



**BARRIERS IN ENGLISH COMMUNICATION OF
GROUND PASSENGER SERVICE AT SUVARNABHUMI
AIRPORT**

BY

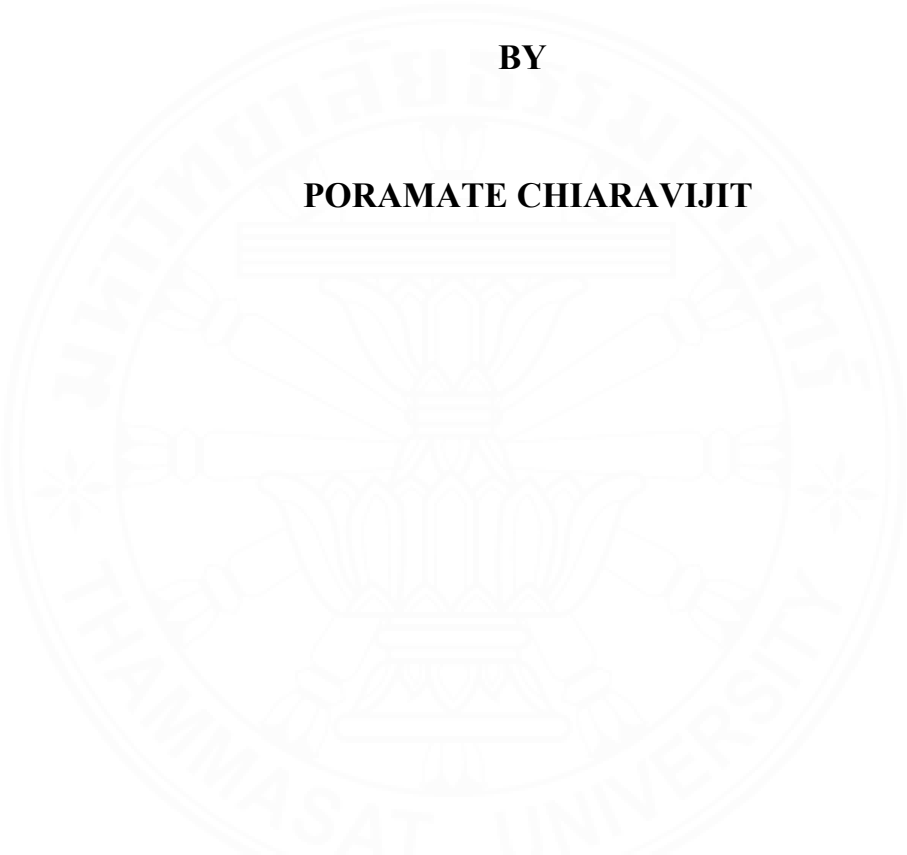
PORAMATE CHIARAVIJIT

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS IN CAREER ENGLISH FOR
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
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ENTITLED

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the degree of Master of Arts in Career English for International Communication

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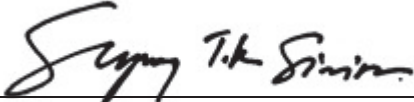
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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the main factors affecting English speaking and listening for ground passenger service staff at Suvarnabhumi Airport. The participants of this study consisted of thirty ground passenger service staff who were working at Suvarnabhumi Airport. A questionnaire was utilized as the instrument to gather the data on the impediments to respondents' English communication in both speaking and listening. The findings portray that both are considered slightly problematic among respondents.

Keywords: Ground passenger service staff, barriers in English communication skills, Suvarnabhumi Airport, English speaking and listening skills

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

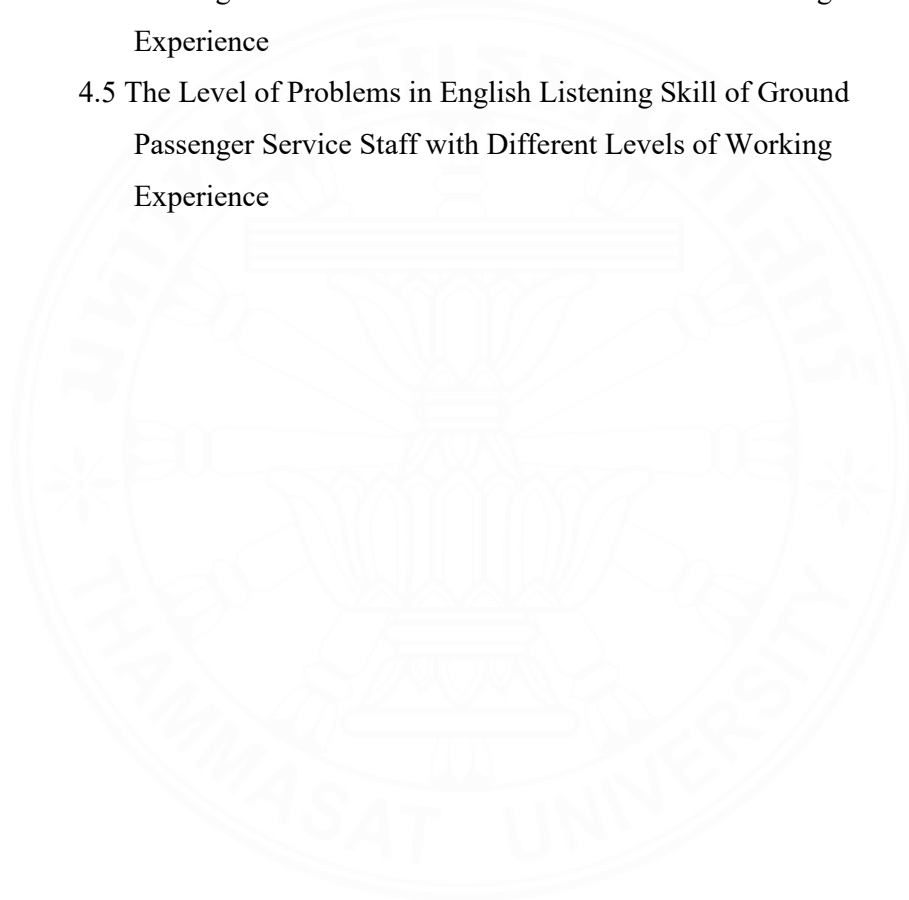
	Page
ABSTRACT	(1)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	(2)
LIST OF TABLES	(6)
LIST OF FIGURES	(7)
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	(8)
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Research Objectives	3
1.3 Research Question	3
1.4 Definitions of Key Terms	3
1.4.1 Ground Passenger Service Staff	3
1.4.2 Barriers in English Communication Skills	4
1.4.3 Suvarnabhumi Airport	4
1.4.4 English Speaking and Listening Skills	4
1.5 Scope of the Study	4
1.6 Significance of the Study	4
1.7 Organization of the Study	4
1.7.1 Chapter 1	5
1.7.2 Chapter 2	5
1.7.3 Chapter 3	5
1.7.4 Chapter 4	5
1.7.5 Chapter 5	5

