

ความต้องการในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษของผู้ขายเพื่อการท่องเที่ยวแบบยั่งยืนใน
จังหวัดสุราษฎร์ธานีและจังหวัดเชียงใหม่

English Communication Needs of Sellers for Sustainable Tourism in
Surat Thani and Chiang Mai Province

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to analyze the needs to improve English language communication of sellers and vendors in tourist destinations. Quantitative research was employed in this study. The subjects included 200 local people purposively selected from two communities: Bang Bai Mai, Mueang district, Surat Thani province and Mae Khue, Doi Saket district, Chiang Mai province. The research tool was a questionnaire in a form of checklist and 5-point Likert scale asking about problems and needs for communication with foreign customers. The results showed that participating sellers were more likely to encounter speaking difficulties than listening. They also illustrated their needs to use English language for greeting the customer, giving general information, selling their products, advertising their products, and dealing with bargaining.

Keywords: English communication, needs, sustainable tourism

บทคัดย่อ: บทความวิจัยนี้วิเคราะห์ความต้องการของประชาชนที่ดำเนินการธุรกิจที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการท่องเที่ยวแบบยั่งยืน การวิจัยนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณ ศึกษาจากกลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวน 200 คนได้แก่ประชาชนประชาชนในชุมชนตำบลบางไผ่ อ.เมือง จ. สุราษฎร์ธานี และประชาชนในชุมชนตำบลแม่คือ อ. ดอยสะเก็ด จ. เชียงใหม่ โดยงานวิจัยนี้ใช้วิธีการเลือกกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจง เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยได้แก่ แบบสอบถามในรูปแบบรายการตรวจสอบและมาตรวัดแบบลิเคิร์ต 5 ระดับเกี่ยวกับปัญหาและสถานการณ์การสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษกับลูกค้าชาวต่างชาติ ผลการวิจัยพบว่าผู้ชายมีปัญหาในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษกับลูกค้าชาวต่างชาติในระดับสูง โดยเฉพาะปัญหาการพูดมีระดับที่สูงกว่าปัญหาการฟัง นอกจากนี้ผู้ชายมีความต้องการที่จะพัฒนาทักษะภาษาอังกฤษ โดยเฉพาะหัวข้อที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการทักทาย การให้ข้อมูลทั่วไป การซื้อขาย การโฆษณาสินค้า และการต่อรองราคา

คำสำคัญ: การสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษ ความต้องการ การท่องเที่ยวแบบยั่งยืน

Introduction

Learning a second language is considered as a necessary tool to broaden people's understandings in different contexts. In the study of second language acquisition (SLA), acquiring any language after acquisition of the mother tongue develops varyingly in different social contexts (Tarone, 2006). While there are many approaches contributed to enhance second language learners, communicative language teaching (CLT) is one crucial approach that aims to meet the needs for learners' oral communication (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Language learners learn through authentic and meaningful communication and they are encouraged to discover grammar rules usable in real communication (Richards,

2006). According to Richards (2006), this approach focuses on developing sociolinguistic competence with regards to purposes (e.g., business and study), settings (e.g., in airplanes and stores), roles of speakers and interlocutors (e.g., a sale person talking to the customer), communicative events (e.g., making a phone call), functions of language (e.g., giving directions), and notions (e.g., history, leisure, finance). In Thai context, English language teaching in Thailand is based on CLT approach in order to promote the use of English in communication either for study or career purposes, to enhance necessary thinking and learning skills, and to encourage positive attitude towards English (Khamkhen, 2010; Wiriyaichitra, 2002). While English is regarded as the second/foreign language, acquiring

second language is seen to be a challenging task especially for local people who work in tourism industry where English communication skills can increase opportunities in their business. However, the studies found that Thai people struggle with English speaking as a result of lacking grammar knowledge, words and expressions, and vocabulary (Lertwannawit *et al.*, 2009; Prachanant, 2012).

Therefore, it is necessary to study needs of people in community about facilitating their business through English communication. The initial aim was to analyze needs to improve English language communication of people who ran their business about sustainable tourism in two communities: Bang Bai Mai, Mueang district, Surat Thani province and Mae Khue, Doi Saket district, Chiang Mai province.

Materials and Methods

This study was quantitative-based. The main method is to ensure that obtained data generates measures that reliable and generalizable (Firestone, 2005; Wiersma and Jurs, 2009). The research procedure began in

2018 to study needs of local people in two communities in Surat Thani and Chiang Mai.

