Communication Mobility and Communication Strategies Used in BELF Communication: Self-Report of Thai Human Resources Professionals in a Multinational Corporation

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Article information	Abstract
	This study attempted to identify and compare the frequency of communication mobility and communication strategies employed by Thai Human Resources professionals in a multinational corporation in Bangkok. To achieve the goals of a small-scale study, a self-report questionnaire was adapted and developed based on the recently introduced 'communication mobility' framework of Marina and Smirnova (2013), and the Strategy Use in Speaking Task Inventory of Chuanchaisit and Prapphal (2009). The questionnaire was based on the purposive sampling method and distributed to thirty participants, including Human Resources analysts, supervisors, and advisors. The key findings revealed: (1) Thai professionals often used communication mobility in their workplace, and mostly employed 'Strategy 4: Individual active strategy', 'Strategy 7: Analytical strategy', and 'Strategy 2: Schema search strategy'; (2) they also often employed communication strategies in workplace communication; and (3) there was no significant difference in the uses of communication mobility and communication strategies among them, even though they used communication strategies that were ranked slightly higher than communication mobility. New findings have confirmed that communication mobility was another strategy for effective communication, which was used in this particular Human Resources setting almost as often as communication strategies which have been used for decades. They also pointed out the necessity of effective strategies for achieving communication goals in the Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) context.

INTRODUCTION

In the globalized era, business or professional interaction between people of diverse sociocultural backgrounds has dramatically increased, and English is the most acceptable sole language used to achieve the ultimate goals of most international interactions, which has been confirmed by a number of studies worldwide. These studies emphasized the vital role of the language as part of business communication in the multinational arenas and settings of all professions

(Alharbi, 2016; Balykina, 2015; Epifanova & Hild, 2015; Kryzhko, 2015; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Cogo, 2010). Due to the use of English by internationally operating business professionals in the global business community, their language can be specifically defined as Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF), or a new professional language (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002). It refers to "a 'neutral' code used by business practitioners to do their work. Thus, it is not used at emulating native-speaker discourse but simply to get the job done." BELF has a primary focus on mutual understanding as the parameter of achieving communication goals, regardless of the dominance of a native speaker model of English. Additionally, it has unique characteristics as it focuses on business communication and strategic skills, rather than language skills, to get the job done.

In terms of multinational corporations, English is a corporate language, used in corporate functions, e.g. accounting, finance, management, communications and human resources, and in various communicative situations in both oral and written modes, e.g. negotiation, oral presentations, group discussion and e-mail correspondence. In order to achieve communicative goals in the international workplace, domain specific knowledge, or expertise, together with linguistic competence may not be viable in communicative situations which are uncertain or unpredictable. This is because some problems may arise during interactions, when the linguistic competence of speakers is imbalanced, or when counterparts from different cultures lack knowledge of cultural differences in communication schemata, or miscommunication or a communication breakdown results from inadequate business communication skills (Kankaanranta, 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2007). Therefore, strategic competence, i.e. communication strategies (CSs) (Dörnyei & Scott, 1995; Bialystok, 1990) and communication mobility (CM) (Marina & Smirnova, 2013) have been recommended in such situations.

Previous studies in the Thai international business context have mainly reported on the problems and the needs of English language skills, such as the highly desirable speaking skills used by international business operating professionals in various positions, including salespeople, hotel receptionists, office staff and managerial staff (Chitpupakdi, 2014; Nimnuch, 2011; Verapornvanichkul, 2011). In addition, a number of studies on CSs have been conducted worldwide in both the academic and professional contexts (Kongsom, 2016; Omar, Embi & Yunus, 2012; Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009; Cook, 1993; Bialystok, 1990). However, the research aims to identify the frequency of strategic competence used for reaching communicative goals, in particular, the newly introduced 'CM framework' for Human Resources professionals which have not been identified yet, in comparison to CSs. Previously, research on CM was initially performed by Russian and Thai scholars (Marina & Smirnova, 2013; Marina & Rajprasit, 2014, 2016) with the following aims: (1) to identify perceived CM levels among Thai and Russian professionals working in airline business fields, automobile manufacturing, chemicals and the provision of ingredients, and financial consulting; (2) to investigate the relationship between perceived CM levels and personal factors, including age, gender, work experience, English language proficiency, frequency of English language use, and the frequency of meeting participation; and (3) to predict the CM level development, based on the personal factors. Still, further explanation of how CMs are used in the BELF context is absolutely necessary in order to identify its realistic use and implications for efficacy of international communication in both academic and professional contexts.