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	6
2.1 Communication Purposes for Ground Passenger Service Staff	6
2.1.1 Informative	6
2.1.2 Emotion	6
2.1.3 Motivation	7
2.1.4 Control	7
2.2 English Communication in the Airline Industry	7
2.3 Speaking Skills	10
2.4 Listening Skills	10
2.5 Communication Barriers	11
2.6 Previous Related Studies	11
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	17
3.1 Participants	17
3.2 Research Instruments	17
3.3 Data Collection	18
3.4 Data Analysis	18
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS	19
4.1 General Information of the Respondents	19
4.2 The Level of Problems in English Speaking and Listening Skills	20
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	28
5.1 Summary of the Results	28
5.2 Discussion	29

	(5)
5.2.1 Research Question 1: What are the Main Factors Affecting English Speaking of Ground Passenger Service Staff?	29 30
5.2.2 Research Question 2: What are the Main Factors Affecting English Listening of Ground Passenger Service Staff?	
5.3 Limitations of the Study	31
5.4 Recommendations	31
REFERENCES	33
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A	37

LIST OF TABLES

Tables	Page
4.1 General Information	19
4.2 Speaking Skill	21
4.3 Listening Skill	22
4.4 The Level of Problems in English Speaking Skill of Ground Passenger Service Staff with Different Levels of Working Experience	23
4.5 The Level of Problems in English Listening Skill of Ground Passenger Service Staff with Different Levels of Working Experience	25



LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
2.1 The Process of Air Transportation Services	8



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Symbols/Abbreviations	Terms
AOT	Airport of Thailand Public Company Limited
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
TOEIC	The Test of English for International Communication
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
TAT	Tourist Authority of Thailand
CAAT	Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand
ASRS	Aviation Safety Reporting System
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English is the international language for business communication in today's world. In the airline industry, ground passenger service staff are expected to be fluent in English communication skills. In the aviation industry, English is essential to communicate with passengers (Davidoff, 1994). According to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), English is the most important language in the airline industry. In fact, most of ground passenger service staff are still unable to understand and communicate in English smoothly, especially listening and speaking skills, when performing their duties at many departments, such as the check-in counter, boarding gate, ticketing and reservations, lost and found, etc.

Ground passenger service staff are essential to the airline's reputation (Law & Doerflein, 2014). In addition, communication with international passengers is the airline's initial interaction with passengers (Law & Doerflein, 2014). Passenger service staff must interact effectively in English with foreign passengers from various nations (Tangniam, 2006). As a result, listening and speaking skills in English are crucial for global use (Uraipan, 2011). Ground passenger service staff ought to be educated in order to provide all information to passengers across all airline activities. As a result, effective communication in English, both speaking and listening, can foster a good attitude among foreign passengers.

In Thailand, Phithakphongphan (2016) mentioned that not only can proper grooming and service impress passengers, English communication skills are also required in the airline industry. English is a significant tool for business communication, and it is very useful for all employees who need to work with foreigners. When communicating with passengers face to face, ground passenger service staff must also communicate in English. Some ground passenger service employees had difficulty saying what they wanted to convey when speaking English. Some people are unsure of their grammar and vocabulary when speaking English.

English listening and speaking skills are necessary for effective communication, particularly among international organizations (Jeharsae, 2014). Language proficiency in English is playing a larger role in communication. Furthermore, the use of English is critical among employees in global companies (Aunruen, 2005). English speaking and listening abilities are regarded as critical communication skills. The study looked at the need for English job training for travel agency employees. Any faults with speaking and listening while executing their tasks had a significant impact on the airline's image and passenger happiness. According to Phithakphongphan (2016), ground passenger service staff are required to have the highest level of English speaking and listening proficiency. Face-to-face communication is the most crucial aspect of ground passenger service, and English speaking and listening skills are always required.

Many airlines demand the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) for applicants who want to work in the airline sector. TOEIC was established specifically to assess candidates' English language proficiency. TOEIC is required for airline industry recruitment (Sirikanjanawong & Wasanasomsithi, 2018). The TOEIC score range for ground passenger service staff varies (Uraipan, 2011). For example, several airlines require 550 to 650 points as a minimum criterion for candidates. Unfortunately, high-scoring individuals are always required to communicate with passengers in English orally (Dhanasmithivesn, 2007), and the TOEIC test cannot demonstrate the effectiveness of speaking skill. As a result, it is critical to grasp the importance of both speaking and listening abilities for greater performance.

Furthermore, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has designated English as the common language among ASEAN members as one of its projects (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Thailand was also an active participant in this global process. Because English is the primary language of ASEAN member nations, this is an excellent chance for them to practice their English. The usage of English in the airline business should be a priority for all Thai airline staff.

Moreover, 37.55 million tourists from all over the world visited Thailand in 2018 (Thakral & Sriring, 2018). In addition to the increased number of foreign tourists, tourism in Thailand has expanded. Thailand had set the goal of becoming an ASEAN tourism hub in five important regions by 2017. This goal involved sports tourism, medical and wellness tourism, marine tourism, and ASEAN connectivity (TAT, 2017).

In addition to the expansion of air travel and the distinctiveness of Thai culture, Thailand has seen sustained tourism growth.

In the airline industry, ground passenger service staff perform an important role. As a result, ground passenger service staff need to communicate with overseas passengers in proper English. Even though each airline provides English training programs for all employees, there is still miscommunication in terms of speaking and listening.

The purpose of this research is to examine and identify the difficulties with English communication that ground passenger service staff at Suvarnabhumi Airport have in their job areas, both with regard to listening and speaking.

1.2 Research Objectives

1) To identify the main factors affecting English speaking for ground passenger service staff.

2) To identify the main factors affecting English listening for ground passenger service staff.

1.3 Research Questions

1) What are the main factors affecting English speaking for ground passenger service staff?

2) What are the main factors affecting English listening for ground passenger service staff?

1.4 Definitions of Key Terms

1.4.1 Ground Passenger Service Staff

Ground passenger service staff refers to passenger service agents who perform their duties at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Samut Prakarn, Thailand. Ground passenger service staff at the airport provide a variety of services for customers' needs and convenience during departures and arrivals. Ground passenger service staff usually work their shift duties regarding all aspects of each airlines procedure and also have to work together with other employees in other departments of the organization.

