of previous research concerning directly related constructs applied to similar locations, therefore justifying the chosen sample.

Together, there are 64 items, 12 from SPCC (alpha reliability = .92), 20 from SCO (alpha reliability = .80), and 32 from THAIRESSEN (alpha reliability = rhetorical reflection .82, noble self .88, rhetorical sensitivity .81). As of to date, no other instruments have achieved more sound measurement of these constructs.

Therefore, these are deemed qualified for the intended application, and were expected to produce valid and reliable results – tapping into the same stimulants of behavior.

Questionnaires were issued to approximately four hundred Thai students. Four hundred is an acceptable number, as data collected beyond that quantity offer little extra information from which to make valuable inferences.

Gender, age, academic class, along with nationality, and university enrollment accounted for demographic qualifications for the target sample. To further reassure measurement accuracy, any of the volunteer subjects identified as non-natives of the selected nation, or not enrolled in the selected universities were disqualified. Finally, due to the limitations of this thesis, specifically time and mobility, samples of this project were selected through a voluntary sampling process. Questionnaires were issued to students in the classroom, and asked to complete questionnaires voluntarily at the end of classes.

### 3.3 VARIABLES

The focus of this thesis was to discover existing convergent validity between the variables derived from rhetorical sensitivity (rhetorical reflection, noble self, and rhetorical sensitivity), and the variables derived from self-perceived communication competence and socio-communicative orientation dimensions (assertiveness/responsiveness). The objective was to measure the convergent validity of these constructs as they operate among members of the selected culture.

If convergent validity is discovered, THAI RETSEN ought to breakdown the same as measurements of SPCC and SCO. Items from SPCC were suspected to account for rhetorical sensitivity, while items from SCO (assertiveness/responsiveness) were suspected to account for noble self/rhetorical reflector dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity.

### 3.4 INSTRUMENTS

#### 3.4.1 Part one

Demographic items:

This section of the questionnaire systematically identified personal information of each subject related to the determined constraints of the set qualifications. The information here established age, gender, class status, major, and Thai nationality (native/non-native). Any subject that was not a native to the nation, or not enrolled in a university was disqualified.

#### 3.4.2 Part two

Likert type questionnaires:

“The self-perceived communication competence scale was developed to obtain information concerning how competent people feel they are in a variety of

communication contexts and with a variety of types of receivers. Early self-report measures of competence were structured to represent what the creators of the measures felt were the components of communication competence. This scale is intended to let the respondent define communication competence. Since people make decisions with regard to communication (for example, whether they will even do it), it is their perception that is important, not that of an outside observer. It is important that users of this measure recognize that this is NOT a measure of actual communication competence, it is a measure of PERCEIVED competence. While these two different types of measures may be substantially correlated, they are not the same thing. This measure has generated good alpha reliability estimates (above .85) and had strong face validity. It also has been found to have substantial predictive validity” (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988).

“Socio-communicative orientation refers to an individual's perception of how assertive and responsive he/she is. This instrument is designed to measure these orientations. Generally, these orientations are either totally uncorrelated or only marginally correlated ( $r < .30$ ). These are two of the three components of the SCO construct. The third component is variously labeled as "versatility" or "flexibility." This third component is best measured by the "Cognitive Flexibility" scale. The alpha reliability estimates for the measures of assertiveness and responsiveness are generally above .80. The predictive validity of this instrument has been demonstrated in numerous studies. It is believed that the components of SCO (assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility/flexibility) are the essential cognitive components of general communication competence” (McCroskey & Richmond, 1996).

THAIRETSEN was designed to measure how an individual perceives themselves to be able to balance self and other in respect to a given instrumental communication situation. It was derived from RHETSEN2 (Knustson & Posirisuk, 2006). It was translated to meet the demands of Thai cultural values in respect to the rhetorical sensitivity construct. Generally, it measures the quantity of conscientiousness an individual gives to satisfying the interpersonal needs of self, the interpersonal needs of the 'other,' and the ability to appropriately balance the two, as to be most effective in the given communication situation (Knustson & Posirisuk, 2006).

### 3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Four hundred questionnaires were distributed to Bangkok University students in Bangkok, Thailand. Distribution took place during the June, 2008. Instructors were asked to issue these questionnaires to their students. Subjects were then requested to voluntarily complete questionnaires while in the classroom; thus, maximizing probability of retrieval of all possible data. This approach was deemed acceptable, in part, as contributing factors acting to counteract time and mobility constraints. Furthermore, subjects were strictly advised to refrain from disclosing any personal identification information outside the confines of section one of the questionnaire – demographic information. This approach allowed for security of personal identity and promote confidentiality. If this thesis were ever questioned to release such information, it would simply not be available.

### 3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Following acquisition of all available data, completed questionnaire responses were submitted to an SPSS data analysis program at the Bangkok University library.



Calculations of convergent validity were utilized, as a method to reveal actual existing convergence between rhetorical sensitivity, and THAISPCC/THAISCO. This thesis utilized inferences obtained through a correlation coefficient matrix of THAISPCC/THAISCO and THAIRETSEN, as the hypotheses necessitated identification of simultaneous relationships. For example, if the rhetorical sensitivity construct was convergent with communication competence, and noble self/rhetorical reflector were convergent with assertiveness/responsiveness, and all were to change isomorphically.

While other possible measures may have been applied to discover correlations, measuring the convergent validity was the best. Convergent validity is used to measure how indicators of one construct match the likes of another (Neuman, 2006). Predictive validity measures the probability of future events or behaviors (Neuman, 2006). This thesis is not directly concerned with time sequences. Discriminate validity measures how variables diverge (Neuman, 2006). This thesis is not necessarily concerned with how to describe how variables are different from each other. Construct validity measures how well one's concept indicators measure what is said to be measured – or how well defined a construct is (Neuman, 2006). Construct validity may be a good test for potential future research with the construct of rhetorical sensitivity when analysis focuses only on the construct alone. Therefore, convergent validity testing was the best for this thesis, as we were concerned with how much the multiple factors of different constructs mimic each other – specifically rhetorical sensitivity, and communication competence/socio-communicative orientation. The statistical analysis used for the test was a Pearson's coefficient correlation matrix.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the data collected, and statistical treatment to derive results. First it discusses the demographic findings, providing information concerning age, gender, major, class status, and nationality. Then the hypothesis testing is discussed, providing an understanding of the statistical procedures of Pearson's coefficient correlation matrix as it relates to testing for convergent validity, including statistical tables to provide an overall comprehensive understanding. Finally, a conclusion is provided, briefly summarizing all research results.

#### 4.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

From the four hundred questionnaires distributed, only three hundred forty six were acceptable. Thirty seven questionnaires were never returned, three were non-Thai, and fourteen were invalid. 69.3% of subjects were between the ages of 15-20, and 30.4% were between the ages of 21-25. This means that within the range of 15-30 years of age, nearly 100% of the sample fell within the youngest possible age groups. The division of gender was Male 58.7%, Female 42.2%. 67.3% of the subjects were in their third year, while 23.4% were in their first year. Most of the subjects studied either business (36.7%) or communication (39.3%). All qualified subjects were of Thai nationality. All of this indicates a very homogenized sample, and that the most frequented subject was Thai, likely between the ages of 15-20, male, third year status, and studying communication.

