



# **THAI TOUR GUIDES' PERCEPTION TOWARD ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

**BY**

**MR. ANURAK VANSOOK**

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN CAREER ENGLISH FOR  
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION  
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE  
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2021  
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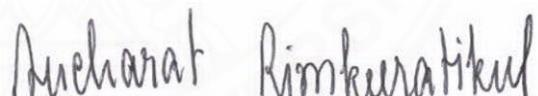
ENTITLED

THAI TOUR GUIDES' PERCEPTION TOWARD ENGLISH  
COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Chairman



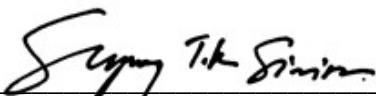
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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the perception level of Thai tour guides toward English communication skills and to examine the main problems of Thai tour guides' English communication skills. The study concentrated on speaking and listening abilities. The instrument of this research is an online questionnaire which contains both closed-ended questions with five-point Likert scales and opened-ended questions. It was used to explore the perception level of Thai tour guides toward their English oral communication ability and to investigate which English oral communication skills of Thai tour guides must be improved. The sample of the study were 45 Thai tour guides who use English communication when they lead international tourists. The researcher used a convenience sampling to recruit the participants from tour companies.

The findings revealed that the majority of tour guides in this study were divided into two groups; 26-30 and over 50 years old. For those who were 26-30 years old, their work experiences ranged from 0 to 4 years. For those working for over 50 years old, an average working experience was more than 10 years old. The majority of their customers were from Asia. Overall, the respondents had a high perception level toward English speaking skills with a 3.88 mean score, and had a high perception level toward English listening skills with a 3.89 mean score.

**Keywords:** Thai tour guides' perception, English communication skills



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 Background of study**

Currently, Thailand's tourism industry generates high income for the country due to an increasing number of international tourists every year (MOTS, 2019). In response to the increased number of incoming tourists, travel agencies offer a lot of package holiday tours to attract those tourists. One key factor for each package tour is to provide efficient tour guides along with the tour. Tour guides not only provide the best services for the tourists, but they also need to communicate in English about their local culture along with being friends with the incoming tourists.

English is a worldwide language for international people to communicate. Consequently, having a high proficiency of English is necessary for tour guides to communicate with international tourists (Richards, 1985). However, many Thai tour guides still have problems in English for oral communication. To communicate effectively for their career, Thai tour guides need to improve and develop their speaking and listening skills (Bobanovic & Grzinic, 2011). Although there are quite a lot of studies about the English of tourism workers, studies in Thailand of tour guides in particular are less available.

To identify the perception of Thai tour guides who work in the central part of Thailand toward their English communication skills is the purpose of this study. This is important because, without knowledge of valued customers in tourism, i.e. international tourists, on-point development of local Thai tour guides might not be possible. The specific areas of interest are Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Kanjanaburi and Ratchaburi because these are main tour destinations for Thailand.

A questionnaire was designed as the research instrument by asking perceptions of Thai tour guides toward English communication skills. It was used to reply these two research questions:

- 1) What are Thai tour guides' perception toward English communication skills?

2) What are the major problems of Thai tour guides in English oral communication?

The outline of this study comprises three sections. The first part describes the reasons for the survey in this study. The second part is the analysis of relevant theories and previous related studies. The third part is the methodology of conducting the study and data analysis. The fourth part is the results of the study and interpretation of the research finding, and the final part is the conclusion and further studies.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1.2.1 What are Thai tour guides' perceptions toward English communication skills?

1.2.2 What are the main problems of Thai tour guides' English oral communication skills?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

1.3.1 To survey the perceptions of Thai tour guides toward English oral communication skills.

1.3.2 To find out the main problems in English oral communication of Thai tour guides

## **1.4 Definition of Terms**

The definition of the terms of this study is as follows:

1.4.1 Perception refers to recognition, interpretation of sensory information and encouragement into significant meaning

1.4.2 Tourist refers to foreigners who visit Thailand and use tour guides during the trip

1.4.3 Thai tour guide refers to Thai people who are licensed by the Tourist Department to lead foreigners traveling in Thailand

1.4.4 Oral communication skills refer to speaking ability

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This research focused only on Thai tour guides' perceptions toward English communication skills, i.e. only speaking and listening skills. These skills were examined in the questionnaires because a tour guide always uses these two skills to communicate with the international tourists. Furthermore, the study is limited to examining 45 tour guides. An online questionnaire was created on Google Form and was distributed to all participants through their LINE application account.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this research will help the tour companies to understand the perceptions of Thai tour guides toward their English speaking and listening abilities. It is useful to evaluate the performance of Thai tour guides so that they can understand how professional they are in English communication and which English oral communication skills they should place an emphasis on, improve and develop in order to communicate with foreigners effectively and increase their satisfaction. Besides, the result of the study will be beneficial for the tour companies assigning jobs to Thai - English speaking guides who work in the central part of Thailand.

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The research is organized into five chapters as follows:

Chapter One introduces the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, definition of the terms, scope of the study and significance of the study.

Chapter Two is the literature review which includes the theory of effective oral communication skills, definition of attitude and related studies.

Chapter Three illustrates the research methodology which comprises respondents, the research instrument, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter Four presents the result of this research

Chapter Five is a summary of the study and findings, discussion, conclusion, limitation of study and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Chapter 2 begins by laying out the theoretical dimension of the research questions on Thai tour guides' perceptions toward English communication skills. The first section of this chapter explores concepts and definition revolving around effective oral communication skills. The second section examines English pronunciation problems of Thai tour guides. Finally, the chapter ends with related empirical studies.

