

ENGLISH COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES USED BY AIRLINE CHECK-IN  
GROUND STAFF


A THESIS  
BY  
PAVEENA KHANEEYOR

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts in Business English for International Communication  
at Srinakharinwirot University

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The purpose of this study is to identify the English language communication problems often faced by airline check-in ground staff and the strategies and factors that influenced them in terms of effective communication. Tourism in Thailand makes a significant contribution to the economy of the Kingdom and the airline industry has a direct impact on the tourism sector. Thus, the quality deliverables are the key measuring factor to sustain any competent airline in airline industry. The airline is a national and commercial Thai aviation company, whose quality depends on the factors of cost effectiveness, connectivity, services and of the foremost importance are the airline ground staff and the professionalism of the crew. As a widely used and preferred language, English is a primary language used along with their native language for the interaction between airline staff and passengers all over the world. The purposes of this study are to explore the communication problems and strategies as well as to identify the factors influencing their effectiveness in terms of communication in English of Thai airline check-in ground staff. The questionnaires were distributed to one hundred ground check-in staff and ten personal interviews were also employed in order to integrate and gather the information. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and mean were used to analyze the data. The results indicated that airline check-in ground staff have a moderate understanding of people from different nationalities and cultures. They also usually avoid any detailed conversations with passengers on flights to avoid the risk of confusion and misinterpretation which might be considered discourteous. The results indicated that different pronunciation and accents were the core problems often faced difficulties in terms of communicating with people from diversified cultures, particularly non-native English speakers. The results also indicated that there were positive influence in terms of power distance and long-term orientation, but with no significant influence of uncertain avoidance or collectivism in communication effectiveness. Furthermore, it was mentioned by the participants that the most frequently used communication strategies involved and primarily used by the participants to ask the customers for a written note about their verbal queries, followed by taking assistance from the colleagues or supervisors, calling translators for problems with limited English usage by customers to interpret their regional language.

ปัญหาการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษและกลยุทธ์ในการแก้ปัญหาของพนักงานฝ่ายบริการบัตรโดยสาร  
ของสายการบิน



บทรัดย่อ  
ของ  
ปวีณา คาน็ีโย

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา  
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อศึกษานานาชาติ  
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งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ในการศึกษาปัญหาด้านการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษที่พบบ่อยของพนักงานบริการบัตรโดยสารของสายการบินกลยุทธ์ และปัจจัยต่างๆ ที่มีผลกระทบต่อประสิทธิภาพในการสื่อสาร ในศตวรรษที่ 21 การคมนาคมขนส่งโดยเครื่องบินเป็นที่นิยมอย่างแพร่หลายสำหรับการเดินทางทั้งในประเทศและต่างประเทศ ซึ่งเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญสำหรับการส่งเสริมท่องเที่ยวของประเทศต่างๆ ในส่วนของการท่องเที่ยวประเทศไทยก็มีส่วนในการขยายเศรษฐกิจของประเทศ ดังนั้นอุตสาหกรรมการบินจึงมีผลกระทบโดยตรงกับการท่องเที่ยวของประเทศไทยเช่นกัน การส่งมอบการบริการที่มีคุณภาพเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในการรักษาให้สายการบินนั้นๆ มีอำนาจในธุรกิจนี้การบินพาณิชย์แห่งชาติของราชอาณาจักรต่างๆ ที่มีคุณภาพขึ้นอยู่กับประสิทธิภาพด้านต้นทุนการเชื่อมต่อการบริการและสิ่งที่สำคัญที่สุดคือพนักงานสายการบินที่ให้บริการอย่างมืออาชีพในด้านของภาษาที่ใช้กันอย่างแพร่หลายและเป็นที่ยอมรับใช้ในธุรกิจการบินคือภาษาอังกฤษ ซึ่งเป็นภาษาหลักที่ใช้ร่วมกับภาษาประจำชาติของประเทศเพื่อการปฏิสัมพันธ์ระหว่างพนักงานสายการบินและผู้โดยสารทั่วโลกการวิจัยครั้งนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาปัญหาและแนวทางในการสื่อสารรวมถึงการหาปัจจัยที่มีผลกระทบต่อประสิทธิภาพในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษของพนักงานตรวจสอบบัตรโดยสารของสายการบินในประเทศไทย

พนักงานต้อนรับภาคพื้นดินจำนวน 100 คนได้ทำแบบสอบถามและมีการสัมภาษณ์ส่วนตัวจำนวน 10 คน เพื่อเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลต่าง ๆ รวมทั้งแบบสอบถามได้ใช้สถิติ SPSS ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลซึ่งผลการวิจัยพบว่าพนักงานเช็คอินของสายการบินสามารถเข้าใจคนในชาติและวัฒนธรรมได้พอสมควรมีความสามารถในการปรับตัวโดยทั่วไปเมื่อต้องเผชิญกับการสื่อสารต่างๆนอกจากนี้ยังมีหลีกเลี่ยงการสนทนารายละเอียดกับผู้โดยสารที่บินเพื่อหลีกเลี่ยงความเสี่ยงจากความสับสนและการตีความผิดซึ่งอาจทำให้เกิดความไม่สุภาพกับผู้โดยสารผลการวิจัยพบว่าการออกเสียงที่แตกต่างกันและสำเนียงเป็นปัญหาหลักที่ต้องเผชิญกับการสื่อสารกับผู้คนจากวัฒนธรรมที่หลากหลายโดยเฉพาะกับผู้ที่พูดภาษาอังกฤษซึ่งไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษาผลการวิจัยยังแสดงให้เห็นอีกว่าอิทธิพลทางบวกของระยะห่างระหว่างหัวหน้าและลูกน้อง และการวางตัวเป่าในระยะยาวแต่ไม่มีอิทธิพลสำคัญต่อการหลีกเลี่ยงความเสี่ยง หรือความมีส่วนร่วมในด้านประสิทธิภาพในการสื่อสารนอกจากนี้ยังกล่าวว่ากลยุทธ์การสื่อสารส่วนใหญ่ที่เกี่ยวข้องและถูกใช้โดยผู้เข้าร่วมในการทำแบบสอบถามเป็นหลักคือ การขอให้ผู้โดยสารเขียนลงบน แทนการสอบถามด้วยวาจา ตามด้วยการขอความช่วยเหลือจากเพื่อนร่วมงานหรือหัวหน้างานและปรึกษาหรือเรียกล่ามแปลภาษาเพื่อขอความช่วยเหลือซึ่งอาจมีการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษอย่างจำกัดของผู้โดยสารที่ใช้ภาษาตามประเทศหรือภูมิภาคของตน

