

Factors Contributing to English Communication Barriers Among Tourism Service
Providers in Thailand's Eastern Coastal Region: The Influence of
Specific Communicative Purposes

ปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่ออุปสรรคในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษของผู้ให้บริการ
ด้านการท่องเที่ยวในพื้นที่ชายฝั่งทะเลตะวันออกของประเทศไทย:
อิทธิพลของวัตถุประสงค์เฉพาะในการสื่อสาร

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การวิจัยแบบผสมผสานนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาปัจจัยที่เป็นอุปสรรคในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษของผู้ให้บริการด้านการท่องเที่ยวในพื้นที่ชายฝั่งตะวันออกของประเทศไทย และ 2) ศึกษาวัตถุประสงค์เฉพาะในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษที่มีผลต่ออุปสรรคในการสื่อสาร ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณมาจากผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามจำนวน 400 คน ซึ่งประกอบด้วยมัคคุเทศก์ พนักงานบริการในศูนย์นิทรรศการและร้านขายของที่ระลึก เจ้าหน้าที่ตำรวจท่องเที่ยว พนักงานร้านอาหาร และพนักงานนวดและสปา ในจังหวัดชลบุรี ระยอง จันทบุรี และตราด สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ได้แก่ สถิติเชิงพรรณนาและการวิเคราะห์ถดถอย นอกจากนี้ ยังมีการเก็บข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพโดยการสัมภาษณ์เชิงกึ่งโครงสร้างและนำข้อมูลมาวิเคราะห์เชิงเนื้อหา ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ทักษะการพูดเป็นอุปสรรคสำคัญที่สุด รองลงมาคือการฟัง การอ่าน และการเขียนตามลำดับ จุดประสงค์หลักในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ ได้แก่ การเข้าใจความต้องการของลูกค้า การเพิ่มรายได้และผลประโยชน์ และการส่งเสริมการท่องเที่ยว โดยภาพรวมพบว่าระดับความยากในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษอยู่ในระดับสูง การวิเคราะห์อิทธิพลของวัตถุประสงค์เฉพาะในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษที่มีต่อปัจจัยอุปสรรค พบว่า การเข้าใจความต้องการของลูกค้าและการพัฒนาตนเองส่งผลต่ออุปสรรคด้านการฟัง ในขณะที่อุปสรรคด้านการพูดได้รับอิทธิพลจาก การเข้าใจความต้องการของลูกค้า การเพิ่มรายได้ การส่งเสริมการท่องเที่ยว และการพัฒนาตนเอง สำหรับอุปสรรคด้านการอ่านได้รับอิทธิพลจากการพัฒนาตนเอง ส่วนอุปสรรคด้านการเขียนมีความสัมพันธ์กับการเพิ่มรายได้และการส่งเสริมการท่องเที่ยว จากผลการศึกษาดังกล่าว ผู้วิจัยได้เสนอแนวทางเฉพาะเพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษและเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพการสื่อสารและคุณภาพการบริการโดยรวม ของผู้ให้บริการด้านการท่องเที่ยว ซึ่งจะช่วยเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการแข่งขันของประเทศไทยในตลาดการท่องเที่ยวระดับโลก

คำสำคัญ: อุปสรรคในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษ วัตถุประสงค์เฉพาะในการสื่อสาร การพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษ ทักษะภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสาร การพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษของผู้ให้บริการด้านการท่องเที่ยว

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ABSTRACT

In this mixed-methods research investigation, the researcher examines (1) the factors of English communication barriers of tourism service providers in Thailand's eastern coastal region; and investigates (2) specific purposes in the use of English affecting communication barriers.

Quantitative data were collected from 400 questionnaire respondents consisting of tour guides, service providers in exhibition centers and souvenir shops, tourist police officers, restaurant staff, and massage and spa therapists in Chon Buri, Rayong, Chanthaburi, and Trat. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Qualitative data were collected using the technique of semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using the technique of content analysis.

Findings showed that speaking skills were the most significant barrier. Next in descending order were listening, reading, and writing. The major objectives in using English were to understand customers' needs, to increase income and benefits, and to promote tourism. Overall, it was found that the difficulty in the use of English was at a high level. The analysis of the influence of the specific purposes in English communication on the factor of barriers found that understanding customers' needs and personal development were associated with listening barriers. Speaking barriers were influenced from the understanding of customers' needs, an increase of income, tourism promotion, and personal development. Reading barriers were influenced from personal development. Writing barriers correlated with an increase of income and tourism promotion.

