ENGLISH COMMUNICATE WITH INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMERS: A CASE STUDY OF HOTELS EMPLOYEES IN THAILAND

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Abstract - With significant jobs, incomes, and employments depend upon the booming of tourism, ability to communicate in English is an essential of job functions for many hotel employees working in hotels all over Thailand. The purposes of this research was to investigate the level of English that were used by hotel employees, the ability of employees to understand international customers, how to communicate with their international customers in basic English and finally to seek out what kinds of English trainings do they need to improve their ability to communicate in basic English effectively. The research had developed survey questionnaire in order to collect data from 400 foreign tourists who had been staying in hotels in many major tourist destinations such as Bangkok, Chiang-Mai, Pattaya, and Hua-Hin, and other major tourist cities. Data analyses revealed that the majority of respondents were able to communicate in English with hotel employees at minimal level. Most of hotel employees can say only greeting and taking simple orders from the international customers.

Index Terms - English Training, International Customers, English Communication.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is a very successful business in terms of fast growth, however, English plays in important role in communication with foreign tourists. The high growth of tourism has influenced the need to obtain better training to improve employees at hotels and who are working in tourism and service industry to be able to communicate with international customers effectively (Wongleedee, 2013). Despite the fact that English is not the official language of Thailand, it is the second important language or business language of Thailand. The market often believes that strong candidates are always asked about their ability in English as well as the proof of their test score. In other words, it is common accepted that ability is a must and requirement of success in the job market. In comparison with the four or five stars hotels which have a proper training in communicate in English regularly, the employees in small hotel have to learn fundamental English by themselves and collecting more words from every day experience in the job.

The majority of students in primary schools and high schools often study English as a second language for many years. The focus of learning English is on the grammatical and comprehension reading, and less focus on writing, speaking and listening. The weaknesses of their English was due to the fact that the majority of teachers are not native English speakers or have a direct degree in the English teaching. This research aimed to put the focus on both sides of the communication which are employees of hotels and foreign tourists. The author of this research was interested in studying the level of satisfaction of ability in communicating in English from the perspective of foreign tourists who were staying at many different hotels all over Thailand.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea that every employees must be able to speak English and have possessed communication competency which is one of the most important areas that many teachers, professors, academicians, and educational policy makers are interested and often appears in the national debate. Clair (1991) stated that there were three communication principles. Communication competency includes grammatical and vocabularies knowledge, psycholinguistic knowledge, socio-culture knowledge, practical English usage knowledge (Hall, 1976). In the globalization era, ability to communicate better English serves as the ability to communicate in all over the world and inter cultural communication. Obviously, there is a rapid growth in high demand regarding the learning of English skills. The high demand of employees with ability in English means the high demand for proper training curriculums. English for specific purposes (ESP) is a system to identify the initial need for English communication and it is important to design English training to match with learners' specific needs and rational for learning (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In fact, the need to develop specific training program that suits for a particular group who have specific need in order to motivate them to learn effectively and be able to use their training knowledge to use directly in their everyday working hours.

ESP courses are widely used and accepted in Thai academic training and Thai educational system. The most common courses are business English, tourism English, service industry English, technical English, and major based training for specific purposes. In fact, the foundation of EPS is an approach to language training in which all decisions as to specific contents,

materials, and methods are based on the learner's reasons for learning (Hutchison & Waters, 2001).
ESP courses should be designed to improve certain language skills that are required to perform during the process of doing their jobs. In addition, learners of ESP courses are expected to enhance their English communication skills by practicing, role playing, and modelling in activities which requires the use of certain English skills. All this methods are important for training employees in hotels.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aims of this research paper were to conduct an investigation and to examine the ability of Thai employees, working in various hotels in many important tourist destinations in all regions of Thailand, to communicate with their foreign customers in basic English and also was to find out what kinds of English training do they need to improve their ability to communicate in basic English effectively. English survey questionnaire was designed and collected from 400 foreign tourists who had been staying in various hotels of major tourist destinations such as Bangkok, Chiang-Mai, Pattaya, and etc. This study was a case study of 400 hotel employees, Thailand. The population of this study included all employees who were working in hotels around Thailand during the year 2017.

IV. RESULTS

In order to answer the research objectives and questions, the demographic data first revealed that most of the foreign tourists who were staying in hotels in many different parts of tourist destinations in Thailand were men for 70 percent while the foreign tourists were accounted for 30 percent. In terms of their motive to travel and visit Thailand, the study revealed that pleasure or relaxation was about 55 percent, business or work related about 24 percent, education about 9 percent, and other.

Table 1. Foreign tourists' perception toward hotel' employee English communication skills

English Communication skills in	Mean	S.D.
mployees can communicate with you and understand your English.	4.34	.997
mployees can greet you with proper English and proper manner of the West	4.67	.563
mployees can speak to you with confidence in his ability in English.	4.41	.982
mployees can respond to you immediately with information in English.	3.74	.897
mployees can fully explain with long sentences of English and with highly accurate.	2.75	.993

Based on the results of table 1 regarding foreign tourists' perception toward hotels' employee communication skills, the findings revealed that the foreign tourists agreed that the majority of hotel' employee can greet them in English with the highest mean. Second, the foreign tourists rated the ability of hotels' employees to speak English with confidence and understand their request as the second in the rank. Third, the foreign tourists rated the ability of hotels' employees to communicate to them with fundamental English as the third in the rank.
From the in-depth interview with some of the hotels' employees, they were unable to speak to their foreign guests effectively at the level that they needed to communicate. They are in need of training to improve their English communication ability in order to provide more information about their activities, festivals, games, local products and services to foreign tourists. Moreover, they also need from experts to help them write some information in proper format of English such as menu, games, activities, including rules and regulations of using hotels' facilities. Printed media can be created with the need to explain some detailed of activities and information in proper English to make sure that foreign tourists can understand by reading themselves which will help both senders and receivers of the communication to understand each other better and save time and trouble from miscommunication. The service quality, however, is one of their strengths.

V. DISCUSSION

The result is very easy to understand since greeting in English is very easy to practice or train, therefore, the guest houses' employees can perform this task easily. Moreover, it is the friendly custom of Thai people to greet and try to make their guests happy. While the ability to explain about their activities and services requires these employees to explain large amount of information in English which require many long sentences of English. Therefore, it is hard for them to perform correct and try to explain effectively.

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