Table 1: Demographics of 2008 sample in Thailand: gender

	Frequency	%
Female	146	42.2%
Male	200	58.7%
Total	346	100%

Table 2: Demographics of 2008 sample in Thailand: Age

	Frequency	%
15-20	240	69.3%
21-25	105	30.4%
26-30	1	.3%
Total	346	100%

Table 3: Demographics of 2008 sample in Thailand: Class Status

	Frequency	%
1 <sup>st</sup> year	81	23.4%
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	15	4.3%
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	233	67.3%
4 <sup>th</sup> year	15	4.3%
Other	2	.6%
Total	346	100%

Table 4: Demographics of 2008 sample in Thailand: Major

	Frequency	%
Business	127	36.7%
Engineering	1	.3%
Science	5	1.4%
Communication	136	39.3%
Art	2	.6%
Foreign Language	19	5.5%
Other	56	16.2%
Total	346	100%

Table 5: Demographics of 2008 sample in Thailand: Nationality

	Frequency	%
Thai	346	100%
Non-Thai	0	0%
Total	346	100%

### 4.3 HYPOTHESES TESTING

#### 4.3.1 Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one suspected the construct of rhetorical sensitivity as convergent with self perceived communication competence. Both constructs seem to focus on adaptive instrumental, interpersonal communication effectiveness. They conceptually depict the individual that both knows how to behave flexibly and appropriately to adapt to situations, and demonstrates such behaviors by balancing self and the other in such interactions. Where rhetorical sensitivity balances noble self and rhetorical reflection, self perceived communication competence balances assertiveness and responsiveness.

To test the hypothesis, a simple Pearson's coefficient correlation was used. This procedure determines how well one variable may relate another variable. The higher the statistical correlation values, the more the variables relate to one another. For this thesis, both variables are presumed to both measure the same concept. In other words, both are presumed as effective goal seeking communication – relative to adaptive instrumental, interpersonal communication outcomes. This is what is meant by convergent validity. Simply put, this thesis presumed both constructs as the same concept under different names.

It should be noted that these relationships can either be positive, or negative. When there is a high negative correlation (-1.00 to .00) it indicates a contrary

relationship. Specific to this research, a high negative correlation score would not only indicate that the two constructs were not conceptually convergent, but were actually opposing. Simply, it would indicate that the more an individual behaved as communicatively competent, the same individual would behave less rhetorically sensitive. This hypothesis only stated either no correlation, or a positive correlation.

To test this hypothesis, if a significance score is high ( $p > .01$ ), it indicates that the relationship between rhetorical sensitivity and self perceived communication competence may have only been perceived as convergent among these specific subjects at the specific time questionnaires were completed. When the scores are low ( $p < .01$ ), it indicates that the same perceived relationship would likely emerge again, given the same questionnaires to the same sample at a different time. In other words, findings with low significance scores ( $p < .01$ ) are not likely by chance. When results from the data are reported as meaningful and significant, it translates to high correlation values with low significance scores.

Both rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence constructs were statistically tested with Pearson's coefficient correlations, perceived by participants as identical concepts. The higher the statistical correlation value, the closer the relationship was presumed to have been. Hypothesis one suspected a high level of convergence, which would result in high positive Pearson's coefficient correlation values. If the correlations registered positively high, convergence would be evidenced and the hypothesis would be accepted. While there is not a set statistical value to specifically determine convergence, all correlations fall somewhere between a perfect relationship, from ( $-1.00, p < .01$ ) to ( $r = 1.00, p < .01$ ), or no relationship ( $r = .00, p < .01$ ). This research would arbitrarily accept a score no lower than ( $r = .65, p < .01$ ).

Anything less than a moderately high relationship would be considered potentially related but not convergent.

According to the data reported from the sample, hypothesis one is statistically significant, but the correlation value is lower than the cut-off point ( $r = .65$ ), so there is no evidence of convergent validity. Almost no convergent validity was discovered as initially suspected with rhetorical sensitivity and self-perceived communication competence. The relationship is positive, as suspected, but the results from this research do not reflect convergence. The statistical relationship, or correlation value is too low ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ). Though positive, rhetorical sensitivity and self-perceived communication competence produced a significant but meaningless relationship. Therefore, this thesis does not accept the hypothesis that the construct of rhetorical sensitivity converges with self perceived communication competence.

Table 6: Pearson's correlation matrix relating Rhetorical Sensitivity (RS) and Self Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC)

	RS	SPCC
RS	1.00**	.20**
SCPP	.20**	1.00**

\*\* Relationships are significant at .01

#### 4.3.2 Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two suspected the opposing dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity, noble self and rhetorical reflection, as convergent with the opposing dimensions of socio-communicative orientation, assertiveness and responsiveness, respectively. To test the hypothesis, a Pearson's coefficient correlation was also used. The suspicion is that noble self and assertiveness are related to the same outcomes under different

names. The same can be said for rhetorical reflection and responsiveness. However, the two sets of dimensions oppose one another. Noble self and assertiveness concern the self, while rhetorical reflection and responsiveness concern the other participants in the communication situation. Both sets were suspected to emerge with a high positive and significant correlation; in other words, a positive significant and meaningful relationship, indicating convergent validity.

The results concerning noble self and assertiveness revealed a positive significant and meaningless relationship. Hypothesis two for noble self and assertiveness is statistically significant, but the correlation value is lower than the cut-off point ( $r = .65$ ), so there is no evidence of convergent validity. The results indicate a significant measure, but a low Pearson's coefficient correlation value ( $r = .34$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This finding is not by chance, according to the significance score. It is also indicative of variables not converging. Recall that this thesis would accept a score to support the hypothesis no lower than a moderately high measure ( $r = .65$ ). Therefore, this finding does not support hypothesis two, stating that convergent validity exists between assertiveness and noble self.

Table 7: Pearson's correlation matrix relating Assertiveness (Assert) and Noble Self (NS)

	Assert	NS
Assert	1.00**	.34**
NS	.34**	1.00**

NOTE: \*\* Relationships are significant at .01

The results concerning rhetorical reflection and responsiveness revealed a positive insignificant and meaningless relationship. Hypothesis two for rhetorical

reflection and responsiveness is not statistically significant, and the correlation value is lower than the cut-off point ( $r = .65$ ), so there is no evidence of convergent validity. The results reveal an insignificant measure with a low Pearson's coefficient correlation value ( $r = .06, p > .05$ ). The low correlation is also indicative of variables not converging, but this finding may be by chance, according to the high significance score. This information does not support hypothesis two either, stating convergent validity exists between rhetorical reflection and responsiveness.

Table 8: Pearson's correlation matrix relating Rhetorical Reflection (RR) and Responsiveness (Resp)

	Resp	RR
Resp	1.00**	.06
RR	.06	1.00**

NOTE: \*\* Relationships are significant at .01

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

Hypothesis one suggests that rhetorical sensitivity and self perceived communication competence reveal convergent validity. Hypothesis one is statistically significant, but the correlation value is lower than the cut-off point ( $r = .65$ ), so there is no evidence of convergent validity. This hypothesis is not supported by the data. Hypothesis two stated noble self to converge with assertiveness, and rhetorical reflection to converge with responsiveness. Hypothesis two for noble self and assertiveness is statistically significant, but the correlation value is lower than the cut-off point ( $r = .65$ ), so there is no evidence of convergent validity. Hypothesis two for rhetorical reflection and responsiveness is not statistically significant, and the correlation value is lower than the cut-off point ( $r = .65$ ), so there is no evidence of



convergent validity. The data does not support this hypothesis either. Ultimately this thesis accepts the null for both hypotheses. Little to no convergent validity was discovered.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This section discusses the overall theoretical consequences and results. First, summaries of the conceptual frame work and methodology are provided. Then there is a clear statement and discussion explaining the outcomes of hypotheses one and two. Following the explanations of hypotheses, a discussion identifies similarities and differences between the results and the work of others to clarify conclusions. Then a limitations section is provided, as to identify certain shortcomings. Finally, recommendations for future research are provided based on the implications for further understanding of instrumental, interpersonal adaptation.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY: conceptual

The constructs of rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence both seem to theoretically simplify Aristotle's need for adaptation, and both deal with instrumental social influence, or rhetoric. Studying the operations of such effective, flexible, and appropriate communication is valuable to understanding the operations of adaptation, most currently in the intercultural setting. For this reason, this thesis investigated potential convergent validity between rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence. The two constructs appear conceptualized in almost exactly the same way. Where a rhetorically sensitive person balances noble self and rhetorical reflection, a competent communicator balances socio-communicative orientations assertiveness and responsiveness, with respect to the constraints of communication situations. Evidently, the construct of rhetorical sensitivity was

popular in the 1970s, but it had no measurement. Hart, Carlson, and Eadie attempted to make things clearer in 1980 with RHETSEN, and the additional factors of RR and NS. During 1984, Eadie and Paulson derived better information from a well designed project by a second use of RHETSEN, but still did not produce clear results. By 2006, Knutson and Posirisuk's cross-cultural findings greatly assisted in revealing clear evidence of how previous research sustained unmistakable inconsistencies.