#### **2.1 Perception definition**

Perception is a human's process of recognition, interpretation of sensory information and encouragement into significant meaning. As defined on <https://www.lexico.com>, perception is defined as the ability to see, hear or become aware of something through the senses. In term of senses, perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the presented information or environment (Schacter 2011). Moreover, perception is not only the passive receipt of these signals, but it's also shaped by the recipient's learning, memory, expectation, and attention (Gregory, 1987, p. 598). In addition, sensory input is a process that transforms this low-level information to higher-level information (Bernstein, 2010, pp. 123–124).

Tacca (2011) stated that perception and cognition are tightly related. Perceptual information guides our decisions and actions, and shapes our beliefs. Brewer and Lambert (2001) also pointed out that at the same time our knowledge influences the way we perceive the world.

There are many types of perception, for instance, visual perception, social perception and multimode perception. The target perception in this study includes speech perception and sound (hearing) perception.

##### **2.1.1 Speech perception**

Speech perception means the perceptual and cognitive process when speaking is heard, interpreted and understood. This is the best face to face

communication (Masaro, 2001). In addition, Masaro's (1998) study revealed conclusively that our perception and understanding are influenced by a speaker's face and accompanying gesture, as well as the actual sound of speech. Thus, speech perception is an important perception. A listener perceives sounds from multi conditions, and word sound can vary widely because the word was surrounded by speed speech, accent, tone, speaker's emotion and physical characteristics. Experiments have shown that people automatically compensate for this effect when hearing speech (Moore, 2019; Watkin, Raimond & Makin, 2010)

### **2.1.2 Sound perception**

Audition or hearing is competency to perceive sounds by experiencing vibrations. The auditory system is the sense of hearing. It composes three parts of ear which are outer, middle and inner ear. Sounds can be perceived by multidirectional sources. Moore (2009) stated that hearing involves the computationally complex task of separating out sources of interest, identifying them and often estimating their distance and direction.

## **2.2 Definitions of Attitude**

There are various definitions of attitude which have been considered by many authors. A tourist's attitude can reveal satisfaction, as it is the attitude of like and dislike (Bem, 1970, p.14). Moreover, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) viewed that "an attitude is a learned predisposition to respond to a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object (p.6).

Gordon Allport (1935) defined an attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related "(p.810) This study agrees with readiness, the main idea of Allport. It is making ready for behavior, the driving force to react in a particular mode to attitude object.

### **2.2.1 Cognitive attitude**

Wenden (1991) presented a fine concept of attitude by presenting a comprehensive definition, along with classifying attitude into three correlated

components, namely emotional, behavioral and cognitive components. He also mentioned that the cognitive component includes a persons' points of view, thoughts, belief and opinion towards the object.

The cognitive aspect of attitude is related to a persons' belief or perception towards certain knowledge and understanding the process of learning (Abidin et al., 2012). Therefore, he mentioned the process of cognitive attitudes in four ways, which are prior knowledge and new knowledge, developing the new knowledge, examining new knowledge and implications of new knowledge in various situations.

### **2.3 Effective oral communication skills**

The definition will focus on processing, understanding, and sharing; meaning tourists and tour guides understanding each other is effective oral communication skills. Hamilton mentioned that "communication is the process that people share their ideas, thoughts and feeling with each other in commonly understandable ways" (2014, p.4). It includes individuals conversing with each other. According to Glenn (1981, p.12), an effective oral communication is divided into three perspectives. Firstly, effective oral communication needs to be simple, and direct. Secondly, an effective communicator should have knowledge of the subject and have the abilities to say it well. Finally, effective communication needs to be useful for both speaker and receiver.

In the field of Thai tour guides who use English oral communication in their career, the study focuses on English oral communication which consists of two language skills which are speaking and listening abilities because both skills are main problems for Thai tour guides who use English as a foreign language. According to Leelaviriyawong (2017), pronunciation, confidence, English grammar and vocabulary of Thai vendors seemed to be the main problems when the respondents communicated in English with tourists in Bangkok. Additionally, Thai vendors could not follow the speed of speech from native English speakers.

#### **2.3.1 Speaking skill**

Speaking is a part of the significant communication skills. Torky (2006) claim that speaking is one of the basic language skills (among writing, reading, speaking, and listening) which is used frequently. It is the way that people often explicit

their opinions, intentions, and transmit information for achieve their goals. To be a good speaker, Florez (1999) pointed out some essential skills that the speaker should place an emphasis on as follows:

1. Speaking with correct grammar structure,
2. Choosing appropriate and understandable vocabulary
3. Using language strategies (emphasizing key words or rephrasing) to enhance the listener's comprehension.

Furthermore, when Thai tour guides and non-Thai tourists communicate in English, language barriers can happen during their conversation. Thai tour guides need to be aware of the potential problem because this can be the cause of misunderstanding and misinterpretation between people and lead to customers' dissatisfaction. Jitjenkarn (2011) stated that there are many language obstacles such as words choice, lack of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

1. Word choices: The speaker should select language with extreme care before communicating. Otherwise, the listener can misunderstand and interpret a word differently from what the sender intends to communicate. Moreover, the unfamiliarity with the word might make the listener react in the wrong way.
2. Lack of vocabulary: The limited size of vocabulary is another important language barrier. Lack of vocabulary of senders and receivers can lead to miscommunication of the whole message
3. Grammar: Communication with a lot of grammatical errors can be an obstacle between the speaker and listener. It can cause confusion and bewilder the listener's attention. Whereas, using the correct grammar in speaking and writing shows the positive and reliable image of the speakers.
4. Pronunciation: Stressing the wrong words or syllables leads to difficulties in understanding the meaning of the messages. Thus, correct pronunciation is an extremely important of communication and a key language skill.