From the research findings, the researcher proposes specific guidelines to develop English communication skills and enhance communication efficiency as well as overall service quality of tourism service providers which will strengthen the competitiveness of Thailand in the global tourism market.

Keywords: English Communication Barriers, Specific Communicative Purposes, English Development, Communicative English Skills, English Development of Tourism Service Providers

Introduction

The English language skills are crucial and essential as they serve as the primary means of communication with foreign tourists visiting Thailand (Phaiboonnugulkij & Prapphal 2013; Pinsirikul et al., 2023; Prachanant, 2012). Thailand's tourist attractions remain popular among international visitors, and the intention to return increases when tourism service providers demonstrate greater proficiency and fluency in English communication (Boonyopakorn, 2022). Therefore, identifying and understanding the English communication barriers faced by tourism

service providers is essential for several important reasons. The language barriers could affect the work productivity of foreign workers and directly impact visitor experiences, potentially leading to misunderstandings, dissatisfaction, and negative reviews (Salleh et al., 2021). From an economic perspective, effective communication enables service providers to better meet tourist needs, recommend additional services, and increase revenue potential (Lo Presti et al., 2022). Furthermore, addressing these barriers can enhance cultural exchange and understanding, leading to more meaningful interactions—an increasingly significant motivation for travel. Such outcomes not only enrich visitor experiences but also benefit local communities. This is particularly relevant given that cultural tourism has been reaffirmed as a core component of international tourism, representing over 39% of global tourist arrivals (Richards, 2018). By identifying and mitigating specific communication challenges, tourism authorities can implement targeted training programs and practical solutions that improve service quality, visitor satisfaction, and ultimately strengthen the sustainability of the tourism sector.

Thailand has a wealth of tourist attractions, and one of the notable areas is the Eastern coastal region, which includes four provinces: Chonburi, Rayong, Chanthaburi, and Trat. The tourism industry is one of the key industries in Thailand, contributing to economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits. In recent years, the tourism industry has significantly contributed to Thailand's economic growth by stimulating domestic spending and drawing in foreign currency, with international tourist arrivals in Thailand projected to reach 66.48 million by 2033, generating approximately THB 3,742.9 billion in revenue—representing an average annual growth rate of 13.5% since 2023 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023). As discussed, the tourism industry is a key driver of Thailand's economic growth. To ensure continued economic expansion, promoting tourism is vital. Such promotion may involve strategies to attract new visitors and encourage repeat tourism.

Despite the economic importance of tourism in Thailand's eastern coastal region, there is limited empirical research exploring the actual English communication problems faced by local tourism service providers in this area. The eastern region, particularly Chonburi, Rayong, Chanthaburi, and Trat, plays a dual role: it is both an industrial hub attracting foreign investment and a key cultural and natural tourism destination. This context draws a diverse mix of tourists, including short-term business travelers, long-term expatriates, and leisure visitors from ASEAN countries and beyond. However, many service providers lack systematic English training suited to these varied groups (Suraprajit, 2017). The gap between required communicative competence and current staff skills becomes particularly evident when considering the specific purposes for which English is used in tourism. While tourists expect effective communication for service efficiency, information exchange, and cultural interaction, frontline workers often face obstacles such as pronunciation difficulties, limited context-specific vocabulary, and challenges in cross-

cultural pragmatics. Investigating how these distinct purposes of English use shape communication barriers is therefore essential for developing targeted training that enhances tourist satisfaction and supports the region's long-term tourism sustainability.

Research Gaps and Future Directions

Although research on communication barriers in tourism has grown (Boonyopakorn, 2022; Kiatkheeree et al., 2020; Kraithep et al., 2021), notable gaps remain, particularly in understanding the interrelationship between different English communication skills and how challenges in one area may affect overall communicative performance. Existing literature often treats communication barriers in isolation, without examining how specific communicative purposes may shape or affect the obstacle factors. Furthermore, limited attention has been paid to context-specific challenges faced by tourism service providers in regional destinations, such as Thailand's eastern coastal areas.

Research purposes

To address these gaps and support sustainable growth and competitiveness in the tourism sector, this study aims at:

1. Exploring English communication obstacle factors among service providers in the eastern coastal area
2. Investigating the influence of specific purposes of using English for communication on the obstacle factors

Literature Review

The Importance of English in Tourism and Hospitality Services

English language proficiency plays a crucial role in the tourism and hospitality industry globally. Several studies highlight that English serves as the lingua franca in international tourism contexts (Prachanant, 2012; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). In addition, Blue and Harun (2003) established that effective communication in English significantly impacted guest satisfaction and service quality perception. Their research demonstrated that language barriers often resulted in misunderstandings that negatively affected the overall tourist experience.