The notably identified dimensions involved with the construct of rhetorical sensitivity suspiciously mimic other recent research; such as, communication competence, and socio-communicative orientation. The purpose, then, was to perform convergent validity measurement, testing the construct of rhetorical sensitivity with communication competence and socio-communicative orientation. This procedure was meant to discover a better fit of measures. It investigated a need to reconceptualize and measure rhetorical sensitivity, as there have been inconsistent findings among the current elements of the construct as it stands. Because of the anticipated relationship communication competence and socio-communicative orientation share with rhetorical sensitivity, reconceptualization based on communication competence may have lead to clearer measurements of instrumental and adaptive communication.

Therefore, this thesis focused on testing for scientific redundancy between communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity. "Rhetorical sensitivity is conceptually consistent with communication competence in that the rhetorically sensitive communicator accomplishes goals within the constraints of a given social situation. In addition, the situational based nature of rhetorical sensitivity aligns it more closely with flexibility than other related competence dimensions. The

relationship between rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence is particularly evident when contrasted with noble self and rhetorical reflector constructs. The noble self is unable or unwilling to adapt to situational cues due to excessive concern for self. The rhetorical reflector, on the other hand, relinquishes self goals by adapting completely to situational cues and relational others” (Spano & Zimmermann, 1995, p. 20). These dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity –noble self and rhetorical reflector –seem to converge through socio-communicative orientation (Klopf, 1991). The point is that “competent communication is manifest in a socio-communicative style that includes being perceived by others as responsive and assertive... responsiveness and assertiveness are presumed to represent core style elements of an individual’s communication competence” (Mottet & Beebe, 2006, p. 300; McCroskey & Richmond, 1996). That is, these two dimensions have clearly described an individual’s predisposition to react, relate, and adapt to the other in a variety of communication circumstances (Mottet & Beebe, 2006). It appears that assertiveness mimics that of noble self, while responsiveness mimics that of rhetorical reflection, and the appropriate flexibility between the two seem to overlap within the likes of rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence.

Recently, the construct of rhetorical sensitivity was applied to Thailand with THAIRHETSEN (Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006). To address the issue of the rhetorical sensitivity operational definition, Knutson and Posirisuk (2006) state that “the rhetorically sensitive person avoids rigid communication patterns, adapts to the situation and context, and balances self and other, conditions often associated with intercultural communication effectiveness” (p. 206). Knutson, and Posirisuk (2006) also observe that “competent communicators are flexible, able to adapt their

communication to meet the demands of different situations,” and apply quantitative methods to the research of rhetorical sensitivity (p. 4).

Shortly before Knutson and Posirisuk (2006), Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999) applied communication competence in Thailand. Their research, similar to Knutson and Posirisuk (2006), also directly address the ethnocentric error, and approach their study of Thai culture from a Thai perspective. Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999) also translated questionnaires in format and content to fit Thai culture. A variety of native, bi-lingual (English/Thai) Thais were selected to perform this task. This approach to the ethnocentric interference, concerning cross-cultural communication studies, is most effective.

Shortly before Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin, (1999), Thompson and Klopff (1991) relate socio-communicative style to an intercultural setting, and define socio-communicative style as “the way people relate to others” and utilize the “two behavioral dimensions –communicative assertiveness and communicative responsiveness” (p. 65). The research asserts that not every culture values these elements the same way; however, cultural values of assertiveness and responsiveness usually influence the way members of the society behave when interacting with one another, and while different cultures may value and apply the dimensions of socio-communicative style in different ways, the concept remains the same (Thompson & Klopff, 1991).

It follows then, that, because of the anticipated relationship communication competence shares with rhetorical sensitivity, the reconceptualization is believed to lead to clearer measurement. Communication competence appears to be the best, as we are working with adaptive and effective persuasive rhetoric, or social

influence/instrumental communication. Therefore, this thesis investigated the convergent validity potentially existing between rhetorical sensitivity, and communication competence and socio-orientation.

### 5.3 SUMMARY: methodological

Distribution of questionnaires took place during the first two weeks of June, 2008. Questionnaires were issued in pursuit of findings to four hundred Thai students. Four hundred is an acceptable number, as data collected beyond that quantity offer little extra information from which to make valuable inferences. Questionnaires were issued to students voluntarily at Bangkok University, Thailand. This research adhered to cross-cultural investigations, similar to previous research concerning directly related constructs applied to Thailand, therefore justifying the chosen sample. Because of the cross-cultural element, each of the questionnaires issued in Thailand were translated into the culture's native language, Thai, and back translated into English by qualified academicians. This procedure has been widely recognized to assist in avoidance of ethnocentric error, which assumes cultural values and interpretations of instrumental items are stable across cultures. It therefore was expected to increase validity of measurement, as to accurately test for convergence of related previous research performed in Thailand.

The Thai self-perceived communication competence (THAISPCC) was derived from McCroskey and Richmond (1996) and the Thai socio-communicative orientation (THAISCO) measures were derived from Richmond and McCroskey (1990). Rhetorical sensitivity measures used THAIRHETSEN (Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006). Together, there are 68 items derived from past research, 12 from SPCC (alpha reliability = .92), 20 from SCO (alpha reliability = .80), and 36 from THAIRETSEN

(alpha reliability = rhetorical reflection .82, noble self .88, rhetorical sensitivity .81). As of to date, no other instruments have achieved more sound measurement of these constructs. Therefore, these are qualified for the intended application, and were expected to tap into the same stimulants of behavior. Gender, age, academic class, major, nationality, and university status accounted for demographics and qualifications of the target sample. To further reassure measurement accuracy, any of the volunteers identified as non-natives of the selected nation, or not enrolled in the selected university were disqualified.

Finally, following acquisition of all available data, completed questionnaires were input into an SPSS data analysis program at the Bangkok University library. This thesis made inferences obtained through a Pearson's correlation coefficient matrix, as the hypotheses stated identification of convergent validity. While other possible measures may apply to discover correlations, measuring the convergent validity through simple correlations is best when indicators of one construct match the likes of another (Neuman, 2006). Therefore, convergent validity testing is the best for this thesis, as we are concerned with how much the multiple factors of different constructs mimic each other.

#### 5.4 HYPOTHESES OUTCOMES

Hypothesis one stated that rhetorical sensitivity significantly converges with Communication competence. According to the data reported from the sample, almost no convergent validity was discovered as initially suspected with rhetorical sensitivity and self-perceived communication competence. The relationship is positive, as suspected, but the results from this research do not reflect convergence. The statistical relationship, or correlation value is too low ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ). Therefore, this thesis does

not accept that the construct of rhetorical sensitivity converges with self perceived communication competence.

Hypothesis two stated that the opposing dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity, noble self and rhetorical reflection, converge with the opposing dimensions of socio-communicative orientation, assertiveness and responsiveness, respectively. The results concerning noble self and assertiveness revealed a positive significant and meaningless relationship. This finding is not by chance, according to the significance score. It is also indicative of variables not converging. These results indicate a significant measure, but a low Pearson's coefficient correlation value ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ). Convergent validity between assertiveness and noble self was not discovered. Therefore, this finding does not support hypothesis two. Furthermore, results concerning rhetorical reflection and responsiveness revealed a positive insignificant and meaningless relationship ( $r = .06, p > .05$ ). The low correlation is also indicative of variables not converging, but this finding may be by chance, according to the high significance score. This information does not support hypothesis two either, stating rhetorical reflection and responsiveness as convergent.