### **2.3.2 Listening skill**

Effective listening is understanding clearly what a speaker intends to communicate. According to Howatt and Dakin (1974), listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. Furthermore Jitjenkarn (2011) stated that

hearing depends upon the ears, but listening uses the mind as well, and may even require the eyes.

Tyagi (2013) mentioned some tactics that are very beneficial in improving listening proficiency as follows:

1. Paying attention and showing attentiveness through body language. For example, you might lean forward slightly to the speaker when he/she is speaking.
2. Having the appropriate eye contact. It helps to show that you are a good listener and actually listening to what the speaker says.
3. Responding to the speaker to show your understanding by saying some words, using sound (um-hmm), or nodding your head.
4. If a speaker says something unclear, the listener should ask and paraphrase what he/she says in order to avoid the misunderstanding.
5. Do not interrupt while the speaker is talking

Consequently, exploring the attitude of international tourists toward Thai tour guides' English oral communication can indicate potential problems of Thai tour guides' communication. Then we will know ways of solving, improving and developing communication problems of Thai tour guides. Listening and speaking are evenly significant in the communication between Thai tour guides and international tourists. In order to communicate effectively tourists and tour guides require both good listening and speaking skills. This research, on both speaking and listening, will be useful for the tour companies to understand their tour guide' communication proficiency in order to maintain and increase the satisfaction level of the international customers.

## 2.4 Related studies

In this section, the literature involves empirical studies, which are related to English oral communication skills.

Leeviriyawong (2015) conducted an independent study on foreign tourists' satisfaction towards English oral communication with Thai vendors in Bangkok. He collected data from 100 foreign tourists, both male and female, who were visiting Khaosan Road. The study found that in terms of speaking skills, they gave the highest rank to speaking English confidently. On the other hand, they gave the lowest rank to

the pronunciation of Thai vendors. In terms of listening, they gave the highest rank to concentration on the conversation of Thai vendors. On the contrary, they gave the lowest rank to understanding their difficult words.

Jiranithiroj (2017) conducted research on foreign visitors' satisfaction toward the English oral communication skills of Thai staff at museums in Bangkok. She collected data from 120 foreign visitors who visited Jim Thompson House Museum and Rattanakosin Exhibition Hall during April 2018 and had some interactions with Thai museum staff. They were asked for their cooperation by completing the questionnaires with 29 questions after visiting these museums. The findings showed that, overall, foreign visitors had a high satisfaction level toward the English oral communication abilities in both speaking and listening skills of Thai staff at museums in Bangkok.

Jitjenkarn (2011) conducted research on satisfaction level of foreign customers toward English communication of Bank of Ayudhaya staffs. She collected data from 100 non-Thai customers who used services at the bank. The result revealed that the non-Thai customers satisfaction level were high in both skills (speaking and listening). The result pointed that the bank staff demanded English training classes for develop their English communication skills.

Paosuphan (2013) investigated communication problems between customer service officer and non-Thai customers, the study concentrated on speaking and listening abilities. She collected data from 30 customer service staff who worked in the Silom area. They usually deal with foreign customers. The result of study shows that customer service staff still wanted to improve their English skills even though they could communicate with their foreign customers.

Suntornsripitak (2015) conducted an independent study in perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok. She collected data from 57 MA second-year students at a public university in Bangkok. The study found that 1) the limited vocabulary knowledge was the biggest problem among five barriers; and 2) to improve students' fluency in speaking English, two major methods selected by most of the respondents were "Finding a job that allows them to use English speaking skills more" followed by "Practicing English speaking with Thai and foreigner friends" and "Watching movies in English with subtitles".

Chaiyapornnangkul (2013) studied international customers' satisfaction toward English oral communication ability of hotel's receptions at Shagari-la Bangkok. The researcher highlighted on English skills and cross-cultural communication. The subjects of this study were 100 foreign guests who stayed at the hotel. The result showed that the receptionists could speak English fluently, give clear directions, use the appropriate conversation format, and understand customers' English very well. Besides, overall customers were satisfied with the cross-cultural communication of the receptionists at a high level. The receptionists spoke English politely and friendly, always provided service with smile, reacted with the customers' complaints properly, understood customer's needs and never asked questions in an aggressive manner.

Witchaiyutphong (2011) conducted English barriers for Thai employees working in an international setting, a study at Thomson Reuters Company in Thailand. The participants were 100 Thai staffs from both the Bangkok office and Thomson Reuters. The findings revealed that English speaking is the most need to improve for Thai employees and lack of vocabulary caused main problem of their English communication. In terms of listening skills, the results showed that most Thai employees were unfamiliar with different accents and pronunciations. In addition, making grammatical mistakes was another barrier that obstructed speaking and writing skills of Thai employees.

Siwayingsuwan (2015) conducted a research on the needs and problems in English listening and speaking of tourist police officers at Suvarnabhumi airport. He investigated 50 participants who were Tourist polices in the area. The result found that the level of need of speaking and listening were high. Also, discovered that the most important listening activities for participant's career were listening to foreigner questions, complaints and conversation via phone.

In summary, all previous studies investigated communication skills in speaking and listening. The findings of some previous researches showed that the satisfaction level of non-Thais toward the English oral communication abilities of Thai hotel receptionists, airline staff and students are high. They can speak and listen to English fluently because they are well trained and have good educational backgrounds. However, one study showed that non-Thais were only averagely satisfied toward the English abilities of the Thai vendors who always communicate with the tourists. The

most important problem in communication between Thais and foreigners is pronunciation.

