PRELIMINARY STUDY OF INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN THAI ORGANIZATIONS

Papassara Chaiwong

Abstract

This paper is a part of a dissertation entitled 'Intergenerational Communication Competence in Thai Organizations', its main purpose being to investigate the key characteristics of intergenerational communication competence in Thai organizations. At the pilot stage, this exploratory study is aimed preliminarily to examine 1) communication-related work values of the three different age groups (30 years and below, 35 to 45 years, and 50 years and above), 2) perceptions of the three generations toward one another, and 3) communication expectations of the three generations when having to communicate with one another in Thai organizations. Multi-method was employed. Data was collected by conducting: 1) self-administered questionnaires (n=36) from the three generations in three large organizations, from public, state enterprise and private sectors; and 2) in-depth interviews with executives and employees from the three generations (n=6) in the three organizations.

The results showed that:

1. Respondents from all age groups, especially the 30-and-below group, strongly agreed that *'recognition, compliment and encouragement can provide great work motivation'*. The work-related values most and least held by each age group were different; however, the 35-to-45 age group's values were more similar to the 50-and-above. Moreover, at 0.05 level of significance, the following work-related values held by the youngest generational cohort were statistically different from the two older age groups: *'If another organization offers me a better deal, I am ready to move on to the new job.'*; *'I believe that competitions and challenges can provide great motivation.'*; and 'Whenever I cannot access the internet system or use communication technologies, I am normally frustrated.'

Papassara Chaiwong (email: papassara.c@gmail.com) is from Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

2. Compared to the two older age groups, the degree of perceptions of the youngest age group toward themselves and other generational cohorts were relatively high; while the degree of perceptions of the 35-to-45 and the 50-and-above age groups toward the 30-and-below were relatively low.

3. The 30-and-below age group expected the 50-and-above to *'be able to create work atmosphere (e.g., serious and success-oriented, or fun and relax) to suit a certain situation.', and 'be able to appropriately exploit online media/ new media (e.g., e-mail, chat, line) to build relationship with colleague(s) from different generations.';* while both the 50-and-above and the 35-to-45 age groups expected the 30-and-below to *'listen to different opinions of colleague(s) from other generations, and be flexible to combine the organizational work practices and the individual ideas appropriately.';* and *'be aware and accept generational differences in terms of work-related values, working practices and communicative behaviors.'* Moreover, the oldest group expected the youngest group to *'dare to express opinions, which are opposite to ideas of colleague(s) from different generations, while being aware of when and to whom it can be done directly or indirectly.'* In addition, the 35-to-45 age group expected the oldest one to *'be able to efficiently communicate in various communicative activities (e.g., giving orders and instructions, coordinating, information sharing), in face-to-face communication setting.'* and to *'express concerns and thoughtfulness toward both the organizational goals and individual goals (goals of colleague(s) from different generations).'*.

Keywords: intergenerational communication competence, organizational communication, work-related value, perception, communication expectation

Background

Communication across generations at workplaces had been viewed as a normal situation in people's life until the early 1990s, when globalization was highly accelerated by advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs). The accelerated globalization has tremendously and rapidly caused major changes in many countries around the world at all levels, for instance, politics, economics, society and culture, as well as communication-related organizational behaviors. According to observations of nearly 60 percent of HRM managers/practitioners at large companies across the world, studies of communication scholars, as well as HR consultancies and research institutes in several regions, tensions and conflicts in communication-related dynamics, e.g. information sharing, mentoring, feedback giving, knowledge transferring, and problem solving and decision making as a team, in the 21st century workplaces grew from generational differences (Burke, 2004; PricewaterhouseCooper, 2013).

A term 'generation' is defined as an identifiable group of people that shares birth years, age, social class, location, and significant life events at their critical developmental stages (Mannheim, 1952; Kupperschmidt, 2000). From the sociologists' perspective, a generational cohort has been influenced by a shared set of noteworthy experiences, or generational markers, which has impact on all members of the generation (Zemke et al. 2000). It is believed that their similarities in terms of mindset or cognitive elements, e.g., work values, attitudes, preferences, expectations, perceptions, and behaviors are shaped from the same historical, economic, and social experiences. As a result, a generational group has its own unique combination of experiences, expertise, perspective and expectations. (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Zemke et al., 2000). Moreover, members in a particular generation tend to exhibit a shared mindset, and continue to exhibit the characteristics of that mindset as they grow up through life (Codrington, 2011).

Challenges of managing generational differences are said to prominently arise in to-

day's multi-generational organizations. In fact, a multi-generational workforce is believed to bring about many benefits such as productivity, creativity and innovation, talent attraction, reduced turnover and increased competitive advantage. However, unless a multi-generational workforce is managed properly, the existence of different generations at work can give rise to intergenerational tension (Cindy Tan, 2012). The lack of appropriate and effective intergenerational communication, which are the key outcomes of communication competence (Jablin, 1994; Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984), and the inefficient management to bridge the communication gap between generations led to critical consequences, e.g. employees' dissatisfaction, lack of organizational commitment and unhealthy organizational communication climate. Consequently, these negative outcomes caused many organizations, globally and locally, to struggle with high annual turnover of potential and competitive newcomers, high employee replacement costs year after year, and lack of highly efficient young leaders to replace the retiring executive positions.