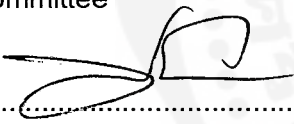
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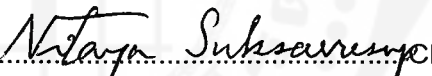
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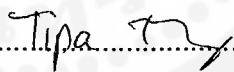
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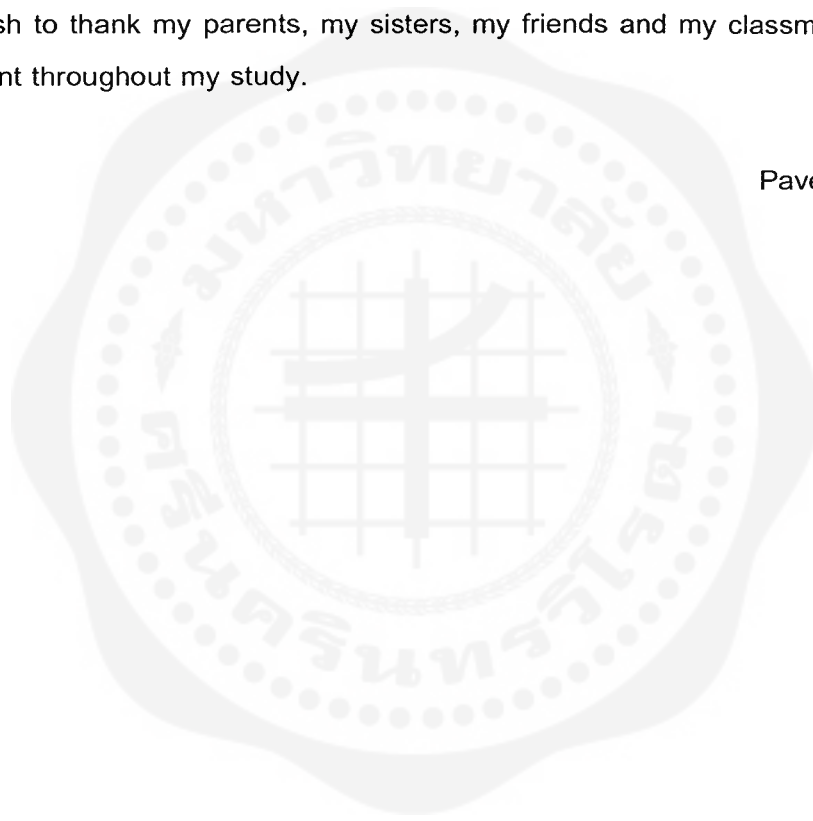
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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Introduction to the Study

The advent of globalization has changed the fundamental nature of communication; the business environment has become a borderless and worldwide network with advanced communication technologies. This in turn has made communication an even more essential part of the lives of people where English is used as an international language for communication. However, the differences in language skills and cultural influence may lead to communication problems among people from different geographical locations, as stated by Richmond and McCroskey (1991). Furthermore, different communication patterns, either verbal or nonverbal communication or both may result in misinterpretations, misunderstandings and/or confusion that influenced the perceptions and relations between people involved in these communications, particularly people from different cultures (Comstock, 1985). English is used all over the world and in Thailand, there is a high demand for using English in fields such as new technologies, business, education, science, and technological progress (Ella & Dapudong, 2014). According to Richmond and McCroskey (1991), communication across cultures involves not only differences in the language used, but also differences in terms of social attitudes and behaviors. Carr (1979) stated that communication is a process of the creation of meaning that meets the intentions of the senders, which are difficult to communicate without any errors. According to Dettmer, Thurston, and Dyck (1996), communication problems were the result of poor listening skills, poor semantic skills, the ambiguous use of verbal and nonverbal communication and different social circumstances can distort a message, which can cause negative results in the service outcome.

The airline industry is an important sector that helps to improve tourism in Thailand as well as overall economic conditions. The country is famous for tourism with many attractive destinations that fuel the positive growth of international tourists visiting the country as well as the positive growth of air traffic on domestic and international routes (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2016). In addition, the International Air Transport Association or IATA (2016) suggested that aviation was a critical aspect of the economic success of Thailand. The Thai aviation industry and related activities account for some two million jobs and generate \$29 billion in GDP. The industry is expected to create 3.8 million jobs and earn \$53 billion in GDP by 2035. The potential 83% growth would have a broad and positive impact on the Thai economy. The future of the Thai aviation market looks bright, with demand for growth, but competition is increasingly intense, which in turn has forced airlines to put

more emphasis on the aspects of service quality and cost management. With regard to the service quality between contact staff and customers, Permtanjit (2003) indicated that the listening and speaking skills of non-native English speaking staff were the most important language skills for contact staff, as well as job-related vocabulary and cultural differences, which were both important aspects of their work. Moreover, unfamiliar accents and pronunciation are two major areas for language difficulties. These issues were investigated with airline check-in ground staff as well as the impact of culture, perceived barriers, communication styles, and the communication strategies used were also explored in this study.

## **2. Statement of the Problems**

Effective communication supports good relationship between passengers and airline staff (Netsuwan, 2008). According to a study of English communication problems between information staff and foreign passengers at Suvarnabhumi Airport, it was found that the greatest difficulty experienced by information staff was grammatically incorrect sentences, but most of their problems as reported by the foreign passengers were using inappropriate words (Ibid).

While the contact staff plays a significant role in terms of showing their value to customers in communication scenarios, it is difficult to communicate without any mistakes. Therefore, it is important for service organizations to change and to improve communication styles and interaction with clients to effectively serve and support customers. Some of the major communication problems faced by contact staff in the airline industry include insufficient knowledge about job-related vocabulary, cultural differences, as well as a lack of experience with unfamiliar accents and pronunciation. As a result, the image of the service organization may be affected as it could be perceived that it provided unprofessional services. This study examines the important role that ground staff play in service interactions during pre-flight service. Therefore, it is important to identify communication problems at the check-in counters between airline ground staff and passengers and seeking solutions to problems to prevent any miscommunications. As a consequence, the results of this study can help develop English communication among Thai airline ground staff and help to recognize the problems and find solutions in the future.

### **3. Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this research were as follows:

- 1) To study the English communication problems between the ground staff of airlines and customers.
- 2) To identify the strategies of English communication problems for ground staff in dealing with English speaking passengers.

### **4. Research questions**

This research aimed to answer to the following questions:

- 1) What are the communication problems of airline ground staff?
- 2) What are the communication strategies for ground staff when dealing with English speaking passengers?

### **5. Significance of the research**

The airline business is a highly competitive industry in which a professional staff is required to provide a professional service. Due to the specificities of the workplace and time, communication between airline ground staff and passengers must be clear and understandable. To enhance the English language skills and the effectiveness of their interactions with passengers, Thai airline ground staff should improve their English communicative competence, especially listening and speaking. There are two expected benefits, which are as follows:

1. The findings may be beneficial to Thai airline ground staff because it will help to provide an understanding of the English communication problems which occur between airline ground staff and passengers. This can also raise awareness in the airline industry to consider improving the overall standard of English language and training for airline ground staff, which in turn may help to reduce existing problems and eliminate communication barriers between airline ground staff and passengers in the workplace.

2. The airline may use these findings as a guideline to help design appropriate training programs for Thai airline ground staff. Therefore, the significance of this research is to help staff to provide professional counter service, prevent or decrease problems with verbal communication to the minimum and learn about the most frequently occurring verbal communication problems to fully develop knowledge of the company services for customers, as well as to design a model syllabus as a learning tool for staff members.

## **6. Scope of the Study**

This study involved the adoption of both quantitative and qualitative research and the results were integrated for the purpose of interpretation. The quantitative research was performed with a questionnaire survey with one hundred respondents, while the qualitative research was conducted with in-depth personal interviews with ten participants. All of the respondents and participants in this study were on the ground staff of an airline at Suvarnabhumi Airport. The selection of respondents and participants were based on convenience sampling, with an emphasis on accessibility by the researcher and the willingness of the respondents to participate. The study was also limited in terms of exploring the barriers to cultural communication, English language problems, communication styles, and communication strategies for effective communication of Thai airline check-in ground staff.