Although there were some previous studies involving foreign satisfaction towards English language of Thai people in different careers, studies of tourists' attitudes towards English oral communication with Thai tour guide are less available. Thus, it will be a good opportunity to see whether foreign tourists are satisfied with the English oral communication of Thai tour guides or not, and to find the main problems that obstruct communication between international tourists and Thai tour guides. Additionally, the results of the study will be useful for Thai tour guides to improve their English skills.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research was conducted to survey perceptions of Thai tour guides who service international tourists in the central part of Thailand. The main objective following the research questions examines the English oral communication ability of Thai tour guides.

This chapter illustrates the methodology used in data collection for this work, which includes: (1) Respondents, (2) Instruments, (3) Data collection, and (4) Data Analysis.

#### **3.1 Respondents**

The respondents of this study were 45 Thai tour guides who have to use English communication during working in Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Ratchaburi and Kanchanaburi.

The questionnaires were used to explore the perception level of Thai tour guides toward their English oral communication ability and to investigate which English oral communication skills of Thai tour guides must be improved.

The population of the study was approximately 45 Thai tour guides who use English communication when they lead international tourists. It was not possible to collect the data from all of the research population. The researcher needed to take a sample by using convenience samplings and make inferences about the rest of the population based on this sample. The researcher selected convenience sampling to recruit the participants from foreign tour companies.

#### **3.2 Research instrument**

The instrument of this research is an online questionnaire which contains both closed-ended question with five-point Likert scales and opened-ended questions. The questionnaire of this study was adapted from Jiranithiroj (2017) and Leelaviriyawong (2016) who investigated foreign visitors' satisfaction toward the English oral communication skills of Thai staff at museums in Bangkok and toward Thai vendors in Bangkok, respectively. The questionnaire is divided into three parts as follows.

### **Section 1: Personal information**

The first section is the general background information of the participants. There are 4 questions which constitute gender, age, region of their customer and work experience. The type of questions was multiple choice. The researcher asked these questions in order to observe the correlation of these variables with participants' perception.

### **Section 2: The perception level of Thai tour guide toward oral communication skills**

The questions in this part are about the English communication skills. The participants were requested to indicate the perception level of English speaking and listening abilities. The closed-ended questions with five-point Likert scales were created using the criteria as follows:

5 = Strongly agree

4 = Agree

3 = Neutral

2 = Disagree

1 = Strongly disagree

### **Part 3: Thai tour guide's comments and suggestions**

The last part is open-ended questions that allow the participants to write their own opinions toward Thai tour guide's English oral communication ability. It would help to understand more about the area of emphasis or improvement.

The data were collected by questionnaires to survey 45 tourists' attitude toward Thai tour guides 'oral communication and to find out which areas of English oral communication skills must be improved for Thai tour guides. The participants were required to answer the close-ended question about the oral communication of Thai tour guides and were required to recommend important skills that should be improved.

### **3.3 Data collection**

The study was conducted between 6 -10 April 2020. The online questionnaire was created on the Google Form website. All questionnaires were sent to 63 Thai tour

guides via the Line application to their accounts. Only 45 respondents completed the questionnaire. The weight of return was 71.42%

### 3.4 Data analysis

The data of each part were analyzed as follows:

Part I: General information is demographic data consisting of closed-ended questions. The questions generated an interval number of participants: ages, regions of tourist, and trip purpose.

Part II: Thai tour guides' perception towards English oral communication. This part consists of closed-ended questions with the Likert 5-point scale. The ordinal data were generated in terms of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The average score (mean) obtained from each item was interpreted into the degree of perception as show below

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Mean Score Range} &= \frac{\text{Maximum Score} - \text{Minimum Score}}{\text{Range}} \\ &= \frac{5.1 - 0.8}{5} \\ &= 5 \end{aligned}$$

Table 3.1. Five ranges scale value of English problems

| Scale Value | Level of Perception |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 4.21 – 5.00 | Very High           |
| 3.41 – 4.20 | High                |
| 2.61 – 3.40 | Moderate            |
| 1.81 – 2.60 | Low                 |
| 1.00 – 1.80 | Very Low            |

Part III: Main problems and suggestions when international tourists communicate in English with Thai tour guides. This part consisted of open-ended questions; therefore, the data was analyzed by using content analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This chapter informs the results of the study found on the perception questionnaire of 45 participants. The result was divided into three parts: 1) general information of participants; 2) the perception level of Thai tour guides toward English communication skills; and 3) respondents' comments and suggestions.

#### 4.1 General Information

In the first part, participants were asked 4 questions of general information which includes gender, age, their customers' region and work experience period. The data was calculated by frequencies and percentages.

Table 4.1. *Gender of participants.*

| Gender      | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------|-----------|------------|
| Male        | 20        | 44.4       |
| Female      | 24        | 53.4       |
| Not specify | 1         | 2.2        |
| Total       | 45        | 100        |

According to Table 4.1, the whole number of respondents were 45, with 20 males, 24 females and 1 did not specify gender. In other words, males accounted for 44.4%, females accounted for 53.4% and 2.2% of the respondents did not specify their gender.

Table 4.2. *Age of respondents*

| Age     | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|-----------|------------|
| 21-25   | 1         | 2.2        |
| 26-30   | 12        | 26.7       |
| 31-35   | 10        | 22.2       |
| 36-40   | 3         | 6.7        |
| 41-45   | 3         | 6.7        |
| 46-50   | 4         | 8.8        |
| Over 50 | 12        | 26.7       |
| Total   | 45        | 100        |

As shown in Table 4.2, there were two largest respondent groups with the same percentage (26.7%). The first age group was between 26-30 years old, and another group was over 50 years old. This is followed by 31-35 years old (22.2%), 46-50 years old (8.8%), 36-40 years old (6.7%), 41-45 years old (6.7%) and the smallest group was 21-25 (2.2%).