Tourism employees' English communication skills directly influence customer satisfaction. Leslie and Russell (2006) found that tourists rated their experience more positively when service providers demonstrated strong English abilities. Similarly, Bobanovic and Grzinic (2011) concluded that hotels with English-proficient staff received higher ratings and experience. The destinations with a more developed English language infrastructure were better positioned to attract high-spending international tourists and establish stronger global tourism networks. Poor efficiency of linguistic services in tourists' languages often compelled them to adjust to the service

providers' language, which could reduce their overall satisfaction—especially for those with limited proficiency in the destination country's language (Ying et al., 2018).

Therefore, research consistently demonstrates that English language proficiency is not merely beneficial but essential for success in the increasingly globalized tourism and hospitality industry. It affects service quality, customer satisfaction, competitive advantage, and ultimately, economic outcomes (Bobanovic & Grzinic, 2011; Prabhu & Wani, 2015).

English communication obstacles among Tourism Service Providers

Tourism has emerged as a significant economic sector worldwide, with its success largely dependent on effective communication between service providers and international visitors. The communication obstacles are factors that hinder the smooth exchange of information between a sender and a receiver, making it difficult for people to understand one another clearly (Luechatham, 2022). In regions like the eastern coastal area, where tourism forms a central pillar of economic development, English communication competency among service providers has become increasingly crucial.

Previous research has consistently identified vocabulary limitations as a primary obstacle to effective communication in tourism contexts. Alqahtani (2015) noted that insufficient lexical knowledge affected all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and presented a more significant barrier than grammatical mistakes in service interactions. The study of tourism employees found that limited vocabulary frequently led to complete communication breakdowns, while grammatical errors rarely prevented successful message delivery. Hsu (2014) further elaborated that tourism service providers needed to know two main types of vocabulary: general language used for customer service, and more specific terms related to local attractions, food, culture, and geography. Phonological challenges also present significant barriers, particularly for listening comprehension. Cook (2008) identified the diversity of accents encountered in tourism settings as a substantial obstacle. The study found that service providers frequently misunderstood key information when dealing with non-standard pronunciation patterns, leading to service failures and customer dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, research has documented specific challenges associated with each language skill in tourism contexts. Regarding listening skills, several studies have explored the challenges Thai individuals faced when trying to understand foreigners in workplace settings. Research by Kiatkheeree et al. (2020) revealed that sellers in Surat Thani and Chiang Mai struggled with the fast pace of foreign customers' speech, insufficient grammar knowledge, difficulty understanding English pronunciation, and a limited vocabulary. Similarly, Phonsomboon (2020) found that unfamiliar vocabulary and accents were the primary difficulties for vendors on Khaosan Road. In terms of speaking challenges, Prachanant (2012) conducted a comprehensive needs analysis of tourism professionals and found that anxiety about pronunciation, difficulty with

spontaneous responses, and limited fluency in specialized domains created significant barriers to effective communication. Writing challenges have received increasing attention as digital communication becomes more prevalent in tourism. According to Maglalang's (2023) research on academic writing challenges faced by hospitality and tourism management students in ESP contexts, these students demonstrated poor writing performance linked to low writing self-efficacy. *The Purposes of English Communication and Their Impacts on English communication obstacle factors*

The relationship between communication purposes and obstacles in English-language interactions has been the focus of several notable studies, exploring how specific goals behind English usage affect resulting communication challenges. English serves diverse purposes, each creating a unique communication landscape with distinct barriers. Kim and Davies (2014) investigated how motivational factors influence tourism service providers' perception and experience of communication barriers. Their research revealed that income potential functions as a powerful motivator for English improvement among tourism workers, demonstrating that service providers who recognized a clear connection between language proficiency and earning potential dedicated substantially more time to language learning activities.

Tourism promotion has been recognized as the most impactful element. The foundational research on tourism language of Dann (2023) highlighted the promotional discourse as a distinct linguistic register with unique features. Expanding on this, Cappelli (2008) explored the linguistic complexities inherent in crafting promotional tourism texts, emphasizing the need for a sophisticated mix of descriptive, persuasive, and informative techniques. The analysis of successful tourism content revealed that complex sentence structures, specific vocabulary, and culturally appropriate language can be challenging for non-native English writers.