In Thailand, Human Resources (HR) is among the popular professions in multinational corporations, and is listed sixth in the job announcement after Sales, Engineering, Accounting, Administration, and Information Technology, which required a large number of full-time employees (Adecco, 2018). However, reports on successful workplace communication in terms of CM and CSs use among Thai HR professionals were not found. Therefore, the focus in this study is on BELF communication among Thai HR professionals of a multinational corporation. It aimed to investigate how frequently Thai HR professionals employ CM and CSs in their workplace, and to compare their use of both strategies in the BELF context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication mobility (CM)

According to the constructive suggestion of Tareva (2007), CM was created by a Russian scholar, Smirnova (2013), in English oral communication course for Economics students. In the pioneering stage, the empirical findings and the CM framework of her doctoral dissertation demonstrated that there was a positive correlation between increased CM levels among Economics students, their ability to identify uncertainty in an intercultural context, and the ability to find ways to overcome such uncertainty. Afterward, Marina and Smirnova (2013) further revised the CM framework which was included in the more widely international academic context regarding English for occupational purposes and problem-based methodology. The two Russian scholars provided seven strategies together with detailed tactics for novel communicative strategies for non-native English speakers for efficient international communication. These strategies are the main components of CM. To become an effective CM user, one needs to use the strategies systematically when encountering communication problems. In doing so, separate tactics or specific abilities which are developed for each strategy have to be applied in sequence, from strategy 1 to strategy 7, and from the first tactic to the final tactic of each strategy. The final tactics of all strategies are exactly the same, as they require a CM user to take an action immediately in each step. Therefore, it can be regarded as an additional key factor, apart from English language proficiency and domain-specific knowledge. Marina (2011) maintained that achieving a 'here and now' professional communicative situation likely depends on linguistic factors, i.e. English language proficiency, and both external and internal non-linguistic factors, i.e. behavioral task demands, age, and the efficiency of procedural memory.

To define CM, it refers to "the ability to employ a set of specific communicative strategies to facilitate professional communication, particularly among non-native English speakers, in order to achieve their communicative goals in an international context" (Marina & Smirnova, 2013). The concept of CM is reflected in its problem-solving nature, aiming to enable communicators, particularly non-native speakers of English, to achieve their communicative goals in the international professional context (Smirnova, 2013). When professionals get into any intercultural communicative situations, the situations tend to be unpredictable, and are sometimes problematic as these professionals will not always encounter the same situation. In addition, problematic communicative situations are defined as a mental state of intellectual

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difficulty in which communicators are unable to explain new facts or perform effectively with existing knowledge in any new situation, or they are unable to use familiar methods in new situations (Makhmutov, 1972).

According to Marina and Rajprasit (2014), CM is required when communicators encounter complexity in the structure of communicative language ability (CLA), and uncertainty in problematic professional communicative situations. To clarify, Bachman (1990) and Widdowson (1983) ascertained that CLA included linguistic competence, strategic competence, and the psycho-physiological mechanisms demonstrated in the actual execution of language. Young (2010) pointed out that a specific time, place, and activity, as well as communication situations performed by individuals, are unique personal characteristics. Therefore, the professional communicative context is both unique and dynamic (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Harris, 1987). The strategies and tactics are shown and described in Table 1.

Table 1
Communication mobility: Strategies and tactics

Strategies	Tactics
1. Diagnostic strategy: Identifying and assessing the communicative situation.	An ability to: 1.1 Understand if he/she has a problem in communicating with a person/people in a particular workplace situation 1.2 Understand what the problem is about (participants, locations, time and changes in circumstances, etc.) 1.3 Understand if it is easy or difficult to solve the problem 1.4 Understand the nature of the problem (e.g. professional, cross-cultural, language knowledge, etc.) 1.5 Predict how a situation will develop 1.6 React quickly to solve a problem
2. Schema search strategy: Reactivating communication experience (professional, interpersonal, intercultural) in a new environment.	An ability to: 2.1 Compare new communication situations with those that he/she has previously experienced 2.2 Turn to knowledge of and means of previously and successfully solved communication problems 2.3 Identify the ways in which each communicative situation is different 2.4 Avoid stereotypes and habitual communicative behavior 2.5 Overcome the state of frustration and uncertainty caused by an inability to solve communication problems using familiar methods 2.6 Accept responsibility for applying new means of communication problems to create solutions 2.7 React quickly to solve problems

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Strategies	Tactics
3. Observation strategy: Gaining problem-solving experience from observing instances of problem-solving in communicative situations.	An ability to: 3.1 Analyze how other people might solve similar problems 3.2 Think of other possible options that people might use to solve ommunication problems 3.3 Evaluate how his/her own options differ from the other means of solving a given problem under observation 3.4 Identify the best method to solve the problem under observation 3.5 Perform an analysis quickly during an observation period
4. Individual active strategy: Searching for solutions to problems by obtaining information from his/her communication partner(s).	An ability to: 4.1 Identify communication difficulties caused by a lack of knowledge 4.2 Discover solutions to communication problems by asking communication partner(s) for immediate help 4.3 Seek assistance from communication partner(s) to identify sources of missing information 4.4 Think of the steps required to solve particular types of problems

5. Interactive strategy: Finding a solution to a problem by working with a communication partner(s).	An ability to:
	 5.1 Formulate possible options to overcome communication difficulties
	 5.2 Collaboratively search for solutions to communication problems:
	     5.2.1 in the external environment
	     5.2.2 in the experiences of communication partner(s)
	     5.2.3 in the experiences of other people
	 5.3 Collaboratively design a problem-solving algorithm
	 5.4 React quickly to find a solution