These findings mean that the majority of tour guides working in Thailand were middle-aged and older.

Table 4.3. *Majority of the respondent's customer region.*

| Region       | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Asia/Oceania | 27        | 60         |
| Europe       | 12        | 26.7       |
| America      | 6         | 13.3       |
| Africa       | 0         | 0          |
| Total        | 45        | 100        |

From Table 4.3, among the 4 regions of tourists that Thai tour guides worked for, the majority of respondent customers were from Asia (60%), followed by Europe (26.7%) and America (13.3). There were no African tourists reported by the tour guides in this study.

Table 4.4. *Tour guide experience*

| Working years      | Frequently | Percentage |
|--------------------|------------|------------|
| 0-2                | 19         | 42.2       |
| 2-4                | 14         | 31.2       |
| 4-6                | 1          | 2.2        |
| 6-8                | 1          | 2.2        |
| 8-10               | 0          | 0          |
| More than 10 years | 10         | 22.2       |
| Total              | 45         | 100        |

As Table 4.4 shows, the length of work experience of the respondents was divided into 6 groups. The largest group of this study is between 0-2 years (42.2%), followed by 2-4 years (31.2%), and more than 10 years (22.2%). Those working between 4-6 years and 6-8 years accounted for a similar proportion (22.2% each). There was no respondent working between 8-10 years.

We can conclude from the findings that the majority of tour guides in this study were divided into two groups; 26-30 and over 50 years old. For those who were 26-30 years old, their work experiences ranged from 0 to 4 years. For those working at over 50 years old, the average working experience was more than 10 years old. The majority of their customers were from Asia.

#### **4.2 Thai tour guides' perceptions toward English communication skills.**

The second part of questionnaire was created to measure the perceptions of Thai tour guides toward English oral communication skills. The focus was on English speaking and listening skills. It consists of fifteen close-ended questions with the Likert 5-point scale. The results are presented in frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation as follows

Table 4.5. *The Thai tour guides' perceptions toward English communication skills (speaking skills)*

| Statements<br>(Speaking skills)                             | Level of perception |             |             |            |           | Mean | SD    | Perception<br>level |
|---|---------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|------|-------|---------------------|
|   | SA                  | A           | N           | D          | Sd.       |      |       |                     |
| 1) I think I speak English fluently.                        | 10<br>22.2%         | 24<br>53.4% | 10<br>22.2% | 1<br>2.2%  | 0<br>0%   | 3.95 | 0.737 | High                |
| 2) I think I speak English with a clear pronunciation.      | 7<br>15.6%          | 22<br>48.9% | 15<br>33.3% | 1<br>2.2%  | 0<br>0%   | 3.77 | 0.735 | High                |
| 3) I think I speak English with the correct English grammar | 6<br>13.3%          | 15<br>33.3% | 18<br>40%   | 5<br>11.2% | 1<br>2.2% | 3.44 | 0.942 | High                |
| 4) I think I use correct and appropriate vocabulary.        | 4<br>8.9%           | 26<br>57.6% | 12<br>26.7% | 3<br>6.7%  | 0<br>0%   | 3.68 | 0.733 | High                |
| 5) I think my English accent is understandable              | 11<br>24.4%         | 25<br>55.6% | 7<br>15.6%  | 2<br>4.4%  | 0<br>0%   | 4.00 | 0.768 | High                |
| 6) I think I speak confidently                              | 14<br>31.1%         | 21<br>46.7% | 9<br>20%    | 1<br>2.2%  | 0<br>0%   | 4.06 | 0.780 | High                |
| 7) I think I speak with a proper speed.                     | 12<br>26.7%         | 19<br>42.2% | 11<br>24.4% | 3<br>6.7%  | 0<br>0%   | 3.88 | 0.884 | High                |
| 8) I think I use a proper tone of voice                     | 9<br>20.0%          | 21<br>46.7% | 13<br>28.9% | 2<br>4.4%  | 0<br>0%   | 3.82 | 0.805 | High                |
| 9) I think I make eye-contact during speaking.              | 16<br>35.6%         | 26<br>57.8% | 2<br>4.4%   | 1<br>2.2%  | 0<br>0%   | 4.20 | 0.842 | High                |
| 10) I think I use suitable gestures.                        | 12<br>26.7%         | 25<br>55.6% | 7<br>15.6%  | 1<br>2.2%  | 0<br>0%   | 4.06 | 0.719 | High                |
| Total   |                     |             |             |            |           | 3.88 | 7.945 | High                |

SA= Strongly agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, Sd= Strongly Disagree

Table 4.5 shows that, overall, the respondents were satisfied with their English-speaking skills. In terms of overall speaking skills, the respondents had a high perception level of 3.88 mean score. It was found that, on average, eye-contact and gestures were perceived by the participants as supporting their speaking the most ( $\bar{x} = 4.20$  and  $4.06$ , respectively). These were followed by the participants' high level on their confidence and accent in English speaking ( $\bar{x} = 4.06$  and  $4.00$ , respectively). It is interesting from the findings that, despite a high level of perception on gestures and confidence, participants had a lower level of perceptions on language components. These are pronunciation ( $\bar{x} = 3.77$ ), vocabulary ( $\bar{x} = 3.68$ ), and grammar ( $\bar{x} = 3.44$ ).