1.4.2 Barriers in English Communication Skills

Barriers in English communication skills refer to the obstacles that ground passenger service staffs encounter when using English communication in their workplace.

1.4.3 Suvarnabhumi Airport

Suvarnabhumi Airport refers to the one of the international airports that serves the Bangkok Metropolitan Region. It is one of the largest international airports in Southeast Asia, as well as a regional aviation hub.

1.4.4 English Speaking and Listening Skills

English speaking and listening skills refer to the English communication skills required of all ground passenger service workers at Suvarnabhumi Airport, including speaking and listening.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study aims to investigate several issues with English communication regarding the English listening and speaking skills of ground passenger service staff at Suvarnabhumi Airport. The data for this study was gathered from 30 ground passenger service staff working for various airlines at Suvarnabhumi Airport.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be beneficial to ground passenger service staff in terms of improving their English communication skills, including listening and speaking. The objective of this research is to identify English difficulties with communication in ground passenger service.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study was divided into five chapters as follows:

1.7.1 Chapter 1

Chapter one contains the introduction, research objectives, research questions, definition of terms, scope of the study, significance of study and organization of the study.

1.7.2 Chapter 2

Chapter two provides a review of literature related to the study.

1.7.3 Chapter 3

Chapter three presents the study's research methodology and data analysis in detail.

1.7.4 Chapter 4

Chapter four discusses the study's findings.

1.7.5 Chapter 5

Chapter five contains the conclusion, discussion, limitations of the study and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study aims to examine the barriers to English listening and speaking communication among ground passenger service staff at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Samut Prakarn, Thailand. In order to acquire sufficient background information for the investigation, the relevant literature and research were reviewed. This chapter is divided into six parts, as follows.

2.1 Communication Purposes for Ground Passenger Service Staff

The primary goal of communicating with foreign travelers is to ensure that passengers have what they need and want. Face-to-face contact is the first step in the encounter, which starts at check-in counter and ends at the departure gate. This shows the professionalism of ground passenger service staff while performing their responsibilities. In the business world, good and smooth communication builds trust, goodwill, and reputation (Talukder, 2012). Effective communication at the beginning of a contact is essential for maintaining passengers' positive perceptions of a company's image (Jain, Mukherji, and Sethi, 2009). Ground passenger service staff have to demonstrate excellent English listening and speaking skills when communicating with international passengers from around the globe in order to effectively interact with them and provide the best services possible. According to Davidoff (1994), communication services are classified as follows.

2.1.1 Informative

Ground passenger service relies heavily on communication. They must use information to meet the needs and desires of passengers by speaking and listening.

2.1.2 Emotion

The exchange of information among several individuals is known as communication. Emotions play a vital role in interpersonal communication as they can be effectively transmitted between individuals. Various physiological activities,

including facial expressions, agreement expressions, and behaviors, are utilized as means to express emotions. This emotional expression is of utmost importance in communication. When it comes to passenger service, it is crucial to cater to their individual needs and expectations on a personal level. Failing to address emotions adequately during interactions with passengers can lead to potential issues and subsequent complaints.

2.1.3 Motivation

It is critical to meet passengers' demands. Highly motivated ground passenger staff have a tendency to communicate more freely to their managers or superiors, providing suggestions or paying attention to guidance.

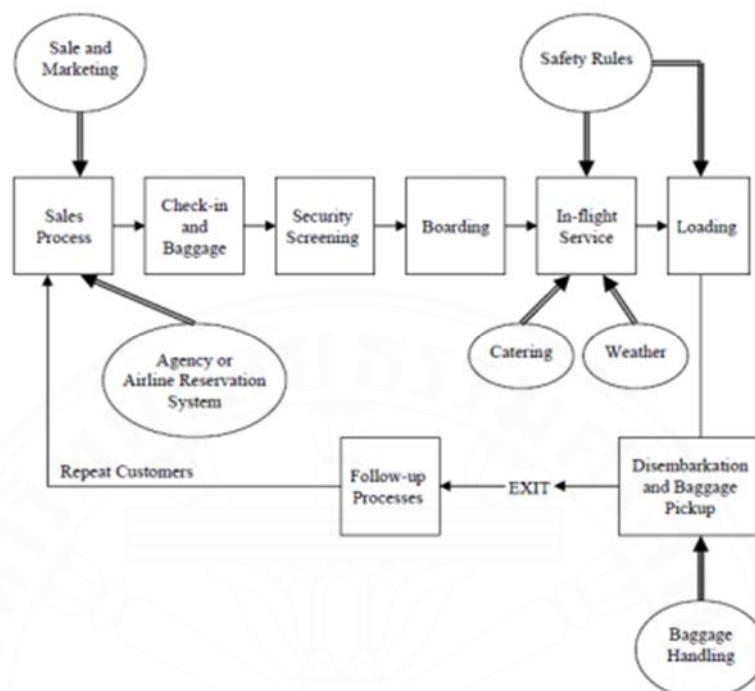
2.1.4 Control

Communication has the power to influence people's movements, behaviors, and reactions to a particular situation. Ground passenger service staff should make every attempt to accommodate passengers' requests. When ground passenger service listens to what passengers need and want, it makes them feel valuable and strengthens their connection with the organization.

2.2 English Communication in the Airline Industry

According to Davidoff (1994), ground passenger service staff are customer-contact personnel for an international airline. Ground passenger service staff must be able to communicate in English in order to provide the best service and deal effectively with passengers from all over the world. Many airline occupations demand English communication, whether among coworkers or with passengers. English communication for ground passenger service staff is unquestionably important to the success of any service. The majority of service is just the processing of information, which requires effective communication, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Figure 2.1
The Process of Air Transportation Services



Davidoff (1994) illustrates a service delivery system for air transportation as a flowchart used by the broader tourism and hospitality business.

English language competence was concern in the aviation business even before the establishment of the language proficiency requirements. Kutz (2000) argues that airline management had already recognized the significance of English competence in communication in terms of the air crash accidents that occurred as far back as in the 1980 and 1990. They also assert that good English communication skills are able to be completed through basic writing skills (grammar, spelling and punctuation) and interpersonal relationships.

In 2008, Beijing Capital International Airport Corporation made it compulsory for their ground passenger service staff to undergo intensive English communication course training. The Beijing International airport did not achieve a high ranking despite being one of the busiest airports in Republic of China. One of the issues highlighted was the poor English communication skills of the ground passenger service staff at the airport. They are also needed to communicate effectively in English with international

passengers all around the world and make them feel free and comfortable during their time at the airport (Ting, 2010).