6. Implementation strategy: Implementing a devised solution.	An ability to: 6.1 Apply found solutions in order to solve communication problems 6.2 Monitor and self-monitor the communication process with the aim of problem-solving 6.3 Reject ineffective solutions 6.4 Return to using one of the previously mentioned strategies in the event of ineffective communication 6.5 React quickly in conversation
7. Analytical strategy: Analyzing the effectiveness of an applied solution.	An ability to: 7.1 Evaluate the effectiveness of implemented solutions 7.2 Compare several problem-solving options with the goal of identifying optimal strategies for future use

The studies on CM were previously conducted in two aspects. The first attempts to introduce the notion of CM into the academic context were initially in Business English courses at the Russian university level (Marina & Smirnova, 2013, 2016). The other aspect focused on perceptions of internationally operating professionals in Thai and Russian international companies on CM levels, and on an analysis of correlation between personal factors, including age, work experience, English language proficiency, and the frequency of English use in daily life and the workplace (Marina & Rajprasit, 2014, 2016). However, studies on CM that demonstrate how CM can be successfully employed in the international workplace are still limited. In other words, to guarantee the practicality and teachability of the CM framework, in-depth studies are absolutely required in terms of the particular factors that could enhance CM development, as well as realistic use of CM in comparison to other communication strategies, and whether or not CM is merely used or interchangeably used with other strategies (Dörnyei & Scott, 1995; Bialystok, 1990; Faerch & Kasper, 1983).

Previous studies of CM conducted by the authors and colleagues have proved CM teachable, and highlighted the need for further investigation. The first study on CM and the environment for its development (Marina & Smirnova, 2013) aimed to introduce an effective means of providing students with strategies and tactics that promote and develop communicatively mobile behavior. In this study, a methodological approach to develop and employ CM in problematic communicative situations is offered to develop a specific Business English course for undergraduate students. In the second study, Marina and Rajprasit (2014) investigated the impact of personality factors on perceived communication mobility of non-native English speaking Thai professionals in international companies, and attempted to identify the conditions in which this desirable quality may be developed. They discovered that (1) fifty-four Thai professionals perceived their CM level at a good level (fourth level out of five), (2) Strategy 2 (schema search) and Strategy 6 (implementation) were rated more highly than the other five strategies, Strategy 1 (diagnostic), Strategy 3 (observation), Strategy 4 (individual active), Strategy 5 (interactive), and Strategy 7 (analytical), and (3) the only two personal factors, including the frequent use of English in daily life and in the workplace, correlated with perceptions of CM levels, whereas the factors of age and work experience did not. However, one variable that could predict perceived CM levels was the frequency of English use in the workplace. In the third study, the role of personal factors in CM development of Thai and Russian professionals in the BELF context (Marina & Rajprasit, 2016) was investigated. The primary objectives were to identify perceived CM levels among Thai and Russian professionals working in international companies, to investigate possible correlations between personal factors and CM levels, to compare these factors and the conditions in which CM may be developed among both groups, and to predict the possibility of CM development. The findings revealed that (1) Russian professionals were rated as very good CM users (the highest level), whereas Thai professionals were rated as merely fair CM users (at the average level, 3 out of 5), and (2) the frequent use of English in the workplace correlated with perceived CM levels for both Thai and Russian professionals. However, the frequency of English language use in the workplace could only predict the CM development for Thais, but not for Russians. The latest study on the Cambridge BEC as an academic context model of problematic situations in professional intercultural communication was undertaken by Marina and Smirnova (2016) in order to find appropriate measurements for the assessment of communication mobility

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development. They found that (1) the format of the BEC speaking exam paper covered the components of CM model to a large extent, and (2) the speaking exam could be used to measure CM development.

Communication strategies

According to Bialystok (1990) and Faerch and Kasper (1983), communication strategies (CSs) refer to the devices used by second or foreign language learners to cope with oral communication problems in order to achieve their communicative goals. However, there are two different theoretical approaches: the psychological approach and the interactional approach (Dörnyei & Scott, 1995). The former consists of psychological processes to compensate for linguistic deficiencies, viewed as an individual mental response to communication problems. The latter are communication maintenance strategies used to keep the channels of communication open during times of difficulty and emphasize the negotiation of meaning between interlocutors (Cook, 1993). In addition, the manner of addressing communication problems in the revised CSs taxonomy can be categorized into three basic strategies: direct, indirect and interactional (Dörnyei & Scott, 1995). Taken together, CSs can be regarded as both problem-solving mechanisms for handling communication breakdowns, tools for discourse function and the negotiation of meaning (Omar, Embi & Yunus, 2012; Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009).