*Table 4.6. The Thai tour guides' perceptions toward English communication skills (listening skills)*

| Statements<br>(Listening skills)                          | Level of perception |             |             |            |         | Mean | SD    | Perception<br>level |
|---|---------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|---------|------|-------|---------------------|
|   | SA                  | A           | N           | D          | Sd.     |      |       |                     |
| 11) I think I understand my customers request or question | 10<br>22.2%         | 31<br>68.9% | 4<br>8.9%   | 0<br>0%    | 0<br>0% | 4.13 | 0.547 | High                |
| 12) I think I am familiar with my customers speech        | 9<br>20%            | 25<br>55.6% | 10<br>22.2% | 1<br>2.2%  | 0<br>0% | 3.93 | 0.719 | High                |
| 13) I think I understand my customers long sentences      | 7<br>15.6%          | 28<br>62.1% | 7<br>15.6%  | 3<br>6.7   | 0<br>0% | 3.86 | 0.756 | High                |
| 14) I think I understand difficult vocabulary             | 3<br>6.8%           | 19<br>42.2% | 16<br>36.4% | 7<br>15.9% | 0<br>0% | 3.40 | 0.836 | Moderate            |
| 15) I think I concentrate on my customers conversation    | 12<br>26.7%         | 29<br>64.4% | 3<br>6.7%   | 1<br>2.2%  | 0<br>0% | 4.15 | 0.638 | High                |
| Total   |                     |             |             |            |         | 3.89 | 0.699 | High                |

SA= Strongly agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, Sd= Strongly Disagree

Table 4.6 illustrates the perceptions level of the respondents toward their English listening skills. Overall, the respondents had a high perception level on communication abilities ( $\bar{x} = 3.89$ ). The findings revealed that the participants perceived themselves as good communicators. In other words, they reported they concentrate on a conversation with their customers ( $\bar{x} = 4.15$ ) and they understood their customers' requests or questions ( $\bar{x} = 4.13$ ). In terms of language components, the participants reported to have a high perception on customers' speech and long sentences ( $\bar{x} = 3.93$  and  $3.86$ , respectively), but they tended to have a difficulty in understanding customers' difficult vocabulary (with  $\bar{x} = 3.40$ ).

### **4.3 Thai tour guides' comment and suggestion.**

The last part of the questionnaire was open-ended questions to determine the main problems when Thai tour guides communicated in English with their customers, and their suggestions for improving themselves and other Thai tour guides' English oral communication skills. 35 respondents filled in the suggestion part and the results are as follows:

#### **4.3.1 Main problems Thai tour guides find when communicating in English with their customers**

The respondents reported that listening to a variety of accents of international customers was their major problem. Thai tour guides stated that they were not familiar with their customers' accents, different cultures, different words and different ways of speaking English.

Thai tour guides also reported to have a problem with understanding English native speakers if they use slang and dialects. Also, they had obstacles with speed, wrong grammar, and difficult vocabulary. On the other hand, some tour guides reported their own challenges in speaking with incorrect grammar and structure, wrong word order, the lack of vocabulary and their own accent and pronunciation.

### **4.3.2 Suggestions for improving your and Thai tour guides' English oral communication skills**

Suggestions from Thai tour guides were similar to the previous section. Most of them wanted to practice both skills (listening and speaking) by listening to different accents in English on YouTube and TV, learning English lessons from YouTube, watching English films for different pronunciations, practicing with foreigners, and practicing with friends by using English or typing in the English language via a phone chat. They also reported to want to practice English by thinking in English first, not in Thai first.

In addition, some tour guides recommended being relaxed and being yourself in English communication. They reported that good knowledge and information could assist tour guides fluently in storytelling, concentrating on customers' conversation and replying to customers with competence.

### **4.4 Summary**

From questionnaire's result the researcher found some strength points of Thai tour guides' English communication skills. The highest level of strength in speaking skill is that they made eye-contact during speaking to customers. For the listening skills, the highest level of strength is their concentration on customer conversations.

Thai tour guides also perceived their potential problems in English communication. The main problem is listening, especially when they listened to multiple accents of customers who came from different regions in the world. Also, Thai tour guides had problems when listening to slang and dialects from English native speakers.

Listening practice was perceived by the participants as the most important need to develop Thai tour guides' English communication problems. Most of them suggested to listen to English multimedia which was made by English native speakers and international producers such as YouTube or Netflix

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter consists of (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) discussion of the findings, (4) the conclusion, (5) limitation of study, and (6) recommendations for further research.

#### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

##### **5.1.1 Objective of the study**

This section summarizes the objectives, participants, instruments, and procedures of the study as follows:

The present study examines the perceptions of Thai tour guides' English communication skills, and investigates main English communication problems of Thai tour guides. The study focused on speaking and listening skills. Hence, the results of this study were discussed and interpreted to answer the research questions

- 1) What are perceptions of Thai tour guides' English communication skills?
- 2) What are the main English communication problems of Thai tour guides?

##### **5.1.2 Participants, Instruments, and Procedures**

The participants of this study were Thai tour guides who worked with international tourists at tourism spots around the central part of Thailand. The sample size was 45 participants selected by using the convenience sampling. The online questionnaire was conducted as the survey instrument of this research, and it consisted of closed-ended questions with five-point Likert scale and some opened-ended questions. The questionnaire was separated into three parts. The first part was general information of participants, consisting of 5 questions. The second part was the perception level of Thai tour guides' English oral communication skills, accounting for 15 questions. The last part consists of opened-ended question asking about the

participants' comments and suggestions. The questionnaire was approved by the advisor and the data collection was conducted during 6-10 April 2020.