At today's workplaces, there are at least three generations working together in organizations, which mostly are Generation Babyboomers or Gen B; Generation X or Gen X; and Generation Y or Gen Y. While employees from the older generations (mostly Gen B) are delaying retirement, younger cohorts of Gen Y are also entering the workforce. Interestingly, intergenerational tension among generations is said to be the most acute for generations with the widest age gap, e.g.,, Gen Y employees versus the Gen B (e.g. Twenge, 2010; Murphy et al, 2010; Gursoy et al, 2008; Cindy Tan, 2012). The studies also indicated that the communication disconnect in workplaces was caused by the difference of 3 cognitive factors as follows: work-related values, generational stereotype, and communicative behaviors that were not congruent with one another's communication expectations (e.g. Twenge, 2010; Twenge et al, 2008; Gursoy, Karadag and Chi, 2008;

McCann and Keaton, 2013; Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010; Murphy et al, 2010).

Like most other countries, many large organizations in Thailand are also encountering a dilemma of generational diversity. Even though there were plenty of suggestions given by HR consultancies regarding how to manage a multigenerational workplace, the ideas or implications may not be applicable to organizational settings in Thailand because they were mostly based on findings in the western context, in which the respondents in the same generation (shared birth years) might have a different set of cognitive factors (e.g. worldview, values, attitudes) due to a different a set of significant life events and cultural factors they experienced in their location/country (Codrington, 2011).

The main purpose of this study, therefore, is to preliminarily identify key components of intergenerational communication competence in Thai organizations. In pursuing the main purpose, the three communication-related cognitive factors which mainly caused the generational gap: work-related values, perceptions and communication expectations of each generational cohort and toward each other are to be examined.

The research rationale is organized in the following fashion. Firstly, I review Thai cultural and organizational characteristics to provide an understanding of the nature of Thai working culture and norms. Secondly, from both Western and Thai context, I review the three cognitive factors of each generational cohort: 1) communication-related work values (so called 'work-related values' in this paper); 2) perceptions and 3) communication expectations toward one another. Thirdly, I review the literature on communication competence to provide a brief theoretical and conceptual foundation for this study, as well as its relationship with the three cognitive factors. Finally, the research question that guided this study is presented and the study is discussed.

Literature Review

Overview of Thai Cultural and Organizational Characteristic.

According to the study of Komin (1991), values embedded in Thai culture can be grouped in nine clusters. Most of the cognitive system is around the concept of face-saving, gratitude, reciprocity and mutual relationship, and harmony (smooth interpersonal relationship and flexibility adjustment to situation). According to Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture Framework (2010), the Thai national culture found among Thai employees in his study is characterized by: **1) collectivismor low individualism:** socially-oriented, needs of the group superseding individual aspirations, interpersonal harmony and group orientation are upheld for the sake of cordial relationships. Accordingly, Thais believe in 'kreng jai' – an extreme reluctance to impose on anyone or disturb another's personal equilibrium by refusing requests, accepting assistance, showing disagreement, giving direct criticism, challenging knowledge or authority, or confronting in a conflict situation. Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999) found that Thai communicatively competent employees are expected to know how to communicate so as to avoid conflict with others, for example, by not discussing things without regard to the person being referred to, recognizing the inappropriateness of responding negatively to colleague's opinions, and being able to control expression of emotions; **2) low masculinity:** indirect, relational-oriented, situation-centered, face-saving, conflict avoiding. According to Sriussa-daporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999), a successful, modest Thai subordinates often expresses a lower opinion than is probably deserved of her or his own ability, knowledge, skill, successes, etc. Besides, even though supervisors or senior employees encourage their younger colleagues to be straight-forward, they also expect the younger to know how and when to communicate to avoid conflict and interpersonal problems with their supervisors; **3) high power distance:** status and hierarchy-focused, taking seriously addressing people according to their status. Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999) commented that social differences in Thai culture also have a lot to do with age differences. For example, younger people are taught to respect their elders. Their overall study indicated that Thai organizational members perceived communication competence in terms of knowledge of normative communication behaviors, especially with respect to how to communicate with persons in different organizational roles and/or status; **4) high uncertainty avoidance:** in Thai culture, social order and correct behavior are emphasized. They are able to tolerate a higher level of uncertainty. The influence of 'face-saving' and maintaining harmony values, Thai employees prefer to avoid uncertainty by controlling everything in order to eliminate or avoid the unexpected; **5) pragmatism:** due to the beliefs in cosmic forces and 'bun wassana - kum' (results of good and bad karma), most people in Thai culture may not have a need of explanation in everything, as they believe that it is impossible to understand fully the complexity of life; and **6) indulgence:** due to 'fun-oriented' value, Thai employees tend to be relaxed rather than control their desires and impulses.

Nevertheless, according to many studies, it seems that the globalization created by advanced ICTs has tremendously affected the economy across the world, and has strongly encouraged countries around the globe to put their efforts to increase their competitive advantages. Therefore, many countries including those economic hubs in Southeast Asian region, like Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, have put 'human capital policy' as their national agenda. As a result, values of people in these countries are changing to align with the ideal characteristics written in the national human resource development plan. Furthermore, from the findings

in various related studies as well as my observation, regardless of cultural or generational differences, communication characteristics of employees at today workplaces were influenced by advanced ICTs and globalization. Interestingly, through high exposure to ICT and digital media, their identity, mindset and communicative behaviors, especially of those in Gen X and Y, were shaped and socialized to be much more like those in the western context (aka, neo-westernization) (NESDB, 2011). Thus, the culture mostly held by the younger generations like late Gen X and Gen Y tends to be characterized by: higher individualism, lower power distance, higher masculinity, lower uncertainty reduction, lower pragmatism and higher indulgence.