Many studies on CSs have been conducted worldwide for decades, revealing the use of CSs by professionals of various fields, as well as in the particular pedagogical implications for the EFL classroom. For instance, in the European context, Cogo (2010) studied the strategic use and perceptions of English as a lingua franca. The participants had sophisticated strategic behavior to enhance understanding, create supportive and cooperative communication and display community membership in discourse. The findings revealed that they used English appropriately for their own purposes, signaling their identities through the language and creatively making use of it. In Canada, an experimental study among two pairs of ELF speakers was conducted by Kennedy (2017) to identify the two contextual factors on CSs use - the communicative goals and the thoughts and feelings of ELF users about the interactions. She found that different strategy types were seen across both pairs of speakers in this study. However, the pair which achieved the shared goal showed a different pattern of strategy use and interaction compared to the other pair, which did not achieve the shared goal.

In the Asian context, Rastegar, Sadat and Gohari (2016) examined the relationship between the speaking strategies used by Iranian EFL learners, their attitudes and English language oral output. They discovered that there was a significant relationship between the different subscales of communication strategies and the attitudes of intermediate EFL learners. In addition, they concluded that speaking strategy training in learner education with regard to attitudes towards language learning and their oral language output was very significant for language learners. In Jordan, Bataineh, Al-Bzour, and Baniabdelrahman (2017) studied the effects of communication strategy instruction on the oral performance and strategy use of their students. The results revealed that the use of communication strategies in language instruction could improve both oral performance and an increased use of strategies. Hanamo-

to (2016) explored the use of CSs in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) situations in a Japanese university with regard to resolving problems with understanding, focusing on both the verbal and the non-verbal aspects by students at a lower level of English proficiency. The findings showed that collaborative repair was employed in order to resolve problems in understanding, and was also tried to close the understanding gap with a use of multimodal resources other than language to facilitate shared understanding. In the Korean academic context, Watterson (2008) conducted an exploratory study on the use of ELF with a focus on the communication strategies used to repair non-understanding between participants and showed improvements in terms of using repair strategies.

At the Thai university level, Kongsom (2016) investigated the effects of teaching communication strategies to engineering undergraduate students. Ten communication strategies were taught and a self-report communication strategy questionnaire was distributed before and after communication strategy instruction. It was found that this instruction had a positive influence on the reports made by students on the use of those strategies, and students could successfully use these communication strategies for their utterances in the speaking tasks. Furthermore, the level of strategic competence among students showed some improvement. The other study in the Thai context was conducted by Chuanchaisit and Prapphal (2009) who acquired empirical data on the types of communication strategies that low-ability students used in a Speaking Task Inventory (see Instrument section) and that may affect their oral communication abilities. They found that those low-ability students mostly employed risk avoidance techniques such as time-gaining strategies. Also, they needed some practice for developing risk-taking techniques such as social-affective, fluency-oriented, help-seeking, and circumlocution strategies, as they were unable to use them.

On the whole, CSs have been studied worldwide and used to develop strategic competence among EFL/ELF speakers, and their practical effectiveness have been empirically demonstrated.

Similarities and differences between CM and CSs

Both strategies are used for effective communication; however, similarities and differences between such strategies can be found. The characteristics of CM are different to CSs (Marina & Rajprasit, 2016, p. 172) because "...CM strives to develop a comprehensive framework of strategies which allow the user to become a successful communicator in uncertain situations, while CSs are mostly linguistic-oriented, or a compensation for linguistic deficiencies…. CM is employed when individuals experience performance problems in terms of their communicative behavior…. [and] CM requires analytical thinking skills…" (See Table 2). In other words, CM has to be used in a sequence, from strategies 1 to 7, as it is a continuous process for dealing with problematic communicative situations, starting from the identification of the problem, searching for and applying a solution, as well as evaluating the applied solution. On the other hand, the sub-strategies of CSs, including direct strategies, indirect strategies, and interactional strategies can be independently used, depending on the situation. There is a great interest in finding a relationship between the realistic and interchangeable use of CSs, because CSs have been suggested for effective international communication for decades. However, studies on CM have not been found much.

Table 2
Communication strategies and communication mobility (Marina & Rajprasit, 2016)

Communication Mobility	Communication Strategies
1. Diagnostic strategy: Identifying and assessing a communicative situation	**1. Direct strategies:** (meaning-related) Resource deficit-related strategies, own-performance problem-related strategies, other-performance problem-related strategies
2. Schema search strategy: Reactivating a communication experience (professional, interpersonal and intercultural) in a new environment	**2. Indirect strategies:** (problem-management-related) Processing time pressure-related strategies, own-performance problem-related strategies, other-performance problem-related strategies
3. Observation strategy: Gaining problem-solving experience from observing instances of problem-solving behavior in communicative situations	**3. Interactional strategies:** (cooperative-related) Resource deficit-related strategies, own-performance problem-related strategies, other-performance problem-related strategies
4. Individual active strategy: Searching for solutions to a problem by obtaining information from communication partner(s)	
5. Interactive strategy: Finding a solution to a problem by working with communication partner(s)	
6. Implementation strategy: Implementing a devised solution	
7. Analytical strategy: Analyzing the effectiveness of an applied solution	