## **7. Organization of the Study**

The structure of the study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one covers the background of the research and the statement of the problems. The research objectives are presented, the significance of the study is highlighted and the scope of the study, structure and thesis structure are explained in more detail. Chapter two elaborated on all the related research articles, texts and papers and discussed them critically. Chapter three reveals that the research methodology used as a platform to conduct this study. Chapter four includes an analysis of data presented in the form of graphics for a clear understanding and the outcomes of the analysis are presented in a systematic manner. Chapter five is the final chapter of this study that reveals the limitations of the study and future research possibilities in his area. It also presents a conclusion of the entire study.

## **8. Definition of Terms**

### **Airline ground staff**

In this study, the airline ground staff refers to airline employees who work at check-in counters, as well as the staff at the transfer and customer service counters.

### **Effective Communication**

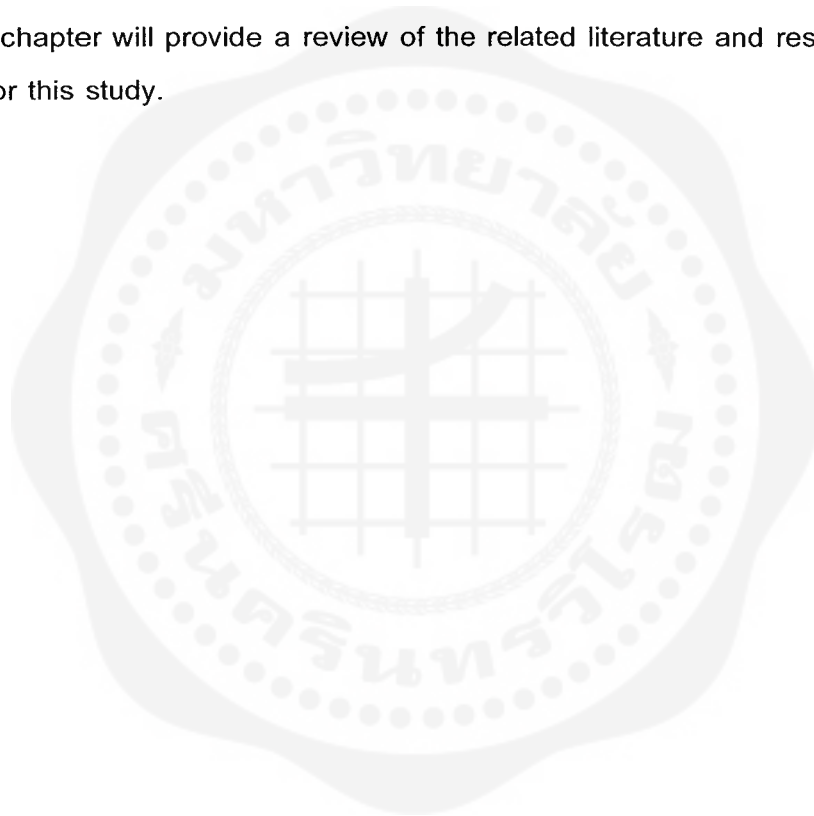
Effective communication, as defined by Keyton (2011), indicated the process of transmitting information and developing a common understanding between the ground staff and the customers.

**Verbal communication problem**

Verbal communication problems refer to the spoken words which a sender needs to send information or messages to a receiver, but are not successfully received. If messages fail to be clear and concise, it may result in conflict and confusion between the sender and the receiver.

**9. Summary of Chapter 1**

This chapter presented the research background, a statement of problems, research objectives, research questions, the significance of study, the scope of research and a definition of terms. The next chapter will provide a review of the related literature and research that will serve as a foundation for this study.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides a review of related literature and research, which served as the foundation of this study.

#### **1. Communication**

People can share their ideas, feelings, or information through communication so it is important to communicate effectively in order to prevent misunderstanding. Communication is a message sent by a sender to a receiver through the variety of channels (DeVito, 1986).

According to Keyton (2011), two common elements in every communication exchange include the sender who initiate communication and the receiver who decoded the received message into meaningful information. Communication may be considered effective when the receiver ends up with the same message that the source intended to send (Robock and Simmonds, 1989) because the message received by the recipient may not always be as intended. Some incidents that may occur during the communication process and confuse the meaning of the transmitted message. Following the suggestions of George and Jones (2006), communication may be more effective when the people involved share information with each other and that they clearly understood this information. Kreitner and Kinicki (2002) indicated that effective communication occurs when the medium is neither too rich nor insufficient for the intricacy of the problems or situations.

The effective communication between employees become very important because of the quality of communication and it is a reflection of the image of the corporation to its customers. In a study by Mehmet (2011), it was found that effective communication had a positive effect on building customer attachment to establishing and developing healthy relationships with customers. In other words, it can be implied that the best means for consumers to receive quality service is through the communication between service providers [airline staff] and the recipients of the service [airline passengers], as suggested by Headley and Choi (1992). Campbell and Finch (2004) claimed that effective communication influenced customer satisfaction, in which one of the key factors for success was effectiveness in handling customer complaints. Ahn, Han and Lee (2006) stated that communication skills are important for staff in terms of dealing with customers, in particular when information or messages should be clear and need to be communicated in the right way. A study by Cook (2000) suggested that communication between the service staff and the customers was about the beneficial information, together with friendly attitudes and courteous

behavior of staff members. Furthermore, Wall and Berry (2007) added that lowest level of customer satisfaction occurred when the customers perceived that the staff were unfriendly or unresponsive.

In conclusion, the ground staff of airlines play an important role in creating effective communication by creating a clear message and communicating appropriately about the usefulness of the information, as well as a friendly attitude and courteous behavior, which in turn will help to enhance customer satisfaction.

### **1.1 Functions of Communication**

For frontline service employees, effective communication required employee competence when interacting with customers. In addition, acquiring strong interpersonal communication skills benefited both individuals and organizations (O'Hair, 2008). In this sense, service providers can show their interest to customers by attracting and building long-term relationships with them and vice versa. Customers can also recognize that their demands are listened to attentively, which in turn affects the image and the reputation of the services provided by organizational services (Shukri Zain, 2001). As suggested by Ghanekar (2004), the role of communication can be divided into the following categories: informative, commanding and instructive, influential and persuasive and integrative functions.

In conclusion, the ground staff of an airline may engage in communication with informative functions for service orientation. In addition, ground staff often initiate communication not only to provide information, but also to be instructive in terms of communication. Furthermore, ground staff may need to engage in persuasive functions for the purpose of selling seat upgrades and other extra services. At the same time, they can also engage the integrative functions to handle customer complaints, which can be achieved through effective communication.

### **1.2 Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication**

The communication between ground staff and passengers often involves verbal and non-verbal communication. With regard to verbal communication, Vasavakul (2006) claimed that speaking and listening skills were considered the most necessary and were also more difficult than reading and writing, as rated by the service staff. He argued that the limitations in terms of conversation time was typically shorter than written communication. Gabbott and Hogg (2001) argued that non-verbal communication was more reliable than verbal communication as it is stimulated a subconscious need for emotional expression. For example, body language can actually communicate sincerity and commitment. They further added that failure to understand body language can result in 50% of the real message being lost. For these reasons, it is crucial for service organizations to ensure that the contact staff are aware of the impact of body language on daily communication. This is due to the fact that a better understanding of body language can lead to

increased rapport among customers and indirectly improved trust and productivity, such as making eye contact, smiling, and nodding movements have an impact on the perceptions and experiences of customers during service transactions as they help to enhance the speech of customers or in making an argument (Gregersen et al., 2009). Furthermore, the emotional expressions of service staff, such as facial expressions, which can be perceived as a direct reflection of their emotional state. For example, the smiles of employees may create a warm and comfortable feeling for the customer, as suggested by Neumann and Strack (2000). The basis of this would lead to the development of satisfactory relationships between service staff and customers during service interactions. However, the absence of this factor could indicate unfriendliness during service transactions and cause dissatisfaction among customers.