Communication Work-Related Values, Perceptions and Communication Expectations

Work values are core conceptions of the desirable that function as guiding principles individuals select actions, evaluate people, events and situations, and explain their action and evaluations at work setting. (derived from Kluckkohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Perception is the (active) process of assessing information in an individual's surroundings. It involves becoming aware of one's environment in a way that is unique to the individual and is strongly influence by communication. Workplace age stereotypes, or generational stereotypes, are the beliefs and expectations about a worker based on his or her age. They not occur in isolation and tend to reflect widespread societal stereotypes of people of different ages (McCann and Keaton, 2013). Communication expectation is defined as a state of believing that some communicative behaviors are going to happen or should be a certain way during an interaction in a certain situation. In work settings, apart from outward appearance like gender and age, role relationship (e.g.,

superior-subordinate, coworkers) strongly influences communication expectations one would have toward others.

From the documentary study, at least six dimensions of work-related values of the older and the younger generations were found. These dimensions of work-related values are associated with the way individuals (older and younger generations) perceive themselves, others, and relationships (superior-subordinate and coworkers) and affect content of communication in organizational dynamics, e.g. motivating, information sharing, opinion expressing, mentoring, feedback giving, as well as leadership styles. Also, each dimension is associated with a certain expectation individuals have toward their colleagues from different generations. The six dimensions of work-related values, as well as their association with perceptions and expectations toward other age group, are summarized and shown in appendix A, table 1 and table 2 respectively.

Communication Competence and Its Relationship With The Three Cognitive Factors

During the past three decades, most theories of communication competence, simply defined by Spitzberg (1988, p.68) as "the ability to interact well – *with accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness* -with others", have been developed in several contexts, e.g. interpersonal, group, organizational, and intercultural. In Thailand, since 1999, Sriussadaporn (Aka, Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam) and her colleagues have conceptualized communication competence in these contexts, based on Thai culture. As for the intergenerational context, in fact, if considering from the studied cognitive elements: value, perception and communication expectation, intergenerational communication can be identified as another type of intercultural communication. Nevertheless, there has been no specific conceptualization of intergenerational communication

competence, clearly studied either on western or Thai perspectives yet.

According to Jablin et al (1994), when speaking of communication competence, the term 'knowledge' refers to 'strategic communication', which is knowledge of personal, interpersonal, group, organizational realities, what things 'mean' in the interaction and organization; while *'adaptive communication performances'* refers to 'tactical communication', which represents the skills one has available to use as instruments to accomplish personal, group, and organizational goals. As for term *'a situational ability'* refers to context-bound attribute of communication competence. Another useful framework was proposed by Spitzberg & Cupach (1984) and is known as *'the component model of competence'*. The model is comprised of three specific dimensions. Apart from strategic communication knowledge and tactical communication skill, motivation or 'an individual's approach or avoidance orientation in various social situations' is included.

From the above definitions and basic model, in order to develop 'intergenerational communication competence' in workplace setting, the three components: motivation, strategic communication knowledge, and tactical communication skill should be studied from a social cognitive perspective.

Motivation: Previous intergenerational studies (e.g. McCann and Keaton, 2013; Blauth, McDaniel, Perrin and Perrin, 2012; Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007) indicated that values, perceptions, and expectations as well as attitudes, preferences, self-efficacy of an individual are associated with motivation to communication. For instance, due to different sets of values of two individuals, they may evaluate the others distortedly. And if the two individuals have negative generational stereotypes (perception) toward each other, their communication style tended to be non-accommodating, or even avoidant (McCann and Keaton, 2013). In addition, the same studies showed that unless one perceived that s/he was competent to communicate in a certain context or via a certain means (e.g., new media), s/he would exhibit more avoidant in communication. **Strategic communication knowledge:** According to Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999), strategic communication knowledge has been frequently studied from a social cognitive perspective, through examinations of individual differences among organizational members. In particular, researchers operationalize competence in terms of an individual's cognitive complexity, perspective taking, empathy, persuasive ability and self-monitoring. It can be implied that, to develop intergenerational abilities, an individual needs to gain more knowledge about the other party's values and perceptions toward each other in various situations. Also, the knowledge of communication expectations serves as a guideline for an individual to act appropriately when having interaction with colleagues from different age groups in a certain situation. **Tactical communication skill:** As mentioned earlier that key communication skills that organizational members see as important in superior-subordinate and old-timers-newcomers team relationships are: information seeking and sharing, motivating, instructing/coaching, feedback giving and receiving, advising and listening. Thus, if an individual is usually aware of the three cognitive factors, s/he will be able to adapt their communication approach appropriately and effectively.

In light of the issues mentioned in the previous three parts, this preliminary study poses the following research question: What are characteristics of work-related values, perceptions and communication expectations each age group in Thai organizations hold and have toward one another?

Methodology

Research Population and Sampling

This research population was Thai large organizations (more than 200 employees) from

public, state enterprise and private sectors, which have been established for more than 30 years. At this pilot stage, data were collected from three voluntary organizations in all sectors including a department of Finance Ministry, a telecommunication organization, and a commercial bank.

Respondents

Quantitative data was collected from 36 employees of the three sampling organizations. Using Thai's historical markers and concept of cusper generation as criteria, the respondents were classified into three age groups: 30-and-below, 35-to-45, and 50-and-above. To acquire further understanding for discussion, qualitative data was gathered by in-depth interviewing with another 6 organizational members from the three age groups.