Besides the ground passenger service, flight attendants also regularly communicate with passengers. They are also recognized as the brand ambassadors of the airlines. Hence, they need to communicate well in English while serving passengers in the aircraft (Xiaoqin & Wenzhong, 2016). Flight attendants should make sure that their English competence is satisfactory and not cause any miscommunication when dealing with passengers in the aircraft.

To properly interact with passengers and colleagues, the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) requires flight attendants to be able to speak, read, and write a specified common language. Furthermore, they must comprehend aviation-related communication as well as proper terminology. As a result, in order for persons who do not speak the same language to interact with one another and avoid misunderstandings and confusions, English is employed as the international language in the aviation business. In any case, their English language proficiency must meet the requirements for efficient communication.

The development of proficiency assessments for ground passenger service was also investigated by Barbieri (2014). Barbieri mentioned that many airlines have applied the evaluation of ground passenger service staff and flight attendants. Ground passenger service staff also communicate with government officers, airlines service providers, and other international organization to confirm that all operations are fulfilled.

In the context of the tourism and hospitality industry, it was essential to define and understand the key terms "service" and "hospitality." The airline job responsibilities were regarded as services, encompassing the concept of a service relationship between the passengers as guests and the ground passenger service staff as hosts. This dynamic interaction established the social role of ground passenger service staff in coordinating among the passengers.

According to Powers (1992), "services" encompass not only the actions performed but also the reactions experienced by clients after making a purchase. In terms of hospitality, people provided services to the guests. From the clients' perspective, a service involves the performance of an organization and its employees.

It is important to note that both the guests and the employees have a personal investment in the service transaction. Additionally, Baker and Huyton (2001) defined "hospitality" as a business and financial commitment to engage in a service relationship that focuses on providing comfort, convenience, social interactions, and enjoyable experiences related to accommodation and entertainment, which are appreciated by the guests or clients.

2.3 Speaking Skills

For ground passenger service staff, speaking is the most important language competence. To be a good communicator, they must communicate with passengers. One of the uses of language that can be utilized to communicate with others is speaking. According to Fulcher (2003), speaking is a process that often goes unnoticed in communication. It involves using language skills to express words and convey emotions through verbal expression (Hornby, 1995). Brown (2007) emphasized the importance of social interaction in interactive language functions. The way something is said carries more significance than the actual words used, as it encompasses nonverbal cues such as body language, gestures, and eye contact. English holds particular importance in various industries as it serves as a common language for speakers of different native tongues. Underwood (1989) identified several components of speaking, including sounds, stress and intonation patterns, speech structure, grammar, vocabulary usage, and the influence of foreign accents.

2.4 Listening Skills

Listening skills are the abilities that enable a person to be a competent speaker (Underwood, 1989). This is an important ability to which ground passenger service staff must pay attention in order to elaborate on what the passengers has stated. According to Galvin and Terrell (2001), listening is an active action that includes hearing, processing, assessing, and responding to a message. Floyd (2011) defines listening as the process of hearing verbal symbols with care, comprehension, appreciation, and interpretation in order to gather information, capture the content or message, and comprehend the meaning of communication offered by the reader through

speech or spoken language. Underwood (1989) defines the hindrances to listening skills as a lack of control over the speaker's speed, inability to ask for repetition, listeners' limited vocabulary, difficulty with interpretation, and a failure to concentrate.

2.5 Communication Barriers

According to Buarqoub (2019), human communication is a vital process of social participation that plays a significant role in our daily lives. This interaction involves the exchange, transfer, and sharing of ideas, information, experiences, beliefs, concepts, facts, and emotions between individuals as senders and receivers. The existence and survival of individuals, groups, societies, and cultures rely on effective communication. Language serves as a universal tool for communication and plays a crucial role in establishing strong interpersonal connections. Language barriers in international businesses, such as the airline industry, hotel and accommodation, and travel agencies, can significantly impact their operations.

When examining the Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), it was found that nearly 70% of the initial 28,000 reports received were linked to communication issues. Inadequate communication practices pose a major global risk to aviation safety and security (Durey et al., 2005).

2.6 Previous Related Studies

This section is a review of nine previous related studies that explored the barriers of English language skill in the workplace.

Akkakoson (1994) conducted an investigation of the English use for business communication in top Thai companies. The participants of this research were 17 human resource management agents at a total of 15 Thai companies, which were classified into three levels: 1) high-level companies; 2) middle-level companies; 3) low-level companies. According to research findings, English is an important instrument for international business communication. All four abilities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) were essential. A majority of employees were required to speak English. High-level company human resource managers believed that all four abilities were required of supervisory level workers, while only listening and speaking skills were

useful for junior level staff. Human resource management agents in middle-level companies believed that only listening and reading were important to the supervisory level, whereas human resource management agents in low-level companies believed that listening, speaking, and writing were important.

Ketkeaw (1997) investigated Thai Airways International flight attendants' English needs. A questionnaire was used to gather data, which was evaluated in the form of percentages, frequencies, and means using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows). This study looked into whether English usage was highly significant among flight attendants. Most of the time, listening and speaking abilities were required. Thai flight attendants had only minor issues with the four competencies. All male and female flight attendants should work on improving their listening and speaking abilities the most. Meanwhile, all cabin chiefs and in-flight managers must increase all four abilities to a moderate to advanced level.

Meemark (2002) investigated the English language needs and barriers for Thai tourist police. The findings revealed that all Thai tourist police officers required all four skills in the English language, which included listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The most important skill was listening, which was the first concern. In terms of specific English classes, the majority of Thai tourist police need extensive English training courses taught by an equal number of Thai and English native teachers. English listening and speaking abilities, as well as grammar and vocabulary, should be stressed in English training sessions.

Dejkunjorn (2007) investigated the demand for English-speaking among Thai pilots. According to the study, the majority of Thai pilots' English language abilities were "moderate." They also rated English as extremely significant, stating that hearing and speaking abilities were largely required, while the difficulties in using the four skills were moderate. Thai pilots required the most improvement in their listening and speaking skills, and they regularly made mistakes onboard.

Prachanant (2012) conducted a requirements analysis study on the English language used in the Thai tourism industry. The participants in the study were 40 tourist staff from five worldwide tourism organizations. The questionnaires were designed to obtain data on the demands and impediments to English use in the tourism industry. The majority of tourist staff regarded all four English skills as extremely important. The

findings suggested that because this type of business is prevalent in Thailand, more tourism staff have recognized the significance of using English communication skills. They ranked speaking ability as the most crucial, followed by listening, writing, and reading. These abilities are always employed to guide, assist, communicate with, and provide useful services to tourists.