Ultimately, results suggest almost no convergence among factors was evidenced. Rhetorical sensitivity holds much left to be discovered. Evidence supports that these two constructs (rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence) have most likely not been measuring the same event all along. While rhetorical sensitivity may still benefit from the construct of communication competence and other related constructs, the results do not reflect convergence. Rhetorical sensitivity may hold much left to provide the field of communication with stronger evidence for future



claims. From these results, adaptive instrumental interpersonal communication does not abide by one perspective alone.

## 5.5 DISCUSSION

To help explain the results between rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence, attention to the operations of confirming and disconfirming communication reveals a noticeable difference. While both communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity recognize that effective communicators accurately interpret and express confirming and disconfirming cues during interactions, communication competence has given much more attention to these operations. Also, the limited relationship between communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity seems to exist on the interpersonal level, as communication competence has been applied to a wide range of contexts and paradigms. Rhetorical sensitivity, on the other hand has strictly been applied to the interpersonal paradigm, which helps to explain the limited correlation. Within the interpersonal paradigm, communication competence has identified confirming and disconfirming communication – specifically when describing the sensitivity involved within interpersonal communication. Rhetorical sensitivity, then, may be that portion of communication competence which more accurately describes the cognitively complex sensitivities of social confirmation, as related through interpersonal communication.

These sensitive communicators seem to possess a meta-knowledge of communication events (Duran & Kelly, 1985). “High cognitively complex individuals form more differentiated impressions of others and are better able to role-take than low cognitively complex people” (p. 116). “Cognitive competence is the ability to perceive salient contextual cues that serve to indicate the appropriateness of one’s

various communicative acts” (Duran & Kelly, 1985, p. 117). This “social confirmation is the ability and desire to understand and meet other’s expectations during social interactions. Empathy, warmth, and ability to role-take mark the socially confirming person. It is likely that the person who scores low on social confirmation is not sought out for social interaction,” and evidence social interaction ineffectiveness; hence, one who is communicatively incompetent. (Zakahi & Duran, 1985, p. 58).

“Social confirmation refers to concern for the projected image of the other as well as attempts to make the other feel good, supported and important” (McKinney, Kelly & Duran 1997, p. 193). The individual that is self-oriented “is negatively associated with social experience, social composure, social confirmation, articulation [appropriate use of language], and appropriate disclosure” (McKinney, Kelly & Duran 1997, p. 193). It is noted that the self-oriented individual is not necessarily selfish, but rather possesses “poor communication skills, [is] inexperienced, and [has] anxiety associated with confrontation” (McKinney, Kelly & Duran 1997, p. 193). Thus, a self-oriented individual is negatively associated with communication competence, while those able to focus on the issue and other are more closely related to communication competence and social confirmation.

Specifically, the social confirmation of a competent communicator “aids in the adaptation to the relational context by virtue of recognizing and confirming the projected social image of one’s partner” (Duran, 1992, p. 256). Dyadic disclosure is one measure of an individual’s sensitivity to these cues and “functions to provide information as to how one’s partner is presenting himself or herself and how the other is responding to the way the interaction is transpiring” (Duran, 1992, p. 256).

Experiences with these social confirmations “lead to a refined social repertoire, and the refined social repertoire provides confidence to engage in novel social activities” (Duran & Kelly, 1994, p. 123). Individuals that perceive themselves as competent tend to possess increased willingness to communicate (McCroskey & Richmond, 1995). “In essence, social activities are the arena in which communication competence is learned, demonstrated, and evaluated” (Duran & Kelly, 1994, p. 123), and rhetorical sensitivity may be the construct which is tapping into these constituent operations most pointedly.

In this sense, considering rhetorical sensitivity as a component of communication competence, instead of overall convergent, would explain the small portion of convergence. While communication competence may mimic the construct of rhetorical sensitivity on the interpersonal level, it also adheres to a wider range of the instrumental adaptation process. For example, the SPCC measure used in this research incorporates a variety of situations and contexts within the domain of competence, superseding the domain of rhetorical sensitivity. These other contexts and situations incorporate public, meeting, group, dyad, stranger, acquaintance, and friend (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). The rhetorical sensitivity instrument only asks its subjects to consider a single personal relationship.

Concerning sensitivity, a competent communicator “watches for environmental cues,” is “attentive to interaction flow and aware of the need for appropriate interaction management,” and is able to “discover accurately the meanings and feelings of others” (Littlejohn & Jabusch, 1982, p. 34). To do this, a competent communicator involves “self-monitoring,” which “involves being aware of and accounting for one’s own feelings,” while on the other hand, is also concerned

with the well-being of all other participants committed to the situation – in other words, balancing the self and other in likes of situations (p. 35). Becoming “less egocentric, less turned inward, more perceptive of others, and more alert to the ways that those we interact with think and feel and behave” likely leads to more competence (Barbour, 1981, p. 49). In this way, rhetorical sensitivity seems to converge with communication competence, while at the same time the domain of communication competence reaches beyond the domain of rhetorical sensitivity, incorporating a range of instrumental effectiveness across contexts.

Furthermore, the explanation involving social confirmation also assists to clarify the relationship between assertiveness and noble self, and responsiveness and rhetorical reflection. These dimensions are predictors of both communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity. It follows then that these dimensions describe opposing dimensions of the flexibility involved in sensitive cognitive complexities of social confirmations. The key is how these sub-dimensions of communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity describe the flexibility necessary to balance the self and the other within situations, behaviors associated with confirming and disconfirming the overall projected image the self and other – ultimately leading to either communication competence or rhetorical sensitivity.

This flexibility is “a person’s awareness of communication alternatives, willingness to adapt to the situation, and self-efficacy in being flexible” – often referred to as communication competence (Martin & Anderson, 1998, p. 1) or rhetorically sensitive. “This finding also provides additional support that people who are cognitively flexible have more confidence in their ability to communicate effectively, especially in new situations” – which explains the relationship with

increased willingness to adapt (Martin & Anderson, 1998). Cognitively flexible individuals believe in their communicative success and make necessary changes to achieve goals for themselves and of others without interfering with long-term relational goals or goals of others – which helps to explain why people tend to do what they perceive themselves as competent in doing, and avoid situations related to self-perceived incompetence (Martin & Anderson, 1998; McCroskey, 1982). Results reveal a strong relationship between flexibility, communication competence, and assertiveness and responsiveness. This flexible balance may be that portion of communication competence which best reflects rhetorical sensitivity, as this portion of both constructs is centered on interpersonal adaptation.

However, while these dimensions (assertiveness/responsiveness and noble self/rhetorical reflection) are concerned with balancing self and the other, they may not abide by the same specific operations of social confirmation; rather, operating by different cognitive flexibility ranges stemming from the cognitive complexity involved in social confirmation. “Communicative adaptability, a component of communication competence, is conceptualized as the ability to identify socio-interpersonal relationships (ties/associations) and the adaptation of one’s communication behavior to those contextual constraints” (McKinney, et al, 1997, p. 193). Where communication competence core values are assertiveness and responsiveness, and the core values of rhetorical sensitivity are noble self and rhetorical reflection, they may not both associate with social confirmation the same way.