The impact of personal development motivations on language learning presents an interesting paradox in the research. Noels et al. (2000) focused on the impact of varying motivational orientations on language learning experiences, discovering that learners driven by personal growth goals perceived greater challenges in receptive skills such as reading. Their study suggested this occurred because personally motivated learners set more ambitious targets and engage with more challenging authentic materials.

Cultural factors also significantly impact communication experiences. Edgell et al. (2018) examined how cultural distance between service providers and international visitors amplified communication challenges, with their research showing that greater cultural differences corresponded with increased communication barriers beyond purely linguistic factors. Their study highlighted that cultural expectations about how services should be provided made tourism communication more complicated and added to the challenges caused by language barriers.

Research Hypothesis

H1: The specific purposes of using English for communication significantly influence the obstacle factors experienced by tourism service providers.

Research Methodology

This mixed-method research collected quantitative data from a questionnaire and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews.

Population and Samples

The population in this research consisted of tourism service providers, including tour guides, exhibition and souvenir shop staff, tourist police, restaurant staff, and massage and spa service providers, located in the eastern coastal area covering the provinces of Chonburi, Rayong, Chanthaburi, and Trat. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula in cases where the exact population size is unknown, with an acceptable margin of error set at 5% and a confidence level of 95%. The sample size was calculated to be 384. Then, the data were collected from 400 samples in total.

A multi-stage sampling method was used. In the first stage, purposive sampling was applied to select the occupations of tourism service providers and to determine the data collection areas from major tourist sites in each province (Pleerux, 2014) to ensure good representation of the population. In Chonburi province, the data were collected from Pattaya, Bangsaen, and Nang Ram Beach. In Rayong province, the data were collected from Laem Mae Phim, Mae Ramphueng Beach, and Ban Phe. In Chanthaburi province, the data were collected from Chao Lao Beach, Khung Wiman Beach, Ao Khung Kraben, and Wat Khao Sukim. In Trat province, the data were collected from Koh Chang and Laem Ngop. In the second stage, a simple random sampling method was applied within the tourist areas. The number of samples from each tourist area in each province may vary. For instance, in Chonburi Province, more samples may be collected from Pattaya than from Bangsaen and Nang Ram Beach, depending on the number of service providers present in each area at the time of data collection.

A simple random sampling method was used to select interview participants from the 12 tourism sites where quantitative data had been collected. From each of the 12 identified sites, one tourism service provider was randomly selected for a semi-structured interview, resulting in a total sample of 12 interviewees.

The instrumentation

The instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire applied from Kraithep et al. (2021), Luechatham (2022) and Piriya Silpa (2014). The questionnaire was evaluated the Index of Consistency Values (IOC) by three experts and revised according to their recommendations before data collection. The IOC values of items which were more than 0.5 were accepted (Ismail

& Zubairi, 2022). The questionnaire consisted of three parts: 1) General demographic information of the respondents, 2) The purposes of English usage among tourism service providers, and 3) Obstacle factors that hinder the use of English for communication among tourism service providers. The semi-structured interview was employed in order to gather qualitative analysis. The revised questionnaire was tested for reliability, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.873. (Wood & Haber, 2014).

Data Analysis

The general demographic information of tourism service providers and objectives for using English for communication were examined using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. The obstacle factors in using English for communication among tourism service providers were investigated using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation (S.D.). The influence of specific communication purposes on obstacles were examined using a multiple regression analysis.

The Results

The results of the basic demographic data showed that the majority of 400 respondents were female, aged 41-50 years, with a bachelor's degree. Most of the respondents were employed as restaurant staff, followed by tour guides, and massage and spa service staff. The average frequency of English usage in their work was 30%, followed by 40% and 50% per week respectively.

The most frequently used English skill was speaking, followed by listening, writing, and reading respectively. The purposes of using English for communication were divided into five main objectives. The primary purpose for tourism service providers is to communicate in order to understand the customer needs. The next purposes included earning a higher salary/wage/income, promoting tourism, personal development, and gaining acceptance from employers or coworkers.