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is part of a research project on developing an intercultural business communication course for an international undergraduate program. The primary goal of this phase was to collect quantitative data for the secondary phase of the project, with an attempt to identify the frequency of communication mobility and the communication strategies used by Thai HR professionals in their workplace, and to compare their use of both strategies in the BELF context. In order to attain this goal, the following research questions were posed:

1. How frequently is communication mobility used among Thai HR professionals?
2. How frequently are communication strategies used among Thai HR professionals?
3. What is the difference between the use of communication mobility and communication strategies?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The research setting was the Human Resources Department of a multinational corporation involved in integrated petroleum refining, petrochemicals and marketing in the Bangkok metropolitan area. There were thirty participants, including HR analysts, HR supervisors, and HR advisors (hereafter referred to HR professionals), and they always worked in teams, with a mix of various nationalities and positions. In this study, the participants were purposively selected based on the following criteria: (1) daily use of BELF; (2) interactions with colleagues and clients from diverse sociocultural backgrounds, i.e. England, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Thailand; and (3) work experience in the department for at least one year. Additionally, the females (90%) outnumbered the males (10%). All of the participants held a Bachelor's degree in a foreign language, such as English or German, or a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, and approximately 70% of them had a Master's degree. Half of the population was between 25-30 years old, 30% was between 31-35 years old and approximately 60% had work experience of more than five years.

Research instrument

The sole research instrument was a self-report questionnaire. It was comprised of three parts: (1) five items on demographic information, such as age, gender, educational background and work experience; (2) thirty-six items on the use of communication mobility based on the CM framework of Marina and Smirnova (2013), such as 'You always assess communicative situations as being problematic or non-problematic' and 'You always formulate possible options to overcome communication difficulties'; and (3) twenty-five items on the use of communication strategies adapted from Strategy Use in Speaking Task Inventory by Chuanchaisit and Prapphal (2009), such as 'You always use vocabulary that you are familiar with when communicating with others', and 'You always correct your messages when finding some errors'. In parts two and three, all of the questions are five-point Likert scale questions, ranging from 5 (always) to 1 (never). In this study, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was at .979.

Data collection

The researcher initially contacted the HR staff at the selected company located in Bangkok for permission to collect data. Later, the staff willingly participated in the process and a research assistant helped distribute the questionnaire to other HR staff. This process lasted two weeks.

Data analysis

All of the questionnaires were returned and checked to determine the validity of the samples. All of them were perfectly completed and analyzed using SPSS Version 16.0 for descriptive statistics, such as percentage, mean and standard deviation in order to analyze the frequency of the CM and CSs use among Thai HR professionals; and an independent t-test was employed to identify the differences between the use of CM and CSs.

FINDINGS

In this section, the key findings were reported according to the three research questions on the frequent use of CM and CSs among Thai HR professionals, and the differences between the use of CM and CSs.

1. The frequency of CM use among Thai HR professionals

Table 3
Frequency of using overall strategies

Communication mobility	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Level of frequency
Strategy 1: Diagnostic strategy	2.17	5.00	3.66	.748	Often
Strategy 2: Schema search strategy	2.57	4.86	3.67	.583	Often
Strategy 3: Observation strategy	1.80	5.00	3.53	.694	Often
Strategy 4: Individual active strategy	3.00	5.00	3.83	.557	Often
Strategy 5: Interactive strategy	2.17	4.67	3.53	.668	Often
Strategy 6: Implementation strategy	2.60	4.40	3.41	.506	Often
Strategy 7: Analytical strategy	3.00	5.00	3.76	.561	Often
Overall	**2.58**	**4.53**	**3.62**	**.486**	**Often**

In general, the mean for communication mobility used by HR professionals was 3.62 out of 5 (SD = .486), and on average, they 'often' used CM in their workplace (see Table 3). However, considering the separate strategies, they mostly employed 'Strategy 4: Individual active strategy' (Mean = 3.83, SD = .557), followed by 'Strategy 7: Analytical strategy' (Mean = 3.76, SD = .561), and 'Strategy 2: Schema search strategy' (Mean = 3.67, SD = .583). In general, SD or standard deviation is .486, and the SD of each strategy ranged from .506 to .748. This fact confirms that the perceptions of HR professionals on the frequency of CM use were closely related.

In addition, it may be claimed that these professionals often searched for a solution to a communication problem by asking for more information or some assistance from their communication partner(s) to identify the sources of missing information and the steps required to solve particular types of problems (Strategy 4). They also often employed analytical thinking skills in evaluating the effectiveness of an implemented solution, and at the same time compared several problem-solving options with the goal of identifying an effective way to apply the solution in the particular situation (Strategy 7). Additionally, before they performed an action in a new and problematic situation, they reactivated their previous communication experience (e.g. professional, interpersonal, or intercultural) by comparing the new communication situation with one that they have previously experienced, with the use of the knowledge and the means of previous examples of successfully solved communication problems (Strategy 2). However, the other four strategies were not rated much differently.