First, “Assertiveness concerns a person’s ability to make requests, actively disagree, express positive or negative personal rights and feelings, initiate, maintain,

and disengage from conversations, and stand up for one's self without attacking others. Assertive persons communicate in a manner that helps them maintain their self respect, satisfy personal needs, pursue personal happiness, and defend their rights without impinging on the rights of others. Assertiveness, thus, is a person's ability to state opinions with conviction and to defend him or herself against verbal attack" (Klopf, 1991, p. 135; Bolton, 1979; McCroskey, Richmond & Stewart, 1986). Assertiveness "is a person's general tendency to be interpersonally dominant, ascendant, and forceful... aggressive people express their feelings at the expense of others, always needing to win an argument... they can be abusive, rude, and sarcastic, berating clerks and waitresses for poor service, and dominating subordinates and family members, and always having a final word in conversations" (Thompson & Klopf, 1991, p. 65; Infante, 1987; Bolton, 1979). Assertive communicators are often very dominant, independent, and competitive.

These descriptions of assertiveness emerge as closely related to confirmation. While communication outcomes may be negative, confirmation is present. Assertiveness often requires recognition of the other. Assertive individuals confirm the other through orders, demands, personal needs, initiations, and conversational maintenance. Clearly the behaviors associated with assertiveness maintain regard for the other, regardless of communication outcomes. The point is that, while focused predominantly on personal goals, the assertive individual at least confirms/disconfirms the other, whether it is negatively or positively demonstrated.

The same might not be said for the noble self. The noble self represents more of an "I take care of myself first" attitude (Eadie & Paulson, 1984, p. 390; Darnell & Brockriede, 1976). While this attitude is also predominantly focused on the self,

similar to assertiveness, it is not necessarily confirming/disconfirming. It may be the case that such stringent stylized communication behavior (Hart & Burks, 1972) is simply ignorant of the other. The behaviors associated with noble selves may all together simply ignore the other; thus, establishing non-confirming communication. Noble selves have not been described as those whom stand-up for themselves, make demands, orders, etc... Rather, they are simply self-centered with almost total disregard for others. It may be that, while both dimensions (assertiveness and noble self) are self centered, only one (assertiveness) tends to confirm or disconfirm the other participants involved in the interaction. Noble self behaviors may be representing even less cognitive flexibility and complexity, behaviors operating as interpersonal relationship interferers (Knutson & Posirisuk, 2006). This difference in social confirmation would help to explain the limited relationship between assertiveness and noble self. It would also further support the limited convergence between communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity. The sensitivity of social confirmation operating through flexibility of cognitive complexities is probably not the same. Most simply, while both dimensions seem to focus on the self, the interactive styles may not adhere to the same behaviors.

As for the relationship among responsiveness and rhetorical reflection, “Responsive communicators are often very empathic, friendly, and helpful” and “responsiveness involves being other oriented.” (Rocca, Toale & Martin, 1998, p. 446). “Responsiveness concerns a person’s sensitivity to the feelings of others as they are verbalized. Responsive persons are good listeners, are able to make others comfortable in speaking situations, are cognizant of the needs of others, are helpful, sympathetic, warm and understanding, and are open as communicators. Without



giving up their own rights, they are responsive to the rights of others. Responsive people are not submissive, however, which is to say, they do not give up their rights and defer readily to others” (Klopf, 1991, p. 135; Bolton, 1979; McCroskey, Richmond & Stewart, 1986; Mottet & Beebe, 2006). Responsiveness is a person’s willingness and capacity to be sensitive to the communication of others, being good listeners, and making others comfortable in communication situations while recognizing their needs and desires (Thompson & Klopf, 1991). Responsive behaviors are relationship-oriented (Thompson & Klopf, 1991). “Responsives seem only to encourage others to disclose. This is an obvious strategy for them to utilize. In the absence of disclosure, a responsive has relatively little to respond to. By allowing others to provide them with information about their affective and cognitive state, they are able to determine their next action, whatever that may be” (Patterson & Beckett, 1995, p. 238). However, “in spite of the desire for disclosure, responsives may not be getting the information. As such, they may encourage others to no avail. At the same time, they may be faced with trying a variety of strategies on a hit and miss basis” (Patterson & Beckett, 1995, p. 238).

Conceptually similar, a rhetorical reflector is “a chameleon-like person who believes that satisfying the needs of another is the best means of achieving some desired communication outcome” (Eadie & Paulson, 1984, p. 390; Darnell & Brockriede, 1976). However, while both dimensions (responsiveness/rhetorical reflection) are focused on the other participants, rhetorical reflection may emerge as more submissive than responsiveness. Rhetorical reflectors may actually readily forfeit their personal goals in likes of promoting the desires of others.



This would suggest a difference in seeking social confirmation instead of expressing it. While both dimensions seem to focus on the other, the interactive styles may not adhere to the same behaviors. Responsiveness is associated with tolerance for disagreement (Wrench, 2005), but responsive individuals do not readily forfeit their personal rights in favor of others. Rhetorical reflectors may actually forfeit personal rights, emerging as more submissive, adhering to a face for faces (Eadie & Paulson, 1984). This would demonstrate almost total flexibility, in turn demonstrating less competence, and less rhetorical sensitivity. A rhetorical reflector may all together deny the goals of self, superseding tolerance for disagreement. More simply, rhetorical reflectors may render themselves as all together dependent on the social confirmation from the other, as self goals are almost totally denied.

Ultimately, where noble self adheres to potential total disregard for the other, rendering social confirmation independence, due to low cognitive flexibility and complexity, a rhetorical reflector adheres to potential total disregard for self, rendering submissive dependence on the other for social confirmation. These similarities and differences of social confirming operations support the explanation for the overall limited convergent validity between communication competence and rhetorical sensitivity. It may be the case that Rhetorical Sensitivity is a more defined component of communication competence, further explaining the operations the sensitivities of social confirmation (McKinney, Kelly & Duran 1997) through the likes of cognitive flexibility (Martin & Anderson, 1998) cognitive complexity, and cognitive adaptability (Duran & Kelly, 1985; Duran, 1992; Duran & Kelly, 1994) – all of which is necessary to instrumentally, interpersonally adapt. Further methodological improvements are developed in the limitations.

## 5.6 LIMITATIONS

First, time was a limitation. Measures followed the procedures suggested from past cross-cultural research. However, due the limited available time of bilingual scholars (Thai/English) able to offer their efforts to develop more culturally adapted measures, this research announces that more attention may have allowed further improvements of measures. This would have promoted increased accuracy when tapping into the specific culturally intended meaning of items – ultimately increasing the validity of results.

Furthermore, this thesis took place during summer classes at a private university in Bangkok, Thailand. The sample was very homogenized, and thus, subject's interpretations and responses were generally of the same caliber. This is meaningful, as subjects may not have held enough experience in life to accurately interpret the intended meaning of all instrumental items. It is also a limitation as future research would likely benefit from tapping into a wider range of sample subjects. By doing so, the generalizability of findings would allow for more concrete results. Therefore, this thesis is limited by this sampling error. The research was restricted to only one university, providing access to a limited sample range. Research that is limited to specific, homogenized samples often encounters difficulty representing a true score of the general population. However, due to a lack of permission to distribute questionnaires throughout various other institutions, the sample was limited only to that which immediate access was available.

Beyond the time and space limitations, this thesis does not suspect significant instrumental error. The instruments, THAISPCC, THAISCO, and THAIRHETSEN produced overall reliable scores – though none of them were over .90. These

reliability scores may be due in part from internal conceptual inconsistency of the dimensions. Rhetorical sensitivity as a dimension derived moderately high reliability (alpha .68), along with rhetorical reflection (alpha .69). Responses related to these items may not have been clearly interpreted, as subjects from this specific sample may not have been able to interpret the intended meaning of items consistently, resulting in decreased reliability scores. This is not an instrumental design error; rather, it is an error more related to the conceptual definition. Furthermore, the items from THAISPCC and THAISCO may not have been perfectly adapted to Thai culture, also effecting the validity of measurement.

Another reason these scores are not suspected to have derived from weak instrumental design is that there are only fourteen invalid responses. These invalid responses are probably more related to careless subject consideration. One tends to believe a subject has not put forth the necessary mindful effort to interpret questions when nearly every answer on a questionnaire is the same score. Evidently, the remaining 346 subjects were able to interpret the directions accurately. They were able to operate their responses according to the questionnaire design. If they were not able to do so, a considerably higher quantity of invalid questionnaires would likely emerge. The subjects knew how to provide answers, but may have been unsure *what* to answer, as items may not have been well defined, executing valid responses.