The English communication obstacle factors among service providers in the eastern coastal area

According to the first research aim, the obstacle factors of using English for communication among service providers in the eastern coastal area were explored. The results were shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The English communication obstacle factors among service providers

Obstacle Factors	Mean (\bar{X})	S.D.	Level
Listening skill			
1. Listening problems due to vocabulary limitations, such as having a limited English vocabulary for work.	4.39	0.73	High

Obstacle Factors	Mean (\bar{X})	S.D.	Level
2. Listening problems due to being unable to grasp the main points from the customers.	4.25	0.84	High
3. Listening problems due to the different accents of foreign customers.	4.23	0.83	High
4. Listening problems due to customers speaking too fast, making it difficult to catch the meaning.	3.98	0.91	High
5. Listening problems due to customers speaking in complex sentences.	3.81	0.77	High
Mean	4.13	0.82	High
Speaking skill			
1. Speaking problems due to vocabulary limitations, such as having a limited English vocabulary for work.	4.56	0.77	High
2. Speaking problems due to being unable to communicate with customers in full sentences.	4.31	0.75	High
3. Speaking problems due to not understanding the customer inquiries or needs.	4.28	0.93	High
4. Speaking problems due to a lack of self-confidence.	4.05	0.98	High
5. Speaking problems when making apologies.	3.94	1.12	High
Mean	4.23	0.91	High
Reading skill			
1. Reading problems due to the limited use of reading skills in the workplace.	4.01	0.92	High
2. Reading problems due to vocabulary limitations, such as having a limited English vocabulary for work.	4.00	0.95	High
3. Reading problems due to the complexity of English documents.	3.86	0.88	High
Mean	3.96	0.92	High
Writing skill			
1. Writing problems due to vocabulary limitations, such as having a limited English vocabulary for work.	4.22	0.84	High
2. Writing problems due to a lack of proficiency in sentence structure and grammar.	3.83	0.88	High
3. Writing problems due to not understanding the customer needs.	3.80	0.75	High
4. Writing problems due to not knowing how to start to write.	3.56	0.73	High
Mean	3.85	0.81	High
Overall mean score	4.06	0.80	High

From Table 1, it was shown that tourism service providers encountered obstacles in all four English language skills at a high level, with a total mean score of (\bar{X} =4.06). When considering each aspect individually, the most significant obstacle in using English for communication was speaking skills (\bar{X} =4.23), followed by listening skills (\bar{X} =4.13), reading skills (\bar{X} =3.96), and writing skills (\bar{X} =3.85).

The results also revealed that in terms of speaking skills, the most common problem was the limitation in vocabulary, such as having a limited English vocabulary for work (\bar{X} =4.56),

followed by the problem of being unable to respond to customers in complete sentences ($\bar{X}=4.31$), and the problem of asking for customer information or needs ($\bar{X}=4.28$).

In terms of listening skills, the most common problem was due to vocabulary limitations, such as having a limited English vocabulary for work ($\bar{X}=4.39$), followed by the problem of being unable to grasp the main points from the customers ($\bar{X}=4.25$), and the problem of different accents of foreign customers ($\bar{X}=4.23$).

For reading skills, the most common problem was the limited use of reading skills in the workplace ($\bar{X}=4.01$), followed by vocabulary limitations, such as having a limited English vocabulary for work ($\bar{X}=4.00$), and the complexity of English documents ($\bar{X}=3.86$).

In terms of writing skills, the most common problem was vocabulary limitations, such as having a limited English vocabulary for work ($\bar{X}=4.22$), followed by the problem of not being proficient in sentence structure and grammar ($\bar{X}=3.83$), and the problem of not understanding the customer needs ($\bar{X}=3.80$).

The influence of specific purposes of using English for communication on obstacle factors

The multiple regression analysis was employed to explore the influence of specific purposes of using English for communication on the obstacle factors. The specific purposes of using English for communication included five main objectives: understanding the customer needs, earning a higher salary/wage/income, promoting tourism, personal development, and gaining acceptance from employers or coworkers. The obstacle factors were speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills obstacles. As hypothesized, those variables were taken to perform correlation analysis to examine the relationships between independent variables themselves and between independent variables and the dependent variable. It was conducted in order to verify whether there were any significant relationships between the independent variables or not. The results from the correlation analysis at the 0.05 significance level showed that none of the factors had significant correlations with each other. Then, the multiple regression equation was analyzed using the All Enter method.

Table 2 The model obtained from multiple regression analysis (Model Summary)

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.448	0.200	0.186		0.519

As shown in Table 2, the multiple regression model accounted for 18.6% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.200$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.186$). This means that the specific purposes of using English for communication influencing the four obstacle factors account for 18.6%, while the remaining 81.4% is influenced by other factors.