Bulphong (2003) investigated language learning methodologies used by numerous hotel receptionists in Thailand in regard to their English listening and speaking abilities. It revealed that the primary barriers to English listening and speaking was a lack of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary understanding.

Lumchan (2004) found that incompetence regarding the use of appropriate grammar, jargon words, specific words, idioms, and unfamiliarity with pronunciation might be the main communication obstacles among Thai and foreign co-workers in an international shipping company.

Phitakphongphan (2016) researched the English language skills needed by ground passenger service staff of Air Asia Airline at Phuket International Airport. The study focused on the four English skills — listening, speaking, reading, and writing — that ground passenger service staff used in their jobs. According to the findings, Air Asia ground passenger service staff needed speaking and listening skills the most among the four English skills, followed by reading and writing skills.

Permtanjit (2003) identified three categories of issues related to English communication among flight attendants. These issues encompassed language functions or situational English, English usage, and language difficulties encountered by Thai flight attendants. The survey highlighted that the most crucial language communication skills for Thai flight attendants were listening and speaking in English. In-flight service also required the use of polite language and words. Several factors contributed to the difficulties faced by flight attendants, including English not being their first language, the influence of the Thai language on their English, and the time constraints during flights, which limited opportunities for pronunciation checks.

1. Problems concerning language functions (situational English). The following five items represented the types of problems encountered in this category:

1.1 Boarding, welcoming passengers, and farewells Respondents indicated that this function rarely posed a problem. However, they expressed concerns about "Taking care of passengers who are assigned to the same seat number."

1.2 Checking for safety before taking off and landing Respondents also considered this function to be rarely problematic. Their main concern was requesting passengers to turn off electronic devices that could interfere with the aircraft's navigation system.

1.3 In-flight beverage and meal service Beverage and meal service were regarded as rarely problematic. However, respondents were particularly concerned about handling requests from passengers who wanted multiple beverages simultaneously. Respondents also highlighted challenges in responding to passengers' requests for unavailable meal options and encouraging passengers to choose alternative meals.

1.4 Form distribution Respondents rarely encountered issues in this function. However, they expressed concerns about explaining customs, immigration, and quarantine regulations to passengers.

1.5 Unanticipated and emergency situations Respondents rarely faced problems in this function. Dealing with passenger complaints and managing passengers who consume excessive alcohol were the most worrisome aspects.

2. Problems concerning English usage. Permtanjit (2003) identified three types of problems within this category:

2.1 Problems regarding vocabulary use Respondents considered this type of problem to be rarely encountered. The most serious concern was technical terms related to food. Other issues included technical terms specific to airline services, beverage-related terminology, and the use of incorrect or inappropriate expressions or words. Respondents faced challenges when explaining various types of food and their cooking processes.

2.2 Problems regarding language structure Respondents rarely encountered issues related to language structure. However, they expressed concerns about using incorrect tenses, sentence patterns, pronouns, and prepositions of place and position.

2.3 Problems concerning pronunciation This category included four problems. Two problems were considered moderately problematic by respondents: unfamiliarity with passengers' accents and speaking with inappropriate stress or tone. The other two problems were mispronouncing specific consonants and mispronouncing particular vowels (a, e, i, o, and u).

3. Language problems encountered by flight attendants. Permtanjit (2003) identified five major areas of linguistic difficulties, which are as follows:

3.1 Communication with passengers with unfamiliar accents, particularly those from countries like Singapore, Australia, Bangladesh, India, and Japan, posed challenges for flight attendants.

3.2 Communication with passengers who had limited or no knowledge of English. The inability to communicate effectively due to language barriers was a significant hurdle.

3.3 Difficulty in speaking appropriately and politely, potentially leading to passenger frustration.

3.4 Inability to provide accurate answers to guests' questions on topics not covered in the basic training course, such as booking, connecting flights, VAT refunds, and ground services.

3.5 Requirement to use technical words and vocabulary related

Previous related studies found that English usage in the workplace varies depending on the employment field. In terms of ground passenger service staff, the

requirements for English usage must be considered in order to meet the demands of the employees in terms of gaining language skills, including speaking and listening. Organizations may need to provide language training so that employees can properly utilize the language in real-world settings.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the English communication barriers of ground passenger service staff at Suvarnabhumi Airport. This chapter consists of four sections: participants, research instruments, data collection and analysis procedures. The details are as follows:

3.1 Participants

The participants in this research consisted of 30 ground passenger service staff who were working in various airlines at Suvarnabhumi Airport, Samut Prakarn, Thailand. A simple random sampling method was employed for this study. All of passenger service staff were permanent airline employees.

3.2 Research Instruments

A questionnaire was utilized as the instrument to gather data on the impediments to English communication. The questionnaire was written in English and divided into three sections.

Part I: General information. The objective of the first section was to collect general information of all respondents at Suvarnabhumi Airport, including their gender, age, level of education, working experience, and TOEIC score.

Part II: The main factors which affected English communication of participants. This section was divided into two parts (speaking and listening skills). A questionnaire was designed with close-ended statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not affected), 2 (slightly affected), 3 (somewhat affected), 4 (quite affected), to 5 (highly affected). Ten items asked about the barriers to spoken English communication, and ten items related to English listening barriers. This part was adapted from a needs analysis questionnaire regarding the English oral communication of passenger service agents by Phattharanit Pannuan (2018).

Part III: This part was an open-ended question. All participants were asked to share their perspectives regarding the improvement of their English speaking and listening skills.

3.3 Data Collection

The designed questionnaire was given to thirty ground passenger service at Suvarnabhumi Airport during their breaks. Respondents were instructed to respond the questionnaire with truthfulness. The researcher then collected their responses.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed and calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The demographic data of the respondents were reported by mean range. A five-point Likert scale was used to rate the main factors which affected English communication of participants. Based on the Likert criterion (1932), the following scores were calculated to determine the amount in agreement and disagreement:

Scale	Level of Agreement	Mean Range
5	Highly affected	4.21-5.00
4	Quite affected	3.41-4.20
3	Somewhat affected	2.61-3.40
2	Slightly affected	1.81-2.60
1	Not affected	1.00-1.80

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter examines the study's findings by answering two major research questions.

1) What are the main factors affecting English speaking for ground passenger service staff?

2) What are the main factors affecting English listening for ground passenger service staff?

The questionnaire findings were divided into three parts: general information of ground passenger service staff, the level of problems in English listening and speaking skills, and suggestions on how to improve English listening and speaking skills.