Scale Development and Pilot Test of Questionnaires

Items in a questionnaire were generated to reflect the three bodies of literature, one concerned with the six dimensions of work-related values proposed in the table 1, another with impact of intergenerational communication to communication-related outcomes (which is not presented in this paper), and the other with communication expectations which are related to both the proposed six dimensions of work -related values and the two dimensions of Thai organizational communication competence (strategic communication knowledge and tactical communication skills) based on the study of Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999).

As for research tool development and testing, a developed questionnaire was presented to 5 experts (2 PhDs and Assistant Professors in communication, 1 Associate Professor in communication, 1 PhD and high-level HRD executive, and 1 Associate Professor in Statistics) for content validity test. After that, 10 copies of the

edited version were distributed to 10 samples in 5 large organizations from all sectors for reliability test.

Procedure

Within each organization, questionnaires were distributed to 12 persons: 4 individuals who were in 50-and-above age group, 4 individuals who were in 35-to-45 age group, and 30-and-below individuals who were in 50-and-above age group.

The questionnaires were divided into 4 major sections. **The first section** contains 2 parts. The first part sought demographic information: gender, age, highest level of education, division/ department in which they worked, organizational tenure, job tenure, position/nature of job, and media use behaviors; and the second part contains 34 randomly ordered items, and sought personal work-related values. **The second section** consisted of 2 parts. Respondents were asked to think of a colleague (superior, subordinate, or coworker) whose age was 15-20 years older/younger than them, who was working or had worked with them. Those responding to the 30-and-below form were asked to think of a colleague who was 15-20 years older; those responding to the 50-and-above form were asked to think of a colleague who was 15-20 years younger than them; while those responding to the 35-to-45 form were asked to think of 2 colleagues, one was 15-20 years older than them, and the other "was 15-20 years younger than them. The first part sought demographic data of the person(s) each respondent was thinking of. The second part contains 34 randomly ordered items, and sought the respondent's perception toward the targeted-person(s)' work-related values. **(In full-scale questionnaire, the third section sought impact of intergenerational communication to the organizational communication-related outcomes, but it is not discussed in this paper).** The fourth part comprised 35 items, describing expected communicative behaviors/skills and forms of }

knowledge expected to be associated with those who have intergenerational communication competence.

Across all questionnaire subjects were asked to indicate on 4-point, Likert-type scales (4 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree).

Data Analysis

At this pilot stage, due to small sample size, only frequency distributions, percentages, means and standard deviations were examined for each item, allowing the researcher to rank the means score of the items in each part. Afterward, those items which the means were maximum and greater than 3.2 (of 4.0), and/or minimum and lower than 1.8 (of 4.0) would be isolated for further analysis.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Data And Media-Use Behaviors at Workplace

Most of the respondents in this study were female in 35-to-45 group (27.8%), female in 50-and-above group (25%), and male in 30-and-below group (19%) respectively. Two-thirds (66.6%) graduated with a bachelor's degree, 8 of the respondents (22%) had a master's degree. Most of the respondents in the 35-to-45, and 50-and-above groups (79%) had been working in

their current organization for more than 15 years; while almost all respondents in the 30-and-below group (91.6%) had been in their organization for less than 5 years.

As for channels of communication exploited at workplace, almost all respondents (91.6%) from every age group reported that they communicated with their colleagues in face-to-face setting at all times (constantly). Media they mostly used in work activities were e-mail (at all times) and mobile phone (3 to 5 times /day) respectively. Regarding the use of chat application (e.g., LINE or Facebook chat) for work purpose, the respondents across all age groups reported differently. Some never used it; while some used it all the time.

• Work-related values:

Respondents from all age groups, especially the 30-and-below group, strongly agreed that 'recognition, compliment and encouragement can provide great work motivation.'. Means and S.D. of the youngest, the middle, and the oldest groups were as follows: $\bar{x} = 3.64$, S.D.= 0.50; $\bar{x} = 3.50$, S.D.= 0.67; $\bar{x} = 3.25$, S.D.= 1.05. Specifically, work-related values held the most and the least by each age group were as shown in the following table:

Table 1: Perceptions toward their personal work-related values of each age group.

	Perceptions toward Their personal work-related values	Results	
#	*Age group: 30-and-below (n=11)*	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
12	**The highest 3** I believe that recognitions and compliments are good motives at work.	3.67	.50
10	I believe that self-actualization and self-development in terms of having greater work knowledge and skills are indicators of career success.	3.45	.52
9	I believe that competition and challenges can provide great motivation.	3.40	.70
28	**The lowest 2** I am normally willing to take action, even though I do not know or I am not informed of the reason (s) behind.	1.56	.53

	Perceptions toward Their personal work-related values	Results	
25	I think that feedback during or after work procedure is not necessary.	1.75	.87
#	Age group: 35-to-45 (n=11)	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
6	**The highest three** I usually give full cooperation to the organization in every project for the sake of the organization's advancement and success.	3.55	.52
12	I believe that recognitions and compliments are good motives at work.	3.50	.67
7	I would like to grow together (side-by-side) in my current organization, and rarely have an idea to leave my job.	3.42	.67
25	**The lowest one** I think that feedback during or after work procedure is not necessary.	1.56	.53
#	Age group: 50-and-above (n=11)	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
10	**The highest three** I believe that self-actualization and self-development in terms of having greater work knowledge and skills are indicators of career success.	3.42	.51
12	I believe that recognitions and compliments are good motives at work.	3.25	1.05
15	I usually adhere to and follow rules and regulations, which have been held firmly for a long time, to keep/maintain the organization's identity and norms.	3.09	.70
25	**The lowest one** I think that feedback during or after work procedure is not necessary.	1.44	.73

Moreover, at 0.05 level of significance, the following work-related values held by the youngest generational cohort were statistically different from the two older age groups: 'If another organization offers me a better deal, I am ready to move on to the new job.'; 'I believe that competitions and challenges can provide great motivation.'; and 'Whenever I cannot access the internet system or use communication technology, I am normally frustrated.'