### **1.3 Communication as an Interpretive Process and Contextual Matter**

As an interpretive process, Clappitt and Downs (2010) suggested that messages can be transmitted from one person to another, but meaning cannot be passed from one person to another. In other words, message interpretation is subjective and may not be interpreted the same way by each person. In the case of communication between ground staff and passengers, both parties need to engage in message interpretation, in which the differences in experience, culture and other personal factors may lead to the misinterpretation of a communicated message.

With regard to the contextual matter of communication, Lauer (2012) stated that communication involved both a physical and a social context. For example, at check-in counter, the physical context refers to physical surroundings, including furniture, lighting and other physical objects in an open environment. On the other hand, social context refers to social relationships, hierarchies or the status of the communicating parties. Lewis (2010) provided a more detailed concept regarding the contexts involved in communication and categorized them into five types, which can be applied in the context of the working environment of the ground staff. First, the psychological context or the needs of the individuals, their personality, desires and other psychological factors. Second, the relational context that refers to the reactions of individuals towards others. Third, the situational context refers to places where the communication takes place in relation to psycho-social factors, such as the check-in counter. Fourth, the environmental context, similar to the physical context in that it deals with physical objects or settings. Lastly, cultural context or the beliefs and behaviors that an individual has inherited from their own culture. In this study, the research focused only on the psychological, relational, situational, and cultural contexts and ignoring the physical or environmental context of communication between ground staff and customers at the check-in counter.

In this study, the research focused on the psychological, rational, situational, and the cultural context while ignoring physical or environment context of communication between ground staff and customer at the check-in counter. This study did not focus on the personal beliefs and behaviors or cultural aspects, so it was not included in the questionnaire.

## **2. Communication and Situational Factors**

In terms of the check-in ground service staff mostly provided customer service as an organizational representative by offering a service or professional assistance in exchange for additional income for an airline or a corporation. John (1996) described the interactions between service staff and customers as an opportunity to develop or enhance relationships or even to assess the service quality. Thus, it is necessary to develop a mutual understanding of both individuals in the context of the service encounter. Durvasula et al. (2005) suggested that customer service encounters had different outcomes that were emphasized by service organizations, for instance, customer satisfaction, loyalty, relationships or service quality. They claimed that service employees played a significant role in determining the emotions or feelings of their customers. As a result, customer satisfaction will be high when they interact with helpful service staff members, as well as experiencing pleasant services, which in turn will further enhance the factors of customer relationships, perceived service quality, satisfaction and loyalty to the service organization.

Hoschild (1983) asserted that service employees have emotional labor jobs that require a particular emotional state. Miller (2006) suggested that service orientation organizations that want to increase their profitability and success to ensure that their frontline service employees can control their emotions when interacting with clients. This is because any emotional displays could result in a negative assessment of the factors of service quality, customer satisfaction, and relationships between customers and the service provider.

In a similar vein, Miller (2006) observed that service employees usually have to behave with clients according to the rules established by an organization, such as rules about emotional displays to tell individual employees whether or not and how to express emotion in professional interactions. An understanding of the rules for emotional display in the context of communication may help individuals to improve their relationships with customers. Usually, employees in frontline service are trained to demonstrate positive emotions towards customers during interactions and communications (Rafaeli, 1989). Focusing on a communication, Sutton and Rafaeli (1988) stated that positive emotional display is a presenting a warm outward demeanor during communication with

customers, in which greeting and thanking words, eye contact, and smiling with customers during the communication are example of positive ones.

### **3. English Language Problems in Communication**

English communication is an important skill for the ground service of an airline because English is commonly used as a means of communication with international passengers and other non-Thai speaking staff. The ground service staff carried out their pre-flight responsibilities for boarding and greeting passengers, and boarding assistance, in which English listening and speaking problems between ground service staff and passengers may lead to problems in the operation of airlines. For example, airline ground staff have to help and serve all passengers, so it is important to communicate in the correct way and make sure all of the passengers were satisfied with the airline services. In general, English listening and speaking problems were caused by many factors. Bulphong (2003) studied the language learning strategies used by Thai hotel receptionists in terms of developing their listening and speaking skills. This finding revealed a lack of knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar were major problems. This was similar to the study by Lumchan (2004), an inability to use correct grammar, technical words, idiomatic expressions and an unfamiliarity with pronunciation caused communication problems between the Thai staff and their foreign colleagues. In addition, Permtanjit (2003) stated that the main causes of communication problems among airline staff were a lack of job-related vocabulary knowledge, their accent and their pronunciation concerning English listening and speaking problems, where grammatical competence is vital for effective English listening and speaking.

In this study, grammatical competence, vocabulary, accent and pronunciation were further explored as the major causes of English language problems in the communication between ground staff and passengers.

#### **3.1 Grammatical Competence**

According to Canale and Swain (1980), grammatical competence can be defined as the ability to understand concepts including subjects, noun phrases and verb phrases. They further stated that without grammatical competence, it would be unlikely for people to understand syntax and the association of the wording of a sentence. Cook (1991) explained that grammatical competence involved a knowledge of language code regarding grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. However, Canale and Swain (1980) also pointed out that grammatical competence involved learning how to accumulate a wealth of information about language, but also the ability to use its rules to create understanding among people.

Following the suggestion of Canale and Swain (1980) and Cook (1991), it can be implied that a lack of grammatical knowledge may cause significant trouble for ground service staff when using English to transmit their intended messages. The inability to use correct tenses, pronouns and prepositions of place and time properly are examples of a lack of grammar knowledge, which may result in English communication problems. Moreover, the lack of grammar knowledge caused listening problems such as service ground staff were unable to distinguish between the tenses in a sentence which the passengers used and the flight attendants were unable to use basic expressions properly in terms of speaking problems. Therefore, this study was also investigated grammar problems in order to find out whether or not grammar knowledge affected the communication of the airline ground staff.

### **3.2 Vocabulary**

Uraipan (2011) studied the problems with the English listening and speaking skills of Thai Airlines flight attendants in economy class and stated that vocabulary use is an important factor affecting the ability of staff to communicate, especially those who are not fluent in English. This was especially true in the case of the ground service staff. The effectiveness of the spoken message depended on the ability to use appropriate words with particular listeners in specific situations, as suggested by Howatt and Dakins (1974). However, the vocabulary of some of the ground service staff were lacking and too limited to fully express their thoughts, which also caused English speaking problems. In addition, a lack of vocabulary also resulting in English listening problems. Furthermore, a larger vocabulary enables ground service staff to increase their knowledge and information and transmitted information to passengers. The ground service of the airline staff members with accurate and precise words can help promote understanding that are critical for effective communication.

### **3.3 Pronunciation and Accent**

Pronunciation differs from person to person and these 'differences' can be large and obtrusive or infinitesimally small and observable only to the trained ear of a phonetician (Quirk, 1990). In order to achieve effective communication, the ground staff of the airline was required to acquire accurate pronunciation for important sounds to sound distinctive from each other. Uraipan (2011) suggested that the ground service staff assigned to make public announcements were expected to pronounce difficult words, especially foreign cities or destinations properly. In addition, they should know how to pronounce something in the native language, such as the name of a person or a place. Such mistakes in pronunciation can detract from good communication and can be avoided by effort and practice. For example, airline check-in ground staff have to check all information in the passports of the passengers and the destinations that they are travelling to, so it is necessary to pronounce their names and destinations in order not to avoid making any mistakes.