Participants

Participants were purposively selected from two communities who were providing service for tourists. This selection was made to ensure that selected participants were the right persons who can give detailed and meaningful information (Gall *et al.*, 2005). The participants were divided into two groups:

Group One: 100 local people in Bang Bai Mai, Mueang district, Surat Thani who were providing service such as grocery shops, or restaurants.

Group Two: 100 local people in Mae Khue, Doi Saket district, Chiang Mai who were providing service such as selling handicrafts, grocery shops, or food stalls.

Research Tool

A need analysis questionnaire was used to collect the data. It comprised four sections. Section 1 was basic information of respondents (e.g., age, gender, and job), in a form of checklist. Section 2 asked about problems in English communication, in a form of rating scale. Section 3 asked about

needs to use the English language communication (e.g., topics and language functions), in a form of rating scale. Section 4 was an open-ended form which allows respondents to recommend further useful information for the study.

Research Procedure

The research procedure began in 2018. The researchers utilized a questionnaire to obtain the data. A need analysis questionnaire was handed to participants in person and asked them to complete and return to the researchers' assistants. Utilizing a need analysis questionnaire in the study was seen to be a useful method. It is cost saving with speedy results and maintain anonymity of respondents from a larger and more representative group (Berkowitz, 1982; Debois, 2016; Neuber *et al.*, 1980). A questionnaire was created and validated by three experts using an evaluation form for a questionnaire in which the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was used so as to find the content validity.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from a questionnaire was analyzed by using Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistics include frequencies, measure of central tendency (mean), and measure of dispersion (range).

Results and Discussion

The results obtained from a questionnaire are presented and discussed into three parts: Part 1 Demographic data, Part 2 Descriptive data about English speaking and listening problems, and Part 3 Needs for English language communication.

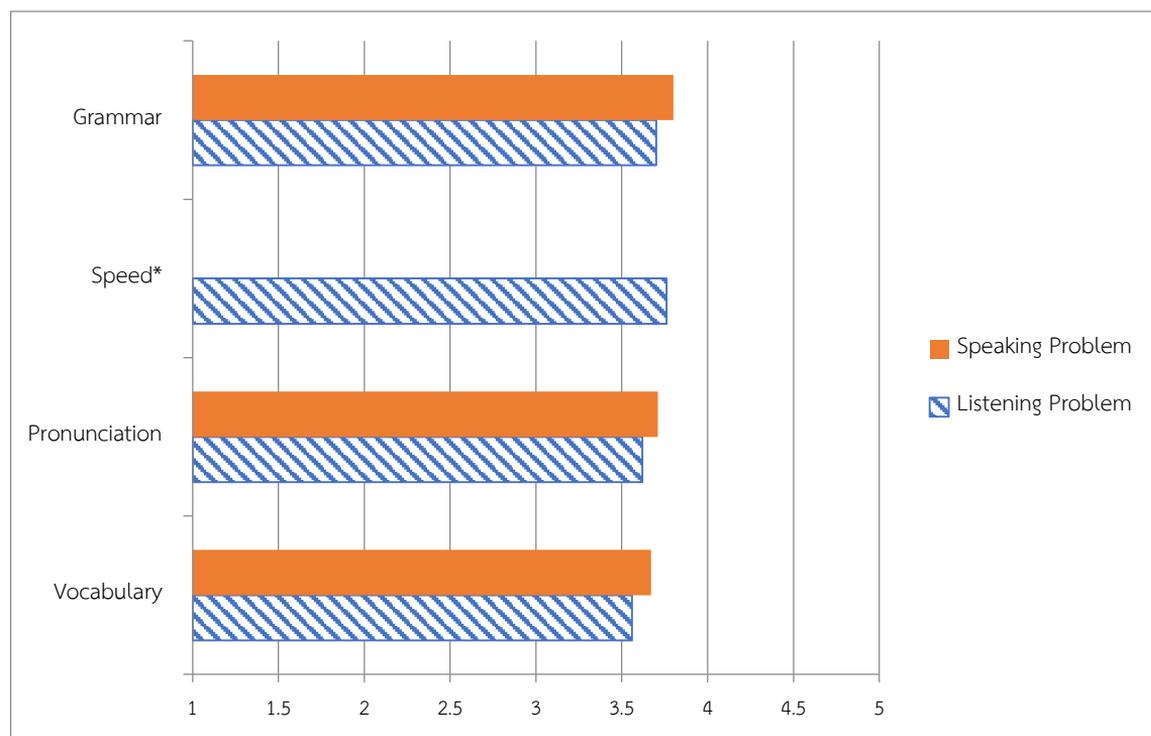
Part 1 Demographic data

According to demographic data of respondents, it was found that the majority of participants were female with education background lower than bachelor's degree (74.5%). Most of them were owners or co-owners of the business (69.5%). Their income was lower than 15,000 baht per month. When comparing two provinces, it was found that the number of tourists the sellers offered service were different. The sellers in Surat Thani had a less chance (5%) to meet a great number of foreign customers (more than 10 people per week) than those in