Discussion: In general, the results in with respect to work-related values were in accordance with the previous studies (see table 1 and 2 in appendix A). Also, as remarked earlier that

comparing with the older employees, work-related values of the younger generation tended to be higher individualism, lower power distance, higher masculinity, lower uncertainty reduction, lower pragmatism and higher indulgence.

Recognitions and compliments are highly valued: As Thai culture is characterized by 'low masculinity', non-competitive, relational-oriented, face-saving, conflict avoiding expression, it was not surprising to find that, across all age groups, the respondents believed that 'recognitions and compliments' are good motives at work. Moreover, due to great pressure in today's highly competitive work environment, recognitions and compliments

from colleagues can be also considered as 'encouragement' to move toward one's goals. However, it was interesting to see that, paradoxically, while the youngest age group valued 'recognitions and compliments' the most, they were also highly agreed 'competition and challenges' are motivating. Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) discussed that while Gen Y demonstrated that they felt not threatened by challenging tasks, rather, they had fun to tackle with the problems as long as they did not have to stick with any norms, their need for affirmation derives from the constant flow of supportive messages they had received from parents, teachers, and coaches throughout their childhood. Moreover, the findings corresponded with comments from some executives in this study. They suggested that to make the young generation commit themselves to the organization, the superior should 'win their heart' first, by showing confidence in the young and providing them platforms to demonstrate their abilities; yet, still having to be in close relationship with them to give them advice for their professional and personal development.

Everyone needs feedback: Respondents across age group quite strongly disagreed with the following statement 'I think that feedback during or after work procedure is not necessary.' The result reflected Thai cultural characteristic of 'high uncertainty avoidance' - the influence of 'face-saving' and maintain harmony values, Thai employees prefer to avoid uncertainty by controlling everything in order to eliminate or avoid the unexpected. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the findings from face-to-face interview revealed that the younger employees preferred open communication and to be in close relationship with their superiors, so they could ask for advice and opinion anytime. This can also explain the result why the 30-and-below group strongly disagreed with 'I am normally willing to take action, even though I do not know or I am not informed of the reason (s) behind.'

• **Perceptions toward one another**

Compared with the two older age groups, the degree of perceptions of the youngest group toward themselves and the other generational cohorts were relatively high; while degree of perceptions of the 35-to-45 and, especially the 50-and-above groups toward the 30-and-below were relatively lower. Also, the findings showed that the older age groups perceived a 'wider gap' in their relationship with the young; while the young felt not. For example, while the youngest group highly agreed that both the 50-and-above group and themselves 'usually give full cooperation to the organization in every project for the sake of the organization's advancement and success' (x^- =3.40, S.D.=0.52; x^- =3.36, S.D.=0.92), the oldest perceived that the degree of cooperation given by the youngest was just at moderate level (x^- =2.70, S.D.=0.98).

Discussion: The result was similar to comments from senior worker that, the young generation had higher level of self-esteem than the old-timers because today's parents brought up their kids very closely. However, some parents overly praised or gave too many compliments to their children to a degree that made them over-confident when they grew up. In addition, Greenfield (1998, cited in Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010) proposed that this confidence has been buoyed by an educational system with inflated grades and standardized tests, in which many Millennials are expert in performing well.

War of definition: With respect to the 'wider' gap perceived by the old-timers, in my observation, the gap among these generational cohorts may come from 'different definition' one gives to a certain set of behaviors. For example, the findings elicited from face-to-face interview with the youngest group indicated that 'giving full cooperation' was 'to do their best and to the utmost during working hours'; yet, if the given task had not been accomplished, they were willing to get it done at home, and e-mail to their boss later by the given deadline. In contrast,

from the views of the older executives and employees, they expected the young to express 'cooperation' by 'staying back at workplace together with their older workers until the job was done.'

• **Communication expectations toward one another**

The results indicated that the older generation, especially the 50-and-above group, expected from the youngest group more than the youngest expected from them. The top two communication expectations each age group had toward each other were as follows:

The 30-and-below toward the 50-and-above: *'be able to create work atmosphere (e.g., serious and success-oriented, or fun and relax) to suit a certain situation.'* (x^- =3.27, S.D.=0.65); and 'be able to appropriately exploit online media/ new media (e.g., e-mail, chat, line) to build relationship with colleague(s) from different generations.' (x^- =3.00, S.D.=0.87).

The 50-and-above toward the 30-and-below: *'dare to express opinions, which are opposite to ideas of colleague (s) from different generations, yet, knows to whom, when and how to express them directly or indirectly.'*(x^- =3.30, S.D.=0.67); *'listen to different opinions of colleague(s) from other generations, and be flexible to combine the organizational work practices and the individual ideas appropriately.' (x^- =3.20, S.D.=0.79); and 'be aware and accept generational differences in terms of work-related values, working practices and communicative behaviors.' (x^- =3.20, S.D.=0.63).*

The 35-to-45 toward the 50-and-above and the 30-and-below: They expected the oldest to *'be able to efficiently communicate in various communicative activities (e.g., giving orders and instructions, coordinating, information sharing), in face-to-face communication setting.' (x^- =3.20, S.D.=0.41);* and to *'express concerns and thoughtfulness toward both the organizational goals and individual goals (goals of colleague(s) from*

*different generations).' (x^- =3.11, S.D.=0.32); while they expected the youngest to *'listen to different opinions of colleague(s) from other generations, and be flexible to combine the organizational work practices and the individual ideas appropriately.'* (x^- =3.125, S.D. = 0.64); *'be aware and accept generational differences in terms of work-related values, working practices and communicative behaviors.'* (x^- =3.11, S.D.=0.33); and *'have knowledge and understandings about generational differences in terms of work-related values, working practices and communicative behaviors'* (x^- =3.11, S.D.=0.33).