While pronunciation is the act or the way of saying a word, an accent mark used to show the stress on a syllable or to pronounce with more emphasis in speaking or in conversation (Quirk, 1990). An accent can affect pronunciation but will have an effect on the personality of an individual. It is said that if an individual has a strong accent, there will not be a problem in terms of understanding their pronunciation. However, as suggested by Uraipan (2011), various accents often cause problems for ground service staff in attempting to interpret what the passengers are saying, especially if they have an unfamiliar accent.

#### **4. Non-Verbal Communication Problems**

Blank (2017) suggested that the barriers to nonverbal communication may occur for several reasons, ranging from deliberate deceptions to cultural differences or even problems with mental functioning. This study, however, focused only on the impact of cultural differences. According to Blank (2017), cultural differences may cause barriers in non-verbal communication because of the fact that different gestures often have vastly different meanings to people from different cultures. For instance, waving a hand from side to side with the palm facing outward means "goodbye" in the United States, but could be misinterpreted as meaning "come here" to someone from Korea. Asian cultures also differ from Western cultures with regard to eye contact. Many Americans value direct eye contact as a sign of honesty. However, lowering your eyes is seen as a sign of respect in many Asian cultures, while many Latin Americans and African Americans also avoid eye contact when they are being "dressed down" as a sign of showing remorse rather than as an attempt at evasiveness. The need for personal space also varies across cultures (Billikopf, 2014) so it is important for ground staff to avoid make culturally-based generalizations using non-verbal communication or interpreting it.

### **5. Culture and Communication**

#### **5.1 Understanding the Culture**

Uraipan (2011) studied the problems with English listening and speaking among Thai Airlines flight attendants in economy class and stated that social and cultural knowledge can lead to increased sociolinguistic competence, which in turn specified ways of using language appropriately in a given situation. There are various types of communication and messages that need to be delivered in a clear and comprehensive manner in order to deliver services more effectively. Therefore, the language functions of the ground service staff of an airline must reflect this, especially when they used English as a means of communication during pre-flight services.

Blundell (1996) argued that sociolinguistic competence was also related to language functions for ground service staff to use appropriate language in diverse situations with an emphasis on politeness, formality, metaphor, registers, and culturally related aspects of language.

As suggested by Broersma (2001), a good level of sociolinguistic competence means that service employees will know when to be quiet, when to talk, when to compliment passengers and when to apologize to them. This also includes being able to understand the situation and know the right things to do or say. There are an infinite number of combinations of roles, tasks, contexts, and feelings that govern what is considered appropriate at the service counter.

Hofstede (2001) stated that a culture reflected the aggregate programming of mind which played an essential role in differentiating people from one group to another as it may influence the thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviors of people. Hall (1964) claimed that communication and language usage in any society was part of its culture, since communicating through language allows people to identify themselves and gives clues and information about their origin and the sort of person they are. Additionally, it becomes easier for the people to identify where someone comes from, based on the type of language that they used.

Following the cultural theories of Hofstede (2001), national culture can be measured in five dimensions, comprised of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, collectivism, and short-term and long-term orientation. This research focused on four of these dimensions, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism and short-term and long-term orientation.

Firstly, Hofstede (2001) described power distance as the level of influence among people with higher social status or power and those with lower status, which represented the inequality or the gap among them. In other words, it is the inequality in terms of power distribution within the culture or the distance between power and a member of the culture. Thai culture can be considered a high power distance culture (Hofstede, 2001).

Table 1 Implication of Power Distance on Communication

Low Power Distance	High Power Distance
In the service, the staff initiate communication.	In the service, the staff expect passengers to initiate communication.
In the service, the staff expect passengers to find their own solutions.	In the service, the staff need to help passengers to solve their problems.

Based on Table 1, the ground staff who were from low power distance societies seemed to initiate communication with passengers; while those from high power distance societies seemed to expect passengers to initiate communication. In addition, ground staff from low power distance societies seemed to expect passengers to find their own solutions to solve their problems; while those from high power distance societies seemed to be more supportive in helping passengers to solve their problems.

Hofstede (2001) explained uncertainty avoidance as the level of tolerance for ambiguity in dealing with ambiguous situations and uncertainty by members of a society, in which individuals from a high uncertainty avoidance society were more likely to respond more to rules, laws, regulations, action codes, and a true belief in the practice of minimizing negative outcomes, and they seemed to have a higher tolerance for different views. It can also refer to the degree of anxiety in which members of a given culture feel about ambiguous situations and find ways to avoid them. The culture in Thailand can be considered high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001).

Table 2 Implications of Uncertainty Avoidance on Communication

Low Uncertainty Avoidance	High Uncertainty Avoidance
In the service, the staff are comfortable in unstructured communication situations.	In the service, the staff are comfortable in structured communication situations.
In the service, the staff are allowed to say "I don't know."	In the service, the staff are expected to have all of the answers.
In the service, the staff use plain language.	In the service, the staff use formal language.

Based on Table 2, ground staff from the societies with high uncertainty avoidance levels seemed more comfortable in structured communication, being knowledgeable enough to answer all questions and more preferred to use formal or technical words compared to those from low uncertainty avoidance societies.

Hofstede (2001) suggested that collectivism was the strength of association among the members of a specific group and a society with a relatively high level of collectivism were more likely to demand achievement, cohesion, and harmony from the group more than those with a low level of collectivism or high individualism. The culture of Thailand can be considered as collectivism or low individualism, as suggested by Hofstede (2001).

Table 3 Implications of Individualism and Collectivism on Communication

Collectivism	Individualism
Formal harmony in communication situations should be maintained at all times.	Confrontation and challenges in communication situations can be brought into the open.
Passengers should never be made to lose face.	The idea of losing face is a sign of weakness.

Based on Table 3, ground staff from high individualism societies seemed less concerned about face consciousness and were likely to accept confrontations and challenges in terms of communication.

Lastly, with reference to short-term and long-term orientation, Hofstede (2010) described short-term oriented societies as those that focused on short-term outcomes, with a greater concern on luck rather than a concerted effort for success or failure. The culture of Thailand can be considered to be short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001).

Table 4 Implications of Long Term Orientation on Communication

Low	High
Focus on asking "why"	Focus on asking "how"
Ground staff wants to find the one and only solution.	It is possible for different solutions.
Stability rated as the most important virtue.	Perseverance rated as the most important virtue.

Based on Table 4, ground staff from long-term orientation societies seemed to ask "how" rather than "why", and they seemed to accept different solutions and value perseverance than those from short-term orientation societies.

In conclusion, this study applied Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions methods (1984) to identify the cross-cultural communication problems because they are essential to the beliefs, values, norms, and social practices of airline ground staff.