In Table 4, an analysis of the data on the frequency of using separate strategies showed that HR professionals evidently used 'Strategy 4.3' the most, meaning that they sought assistance from communication partner(s) in order to identify the sources of missing information; 'Strategy 4.1', showing that they often identified the communication difficulties caused by a lack of knowledge; 'Strategy 2.3', meaning that they often identified the ways in which each communicative situation was different; 'Strategy 2.2', revealing that they often turned to the knowledge and means of previously successfully solved communication problems; and 'Strategy 7.2', meaning that they often made a comparison of several problem-solving options with the goal of identifying an optimal strategy for future use (Mean = 4.13, 3.96, 3.96, 3.91 and 3.91, respectively).

Table 4
Frequency of using separate strategies

Strategies	Mean	SD	Level of frequency
1. Diagnostic strategy: Identifying and assessing communicative situations	**3.66**	**.748**	**Often**
An ability to: 1.1 Understand if he/she has a problem in communicating with people in a particular workplace situation	3.70	.765	Often
1.2 Understand what the problem is about (participants, location, time, and changes in circumstances etc.)	3.70	.703	Often
1.3 Understand if it is difficult or easy to solve the problem	3.65	.832	Often
1.4 Understand the nature of the problem (e.g. professional, cross-cultural, and language knowledge, etc.)	3.74	1.010	Often
1.5 Predict how situations will develop	3.61	1.033	Often
1.6 React quickly to solve problems	3.57	1.121	Often
2. Schema search strategy: Reactivating communication experience (professional, interpersonal and intercultural) in a new environment	**3.67**	**.583**	**Often**
An ability to: 2.1 Compare new communication situations with those that he/she has previously experienced	3.70	1.185	Often
2.2 Turn to knowledge and means of previously successfully solved communication problems	3.91	1.041	Often
2.3 Identify the ways in which each communicative situation is different	3.96	.706	Often
2.4 Avoid stereotypes and habitual communicative behavior	3.43	1.121	Often
2.5 Overcome the state of frustration and uncertainty caused by the inability to solve communication problems using familiar methods	3.43	.843	Often
2.6 Accept responsibility for applying new means of communication problems to create solutions	3.65	1.071	Often
2.7 React quickly to solve problems	3.61	.839	Often
3. Observation strategy: Gaining problem-solving experience from observing instances of problem-solving in communicative situations	**3.53**	**.694**	**Often**

	An ability to:			
3.1	Analyze how other people might solve a similar problem	3.70	.765	Often
3.2	Think of other possible options that people might use to solve communication problems	3.70	.876	Often
3.3	Evaluate how his/her own options differ from other means of solving the problem under observation	3.26	.915	Sometimes
3.4	Identify the best method to solve the problem while under observation	3.43	1.080	Often
3.5	Perform the analysis quickly during the observation period	3.57	1.161	Often
4.	**Individual active strategy: Searching for a solution to a problem by obtaining information communication partner(s)**	**3.83**	**.557**	**Often**
	An ability to:			
4.1I	dentify the communication difficulties caused by a lack of knowledge	3.96	.706	Often
4.2	Discover solutions to communication problems by asking his/her communication partner(s) for immediate help	3.83	.834	Often
4.3	Seek assistance from communication partner(s) to identify the sources of missing information	4.13	.548	Often
4.4	Think of the steps required to solve particular types of problems	3.57	.896	Often
5.	**Interactive strategy: Finding a solution to a problem by working with communication partner(s)**	**3.53**	**.668**	**Often**
	An ability to:			
5.1	Formulate possible options to overcome communication difficulties	3.74	.752	Often
5.2	Collaboratively search for the solutions to communication problems in the external environment	3.43	.992	Often
5.3	Collaboratively search for solutions to communication problems in the experience of communication partner(s)	3.74	.964	Often
5.4	Collaboratively search for solutions to communication problems in the experiences of others	3.48	1.039	Often
5.5	Collaboratively design a problem-solving algorithm	3.43	.945	Often
5.6	React quickly to find a solution	3.45	.935	Often
6.	**Implementation strategy: Implementing a devised solution**	**3.41**	**.506**	**Often**
	An ability to:			
6.1	Apply found solutions in order to solve communication problems	3.74	.619	Often
6.2	Monitor and self-monitor the communication process for the purpose of problem-solving	3.48	.846	Often
6.3	Reject ineffective solutions	2.87	.867	Sometimes
6.4	Return to using one of the previously mentioned strategies in the event of ineffective communication	3.65	.885	Often
6.5	React quickly in conversation	3.30	.1.063	Often
7.	**Analytical strategy: Analyzing the effectiveness of applied solutions**	**3.76**	**.561**	**Often**
	An ability to:			
7.1	Evaluate the effectiveness of an implemented solution	3.61	.656	Often
7.2	Compare several problem-solving options with the goal of identifying an optimal strategy for future use	3.91	.668	Often

2. The frequency of the use of CSs among Thai HR professionals

Overall, the mean of communication strategies employed by those HR professionals was 3.73, and they often used CSs in their workplace communication. The standard deviation or SD is .340, meaning that their perceptions on CSs use were closely related (See Table 5).