4.1 General Information of the Respondents

This part presents the general information concerning the demographic data of 30 ground passenger service staff who were working at Suvarnabhumi Airport. The information regarding gender, age, educational level, working experience, TOEIC score was analyzed and is presented as percentages, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

General Information

General Information	Number of Participants	%
Gender		
Male	13	43.33
Female	17	56.67
Prefer not to say	0	0
Age		
20-30 years	9	30.00
31-40 years	15	50.00
	4	13.33

41-50 years	2	6.67
51-60 years		
Educational level		
High school certificate	0	0
Vocational certificate	0	0
Bachelor's degree	24	80.00
Master's degree	6	20.00
Other (Please specify)	0	0
Working experience at Suvarnabhumi Airport		
1-5 years	12	40.00
6-10 years	13	43.33
Over 10 years	5	16.67
TOEIC score		
Below 300	2	6.67
300-600	13	43.33
Over 600	15	50.00
Total	30	100

As shown in Table 4.1, the portion of male participants was 43.33%, while that of the female participants was 56.67%. The highest number of participants was the group of 31-40 years old (50%), followed by the group of 20-30 years old (30%), 41-50 years old (13.33%) and 51-60 years old (6.67%). The majority of the participants had a bachelor's degree (80%), followed by a master's degree (20%). The majority had worked at Suvarnabhumi Airport for 6-10 years (43.33%), followed by 1-5 years (40%) and over 10 years (16.67%), respectively. The majority of the participants had a TOEIC score of over 600 (50%).

4.2 The Level of Problems in English Speaking and Listening Skills

This part examined the overall problem level in the English speaking and listening skills of ground passenger service staff while communicating in English

during their duties. Using a five-point Likert scale, participants were asked to rate their English speaking and listening difficulties. The data is presented as means (\bar{X}) and standard deviations (SD).

Table 4.2

Speaking Skill

Speaking Skill	\bar{X}	SD.	Level
1. Welcoming and greeting passengers	2.07	1.44	Slightly Affected
2. Asking for passengers' information	2.07	1.34	Slightly Affected
3. Providing what passengers need and want	2.20	1.45	Slightly Affected
4. Clarifying passengers' questions and/or repeating messages	2.33	1.27	Slightly Affected
5. Giving information about flight to passengers and/or flight attendants	2.13	1.31	Slightly Affected
6. Giving passengers directions	2.10	1.30	Slightly Affected
7. Resolving complaints	2.27	1.23	Slightly Affected
8. Making public announcements	2.17	1.09	Slightly Affected
9. Dealing with passengers in case of any irregularities	2.43	1.38	Slightly Affected
10. Cooperating with other foreign airline staff	2.30	1.37	Slightly Affected
Total	2.21	1.30	Slightly Affected

Table 4.2 demonstrates the level of English speaking problems. The information was based on the level of agreement rated by the participants of this study. The findings of this study indicated that the problem of dealing with passengers in case of any

irregularities was rated highest (\bar{X} =2.43), followed by clarifying passengers' questions and/or repeating messages (\bar{X} =2.33), and cooperating with other foreign airline staff (\bar{X} =2.30). However, welcoming and greeting passengers and asking for passengers' information were equally rated as the lowest score (\bar{X} =2.07) by all of the respondents. In addition, the total mean score of the level of problems in English speaking skills was 2.21 (slightly affected).

Table 4.3*Listening Skill*

Listening Skill	\bar{X}	SD.	Level
1. Understanding passengers' needs and wants	2.37	1.54	Slightly Affected
2. Understanding passengers' complaints	2.47	1.53	Slightly Affected
3. Understanding what flight attendants request and need	2.40	1.45	Slightly Affected
4. Understanding what managers request and assign	2.50	1.38	Slightly Affected
5. Understanding the accents of passengers from various countries	2.90	1.24	Somewhat Affected
6. Understanding technical aviation terms	2.37	1.35	Slightly Affected
7. Understanding AOT announcements	2.50	1.33	Slightly Affected
8. Understanding passengers' satisfaction	2.47	1.33	Slightly Affected
9. Understanding foreign colleagues	2.40	1.38	Slightly Affected
10. Understanding what other airline staff need and want	2.57	1.33	Slightly Affected
Total	2.49	1.38	Slightly Affected

Table 4.3 demonstrated the level of problems in terms of English listening. The information was based on the level of agreement rated by participants of this study. The findings of this study indicated that the problem of understanding the accents of passengers from various countries was rated highest ($\bar{X}=2.90$), followed by understanding what other airline staff need and want ($\bar{X}=2.57$), understanding what managers request and assign and understanding AOT announcements ($\bar{X}=2.50$). However, understanding passengers' needs and wants and understanding technical aviation terms were equally rated as the lowest score ($\bar{X}=2.37$) by all of the respondents. In addition, the total average mean scores of the level of problem in English listening skills was 2.49 (slightly affected).

Table 4.4

The Level of Problems in English Speaking Skill of Ground Passenger Service Staff with Different Levels of Working Experience

Speaking skill	1-5 years		6-10 years		Over 10 years	
	\bar{X}	SD.	\bar{X}	SD.	\bar{X}	SD.
1. Welcoming and greeting passengers	2.67	1.67	1.69	1.11	1.60	1.34
2. Asking for passengers' information	2.50	1.62	1.92	1.12	1.40	0.89
3. Providing what passengers need and want	2.75	1.66	1.92	1.19	1.60	1.34
4. Clarifying passengers' questions and/or repeating messages	2.67	1.44	2.23	1.09	1.80	1.30
5. Giving information about flight to passengers and/or flight attendants	2.50	1.51	1.92	1.12	1.80	1.30
6. Giving passengers directions	2.50	1.62	1.92	1.04	1.60	0.89
7. Resolving complaints	2.67	1.37	2.15	1.14	1.60	0.89

8. Making public announcements	2.50	1.17	2.15	0.99	1.40	0.89
9. Dealing with passengers in case of any irregularities	2.83	1.53	2.38	1.33	1.60	0.89
10. Cooperating with other foreign airline staff	2.58	1.78	2.23	0.93	1.80	1.30
Total	2.62	1.49	2.05	1.09	1.62	1.03

In terms of respondents with 1-5 years of work experience, the problem of dealing with passengers in case of any irregularities was rated the highest score ($\bar{X}=2.83$), followed by providing what passengers need and want ($\bar{X}=2.75$), as well as welcoming and greeting passengers, clarifying passengers' questions and/or repeating their messages, and resolving complaints ($\bar{X}=2.67$). However, the problem of asking for passenger's information, giving information about flights to passengers and/or flight attendants, and making public announcements were equally rated the lowest ($\bar{X}=2.50$).