Table 3 Multiple regression analysis of the influence of specific purposes of using English for communication on listening skill obstacle factors

Specific purposes	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)			.999
Understanding the customer needs	0.228	2.070	0.009*
Earning a higher salary/wage/income	-0.022	-0.408	0.684
Promoting tourism	0.041	0.655	0.513
Personal development	0.139	2.617	0.037*
Gaining acceptance from employers or coworkers.	0.012	0.211	0.816

Note * = $p < .05$

As shown in the output, two purposes of English communication significantly affected the listening skill obstacle factors: Understanding the customer needs ($p < .05$, $\beta = 0.228$) and Personal development ($p < .05$, $\beta = 0.139$). The most influencing purpose was understanding the customer needs since standardized beta value was the highest (0.228). Additionally, the beta value indicates that if tourism service providers have a strong desire to communicate for better customer understanding, they will experience greater difficulties in listening.

Table 4 Multiple regression analysis of the influence of specific purposes of using English for communication on speaking skill obstacle factors

Specific purposes	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)			.999
Understanding the customer needs	0.121	1.776	0.035*
Earning a higher salary/wage/income	0.319	2.617	0.001***
Promoting tourism	0.073	0.041	0.045*
Personal development	0.118	2.087	0.038*
Gaining acceptance from employers or coworkers.	0.102	2.112	0.633

Note *** = $p < .001$

* = $p < .05$

As shown in the output, all four purposes of English communication affected the speaking obstacle factors: Understanding the customer needs ($p < .05$, $\beta = 0.121$), Earning a higher salary/wage/income ($p < .001$, $\beta = 0.319$), Promoting tourism ($p < .05$, $\beta = 0.073$) and

Personal development ($p < .05$, $\beta = 0.118$). The most influencing purpose was earning a higher salary/wage/income since standardized beta value was the highest (0.319). Additionally, the beta value indicates that if tourism service providers have a strong desire to communicate for better earning a higher salary/wage/income, they will experience greater difficulties in speaking.

Table 5 Multiple regression analysis of the influence of specific purposes of using English for communication on reading skill obstacle factors

Specific purposes	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)			.999
Understanding the customer needs	0.119	3.012	0.056
Earning a higher salary/wage/income	0.022	1.403	0.206
Promoting tourism	0.061	1.958	0.291
Personal development	0.146	3.057	0.043*
Gaining acceptance from employers or coworkers.	-0.021	-0.366	0.715

Note * = $p < .05$

As shown in the output, there was one purpose of English communication affecting the reading obstacle factors: Personal development ($p < .05$, $\beta = 0.146$). Additionally, the beta value indicates that if tourism service providers have a strong desire to communicate for personal development, they will experience greater difficulties in reading.

Table 6 Multiple regression analysis of the influence of specific purposes of using English for communication on writing skill obstacle factors

Specific purposes	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)			.999
Understanding the customer needs	0.113	2.070	0.057
Earning a higher salary/wage/income	0.254	2.655	0.044*
Promoting tourism	0.289	2.417	0.038*
Personal development	0.143	2.408	0.051
Gaining acceptance from employers or coworkers.	0.007	0.118	0.904

Note * = $p < .05$

As shown in the output, there were two purposes of English communication affecting the writing obstacle factors affecting: Earning a higher salary/wage/income ($p < .05$, $\beta = 0.254$) and Promoting tourism ($p < .05$, $\beta = 0.289$). The most influencing purpose was promoting tourism since standardized beta value was the highest (0.289). Additionally, the beta value indicates that if tourism service providers have a strong desire to promote tourism, they will experience greater difficulties in writing.

In order to triangulate quantitative results, semi-structured interviews with purposively selected participants were employed. The participants were selected randomly from each type of career. Then, there were five participants in the interview section. The findings have emerged in order to provide a complete picture of the obstacles in English communication and the relationship between their purposes of using English and obstacle factors of English four skills. Then, the interview was analyzed in order to determine the presence of certain results found in quantitative data.

Firstly, it was revealed that two main purposes of English communication—understanding customer needs and personal development—contributed to the listening challenges. Among these, understanding customer needs was identified as the most influential factor. As a tourism service provider said: “When I try to understand what the customer is saying, I sometimes face difficulties due to different accents, and there are times when I do not recognize the words they are using.” In addition, some of them stated that using English to understand the customer’s purpose can be challenging, as it sometimes makes it difficult to grasp the main idea when they do not fully understand the language.

Secondly, it was found that four main purposes of English communication—understanding customer needs, earning a higher income, promoting tourism, and personal development—contributed to the speaking challenges. Among these, earning a higher income was identified as the most influential factor. As a tourism service provider said: “I believe that speaking is the most important English skill for communication. If I can speak well, I can communicate effectively in any context and achieve my goals.” One of them added: “If I can speak English well, I believe I’ll have the opportunity to be promoted to a higher position, such as a supervisor. This would also allow me to earn a higher income.”