Table 5
Frequency of using overall strategies

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Level of frequency
Communication strategies	3.08	4.24	3.73	.340	Often

After an analysis of the frequency of the separate strategies used by professionals (see Table 6), it was found that they 'always' used Strategies 5, 4, and 15 (Mean = 4.52, 4.30, 4.26, respectively). In other words, when they encountered some problematic communicative situations, they always employed familiar words to communicate (Strategy 5). When communicating verbally, they always used non-verbal communication, such as making eye-contact (Strategy 4). If they lacked a particular vocabulary item, they always described the characteristics of the object instead of using the exact word when they were not sure (Strategy 15).

Table 6
Frequency of using separate strategies

	Communication strategies	Mean	SD	Level of frequency
1	I pay attention to the conversation flow and avoid silence.	4.00	.798	Often
2	I try to relax when I feel anxious.	4.00	1.000	Often
3	I notice myself using an expression which fits a rule that I have learned.	3.70	1.020	Often
4	When I am talking, I try to make eye-contact.	4.30	.822	Always
5	I use words which are familiar to me.	4.52	.593	Always
6	I think of what I want to say in Thai, and then construct the English sentence.	2.78	1.278	Sometimes
7	When the message is not clear, I ask my interlocutors for clarification directly.	3.83	.834	Often
8	If I encounter some language difficulties, I will leave a message unfinished.	2.74	1.054	Sometimes
9	I pay attention to the intonation and pronunciation.	4.00	.798	Often
10	I give up expressing a message if I cannot make myself understood.	3.17	1.114	Often
11	I try to elicit help from my interlocutors indirectly; such as using rising intonation.	3.83	1.072	Often
12	I use fillers: such as 'well, you know, okay, um, or uh' when I do not know what to say.	3.43	1.237	Often

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13	I try to enjoy the conversation.	4.17	.887	Often
14	I correct myself when I notice that I have made a mistake.	4.04	.638	Often
15	I describe the characteristics of the object instead of using the exact word when I am not sure.	4.26	.810	Always
16	I reduce the message and use simple expressions.	3.74	.915	Often
17	I encourage myself to use English even though this may cause mistakes.	3.96	1.022	Often
18	I use gestures if I cannot express myself.	3.91	1.083	Often
19	I give a good impression to the listener.	3.65	.982	Often
20	I pay attention to grammar and word order.	3.78	1.085	Often
21	I ask for repetition; such as 'Pardon?' or 'Could you say it again?' when a message is not clear to me.	3.87	1.359	Often
22	I actively encourage myself to express what I want to say.	3.78	1.242	Often
23	I replace the original message with another message because of feeling incapability of executing my original intent.	3.48	1.309	Often
24	I use some phrases like 'It is a good question' or 'It is rather difficult to explain', in order to gain more time to think of what I should say.	2.96	1.065	Often
25	I use facial expressions if I cannot express what I want to say.	3.30	1.111	Sometimes

Approximately 80% of the strategies were 'often' employed (Strategies 1-3, 7, 9-14, 16-24) (Mean = 2.74 – 4.17), and only three strategies (Strategies 8, 6, and 25) were 'sometimes' used (Mean = 2.74, 2.78 and 3.30, respectively). That is to say, when they were faced with language difficulties, sometimes they left a message unfinished (Strategy 8), they sometimes thought of what they wanted to say in Thai and then constructed the English sentences (Strategy 6), and facial expressions were sometimes used when they could not express what they wanted to say (Strategy 25).
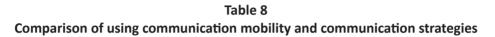
3. The difference between the use of communication mobility and communication strategies

Table 7
Summary of using communication mobility and communication strategies

	Communication mobility	**Communication strategies**
Minimum	2.58	3.08
Maximum	4.53	4.24
Mean	3.62	3.73
Standard deviation	.486	.340
Frequency	Often	Often

Table 8

Comparison of using communication mobility and communication strategies

	Mean	SD	t	ρ
Communication mobility	3.62	.486	.934	.361
Communication strategies	3.73	.340		

According to Table 8, there was no significant difference in the CM and CSs uses among the HR professionals. This is because the use of both strategies are quite close (CM = 3.62, CSs = 3.73), and the mean of the CSs is slightly higher than that of communication mobility.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research aimed to identify the frequency of using CM and CSs among thirty HR professionals in a multinational corporation in Bangkok, Thailand, which included HR analysts, HR supervisors, and HR advisors, and also compared the frequency of the use of such strategies in the BELF communicative situations where business communication and strategic skills, rather than language skills, are a primary focus to get the job done (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002). Even if these HR professionals had daily interactions with their colleagues and clients through the use of BELF, they seemed to have some communication problems as mentioned by Harris (1987) and Celce-Murcia (2007), in particular, communicative situations that are dynamic and do not always repeat themselves. Thus, these HR professionals reported that CM and CSs were often used at work, as discussed below.