Chiang Mai (23%). Even though the total number of foreign tourists the sellers offered service was limited, it would be possible to increase their income by expanding their sell using English. It will also widen their opportunity in expanding their business as 69.5% of respondents from two provinces were owners or co-owners of the business.

Part 2 Descriptive data about English speaking and listening problems

The obtained data showed no difference of English communication problems between the two groups of sellers in Surat Thani and Chiang Mai. None of them showed expertise in using English. Their situations regarding speaking and listening problems are shown in Figure 1.



* Respondents struggled with speaking speed of the foreign customers.

Figure 1. Problems and difficulties in English conversation

According to Figure 1, respondents appeared to encounter difficulties in English communication at a high level ($\bar{x} = 3.68$).

They were more likely to deal with problems in speaking than those in listening ($\bar{x} = 3.72$ and 3.66 respectively). Speaking problems

were mostly caused by lack of grammatical knowledge ($\bar{x} = 3.80$), followed by mispronunciation ($\bar{x} = 3.71$), and limited vocabulary knowledge ($\bar{x} = 3.67$). Listening problems were caused by speed rate of foreign customer's speech ($\bar{x} = 3.76$), the lack of grammatical knowledge ($\bar{x} = 3.70$), recognizing English pronunciation ($\bar{x} = 3.62$), and limited vocabulary knowledge ($\bar{x} = 3.56$) respectively.

Problems in speaking and listening skills of sellers could link to their educational background. In this study, educational levels of the majority of the sellers were lower than bachelor degrees. Learning English in primary and secondary schools, especially in the local areas, focused more on grammar and rote memorization in large size of the classroom. They had limited opportunities to practice and to be exposed to English used in the real world (Noom-ura, 2013). Therefore, communicating with foreign customers in English is a big challenge for Thai sellers.

It is likely that both listening and speaking problems of sellers caused by deficit in linguistic features (e.g., grammar,

pronunciation, and vocabulary). Thai sellers found that their lack of grammatical knowledge led them to be unable to either understand the message they hear or organize their sentences. Such problems may be link to the fact that phrase and sentence structures between Thai and English are different. Thai sellers, like many Thai learners, may think in Thai before translating in English (Noom-ura, 2013). For example, when using a noun phrase (Adjective + Noun) to describe a product, they may translate literally, word by word by using Thai language structure (Noun + adjective). This finding also reflects the problem of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Although grammar was taught intensively, without practice through the real world tasks, Thai EFL students would not be able to use grammar for real-world communication.

Regarding pronunciation problems, sellers tend to encounter difficulties in pronouncing English words and be unable to recognize and understand English words they hear. Particularly in the intercultural context, the variety of English language exists as tourists are not only English native speakers

but also those who use English as the second and foreign language. Miscommunication may be caused by different phonological features between the first language and English phonological features (Kirkpatrick, 2012). According to Tananuraksakul (2017), without awareness of the English phonological features, Thai EFL learners were more likely to pronounce English word by substitute Thai sound systems and may produce unintelligible speech in English. For example, they may pronounce the initial sound /θ/ as /t/ (e.g., three as tree) and /ð/ as /d/ (e.g., this as dis).

Insufficient English proficiency may lead to serious problems when communicating with foreign customers, especially the lack of English vocabulary as Fahmongkolchai (2011) stated that limited English vocabulary can cause problems in

providing service, dealing and building relationship with foreign customers. Although listening and speaking are the key components of communicating in business world, most of the sellers have less opportunity to improve their English listening and speaking proficiency. A lack of English knowledge also creates anxiety towards the speakers which resulted in avoiding using English.

Part 3 Needs for English language communication

Particularly, the participants needed to practice language for the particular topics. When comparing information from two groups of participants, it was found that their top five ranked topics they needed to improve their communication were relatively similar as shown in Figure 2.