The homogenized sampling error provides a more in-depth explanation of the validity issue. According to the demographic report, the vast majority of all subjects were younger than twenty years old. This is meaningful information, as some items may have excluded subjects not yet exposed to experiencing the operations of instrumental communication effectiveness on a more mature level. Without much

experience facing the relational adversities these constructs focus on, such as appropriate and flexible adaptational restraints, there is a higher probability of inaccurate responses to the intended stimulation of meaning from questionnaire items. For example, THAIRHETSEN #16 – “I usually speak out in support of my boss.” This item may not have been tapping the intended meaning accessible to subjects, as the meaning may not have existed within the repertoire of available referents. Simply put, if the young homogenized sample had never had a job, it would be quite difficult for a vast majority of subjects to provide a valid and reliable response to item #16.

This example indicates a risk that the domain of the conceptual content may not be appropriately defined. This is not indicative of a weak instrumental design; rather, it suggests items that do not effectively tap into the intended meaning available to subjects, due to ideological vagueness. This often leads to an inaccurate measure. If the items do not allow for subject’s accurate interpretation, it can seriously limit the effectiveness of measurement. This ultimately reflects a complication with the conceptual definition, as subjects may not have been able to relate. What is being suggested then is potentially inadequate validity.

This limitation becomes clearer when looking at the reliability measures in conjunction with the sampling error. When the sample is homogenous it often does not represent the overall population very well; hence, a limitation from a lack of generalizability. This ultimately weakens the value of information provided by the data. However, while different subjects may adhere to different validity, when the sample is homogenous, subjects do tend to collectively share the same interpretations of items, providing similar responses. More specifically, while the overall population is probably not very well represented by the homogenous sample, homogeneity does

suggest higher reliability scores. Subjects of a homogenous group typically provide very similar answers. High reliability scores are derived from similar responses. If every subject demonstrated the same responses to all items, reliability scores would be perfect 1.00. That is of course, if the items are conceptually consistent and stable, able to be clearly interpreted by the sample. When they are not consistently interpreted, reliability scores decrease, due to varying responses.

While the reliability scores could have been far lower, the internal inconsistency of dimensions is probably due to conceptual instability. This would ultimately indicate conceptual vagueness, as goal seeking, adaptational communication tends to exist at all ages. The concept should not be limited to exclusive interpretations, regardless of homogeneity. A concept cannot have strong validity if the reliability is not strong. Consequently, there still remains much to speculate. If the items of these constructs are not clear to the sample, inferences concerning convergent validity are stalled.

Another limitation is that of state and trait approaches to measurement. While communication competence is fundamentally a trait construct, the instrument introduces state like conditions for measurement. The THAISPPC inquires about a variety of salient situations, ranging from public, meeting, group, dyad, stranger, acquaintance, and friend (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). Each of these situations are applied, as to cover a majority of situations, allowing for trait like interpretations. THAIRHETSEN does not. Rather, the measurement of rhetorical sensitivity inquires subjects to consider a single personal relationship exclusively.

The same may be said about limited perceptions of noble self and rhetorical reflection as a state dimension – operating within specific and unique situations, while

assertiveness and responsiveness as trait like – operating as stable across situations. It is not out of the question to consider some subjects may have viewed these behaviors as operating most of the time, while others may have been considering such behaviors operating strictly in one unique situation. For example, THAIRHETSEN instructs the subject to consider a single relationship, THAISCO does not. These instruments could have stimulated considerably more, or different confounding variables than the other.

Furthermore, subjects may have responded to the items of THAISPCCC differently than that of THAIRHETSEN, regardless of conceptual similarities. For example, THAISPCCC items such as public communication (item #1), or speaking to strangers (item #7), are not likely Thai cultural values (Komin, 1991). For this reason, a variety of self-perceived communication competence scores may have registered as very low in comparison to THAIRHETSEN. This would help to explain the meaningless relationships reported from the data. This also, clarifies a difference in what exactly was being measured. It might have been the case that, while the cross-cultural translations followed the suggested appropriate procedures, Thai culture may not perceive the attraction of public attention, or talking with a stranger as behaviors characteristic of competent communicators. Rather, remaining quiet and unnoticed effectively may be a more appropriate Thai cultural value of competence (Sriussudaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1998). This is a result of unintended stimulation of meaning, leaving concepts inadequately adjusted to fit the targeted sample. This probably made a major impact on results, limiting an accurate interpretation of items. There may still exist ethnocentric error in measurement; thus, due to these limitations, there is still much left to discover concerning the conceptual convergence of these rhetorical constructs.

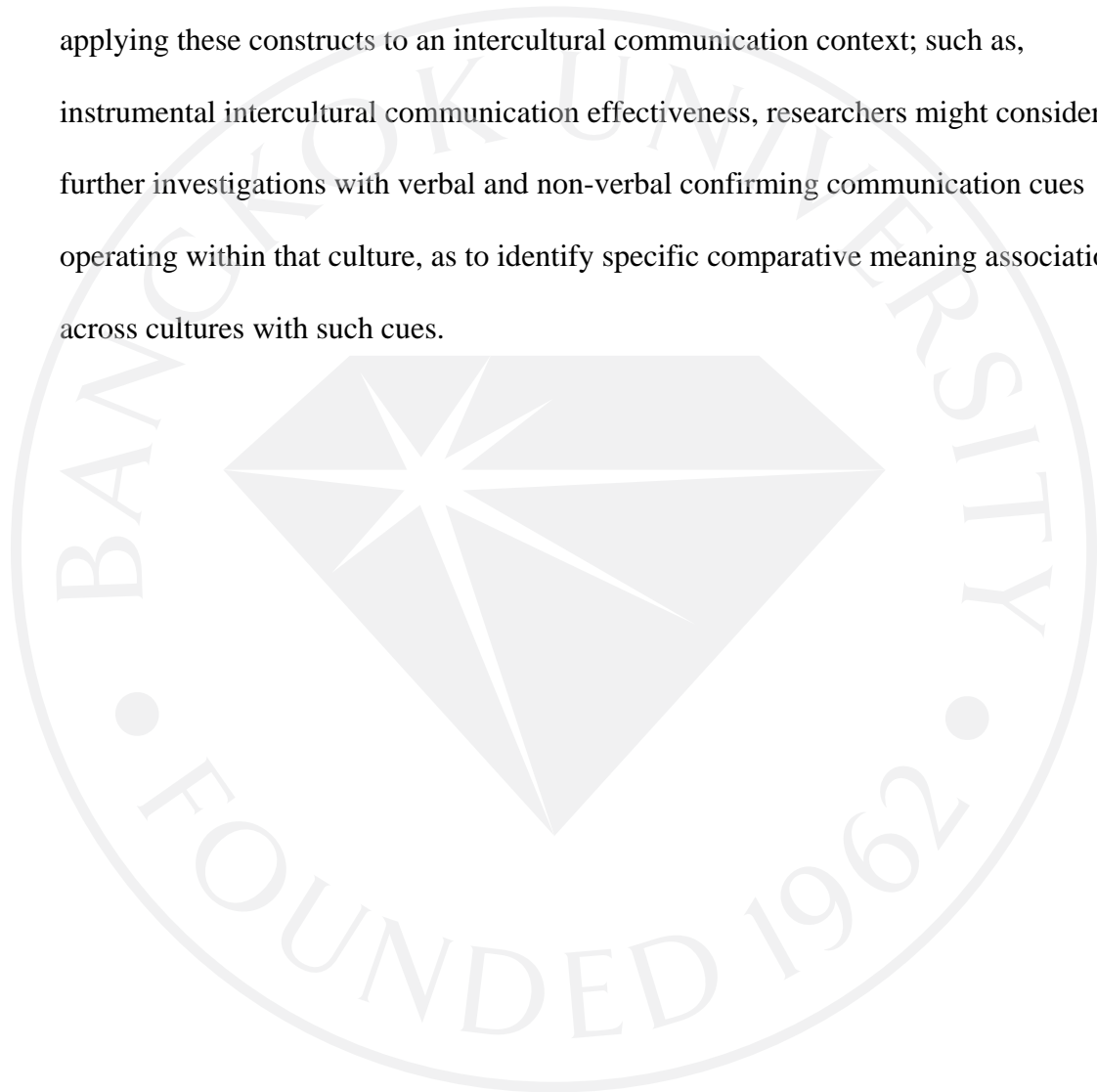
## 5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research suggestions most prominently recommend that other research consider the cognitively complex and flexible operations of social confirmation behaviors as they operate through dimensions of rhetorical sensitivity and communication competence. From the inconsistencies of past research, it is probably the case that rhetorical sensitivity dimensions (noble self/rhetorical reflection) are not bi-polar and future research should investigate their relationship as related, but not exactly opposite. These investigations may lead to a better understanding of how rhetorical sensitivity fits in as a component of communication competence. It may be the case these constructs go together in ways not yet considered. This is one consideration that may expand the understanding of these constructs not only as interpersonally instrumental, but also as contributors to intercultural communication effectiveness.