In addition, it was found that personal development—identified as the sole purpose of English communication—had an impact on the obstacle factor in reading. This suggests that if tourism service providers have a strong desire to communicate for personal development, they will experience greater difficulties in reading. As a tourism service provider mentioned: “English reading skills are used primarily for reading in academic contexts.” One of them also explained: “Since English reading skills are mainly used for understanding academic documents, I often face difficulties when trying to develop myself through academic reading, such as reading notices or outbound tour details.”

Finally, regarding English writing skills, it was revealed that two main purposes of English communication—earning a higher income and promoting tourism—contributed to the challenges faced in writing. Among these, promoting tourism was identified as the most influential factor. Most of tourism service providers mentioned that “English writing skills are closely related to creating tourism promotional documents, such as brochures, catalogs, product posters, and tour

programs.” As a result, they encountered challenges with this skill when trying to create these types of documents.” They also explained that they struggled with writing skills when they wanted to improve themselves. However, the reason they focused on writing was that they needed to write in English for work-related tasks, which gave them a chance to get promoted and earn a higher salary.

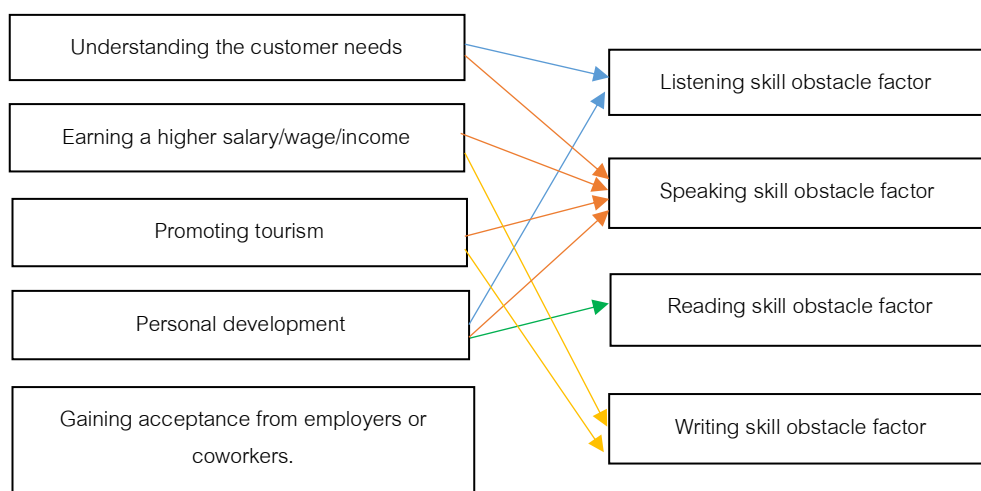


Figure 1 Model summary of the influence of specific communicative purposes on obstacle factors

According to model summary in Figure 1, the specific purposes of using English for understanding the customer needs influenced the obstacle factors on listening skill and speaking skill. In addition, the specific purposes of using English for earning a higher income influenced the obstacle factors on speaking skill and writing skill. It can be concluded that English proficiency, particularly in speaking and writing skills, directly correlates with income potential and career advancement in the tourism industry. Next, the ability to effectively promote tourism is also strongly related to proficiency in speaking and writing skills. Finally, the specific purposes of using English for personal development influenced the obstacle factors on listening skill, speaking skill and reading skill. This means that the desire for personal development in English among tourism service providers significantly influences their experience of obstacles in listening, speaking, and reading skills.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results indicated that the most significant obstacle factors were associated with speaking skills, followed by listening, reading, and writing skills, respectively. The primary purposes of English communication identified in the study were: 1) understanding customer needs; 2) obtaining higher salaries, wages, and benefits, and 3) promoting tourism. These findings

align with Boonyopakorn (2022), who emphasized that English plays a vital role in the tourism industry, as it enables service providers to manage and respond effectively to a variety of situations. Proficiency in English supports clear communication with international tourists, leading to more accurate information exchanges, improved service delivery, and enhanced satisfaction for both service providers and visitors.

Importantly, the obstacle factors related to English communication among service providers in the eastern coastal area were rated at a high level across all items. The comprehensive nature of these obstacles corresponds with Zahedpisheh et al. (2017) assertion that English language competence represents a fundamental requirement for effective service provision in tourism settings. Their research emphasized that without adequate language skills, service providers struggle to deliver satisfactory experiences to international visitors.