## 5.2 Cultural Diversity and Communication

Following the suggestion of Kim (2001), communication is essential in the creation of creating mutual understandings and to reduce the distance between people from different cultures and uncertainty during interaction. Cross-cultural interactions were embedded in ambiguity due to cultural differences and making sense of such an environment required an extra effort and more energy for structure; extra effort which required a certain level of cultural intelligence (Thomas et al. 2008). Cultural intelligence can be defined as a system of knowledge and skills, linked by cultural meta-cognition, which allows people to adapt, select, and shape the cultural aspects of their environment (Thomas et al. 2008). Cultural intelligence also permitted ground staff to communicate in more appropriate and effective ways in cross-cultural business environments at the airport. According to Thomas (2006), cultural intelligence was composed of four dimensions, including motivation, meta-cognition, knowledge, and behavior. First, motivational cultural intelligence involves the capability of making a concerted effort in terms of learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences. It may also help individuals to develop self-efficacy as well as provide them with sufficient energy to put in an effort in cross-cultural situations and to develop the trust necessary to control an unfamiliar situation. Second, meta-cognitive cultural intelligence refers to the ability of individuals to think carefully and deeply about cultural assumptions during cross-cultural interactions. It made people more alert with regard to explanations of unexpected behavior of the person that they are interacting with. Third, cognitive cultural intelligence stimulates thinking about other cultures and searching for explanatory models that bring a certain order to cultural differences. It is also concerned with the knowledge of norms, practices and conventions in different cultures that were acquired from educational and personal experiences. Finally, behavioral cultural intelligence can be defined by the capability to produce effective verbal and non-verbal behavior when interacting with other cultures. It also supported individuals to use certain verbal and non-verbal behavioral repertoires which enabled them to take the initiative and taking part in interactions. For example, airline ground staff communicate with people all over the world and cultures. They are also familiar with working in diverse environments and adapt well.

## 6. Communication Styles

According to Wofford, Gerloff and Cummins (1977), a communication style can be defined as a specialized set of interpersonal behaviors with related purposes and similar approaches used consistently by a person in a similar situation. While this definition was derived from the behavioral aspects of communication, Norton (1978) focused more on the relational aspect of interpersonal communication claiming that “communication style is broadly conceived to mean the way one verbally and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered or understood” (p. 99). Nevertheless, he agreed with Wofford, Gerloff and Cummins (1977) in that a communication style that underlies the influence of a specific context or situation (Norton, 1978).

Hart, Carlson, and Eadie (1980) relied on the categories developed by Darnell and Brockriede (1976) to create the concept of rhetorical sensitivity, which focused on message transmission, which is a central concern for communication scholars and suggested principles for the development of effective communication behaviors. Knutson, Vivatananukul, and Hwang (1995) suggested that the emphasis on the relationship in the theory of rhetorical sensitivity may be particularly useful in the investigation of different cultural norms influencing communication behavior. The theory of rhetorical sensitivity seemed remarkably responsive to both intercultural sensitivity and intercultural transformation and may be even more powerful in determining the behaviors associated with intercultural competence. There were three general types of communicators, as follows: noble selves, rhetorical reflectors, and rhetorically sensitive, as cited in Knutson et al (2003). First, noble selves focus on personal goals and objectives without adapting to others. They do not cast their messages in terms of receiver acceptability; rather, the messages of noble selves were characterized by inflexibility and source-oriented expression. Second, rhetorical reflectors, the relative opposite of noble selves, adjusted themselves to the wishes of others. Rhetorical reflectors exhibited deference in their messages to others and expressed a profound concern for the requirements of the receivers. Third, the rhetorically sensitive individual displayed message behavior located between the extremes of both noble selves and rhetorical reflectors. The rhetorically sensitive combined a concern for self and others with a situational perspective.

## 7. Communication Strategies

Effective communication in daily situations is the need of all people so they should develop their own communicative proficiency by increasing their capability to use communication strategies, helping them to convey messages, resolve communication problems and ensuring effective communication with others (Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011).

There are different definitions of a communication strategy, which have been proposed. Corder (1973) explained that communication strategies are “a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his meaning when faced with some difficulty.” (p.103). Similarly, Stern (1983) stated that “communication strategies, i.e., techniques of coping with difficulties in communicating in an imperfectly known second language.” (p. 411). Communication strategies are used to deal with problems (Paribakht, 1985). Thus, effective communication involves the use of effective strategies to help people convey messages and ensure understanding.

Strategic competence refers to “the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence” (Canale and Swain, 1980, p30.). In the other word, non-native speakers should be able to deal with communication problems to get their meaning across. Canale (1983) emphasized that learners have to be encouraged to use communication strategies, for example, if learners cannot use correct grammatical forms in sentences, they should have opportunity to use communication strategies like familiar words, body language, and gestures, rather than remaining silent. Canale and Swain (1980) identified three types of strategies of language learning, language processing, and language production, as follows;

1. Psycholinguistic perspectives refer to the verbal plan communication strategies used by speakers to overcome planning problems and achieving a communication goals; for instance, avoiding trouble spots or compensating for not knowing a vocabulary item.

2. Interactional perspectives refer to the communication strategies for helping and problem-solving behaviors; which sometimes occur after problems in communication, for example, “Pardon?”, “Could you say that again, please?”, or “What do you call...?”

3. Communication continuity is a communication strategy used to keep communication channels open in the face of communicative difficulties and creating time to think and plan conversations.

Jeharsae (2012) investigated the English oral communication problems and strategies used by Thai employees to communicate with native and non-native English speaking customers in an international workplace. This study also showed that two major oral communication strategies used

by Thai employees when they had communication problems were asking customers directly what they required and making clarification requests. Furthermore, Huang (2010) explored factors affecting the use of oral communication strategies determined that communication strategies can be divided into two types. The first type was an avoidance or reduction strategy, for instance, topic avoidance, message abandonment, or meaning replacement. The second type was an achievement or a compensatory strategy which included an appeal for help, literal translation, first language substitution, and generalization.

## **8. Related Studies on Communication Problems**

Uraipan (2011) studied the listening and speaking problems encountered by Thai Airlines flight attendants working in economy class. The research suggested that English listening and speaking problems were divided into two aspects: 1) problems with English language functions relevant to Thai Airlines flight attendants; and 2) grammatical competence in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The results of this study revealed that the majority of participants thought about responding to the complaints of passengers and warnings to inebriated passengers were moderately problematic in terms of English language functions. The diverse accents of the passengers was also a major cause of listening problems and specific consonants were the main causes of speaking problems. Miscellaneous situations were perceived as moderately problematic in terms of in-flight service.

Jeharsae (2012) investigated the English oral communication problems and strategies used by Thai employees to communicate with native and non-native English speaking customers in an international workplace. The results showed that the communication problems between Thai employees and native or non-native English speakers were listening comprehension and grammar usage. It also showed that the two major oral communication strategies used by Thai employees when they had communication problems or asked customers directly about what they required and making a clarification request.

Tontanavetchakul (2011) studied the barriers to effective communication of Thai cabin crew working for international airlines in which English was not the primary language. The findings from the study revealed that the dominant factors that the respondents commonly encountered when communicating with people from other countries included language differences and difficulties. Second, in terms of language difficulties, the most problematic area were different accents and pronunciation when communicating in English. Third, the majority of the respondents suggested that all airlines should provide their cabin crews with courses or training, especially language



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This chapter covers the research design and the methodology of the study. Apart from discussing the research methods, this chapter also analyzed accessibility, ethical issues and a data analysis plan. It focused on all of the aspects of the research methodology techniques along with proper justification which explained why it is important in connection with this specific research topic.

#### **1. Research Design**

This study was an exploratory research exploring the reasons for the occurrence of the research problems in the study and obtained appropriate solutions for the same. By using this method the researcher was able to explore and understand the various communication strategies of the problems of the ground service staff. In this study, the research applied a partially mixed methodological approach, involving the adoption of both qualitative and quantitative research separately before integrating the results for interpretation. Following the recommendations of Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), mixed approach research can be characterized as inclusive, complementary and expansive research methods compared to more traditional ones which can be conducted through the methods of sequential, concurrent, and transformative processes in the same study, ranging from the research objectives, the types of data and operations, analysis and types of inference. In comparison with a single approach to either qualitative or quantitative research, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) pointed out that mixed-method research took more effort and used more resources. Meanwhile, Maxwell and Loomis (2003) claimed that a mixed approach was adopted by researchers based on the view that no single approach was better than another.