Future researchers must also be aware of the stimulation these measures have on the sample subjects. Methodologically, choosing a sample that better represents more variance of life's experiences would assist greatly. Sampling a wider range of subjects within the parameters of the various demographic specifications would promote better representation of the population. After all, the superseding goal is generalizability. Once generalizability is established, future predications may advance the repertoire of available referents related to instrumental, interpersonal relationships; hence, knowledge across the field of communication.

Also, future research may consider further culturally adapted translations. The ethnocentric error is not always so easy to detect. Translating and back translating measures multiple times from different pools of academicians will help to adjust

instruments for tapping into the cultural values more closely associated with the conceptual domain of constructs. To assist this process, a data base of previous work ought to be created over time as to determine what has, and what has not been effective concerning cross-cultural investigations of this type. For example, when applying these constructs to an intercultural communication context; such as, instrumental intercultural communication effectiveness, researchers might consider further investigations with verbal and non-verbal confirming communication cues operating within that culture, as to identify specific comparative meaning associations across cultures with such cues.





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# Appendix

## Instruments administered

### SPCC

**Instructions:** Below are twelve situations in which you might need to communicate. People's abilities to communicate effectively vary a lot, and sometimes the same person is more competent to communicate in one situation than in another. Please indicate how competent you believe you are to communicate in each of the situations described below. Indicate in the space provided at the left of each item your estimate of your competence.

Presume 0 = completely incompetent and 100 = competent.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Present a talk to a group of strangers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Talk with an acquaintance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Talk in a large meeting of friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Talk in a small group of strangers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Talk with a friend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Talk with a stranger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Present a talk to a group of friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Talk in a small group of friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

**Scoring:** To compute the subscores, add the percentages for the items indicated and divide the total by the number indicated below.

Public	1 + 8 + 12; divide by 3.
Meeting	3 + 6 + 10; divide by 3.
Group	4 + 9 + 11; divide by 3.
Dyad	2 + 5 + 7; divide by 3.
Stranger	1 + 4 + 7 + 10; divide by 4.
Acquaintance	2 + 6 + 9 + 12; divide by 4.
Friend	3 + 5 + 8 + 11; divide by 4.

To compute the total SPCC score, add the subscores for Stranger, Acquaintance, and Friend. Then, divide that total by 3.

## SCO

**Instructions:** The questionnaire below lists twenty personality characteristics. Please indicate the degree to which you believe each of these characteristics applies to you while interacting with others by marking whether you (5) strongly agree that it applies, (4) agree that it applies, (3) are undecided, (2) disagree that it applies, or (1) strongly disagree that it applies. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly; record your first impression.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. helpful
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. defends own beliefs
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. independent
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. responsive to others
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. forceful
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. has strong personality
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. sympathetic
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. compassionate
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. assertive
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. sensitive to the needs of others
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. dominant
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. sincere
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. gentle
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. willing to take a stand
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. warm
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. tender
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. friendly
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. acts as a leader
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. aggressive
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. competitive

Scoring:

For your assertiveness score, add responses to items 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 14, 18, 20.

For your responsiveness score, add responses to items 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17.

**THAIRHETSEN (Translated into English)**

**Directions:** Please think of people you know for a long time. DO NOT think of a particular person, but think of your general experiences associated with people you have known for a long time. For each of the following 30 statements, please indicate the degree to which the statement represents your *typical* attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that occur during the conversation between yourself and the people you have **KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME**. There are no right and wrong answers. Please note that statements appear on both sides of this page. Before you begin, please write **02** and fill in the corresponding bubbles in the *special codes* section of your scantron. Please indicate, on the form provided, the degree to which the statements apply to you by selecting one of the seven points on the following scale:

(A)                      (B)                      (C)                      (D)                      (E)                      (F)                      (G)  
 Strongly Disagree ----- Strongly Agree

1. Most of the conflicts I have with others are resolved to everyone's satisfaction.
2. More than a few times I've been told that I communicate well in difficult situations.
3. I hold on to the principle "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."
4. When conversing, I try to please the other person while being myself.
5. I am a compromising person.
6. I can find a way to make other accept my opinion without making them lose face.
7. I am always the first to say "hello" when greeting an older person.
8. I usually say "excuse me" when I have to bother others.
9. I often give advice to friends who are not as good as I in class.
10. Others say that I am overconfident.
11. When conversing, I select a topic of discussion that suites the other person's interests.
12. I show admiration to others to make myself accepted.
13. I don't speak against the group's decision.
14. I usually comply with others' opinions even though I disagree with them.
15. I am willing to adjust my talking style to please the other person.
16. I usually speak out in support of my boss.
17. I would be considered a traitor if I expressed an opinion in conflict with the group opinion.

18. I tease my friend about his/her weakness.
19. I refrain from answering a professor's question when a smarter friend answers it wrong in the first place.
20. The older person's teaching is unconditionally trusted.
21. I express my feelings openly when I am displeased with another person.
22. I speak overtly without caring for other feelings.
23. I hold on to my opinion, even though others are opposed to it.
24. I am willing to change my opinion to be compatible with older people.
25. I will retort immediately in conversations when I disagree with the opinion proposed by that person.
26. Children should not propose ideas in opposition to older people.
27. In a discussion, I aggressively express my opinions that are in conflict with others.
28. I usually attack those who have different opinions from mine.
29. Others say that I am aggressive.
30. I like to be the center of attention in a conversation.

**NOTE:** This scale was modified to fit the current research. The indication of time has been changed to short time, as this thesis is only concerned with convergent validity – not time sequence developmental patterns of relationships. Also, an additional demographic item inquiring about nationality was administered, as to qualify subjects as Thai nationality.