The online questionnaire was created with the Google Form website. All questionnaires were distributed to 63 participants via Line application. The online questionnaire was operated for five days and 45 participants completed the online questionnaire. After that, the information from parts 1 and 2 was analyzed by the SPSS software in order to obtain the percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation to reveal perception level of Thai tour guides toward English communication skills. Part 3 was analyzed manually using thematic content analysis.

## 5.2 Summary of result

This section summarizes the objectives, participants, materials, and procedures of the study as follows

### 5.2.1 General information

The total number of the respondents was 45, and they were tour guides who work in the central part of Thailand. The results showed the majority of respondents were female (53.4%). In terms of tour guide's ages, those aged between 26 and 30 years were the majority group (26.7%). Asia and Oceania region was the largest group of Thai tour guides' customers (60%). Focusing on the number of years of work experience, most participants had been working as a tour guide for 0-2 years (42.2%).

### 5.2.2 Thai tour guides' perception toward English speaking skills

Referencing overall speaking skills, the respondents had a high perception level of 3.88 mean score. The result revealed that, on average, eye-contact was perceived by the participants as supporting their speaking the most ( $\bar{x} = 4.20$ ). Conversely, the result was found that, on average, grammar was perceived by the participants as supporting their speaking the least ( $\bar{x} = 3.44$ ).

### 5.2.3 Thai tour guides' perception toward English listening skills.

Regarding overall listening skills, the respondents had a high perception level of 3 mean score. The result revealed that, on average, the respondents had a high

perception level on communication abilities ( $\bar{x} = 3.89$ ). The findings revealed that the participants perceived themselves as good communicators. In other words, they reported to concentrate on a conversation with their customers ( $\bar{x} = 4.15$ ). Understanding difficult vocabulary earned the least satisfaction of the respondents ( $\bar{x} = 3.40$ ).

#### **5.2.4 Comments and suggestions from respondents.**

The respondents reported that listening to different accents of non-native English speakers was their major problem. Thai tour guides stated that they were not familiar with their customers way of speaking. Also, they reported to have a problem with understanding English native speakers if they use slang and dialects. Regarding suggestions for improving Thai tour guides' English communication skills, the respondents suggested that Thai tour guides need to practice English listening skills by listening to non-native speaking through multimedia, and watching clips from YouTube channels and conversation with foreigners.

### **5.3 Discussion**

This section associates result interpretation and implication. The results in prior chapter are discussed base on research questions to reach the objective of this study.

#### **5.3.1 Research question I: What are Thai tour guides' perception toward English communication.**

This research investigated the Thai tour guides' perception toward English listening and speaking skills when they operated in the central part of the country. Overall, the study found that the result of mean scores of both English skills were rather similar. Both skills had high perception scores overall. The result in the present study is in line with the result of Siwayingsuwan (2015) who investigated the Tourist Police officers' needs about using English listening and speaking skills which found that mean scores of each English language skill were high overall. Moreover, also similar to Jiranithiroj (2017) who examined the satisfaction level of foreign visitors toward the English speaking and listening skills of Thai Museum Staff at Museums in Bangkok, the study revealed that the satisfaction level of speaking and listening skills

were high. Referring to the two previous studies and this study, participants of all studies usually serviced foreigners and used English on their job every day. This could be a reason why their English listening and speaking scores were high for their careers. According to Mountford (1981) and Mackay (1978), the English language is a requirement for particular jobs. In addition, Moore (2012) explained that the requirement for English language in a career is one of the characteristics of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) or English for Occupational Purpose or EOP. However, the result in the present study contrasted with Leelaviriyawong (2015) who examined the satisfaction level of the foreign tourists towards English oral communication with Thai vendors in Bangkok. The respondents were moderately satisfied with the English speaking and listening skills of Thai vendors. The differences in terms of education and professional training might be an important reason why Thai tour guides, tourist police and museum staff received a higher satisfaction level in listening skills than Thai street vendors.

In terms of speaking skills, the result of this study showed that the respondents were giving the highest perception level to eye contact during speaking. This is similar to the study of Jiranithiroj (2017) who found that the respondents scored speaking with eye contact at a high satisfaction level. Eye contact is another signal to communicate to listeners. Hamilton (2014) stated that eye contact is a type of nonverbal signal. In addition, Jiranithiroj (2017) mentioned that, sometimes, nonverbal communication can help to interpret your words as well.

On the other hand, the results of this study revealed that the respondent was giving the lowest perception level to their own English grammar. The result in the present study is in line with Tipmontree's (2007). The findings reported that the majority problems of Thai staff who communicated with foreign customers were of low fluency and poor English grammar. Witchaiyouthong (2011) concluded the result in her study that wrong grammar usage is another barrier that limits most respondents in their writing and speaking skills.

In terms of listening skill, the result of this study reported that the respondents were giving the highest perception level to concentration on customer conversation. The result in the present study resembles to the result of Jiranithiroj's (2011) who found the respondent scored listening to respondent attentively as the

highest satisfaction. Consequently, when a listener listened to a speaker attentively, the speaker may feel satisfied with a successful communication. This is supported by Tyagi (2013) who mentioned that tactics are very beneficial to improving listening proficiency which include paying attention and showing attentiveness through body language.

However, the present study revealed that the respondent reported their lowest perception level to understanding difficult vocabulary. The result in the present study is similar to the result of Leeviriyawong (2015). It was found that the respondent gave the least satisfaction level to understanding difficult words. Thus, the lack of vocabulary is a cause of misunderstanding in English communication. According to Churunsri (2011), a great number of unknown words make people suffer when communicating with a native speaker. Hence, the problem of low ability of vocabulary understanding in communicators is an enormously cause of their English comprehensive.