#### **2. Research Population and Sampling**

With regard to the research issue, there were one hundred respondents in the quantitative research and ten participants in the qualitative research. According to McDaniel and Gates (2002), sampling methods can be categorized into two major types, probability and non-probability sampling. The intention of probability sampling provides all of the elements in the population with an equal chance of being selected while non-probability sampling is unconcerned with the equal chances of all elements in a population to be selected. In this study, non-probability sampling was considered appropriate in terms of costs and time constraints.

Malhotra and Birks (2007) also described a number of research techniques that can be applied to non-probability sampling, such as convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive

sampling and others. This study applied convenience sampling as the method for selecting samples with regard to the accessibility and judgment of the researcher, as well as the willingness of the respondents with regard to the ethical issues. The respondents and participants were randomly selected from ground staff working at Suwanabhumi Airport, regardless of the airline and based on convenience sampling. Malhotra and Birks (2007) further described that "it is simple to use convenience sampling to measure the accessible, cooperative since it is the cheapest and least time consuming compared to all sampling techniques".

### **3. Research Instrument**

For the quantitative research, the instrument of this study was a questionnaire for measuring the extent how the effectiveness of ground staff communication based on their self-assessment. It focused on English communication problems between Thai airline check-in staff and international passengers. It includes close-ended questions based on a scale of measurement that was used previously. Further, the questions used in the questionnaire were modified by the researcher together with the approval from the advisor and three experts in related business under the implementation of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) Test. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part one was concerned with the personal information and the background of the participants, such as gender, work experience and educational backgrounds. Part two was concerned with the attitudes towards variables, including perceived barriers, communication styles, communication effectiveness, cultural barriers, English language problems, misinterpretation of non-verbal cues, and perceived stress at work.

In terms of the qualitative research, the interviews took place with ten participants for one-on-one, face-to-face interviews. Each interview took approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. An open-ended questionnaires were used to obtain in-depth information on the other problems and solutions they might use.

In addition, a pilot test with a reliability test with a Cronbach's alpha score was conducted to measure the reliability scale used in the questionnaire. There were thirty participants in the pilot study which tested by airline check-in ground staff of different airlines. The purposes of the pilot study were to clarify the language, the content and to check the time taken to complete the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha score in the pilot study was quite low in terms of internal consistency. Therefore, in order to increase the internal consistency score, the questionnaire was changed by researcher and three experts in related business. Table 6 shows the Cronbach's Alpha

score of in an actual test. The scores were more than 0.70, which can be considered to be high reliability and acceptable for this study.

Table 5 Reliability Test Results

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Power Distance	3	0.743
Uncertainty avoidance	3	0.733
Collectivism	3	0.741
Long-term orientation	3	0.762
Perceived barriers	4	0.832
Rhetorical Reflectors	9	0.763
Rhetorical sensitive	9	0.716
Noble selves	8	0.724
Communication effectiveness	3	0.864
Cultural barrier	7	0.768
Language Problems	3	0.716
Non-Verbal Cue Misinterpretation	2	0.832
Stress	3	0.776

## 4. Data Collection

### 4.1 Data Collection for Quantitative Research

The questionnaire was used to collect data from one hundred respondents who were ground staff at Suvarnabhumi Airport. There were seventy one hard copies of the questionnaire distributed by hand and online to ground staff at Suvarnabhumi Airport and twenty nine copies were sent via email from September first to twentieth, 2017. It took the participants approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete and return the questionnaires.

#### **4.2 Data Collection for Qualitative Research**

A series of face-to-face, one-on-one in-depth interviews with ten participants from the ground staff were conducted. The interviews took place at a coffee shop in Suvarnabhumi Airport and each interview lasted approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. Their responses were recorded through audio records and field notes. The transcripts were reviewed once the interviews were completed and once again before data coding.

#### **5. Data Analysis Methods**

In an analysis of the quantitative data, the personal information and general background of the participants were accounted for in terms of frequency and percentage.

A five-point Likert scale was used to score the level of agreement among the participants regarding English verbal communication problems and solutions. For descriptive analysis, there were five levels of agreement based on the criteria established by Likert (1932), which include strongly agree (mean score = 4.51-5.00), agree (mean score = 3.51-4.50), moderately agree (mean score = 2.51-3.50), disagree (mean score = 1.51-2.50), and strongly disagree (mean score = 1.00-1.50). The reliability of the questionnaire was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, considering a measure of the reliability of the scale and mostly used in a survey or a questionnaire. The results revealed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.716 to 0.864; a score of greater than 0.7 for all variables, which suggests that all of the scales used in the questionnaire were reliable.

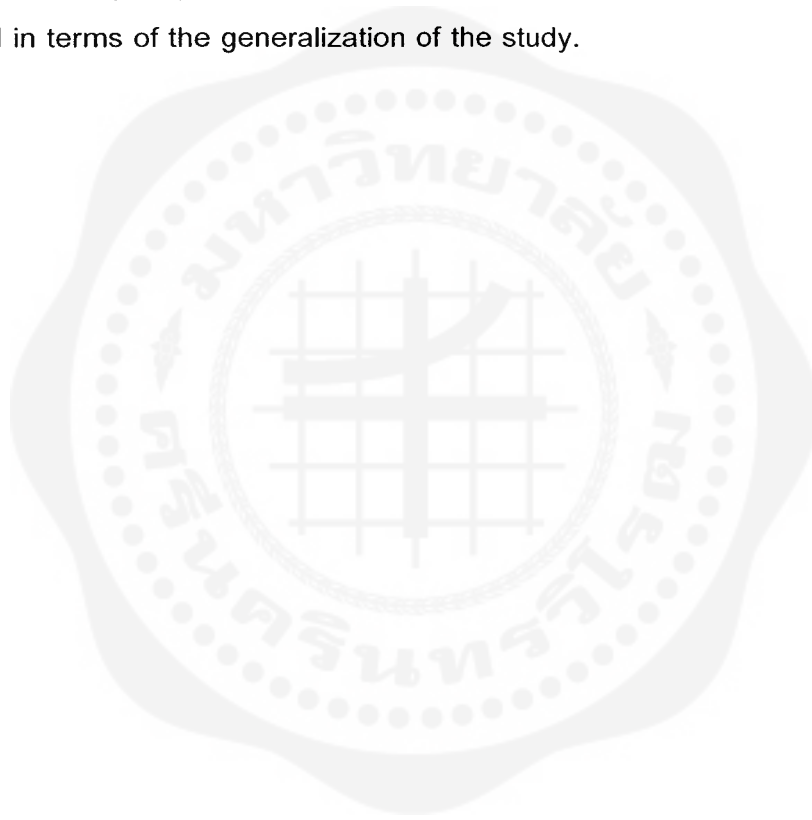
With regard to the analysis of qualitative data, a three-step approach was applied. First, the responses of all participants were combined under the same question heading. Second, categories were formed to code responses and to address the general theme. The data was examined with manual coding. Finally, selective codes were grouped into themes before the results were described.