First of all, Thai HR professionals often used CM in their workplace, and mostly employed 'Strategy 4: Individual active strategy', 'Strategy 7: Analytical strategy', and 'Strategy 2: Schema search strategy', in descending order of frequency. The reasons why these three strategies were more often used in comparison to the other four strategies could be that these HR professionals were assigned to work as a small HR team. As a result, they were familiar with actively collaborating with people to carry out their routine work. Thus, it can be a typical way to search for a solution to a problem by obtaining information from or getting assistance from their communication partner(s). In addition, these HR professionals encounter daily BELF communicative situations in their workplace which may be the same or different every day, and it is possible to face some communication problems, or difficulties in communication. In order to handle such situations, analytical thinking skills could be used to compare several problem-solving options, select the best one, and evaluate the effectiveness of an implemented solution. Moreover, they seemed to make use of past communication experience (i.e. professional, interpersonal and intercultural) in a new communicative situation. It is because previously successful communication experiences can be used as a guideline for a new method to find a solution. However, the findings from this study differ from those of previous studies on CM, because this study attempted to investigate how often the HR professionals actually used CM in their workplace, but the previous studies focused on self-reporting on how well they used CM, and what factors, including age, work experience, and the frequency of English language use in their daily lives and in the workplace, affected their perceived CM levels, and could

predict their CM development, as well as compare the perceived CM levels among non-native speakers of English, including Thai and Russian professionals from various international business contexts (Marina & Rajprasit, 2014).

Secondly, these professionals often use CSs as a part of their workplace communication. As previously mentioned, CSs are mostly linguistic-oriented or a compensation for linguistic deficiencies. For instance, they *always* used (12%) *'Strategy 5: Using words which are familiar to them, Strategy 4: Making eye-contact, and Strategy 15: Describing the characteristics of the object instead of using the exact word when they were not sure'.* As for the other strategies, they were used often (76%) or sometimes infrequently (12%). This indicates that CSs are always used in the international workplace where English is used by non-native speakers of English. Even though this study could identify the frequent use of CSs, it has not reported the efficacy of CSs use used in real workplace situations. This differs from the previous studies (Bataineh, Al-Bzour, & Baniabdelrahman, 2017; Kennedy, 2017; Hanamoto, 2016; Kongsom, 2016; Rastegar, Sadat & Gohari, 2016; Cogo, 2010; Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009; Watterson, 2008) that the CSs were successfully implemented in academic contexts, showing improvement among participants at a satisfactory level.

Thirdly, there was no significant difference in the use of communication mobility and strategies among HR professionals in the BELF context. It means that both strategies were often used by these professionals in the BELF context, even though the mean of their CSs use was slightly higher than that of their CM use. Considering the unique characteristics of CM and CSs, these two strategies share some similarities and differences. For instance, both CM and CSs are process-oriented, while CM is geared toward communicative behavior rather than language behavior (Dörnyei & Scott, 1995; Bialystok, 1990; Faerch & Kasper, 1983). However, it seems that these characteristics support each other. Individuals that could employ both strategies effectively in any problematic communicative situation are most likely to reach their communicative goals, together with the use of their domain-specific knowledge and linguistic competence (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Mauranen, 2006). It still is questionable whether or not CM can actually be used as part of an effective communicative situation. Nevertheless, the findings from this study provided evidence that, in reality, CM is used as almost equally as CSs at the 'often' level in multinational corporations where interactions between non-native English speaking professionals, e.g. Thai, German, Italian, Belgian and Dutch, regularly occur and can be considered one of the tools for success in terms of communication.

Due to the fact that this study is a small-scale questionnaire study, some limitations were identified, such as the fact that only thirty participants from HR were included and they cannot be generalized, even though the findings indicated that CM was actually used in the international workplace in a BELF context by a majority of Thai HR professionals. As CM has been suggested as another communicative strategy by pioneering researchers (Marina & Smirnova, 2013), there is no evidence that it is widely and frequently used among non-native English speaking professionals for successful communication in uncertain or problematic situations, as seen in the present study. From this initial phase, the findings could be used as a basis for information regarding the use of the two types of strategies in a multinational

workplace. They may lead to further development of a research instrument to collect qualitative data about actual communicative situations in the BELF context, in which local professionals successfully or unsuccessfully interact with other professionals from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. In terms of further studies, in particular, qualitative studies, featuring in-depth interviews and audio recordings and transcriptions of actual performances in the BELF context when both CM and CSs are used by HR professionals are suggested. In addition, other professionals with their unique situations, e.g. a salesperson who always encounters uncertain communicative situations, should be included in an extensive study as a case study to explain the particular performances of CM and CSs users. In doing so, a picture of CM use in the BELF context will emerge and lead to another stage, e.g. specifically developing and designing a course related to strategic competence and aiming to develop CM and CSs for novice employees and university students who will eventually enter the labor market at the national or international level.

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