For the respondents with 6-10 years of working experience, the problem of dealing with passengers in case of any irregularities was rated the highest ($\bar{X}=2.38$), followed by clarifying passengers' questions and/or repeating their messages, cooperating with other foreign airline staff ($\bar{X}=2.23$), resolving complaints and making public announcements ($\bar{X}=2.15$). However, the problem of welcoming and greeting passengers was rated the lowest ($\bar{X}=1.69$).

For the respondents with over 10 years of experience, the problem of clarifying passengers' questions and/or repeating their messages, giving information about flight to passengers and/or flight attendants and cooperating with other foreign airline staff equally had the highest mean score ($\bar{X}=1.80$), followed by welcoming and greeting passengers, providing what passengers need and want, giving passengers directions, resolving complaints and dealing with passengers in case of irregularities ($\bar{X}=1.60$). However, the problem of asking for passenger's information and making public announcement were rated the lowest ($\bar{X}=1.40$).

In summary, when the three groups of respondents with diverse job experiences were compared, it was discovered that the highest mean score of the problems in

English speaking was dealing with passengers in case of any irregularities ($\bar{X}=2.83$) as rated by respondents with 1-5 years of working experience. However, the lowest mean score ($\bar{X}=1.40$) was asking for passengers' information and making public announcements, as rated by respondents with over 10 years of working experience. Most of respondents with over 10 years of experience were not affected in every dimension, as they had the lowest total score ($\bar{X}=1.62$) among the three groups of respondents.

Table 4.5

The Level of Problems in English Listening Skill of Ground Passenger Service Staff with Different Levels of Working Experience

Speaking skill	1-5 years		6-10 years		Over 10 years	
	\bar{X}	SD.	\bar{X}	SD.	\bar{X}	SD.
1. Understanding passengers' needs and wants	2.83	1.85	2.23	1.24	1.60	1.34
2. Understanding passengers' complaint	2.92	1.78	2.31	1.32	1.80	1.30
3. Understanding what flight attendants request and need	2.83	1.70	2.23	1.24	1.80	1.30
4. Understanding what managers request and assign	3.00	1.54	2.23	1.17	2.00	1.41
5. Understanding the accents of passengers from various countries	3.17	1.34	2.85	1.14	2.40	1.34
6. Understanding technical aviation terms	2.75	1.48	2.23	1.24	1.80	1.30
7. Understanding AOT announcements	2.83	1.59	2.31	1.11	2.20	1.30
8. Understanding passengers' satisfaction	2.75	1.66	2.31	1.11	2.20	1.10

9. Understanding foreign colleagues	2.75	1.66	2.23	1.17	2.00	1.22
10. Understanding what other airline staff need and want	2.75	1.66	2.62	1.04	2.00	1.22
Total	2.86	1.57	2.35	1.15	1.98	1.19

In terms of respondents with 1-5 years of work experience, the problem of understanding the accents of passengers from various countries was rated the highest score ($\bar{X}=3.17$), followed by understanding what manager request and assign ($\bar{X}=3.00$) and understanding passengers' complaints ($\bar{X}=2.92$). However, the problem of understanding technical aviation terms, understanding passengers' satisfaction, understanding foreign colleagues and understanding what other airline staff need and want were equally rated as the lowest score ($\bar{X}=2.75$).

For the respondents with 6-10 years working experience, the problem of understanding the accents of passengers from various countries was rated the highest score ($\bar{X}=2.85$), followed by understanding what other airline staff need and want ($\bar{X}=2.62$) and understanding passengers' complaints, understanding AOT announcements and understanding passengers' satisfaction ($\bar{X}=2.31$). However, the problem of understanding passengers' needs and wants, understanding what flight attendants request and need, understanding what managers request and assign, understanding technical aviation terms and understanding foreign colleagues were rated the lowest ($\bar{X}=2.23$).

For the respondents with over 10 years of experience, the problem of understanding the accents of passengers from various countries had the highest score ($\bar{X}=2.40$), followed by understanding AOT announcements, understanding foreign colleagues ($\bar{X}=2.20$), understanding what managers request and assign, understanding foreign colleagues, and understanding what other airline staff need and want ($\bar{X}=2.00$). However, the problem of understanding passengers' needs and wants was rated the lowest ($\bar{X}=1.60$).

In short, it is worth noting that understanding various accents was the most problematic among respondents between 1-5 years of working experience as seen from

the highest mean score of 3.17, while the least problematic issue was understanding passengers' needs and wants among the respondents with over 10 years of working experience, with a mean score of 1.60.

Regarding part III — the suggestion (s) on how to improve speaking and listening skills — most of the respondents who had 1-5 years of working experience expressed that they will practice English skill by reading English newspapers, watching an international movie on YouTube and listening to international music. Meanwhile, the respondents who had over 10 years of working experience intended to learn more about the accents of passengers from various countries.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the conclusion and discussion of the major findings, the limitations, and the recommendations for future study.

5.1 Summary of the Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the main factors affecting English speaking and listening for ground passenger service staff in terms of various aspects, including the working experience of respondents. A questionnaire was utilized to gather data in this study, and it was divided into three parts.

Part 1 General information of the respondents

Part 2 The level of English problems both in speaking and listening communication skills

Part 3 Opinions and suggestions from respondents on how to improve their English communication skills, both speaking and listening

The participants of this study included thirty ground passenger service staff who were working at Suvarnabhumi Airport. Most participants were female (56.67%). The majority of the participants were in the 31-40 age range (50%), and 80% of the participants had obtained a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, 43.33% of the participants reported having working experience of 6-10 years, while 40% of them had working experience of 1-5 years; 16.67% of them had experience of over 10 years.

Regarding the English speaking problem of ground passenger service staff, dealing with passengers in case of any irregularities was indicated as the biggest problem. However, welcoming and greeting passengers and asking for passenger's information were equally indicated as the smallest problem. In terms of the English listening problems of ground passenger service staff, understanding the accents of passengers from various countries was indicated as the biggest problem. However, understanding passengers' needs and wants and understanding technical aviation terms were equally indicated as the smallest problem. When comparing the three groups of respondents with different working experience regarding English speaking skill,

dealing with passengers in case of any irregularities was indicated as the largest problem by respondents with 1-5 years of working experience. However, asking for passenger's information and making public announcements was indicated as the smallest problem by respondents with over 10 years of working experience. Regarding English listening skill, understanding the accents of passengers from various countries was indicated as the largest problem by respondents with 1-5 years of working experience. However, understanding passengers' needs and wants was indicated as the smallest problem by respondents with over 10 years of working experience.

The questionnaire was used to collect data in this investigation. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the questionnaire in order to discover the main factors affecting English listening and speaking communication for ground passenger service staff and to answer the research questions in this study.