## THAISPCC

คำสั่ง: ด้านล่างนี้คือสถานการณ์ต่างๆ 12 สถานการณ์ที่ท่านต้องพบเจอในการสื่อสาร ความสามารถทางการสื่อสารอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพของแต่ละบุคคลมีความแตกต่างกันอย่างมาก และบางครั้ง บุคคลเดียวกันก็มีความสามารถในการสื่อสารในสถานการณ์หนึ่งดีกว่าในอีกสถานการณ์หนึ่ง โปรดระบุความสามารถทางการสื่อสารที่ท่านเชื่อว่าท่านมีในแต่ละสถานการณ์ด้านล่างนี้ และระบุความสามารถดังกล่าวในช่องว่างด้านซ้ายมือหน้าข้อความแต่ละข้อ

ให้ค่าคะแนน 0-100 โดย

- \_\_\_ 1. นำเสนอการพูดอย่างจริงจังต่อหน้ากลุ่มคนแปลกหน้า
- \_\_\_ 2. พูดคุยกับคนคุ้นเคย
- \_\_\_ 3. พูดคุยกับเพื่อนกลุ่มใหญ่
- \_\_\_ 4. พูดคุยกับคนแปลกหน้ากลุ่มเล็กๆ
- \_\_\_ 5. พูดคุยกับเพื่อนคนหนึ่ง
- \_\_\_ 6. พูดคุยกับคนคุ้นเคยกลุ่มใหญ่
- \_\_\_ 7. พูดคุยกับคนแปลกหน้าคนหนึ่ง
- \_\_\_ 8. นำเสนอการพูดอย่างจริงจังต่อหน้ากลุ่มเพื่อน
- \_\_\_ 9. พูดคุยกับคนคุ้นเคยกลุ่มเล็กๆ
- \_\_\_ 10. พูดคุยกับคนแปลกหน้ากลุ่มใหญ่
- \_\_\_ 11. พูดคุยกับเพื่อนกลุ่มเล็กๆ
- \_\_\_ 12. นำเสนอการพูดอย่างจริงจังต่อหน้ากลุ่มคนคุ้นเคย



## THAISCO

คำสั่ง: แบบสอบถามด้านล่างนี้ประกอบไปด้วยลักษณะบุคลิกภาพ 12 แบบ โปรดระบุระดับที่คุณเชื่อว่าเป็นลักษณะบุคลิกภาพของคุณในขณะติดต่อกับผู้อื่น โดย (5) = เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง (4) = เห็นด้วย (3) = ไม่แน่ใจ (2) = ไม่เห็นด้วย (1) = ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง คำตอบต่อไปนี้ไม่มีถูกหรือผิด กรุณาตอบอย่างรวดเร็ว โดยยึดความคิดเห็นแรกของท่านเป็นสำคัญ

- 1. ชอบช่วยเหลือผู้อื่น
- 2. ปกป้องความเชื่อของตนเอง
- 3. เป็นตัวของตัวเอง
- 4. ตอบสนองต่อผู้อื่น
- 5. ชอบบังคับผู้อื่น
- 6. มีบุคลิกที่แข็งกร้าว
- 7. เห็นอกเห็นใจผู้อื่น
- 8. มีเมตตา
- 9. มีความแน่วแน่
- 10. อ่อนไหวต่อความต้องการของผู้อื่น
- 11. ครอบงำผู้อื่น
- 12. จริงใจ
- 13. สุภาพ
- 14. มีจุดยืน
- 15. อบอวน
- 16. นุ่มนวล
- 17. เป็นมิตร
- 18. ชอบทำตัวเป็นผู้นำ
- 19. ก้าวร้าว
- 20. ชอบแข่งขัน

## THAIRHETSEN

**แบบสอบถามทัศนคติ ความเชื่อ หรือพฤติกรรมการสื่อสาร**

คำแนะนำในการกรอกแบบสอบถาม

แบบสอบถามต่อไปนี้สอบถามข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับความสัมพันธ์ของท่านกับผู้อื่น

โปรดระบุว่าข้อความต่อไปนี้แสดงให้เห็นถึงทัศนคติ ความเชื่อ

หรือพฤติกรรมของท่านในระดับใด โปรดกรอกแบบสอบถาม

**โดยนึกถึงบุคคลที่ท่านรักเป็นเวลานาน**

โปรดเลือกคำตอบที่เหมาะสมในมาตรวัดดังต่อไปนี้

และเติมลงในกระดาษคำตอบที่จัดไว้ให้

กรุณาใส่รหัส 02 ในช่อง *special codes* ลงในกระดาษคำตอบ ก่อนตอบคำถาม

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E) (F) (G)  
ไม่ใช่ ----- ไข

1. ความขัดแย้งส่วนใหญ่ที่ผม/ฉันมีกับผู้อื่นมักจะได้รับแก้ไขในวิถีทางที่ทุกฝ่ายพอใจ
2. มีคนบอกผม/ฉันบ่อยครั้งว่า ผม/ฉันสื่อสารได้ดีในสถานการณ์ที่ยากลำบาก
3. ผม/ฉันยึดหลัก "เอาใจเขามาใส่ใจเรา" ทุกครั้งที่เริ่มสนทนากับผู้อื่น
4. ผม/ฉันพยายามรักษาน้ำใจคู่สนทนาโดยไม่สูญเสียความเป็นตัวของตัวเอง
5. ผม/ฉันเป็นคนประณีตประนอมและประสานประโยชน์
6. ผม/ฉันมีวิธีทำให้ผู้อื่นยอมรับความคิดเห็นของผม/ฉัน โดยไม่ทำให้เขาขุ่นเคืองและเสียหน้า
7. ผม/ฉันเป็นฝ่ายกล่าวคำว่าสวัสดีก่อนเสมอเมื่อทักทายผู้อื่น
8. ผม/ฉันเอ่ยคำ "ขอโทษ" เมื่อต้องการรบกวนผู้อื่น
9. ผม/ฉันมักให้คำแนะนำกับเพื่อนที่เรียนอ่อนกว่า
10. มักมีคนบอกว่า ผม/ฉันมั่นใจในตนเองจนเกินไป
11. ผม/ฉันเลือกหัวข้อสนทนาที่เหมาะสมกับความสนใจของคู่สนทนา
12. ผม/ฉันเอ่ยชมผู้อื่นเพื่อให้เขายอมรับในตัวผม/ฉัน
13. ผม/ฉันไม่แสดงความคิดเห็นขัดแย้งกับมติของกลุ่ม
14. ผม/ฉันคล้อยตามความคิดเห็นของผู้อื่นแม้ว่าไม่เห็นด้วย
15. ผม/ฉันยินยอมปรับรูปแบบการพูดของผม/ฉันเพื่อให้คู่สนทนาพอใจ
16. ผม/ฉันพูดสนับสนุนความคิดเห็นของผู้บังคับบัญชา
17. การแสดงความคิดเห็นขัดแย้งกับกลุ่มถือเป็นการทรยศต่อส่วนรวม
18. ผม/ฉันล้อเลียนเพื่อนในจุดบกพร่องของเขา
19. ผม/ฉันหลีกเลี่ยงการตอบคำถามของอาจารย์ เมื่อเพื่อนที่เรียนเก่งกว่าตอบผิด
20. คำสั่งสอนของผู้ใหญ่น่าเชื่อถือโดยไม่มีข้อแม้
21. เมื่อผม/ฉันไม่พอใจคู่สนทนา ผม/ฉันจะแสดงออกมาอย่างเปิดเผย
22. ผม/ฉันเป็นคนพูดจาโผงผาง ตรงไปตรงมา โดยมีเห็นแก่หน้าผู้ใด
23. ผม/ฉันยืนกรานในความคิดเห็นของตน แม้ว่าผู้อื่นคัดค้าน
24. ผม/ฉันยอมเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็นของผม/ฉันเพื่อให้สอดคล้องกับผู้ที่มีความวุฒิสูงกว่า
25. ผม/ฉันตอบโต้ทันที เมื่อไม่เห็นด้วยกับความคิดที่คู่สนทนานำเสนอ
26. เด็กไม่ควรเสนอความคิดเห็นขัดแย้งกับผู้ใหญ่
27. ในกลุ่มอภิปราย ผม/ฉันแสดงความคิดเห็นขัดแย้งกับสมาชิกคนอื่นอย่างรุนแรง
28. ผม/ฉันพูดโจมตีผู้ที่มีความคิดเห็นแตกต่างจากผม/ฉัน
29. มักมีคนว่าผม/ฉันเป็นคนก้าวร้าว
30. ผม/ฉันชอบเป็นจุดเด่นในวงสนทนา