The communicative behavior the 35-to-45 and 50-and-above groups least expected from the young was: *'proposes new ideas or work practices, which are different from the existing ones, for job effectiveness, believing that it is not necessary to always keep the old.'* (x^- =2.22, S.D. = 0.83; x^- =2.20, S.D.=0.91 respectively).

Discussion: The results in this part were in accordance with the findings in the study of Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999). Nevertheless, it can be clearly seen that, even though difference in terms of role and status (hierarchy) was still regarded, the older workers were more open to the younger's opinions and willing to adjust their mindset to understand the 30-and-below age group. Findings from the face-to-face interview showed that the seniors appreciated new and creative ideas of the new generation; however, they expected the young not to be overly confident, rather, they should to listen and learn from the old-timers' experiences. Moreover, with the view corresponding to Thai cultural characteristics of collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance, the young should understand that some existing rules and regulations of the organization can never be cancelled, so they should be included and considered when proposing any new ideas.

With respect to the expectations of the 30-and-below and 35-to-45 age groups toward the 50-and-

above, the findings corresponded with comments given by Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999) that, the senior workers should not only know how to exercise their power to influence others, but also be thoughtful and kind enough to their subordinates. As mentioned earlier that the 30-and-below and 35-to-45 groups, which mostly are at operational level, have been working under great pressure in today's highly competitive work environment. It was not surprising that why they expected their seniors or superiors to express thoughtfulness and concerns toward both the organizational goals and individual goals; and, to create fun and relaxing work atmosphere to suit a particular situation. Also, their expectation was in line with previous studies that the young generation highly valued work-life balance (e.g., Cogin, 2011; Twenge, 2010; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Gursoy et al, 2008; etc.)

Interestingly, the findings also indicated that the youngest group expected the oldest group to be able to appropriately exploit online media/ new media (e.g., e-mail, chat, line) to build relationship with colleague(s) from different generations. It was surprising that findings from face-to-fact interviews also supported this statement. Young workers reported that they did not understand why their boss often sent both work and non-work messages to them via chat application after midnight. But, when asking the seniors, they reported that they viewed chat application as a mailbox, rather than interactive media. Thus, they did not expect immediate responses from their recipients. If the issues were urgent, they would rather give their subordinate a call. In addition, they were normally free to think about many things at night time. So they left messages that popped up in the mind via chat application then.

From the overall findings, I would like to propose a preliminary model of intergenerational communication competence and its key components as below:

Preliminary conceptualization of intergenerational communication competence:
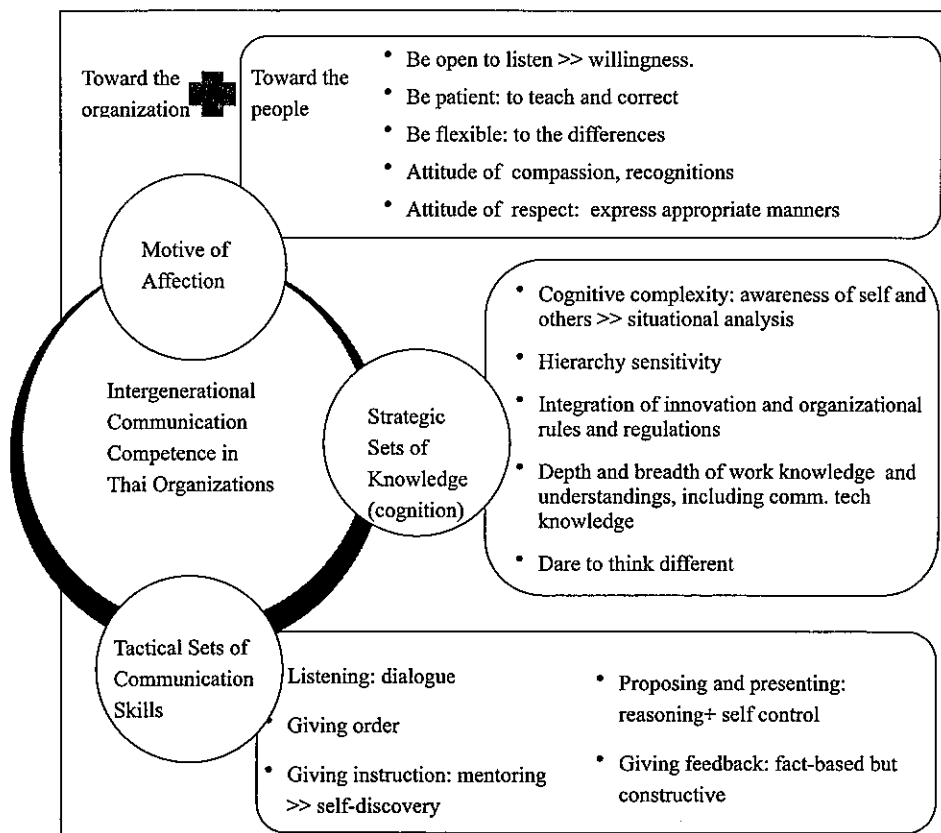
Limitations

In considering the results of this pilot study, several limitations, including constraints associated with the sample and the sample size, should be kept in mind. In search of key characteristics of intergenerational communicatively competent employees, data should be specifically gathered, both by questionnaire and face-to-face interview, from respondents who are in superior-subordinate, or coworker-coworker relationships. But, if doing so, due to Thai cultural norms associated with deference and conflict avoidance, the respondents may feel that it was inappropriate to strongly agree or disagree with some of the statements presented in the questionnaire items, or to share their view about their colleagues, especially on a negative side, directly. With respect to sample size, the results can be altered due to different demographic factors of the respondents, as well as organizational culture.