### **5.3.2 Research question II: What are the main problems of Thai tour guides' English oral communication skills.**

In accordance with the second research question, Thai tour guides were asked to point out the main problems of English oral communication. The result of the open-ended question in this study revealed that the Thai tour guides' major problem of English communication was listening to a variety of accents of international customers. The result in this study is in line with the result of Witchaiyutphong (2011), with the results showing that most respondents perceived different English accents and pronunciation as barriers that block them from effective communication. Also, Thai tour guides stated that they were not familiar with their customers' accents, different cultures, different words and different ways of speaking English. McFarland, as cited in The Barriers to Effective Communication by Jain (2008), regarded how different languages, vocabulary, accents and dialects represents national or regional barriers

Furthermore, the present study also reported that the participants perceived to have a problem with understanding English native speakers if they use slang and dialects. The result in the present study resembles the result of Kaewman (2013), who found that some MEC students may lack experience in using slang or they are not exposed to English slang very much. In the same way, this factor might affect

the Thai tour guides too. They might not be familiar with English native speakers' slang and dialects because they don't have slang and dialect knowledge.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This study aimed to examine Thai tour guides' perception toward English communication and to find the main English communication problems of Thai tour guides. The results of the study revealed that the participants perceived their listening and speaking as contributing to their work the most. With regards to speaking, the participants reported eye contact as the most used skill, but their grammar was perceived as a major challenge. In terms of listening, a focus on listener's messages was reported to be a major strength, yet not understanding vocabulary used in listening was found to be a drawback. In addition to the results of the questionnaires, the participants also reported their needs in the open-ended questions. They reported to have a problem with various accents when they communicated with foreign customers. The stated solutions were practicing via English multimedia which are produced by native and non-native speakers.

#### **5.5 Limitations Of The Study**

The first limitation of this study was the type of participants. At first the research design was aimed at collecting data from international tourists, but unfortunately due to the Covid-19 epidemic from March 2020, the disease affected tourists around the world including international tourists who intended to visit Thailand. The country stopped the outbreak by employing a state quarantine during the study period, so during the study period, there were no tourists at tourism places, hence, the study needed to change its target participants to Thai tour guides in the central part of country.

The second limitation was data collection. A hand-in questionnaire was designed as the research instrument. Due to the work from home policy, the questionnaire was changed to an online questionnaire via a Google Form link sent to participants' LINE (software) accounts.

## 5.6 Recommendation for further research

5.6.1 This study only focused on the perception of Thai tour guides toward their English oral communication skills. Further research might examine the perceptions, attitudes or satisfaction of international tourists toward Thai tour guides' English communication skills in order to recognize international tourists' perception level. This might result in a different aspect which can be compared with Thai tour guides' perceptions.

5.6.2 This study was limited to those tour guides who work for companies in the central part of Thailand. The next study should cover more area in Thailand in order to gain more variety of tour guides' viewpoints.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **Thai tour guides' perceptions toward English communication skills**

This survey is a part of an independent study for Master's Degree in Career English for International Communication at the Language Institute, Thammasat University. It is designed to test the attitude of Thai tour guide toward English oral communication skills. Your answers will be saved confidential and will be used for research purpose only.

#### Part 1: General Information

Instructions: Please fill in the following questionnaire by ticking (✓) in the box or writing your answer in the space provided.

1. Gender  Male  Female  not specify

2. Age

|                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21-25   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26-30    | <input type="checkbox"/> 31-35   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 36-40    | <input type="checkbox"/> 41-45   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 46-50    | <input type="checkbox"/> Over 50 |

3. What is the majority of your customer region?

|                          |          |
|--------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Asia     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Europe   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | American |

Africa

Other .....

4. How long have you been work a tour guide?

0-2 years       2-4 years

5-7 years       7-10 years

More than 10 years

Part 2: Instructions: Please tick (✓) in the box of statement indicating the attitude level of international tourists' attitude toward Thai tour guide's English oral communication skills. There are five levels of satisfaction rating as follows:

5 = Strongly satisfied, 4 = Satisfied, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Dissatisfied, 1 = Strongly dissatisfied

| Statement  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Speaking skills</b>                                       |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1. I think I speak English fluently.                         |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. I think I speak English with a clear pronunciation        |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. I think I speak English with the correct English grammar. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4. I think I use correct and appropriate vocabulary          |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5. I think my English accent is understandable.              |   |   |   |   |   |
| 6. I think I speak confidently.                              |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7. I think I speak with a proper speed.                      |   |   |   |   |   |
| 8. I think I use a proper tone of voice.                     |   |   |   |   |   |
| 9. I think I make eye-contact during speaking.               |   |   |   |   |   |
| 10. I think I use suitable gestures.                         |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Listening skills</b>                                      |   |   |   |   |   |
| 11. I think I understand my customers request or question.   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 12. I think I am familiar with my customers speech           |   |   |   |   |   |

| Statement  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. I think I understand my customers long sentences   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 14. I think I understand difficult vocabulary          |   |   |   |   |   |
| 15. I think I concentrate on my customers conversation |   |   |   |   |   |

**Part 3: Comments and suggestions****Instructions: Please write down your answers**

16. What is/are the main problems you find when communicating in English with your customers?

.....  
.....  
.....  
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17. Please provide your suggestions for improving your and Thai tour guides' English oral communication skills.

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Thank you for your kind cooperation in answering the questionnaire.

## BIOGRAPHY

|                        |                                    |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Name                   | Mr. Anurak Vansook                 |
| Date of Birth          | April 13, 1979                     |
| Educational Attainment | 2004: Bachelor of Engineering.     |
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