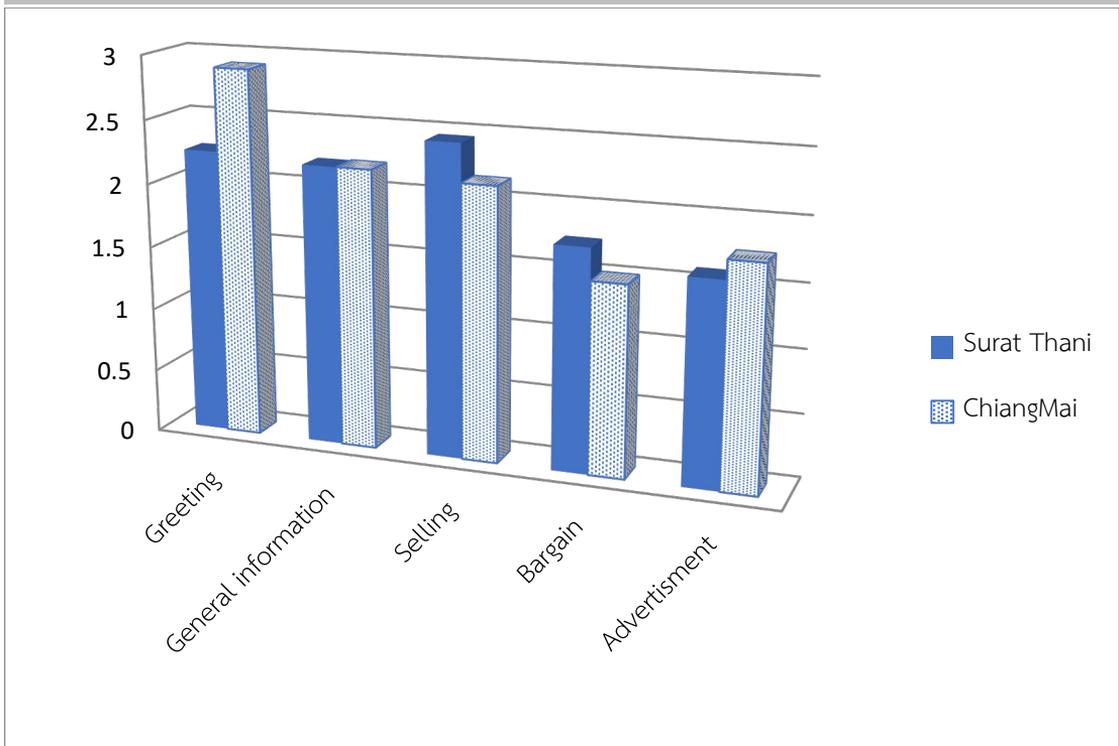


Figure 2. Top Five Ranked Topics to Improve Language Communication

The participants showed their needs to improve English language communication through five topics. The sellers in Surat Thani indicated their needs for topics ranging from 1) selling, 2) greeting, 3) giving general information, 4) bargaining, and 5) advertising. At the same time, the participants in Chiang Mai stated their needs to improve English through topics ranging from 1) greeting, 2) giving general information, 3) selling products, 4) advertising products, and 5) bargaining products. It can be seen that these two groups of participants shared the same

interest of topics, related to both general conversation with customer (e.g., greeting and giving general information) and specific language used for selling (e.g., advertising, selling, and bargaining products). These results are in accordance with the study by Nikonkittikason (2016) which found that Thai local vendors in Koh Kret, Nonthaburi needed to practice vocabulary and general conversation with customer, as well as vocabulary and conversations specifically used for selling their souvenirs, food and drinks.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the two groups of sellers in Surat Thani and Chiang Mai who had their business in sustainable tourism would like to improve their English communication. Particularly, they required to develop linguistic features (e.g., pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar for communication) used in greeting and giving general information to the foreign customers, as well as specific language for advertising, selling their products and dealing with bargaining. It is clearly seen that their ranked topics are associated with their career as sellers. From a sustainable tourism perspective, supporting local economies by involving the locals is one of the key aspects of tourism development, along with the environmental and socio-cultural aspects. If the local sellers are able to communicate with the foreign tourists at an intermediate or advanced level of English as well as in a caring and attentive manner, it would create a positive impression and appreciation of the site. This could also be a starting point for a memorable experience in cultural and knowledge sharing between the foreign

tourists and the locals. Using English as a communication tool, the latter could increase the opportunity to welcome the same group of tourists again in the future. Hence, data in this study will be further used to develop an English manual for sustainable tourism.

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