APPENDIX A

Table 2: Six dimensions of communication-related work values found from the documentary study, in association with Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture (2010) and Minkov's (2011)

(References in Thai language are not stated here)

Dimensions	Communication Characteristics	
	The older generation	The younger generation
	Work-oriented	Personal life-oriented
1) Prioritization: Work-oriented VS Personal life-oriented Association with Minkov's Framework (2011): Industry VS Indulgence *Content of talk = e.g., information sharing, mentoring, decision making	• Work is important for life. So they were willing to continue working even after contractual working hours • Tended to encourage their subordinates or the younger colleagues to work hard, rather than having a work-life balance • Content of talk* and leadership styles: task-oriented	• Work is just a part of their indentity; to spend time on personal and have fun with family and friends, was much more important. • Tended to communicate a desire for work-life balance, flexible work hours and annual leave. • Content of talk and leadership styles: relationship-oriented, flexible and relaxed.
References: e.g., Cogin (2011); Twenge (2010); Myers & Sadaghiani (2010); Meriac, Woehr & Banister (2010); Deloitte (2009); Cennamo & Gardner (2008); Gursoy et al (2008); Glass (2007); SHRM (2004); Smola & Sutton (2002); Murphy et al (2010); Launglaror & Thasnanapark (nd)		
2) Goal settings: Organizational-oriented VS Personal-oriented Association with Hofstede's Framework: Collectivism VS Individualism	Organizational-oriented	Personal-oriented
	• Instilled others to identify their vision and goal with the organization. • Encouraged their colleagues including the younger employees to express loyalty, and give cooperation and supports to the organization.	• Tended to focus on personal goal. • Their cooperation to the organization depended on how the project would enhance their personal development and abilities.

		• Especially Gen Y, expressed a greater intent to leave a company if a better opportunity came along.
References: e.g., Twenge (2010); Sadaghiani & Myers (2009); Gursoy et al (2008); Cennamo & Gardner (2008); Murphy et al (2010);Launglaror & Thasnanapark (nd)		
3) Indicatives of success: Heuristic-concerned VS Materialistic-concerned Association with Hofstede's Framework (2010): Femininity VS Masculinity; Long VS Short term orientation	Heuristic-concerned	Materialistic-concerned
	• Had greater focus on knowledge, skills and experiences gaining through work procedure. • Valued recognition (praise, encouragement), especially in public settings. • Delayed gratification was fine with them.	• Had greater focus on the outcome. • Valued materialistic and instant reward, e.g., high salary, monetary bonus, promotion and benefits. • Recognition as well as instant advancement and gratification were desirable.
References: e.g., Cogin (2011); Twenge (2010); Cennamo & Gardner (2008); Glass (2007); Smola & Sutton (2002); Murphy et al (2010)		

Table 2 (cont.): Six dimensions of communication-related work values found from the documentary study, in association with Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture (2010) and Minkov's (2011)

Dimensions	Communication Characteristics	
	The older generation	The younger generation
4) Working patterns: Institutionalized VS Personalized Association with Hofstede's and Minkov's Frameworks: High VS Low Uncertainty Avoidance; Monumental-ism VS Flexumilism	Institutionalized	Personalized
	• Attached to organization's identity, culture and norms. They ensured the work quality by having things done according to the norms. • Did not want to take any risk by violating the tradition.	• Preferred to have autonomy, flexibility and get things done in their own ways. 1. Was not threatened by challenging tasks; rather, they had fun tackling problems as long as they did not have to stick with any norms.
References: e.g., PricewaterhouseCooper (2013); Myers & Sadaghiani (2010); Twenge (2010); Gursoy et al (2008); Glass (2007); Murphy et al (2010)		
5) Formality, seniority and courtesy in communication: High VS Low	High formality, seniority and courtesy	Low formality, seniority and courtesy
	• Had stronger sense of hierarchy and formality as they respected and obeyed authority.	

Association with Hofstede's Framework (2010): High VS Low Power Distance; Femininity VS Masculinity	• The way they addressed and expressed communicative behaviors toward others was courteous according to the person's status and position. • Quarterly or annual feedback from supervisors was enough for them. • Gave opinion only upon request. When their opinions contradicted to supervisors or senior workers, they would not argue in a direct or aggressive manner.	• Had a view that every employee was equal regardless of age differences. • Especially Gen Y, preferred informal superior-subordinate relationship, and seeking advice from their superior both in work and personal issues. • Preferred open communication and frequent and instant feedback at any time. • In problem solving and decision making, the younger generations often took participation, expressed their view in straight manner, and dared to argue with those in higher positions
References: e.g., Myers & Sadaghiani (2010); Deloitte (2009); SHRM (2009); Gursoy et al (2008); Marston (2007); Martin (2005)		
6) <u>Communication technology exposure and level of dependency</u>: Low VS High	Low comm tech exposure and low level of dependency	High comm tech exposure and high level of dependency
Association with Hofstede's Framework: Collectivism VS Individualism	• Viewed ICTs and new media as another means of communication. • Preferred face-to-face meeting and traditional media, i.e. telephone, fax and memo	• Demonstrated a higher aptitude for using technology, highly depended and used new media in almost every communication situations. • Used new media to communicate both private and work issues during working hours.
References: e.g., Deloitte (2009); Pew Research Center (2007); Glass (2007)		

Table 3: The six dimensions of communication-related work values, perceptions and communication expectations towards each other.