When considering the issue in greater detail, it was found that speaking skills are the most significant challenge for tourism service providers. As noted by Prachanant et al. (2016), personnel in the hospitality industry experience difficulties across all four English language skills, with speaking identified as the most challenging. A common problem is the lack of sufficient English vocabulary relevant to their work. Additional issues include an inability to construct complete sentences during customer interactions, as well as difficulties in formulating questions and understanding customer needs. This is consistent with the study by Chaiyachana, Chiewchan, and Thongnem (2017), which explored the use of English communication skills in hotel receptionists' work in Nan province from the perspective of foreign tourists. The research found that the overall issue with English communication skills for hotel receptionists in Nan was significant, with the most common problem in speaking being the inability to form complete sentences. This is also in line with Intorn, Charoenarpornwattana, and Chuchuen (2020), who studied the problems and the need for the development of English communication skills for employees of a commercial bank in Pattaya, and found that speaking issues were a significant obstacle.

The study of the impacts of specific purposes of using English for communication on obstacle factors revealed that two main purposes of English communication—understanding customer needs and personal development—contributed to the listening challenges. Among these, understanding customer needs was identified as the most influential factor. This in line with the study of Sriduandao (2022), who examined the development of English teaching material for homestay entrepreneurs and found that the international tourists generally have basic expectations regarding communication, particularly in areas such as greetings and the provision of relevant information about tourist attractions, activities, food, and local culture. Effective communication in these areas can enhance tourists' understanding and leave a positive impression, thereby increasing the likelihood of repeat visits. Furthermore, such positive

experiences may also attract new international tourists, contributing to the growth of the tourism sector.

Secondly, it was found that four main purposes of English communication—understanding customer needs, earning a higher income, promoting tourism, and personal development—contributed to the speaking challenges. Among these, earning a higher income was identified as the most influential factor. The identification of these distinctive purposes suggests that speaking challenges in tourism contexts are multifaceted. As Basturkmen (2006) noted, different communicative purposes demand different linguistic resources, contributing to varied challenges.

In addition, it was found that personal development—identified as the sole purpose of English communication—had an impact on the factors that created obstacles in reading. The finding that personal development motivation uniquely influences reading obstacles presents a considerable point in language acquisition within tourism contexts. It suggests that even though people want to improve themselves, this motivation might actually make reading in English harder instead of easier. This seemingly counterintuitive relationship aligns with Dörnyei's (2009) research on motivational self-regulation, which demonstrates that learning goals focused on personal growth often led learners to engage with more challenging materials that exceed their current proficiency level. Empirical research by Noels et al. (2000) specifically examined how different motivational orientations affect language learning experiences and found that learners with strong personal development goals reported higher levels of perceived difficulty across receptive skills like reading. Their study suggested this occurs because personally motivated learners set more ambitious learning targets and engage with more challenging authentic materials.

Finally, regarding English writing skills, it was revealed that two main purposes of English communication—earning a higher income and promoting tourism—contributed to the challenges faced in writing. The finding that promoting tourism was identified as the strongest influence on writing challenges among tourism service providers offers important insights into the complex relationship between communicative purposes and language difficulties. The identification of tourism promotion as the most influential factor aligns with Dann's (2023) seminal work on the language of tourism, which established that promotional discourse in tourism represents a highly specialized register with distinctive linguistic features. Building on this foundation, Cappelli (2008) documented the specific linguistic challenges involved in tourism promotional writing, noting that it requires a sophisticated blend of descriptive, persuasive, and informative elements. Their textual analysis of successful tourism materials revealed complex syntactic structures, specialized vocabulary, and culturally nuanced expressions that present significant challenges for non-native writers. By developing targeted curricula that build specific competencies in promotional writing,

tourism training programs can directly address the most significant writing challenges faced by tourism service providers.

Recommendations

Policy recommendations

1. Since speaking skill presented the greatest barrier, it is recommended that government organizations give tourism service providers speaking and listening-focused English training.

2. Based on the findings regarding the impact of goal-oriented English use on communication obstacles, English language training programs for tourism service providers should place a strong emphasis on developing skills aligned with specific communicative purposes. Such training can help providers effectively understand and respond to customer needs in real-world service contexts.

Further Research Recommendation

Future studies should consider expanding the scope to include a comparative analysis across different regions of Thailand to explore communication barriers in varying tourism contexts. Additionally, longitudinal research could be conducted to assess the long-term effectiveness of targeted English training programs for tourism service providers. Incorporating perspectives from international tourists may also offer valuable insights into how communication challenges affect visitor satisfaction and destination image.

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