5.2 Discussion

The first part of this section summarizes the major findings, based on the two research questions. The conclusion regarding the level of English problems in both speaking and listening while performing their jobs is then discussed.

5.2.1 Research Question 1: What are the Main Factors Affecting English Speaking of Ground Passenger Service Staff?

In terms of English speaking of ground passenger service staff, the findings of this study indicated that the problem of dealing with passengers in case of any irregularities was rated the highest ($\bar{X}=2.43$). The irregularities can be found in every day duties, such as check-in problems, system problems, baggage lost and found, immigration problems, etc. Meanwhile, the problems related to welcoming and greeting passengers and asking for passenger's information were rated the lowest ($\bar{X}=2.07$). The findings showed that the respondents of this study mostly faced problems with English speaking when dealing with passengers in face-to-face communication.

Regarding working experience, this study found that junior staff who had 1-5 years of working experience faced problems dealing with passengers in case of irregularities with the same mean score ($\bar{X}=2.83$) as 6-10 years of working experience.

Meanwhile, senior staff who had work experience of over 10 years did not think that this was a big problem.

Tangniam (2006), who conducted a study on the analysis of English language requirements for Thai Airways ground passenger service staff, reached similar conclusions. The research findings highlighted that communication skills, particularly in dealing with international passengers and offering apologies, were of utmost importance. Pugdeeyothin (2014) conducted a needs analysis to enhance English language proficiency at Thailand's Royal Forest Department. The study emphasized that face-to-face communication was a critical aspect of effective communication. Additionally, Charinsri (2011) highlighted the significance of English speaking skills for front office staff to address client needs, resolve problems, provide directions, offer assistance, and communicate with customers over the phone. Effective communication and successful task performance by ground passenger service staff are essential to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction, which is a primary responsibility within the airline industry.

5.2.2 Research Question 2: What are the Main Factors Affecting English Listening of Ground Passenger Service Staff?

In terms of the English listening of ground passenger service staff, the findings of this study indicated that the problem of understanding the accents of passengers from various countries was rated the highest ($\bar{X}=2.90$). As the passengers who use the services of airlines come from various countries, ground passenger service staff face this problem at work. Meanwhile, the problem of understanding passengers' needs and wants and understanding technical aviation terms was rated the lowest ($\bar{X}=2.37$). The findings showed that the respondents of this study mostly faced English listening problems when dealing with passengers from various countries. Also, they were unable to comprehend what they heard from foreign passengers.

Regarding working experience, the study found that all the respondents in the three groups (1-5 years, 6-10 years and over 10 years) had a problem understanding the accents of passengers from various countries. As they need to deal with many foreigners, it is inevitable that they will have to listen to various accents and interpret passengers' messages about what they want and need.

The findings of this study align with those of Phithakphongphan (2016), who examined the English language requirements of airline ground passenger service staff. It was found that a crucial requirement for all ground passenger service staff is the ability to listen effectively to basic information, such as personal details and seat allocation, in order to ensure passenger satisfaction. Additionally, Fahmongkolchai (2011), in a study on the needs and challenges faced by CIMB Thai bank tellers in English listening and speaking skills, emphasized the importance of these skills for effective communication with international customers.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study were as follows:

1) Close-ended statements were used to collect the data in this investigation. Other areas of English listening and speaking communication may be problematic for the respondents. The researcher did not conduct an in-depth investigation of other factors affecting English listening and speaking.

2) The study focused only on the main factors affecting the English speaking and listening skills of ground passenger service staff. Actually, other problems in terms of English reading and writing skill are encountered on their jobs.

3) The study only focused on participants who worked at Suvarnabhumi Airport. If the researcher had collected data from ground passenger service staff who worked at other domestic airports in Thailand, other factors affecting English communication might have been found.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1) Conducting interviews: Future studies could benefit from incorporating interviews to gather more comprehensive information, thereby enhancing the reliability of the study's conclusions.

2) Emphasizing reading and writing skills: Further studies may consider placing emphasis on other aspects of English communication, such as reading and writing, to explore additional factors that may affect the communication abilities of ground passenger service staff.

3) Including diverse airport settings: Future studies could involve ground passenger service staff from different Thai airports to obtain a broader range of problem-solving outcomes and insights into English communication. Ground passenger service staff at domestic airports in Thailand may face unique factors that differ from those at Suvarnabhumi Airport.

In conclusion, this study's findings shed light on the primary factors influencing English speaking and communication skills among ground passenger service staff. The research provides valuable information for the management team of the company, enabling them to design English language training courses or implement methods aimed at improving the English listening and speaking skills of ground passenger service staff in the company, as well as individuals within this specific ground service sector.



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The image features a large, faint watermark of the Thammasat University seal in the background. The seal is circular and contains a central emblem with a lotus flower and a crown, surrounded by Thai script and the English text 'THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY'.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed for a graduated research project in Master of Arts in Career English for International Communication at Thammasat University. The objective of this questionnaire is to examine the barriers in English listening and speaking of ground passenger service staff. Your response will be kept anonymous and used solely for this study.

Part I: General Information

Instruction: Please answer the following questions.

1. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2. Age

- 20-30 years
- 31-40 years
- 41-50 years
- 51-60 years

3. Educational level

- High School certificate
- Vocational certificate
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Other (please specify)

4. Working experience at Suvarnabhumi Airport

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- Over 10 years

5. TOEIC score

 Below 300 300-600 Over 600**Part II:**

To what extent does your speaking English communication skill affect you in each of the following area regarding your job?

Speaking Skill	Highly Affected 5	Quite Affected 4	Somewhat Affected 3	Slightly Affected 2	Not Affected 1
1. Welcoming and greeting passengers					
2. Asking for passengers' information					
3. Providing what passengers need and want					
4. Clarifying passengers' questions and/or repeating messages					
5. Giving information about flight to passengers and/or flight attendants					
6. Giving passengers directions					
7. Resolving complaints					

8. Making public announcements					
9. Dealing with passengers in case of any irregularities					
10. Cooperating with other foreign airline staff					

To what extent does your listening English communication skill affect you in each of the following area regarding your job?

Listening Skill	Highly Affected 5	Quite Affected 4	Somewhat Affected 3	Slightly Affected 2	Not Affected 1
1. Understanding passengers' needs and wants					
2. Understanding passengers' complaints					
3. Understanding what flight attendants request and need					
4. Understanding what managers request and assign					
5. Understanding the accents of passengers from various countries					
6. Understanding technical aviation terms					

7. Understanding AOT announcements					
8. Understanding passengers' satisfaction					
9. Understanding foreign colleagues					
10. Understanding what other airline staff need and want					

Part III:

Suggestion(s) on how to improve speaking and listening skills.

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