Dimensions	Perceptions toward other's communicative behaviors		Expectations toward other's communicative behaviors	
	The olders towards the youngers	The youngers towards the olders	The olders towards the youngers	The youngers towards the olders
1) Prioritization	Work-oriented prioritization	Personal life-oriented	Work-oriented prioritization	Personal life-oriented
	• Did not work hard nor demonstrate dedication as when they were newcomers.	• Did not understand their mindset of work-life balance.	• Express their work dedication more.	• Express more concern for their work-life balance.
References:	Twenge (2010); Myers & Sadaghiani (2010); Gursoy et al (2008); Glass (2007); SHRM (2004); McCann & Keaton (2013)		Twenge (2010); Myers & Sadaghiani (2010); Gursoy et al (2008)	
2)	Goal settings Organizational-oriented	Personal-oriented	Personal-oriented	Personal-oriented goal settings
	• Were self-absorbed, focused on one's desire and benefits, rather than the organization's. • Viewed the organization as a stepping stone to enhance their skills and career opportunities.	• Did not listen to, and ignored their proposal or request.	• Express their good intentions to cooperate and support the organizational goals, not just their own.	• Listen to, and ignore the youngers' oproposal or request.
References:	Myers & Sadaghiani (2010); Gursoy et al (2008); Glass (2007); McCann & Keaton (2013)			
3) Indicatives of success	Heuristic-concerned	Materialistic-concerned	Heuristic-concerned	Materialistic-concerned
	• Were not patient to wait for their turn of promotion Expected credibility, prompt • promotion and high salary despite their young age and lack of experience.	• Attached to the concept of 'paying their dues*'aand 'seniority-based promotion', which are resisted by the younger workers *Pay one's dues = one has to work hard to demonstrate their worth before s/he is given significant tasks	• Be more open to advice, attentively listen to and patiently learn from the experienced senior workers so that they could be able to function properly when they are promoted.	• Be more open to provide them opportunities/ platforms to demonstrate their abilities. • Give them immediate recognition through title, praise, promotion, and pay.
References:	Twenge (2010); Deloitte (2009); Gursoy et al (2008) Attached to the concept of 'paying their dues*'aand 'seniority-based promotion', which are resisted by the younger workers		Deloitte (2009); Gursoy et al (2008); Zemke et al (2000)	
4) Working patterns	Institutionalized	Personalized	Institutionalized	Personalized
	• Needed monitoring from mentors or supervisors to ensure work performance and achievement. Did not know how to dress • to work properly	• Attempted to exercise concertive control over them by encouraging them to attach with and follow the organizational group norms to ensure work quality. • Were not open to new working patterns, especially by exploiting ICTs.	• Be more open to learn thoroughly from the existing work patterns for effective work performance • Dress properly	• Be more flexible and less strict to norms and regulations. • Allow them to have autonomy, flexible working patterns and work schedules to accommodate their desire for work-life balance, yet, still give them advice for their professional and personal development.
References:	PricewaterhouseCooper (2013); McCann & Keaton (2013); Gursoy et al (2008); Glass (2007)		Gursoy et al (2008)	

5) Formality, seniority and	High formality, seniority and courtesy	Low formality, seniority and courtesy	High formality, seniority and courtesy	Low formality, seniority and courtesy
	• Neither kept a proper distance nor expressed appropriate manners in relationships with senior workers or supervisors. Dared to express their • opinion and were creative; however, sometimes lack knowledge and experiences, yet, were overconfident.	• Were distant, too formal in communication styles, thus, made them feel that they were not supported, and not trusted.	• Be not overconfident when expressing opinions. • Be courteous and well-behaved when working with senior workers or those in higher authority.	• Have informal and open communication, and closer relationship with them. • Give them detailed instruction, frequent and instant feedback (both positive and negative) as well as explanation in decision making.
References:	PricewaterhouseCooper (2013); Myers and Sadaghiani (2010); Gursoy et al (2008)		Myers and Sadaghiani (2010); Gursoy et al (2008); Zemke et al (2000)	
• Communication technology exposure and level of dependency	Low comm tech exposure and low level of dependency	High comm tech exposure and high level of dependency	Low comm tech exposure and low level of dependency	High comm tech exposure and high level of dependency
	• Attached and addicted to social network, and highly depended on ICTs. • Preferred and chose to communicate any issues via ICTs with no concern if the recipients could understand or act accordingly. • Less adept at face-to-face communication and deciphering non-verbal cues	• Were resistant, not willing to use ICTs in work procedure	• Learn how to communicate properly via other. communication channels, e.g. face-to-face, telephone, e-mail. • Learn when and how to communicate appropriately and effectively.	• Be more open to exploit ICTs as well as new media for faster and more effective work results.
References:	PricewaterhouseCooper (2013); Gursoy et al (2008); Glass (2007); McCann & Keaton (2013); Murphy et al (2010)		PricewaterhouseCooper (2013); Gursoy et al (2008); Glass (2007)	

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