#### **6. Ethical issues**

The intentions of the survey were explained to the participants by the researcher. The researcher strongly followed ethical principles and the participants were not compelled to take part in the research. All of the information obtained from the participants were kept confidential and safely stored. The researcher offered adequate citations and proper referencing wherever it was required and emphasized that the sole intention of the research was purely academic.

## 7. Research limitations

The researcher encountered time and cost limitations in terms of conducting research. The data collection procedure was based on the sampling method. The researcher experienced difficulties in terms of gathering their opinions regarding the research topic from the whole population. The researcher also was required to analyze the subject from several perspectives as the research had been performed using the exploratory method. The selection of a reduced sample size due to time limitations might affect the precision and accuracy of the findings and thus reduced the scope of the research. The study only considered a single work environment at Suvarnabhumi Airport and hence questioned in terms of the generalization of the study.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter presents the findings of the research. The results intended to measure the level of communication problems between the ground staff of an airline and their customers and to identify the strategies used to solve communication problems through quantitative and qualitative research.

#### **1. Results of the Quantitative Research**

##### **1.1 Information on the Respondents**

From the one hundred respondents among the ground staff, all of them (100%) indicated that they had a Test of English for International Communication or a TOEIC score of more than five hundred points. Most of the respondents (91%) were female, while only nine respondents or 9% were male. The majority of the respondents were between twenty five to thirty two years of age, which accounted for eighty six of the respondents or 86%, while eight respondents (8%) were between eighteen to twenty five years of age; and the remaining six respondents (6%) were between thirty three to forty years of age. None of them were over above forty years of age. There were seventy five respondents (75%) who were single; and another twenty five of the respondents (25%) were married. All the respondents had educational qualifications of at least a Bachelor's degree. There were eighty one respondents (81%) who had Bachelor's degrees, while nineteen respondents (19%) had Master's degrees. Their working experience ranged from less than one year to less than ten years. There were fifty eight respondents (58%) who had work experience of approximately one to three years, while twenty nine respondents (29%) had work experience of around four to six years; 8 respondents (8%) had experience of less than 1 year; and the remaining five respondents (5%) had work experience of about seven to nine years.

Table 6 Demographic Factors of the Respondents

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	9	9.0
Female	91	91.0
<b>Age:</b>		
18 - 25 years old	8	8.0
25 - 32 years old	86	86.0
33 - 40 years old	6	6.0
<b>Marital Status:</b>		
Single	75	75.0
Married	25	25.0
<b>Education:</b>		
Bachelor's degree	81	81.0
Master's degree	19	19.0
<b>Working Experience for the Position</b>		
less than 1 year	8	8.0
1 - 3 years	58	58.0
4 - 6 years	29	29.0
7 - 9 years	5	5.0

## 2. Descriptive Results of the Factors Affecting Communication

This section examines the influential factors affecting communication between the ground staff of an airline and customer through an investigation of cultural impact (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and long-term orientation), perceived barriers and communication styles (Rhetorical reflectors, Rhetorical sensitive and Noble selves). This functions to answer research question one, What is the level of significance of the influential factors affecting communication between the ground staff of an airline and customers?

### 2.1 Cultural Impact

There were four dimensions of culture examined in this study, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism and long-term orientation.

### A) Power Distance

There were three constructs used in measuring power distance, including “I expect passengers to initiate communication”, “I need to help passengers with solving their problems”, and “The power distance between me and passengers is high”.

Table 7 Descriptive Results of Power Distance

	Mean	SD	Result
I expect passengers to initiate communication.	3.34	1.037	Moderately Agree
I need to help passengers with solving their problems.	3.62	0.763	Agree
The power distance between the passengers and I.	3.15	0.857	Moderately Agree
<b>Power distance</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>0.809</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

In Table 7, the average score for power distance in communication was 3.37, which can be considered to be of moderate significance as perceived by respondents. The construct with the highest mean score was for “I need to help passengers with solving their problems” (mean = 3.62, SD = 0.763); followed by “I expect passengers to initiate communication” (mean = 3.34, SD = 1.037) and “The power distance between me and passengers is high” (mean = 3.15, SD = 0.857).

### B) Uncertainty Avoidance

There were three constructs used in measuring uncertainty avoidance, including “I am comfortable in structured communicating situations”, “I am expected to have all the answers for passengers”, and “I always use formal language”.

Table 8 Descriptive Results of Uncertainty Avoidance

	Mean	SD	Result
I am comfortable in structured communication situations.	3.81	0.775	Agree
I am expected to have all of the answers for passengers.	3.59	0.740	Agree
I always use formal language.	3.75	0.744	Agree
<b>Uncertainty avoidance</b>	<b>3.72</b>	<b>0.622</b>	<b>High</b>

From Table 8, the average score of uncertainty avoidance in the communication was 3.72, was considered to be of high significance as perceived by the respondents. The construct with the highest mean score was “I am comfortable in structured communication situations” (mean = 3.81, SD = 0.775); followed by “I always use formal language” (mean = 3.75, SD = 0.744) and “I am expected to have all the answers for passenger” (mean = 3.59, SD = 0.740).

### C) Collectivism

There were three constructs used in measuring collectivism, including “Formal harmony in communication situations should be maintained at all times”, “Passengers should never be made to lose face”, and “Being accepted by passengers is very important”.

Table 9 Descriptive Results of Collectivism

	Mean	SD	Result
Formal harmony in communication situations should be maintained at all times.	4.33	0.739	Agree
Passengers should never be made to lose face.	3.98	0.724	Agree
Being accepted by passengers is very important.	4.14	0.667	Agree
<b>Collectivism</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>0.596</b>	<b>High</b>

In Table 9, the average score for collectivism in communication was 4.15, which was considered to be of high significance as perceived by the respondents. The construct with the highest mean score was “Formal harmony in communication situations should be maintained at all times” (mean = 4.33, SD = 0.766); followed by “Being accepted by passengers is very important” (mean = 4.14, SD = 0.667), and “Passengers should never be made to lose face” (mean = 3.98, SD = 0.724).

### D) Long-term Orientation

There were three constructs used to measure long-term orientation, including “If a passenger has a problem, I usually focus on asking ‘how’ rather than asking ‘why’”, “I am willing to change the method of communication for a better result” and “Perseverance is rated as the most important virtue”.

Table 10 Descriptive Results of Long-term Orientation

	Mean	SD	Result
If a passenger has a problem, I usually focus on asking “how” rather than asking “why”.	4.18	0.702	Agree
I am willing to change the method of communication for a better result.	4.08	0.825	Agree
Perseverance is rated as the most important virtue.	3.98	0.876	Agree
<b>Long-term Orientation</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>0.748</b>	<b>High</b>

In Table 10, the average score for long-term orientation in terms of communication was 4.08, which was considered as being of high significance, according to the respondents. The construct with highest mean score was “If a passenger has a problem, I usually focus on asking “how” rather than asking “why” (mean = 4.18, SD = 0.702); followed by “I am willing to change the method of communication for a better result” (mean = 4.08, SD = 0.825); and “Long-term success is more important than short-term benefits” (mean = 3.98, SD = 0.876).

## 2.2 Perceived Barrier

There were four constructs used in measuring perceived barriers in communication, including “Sometimes, I cannot understand people from different cultures”, “The wants and needs of people from different cultures are often misinterpreted by their non-verbal cues”, “Using English to communicate often leads to misunderstandings”, and “I have difficulty dealing with people who don’t speak English or Thai”.

Table 11 Descriptive Results of Perceived Barriers

	Mean	SD	Result
Sometimes, I cannot understand people from different culture.	2.25	0.672	Disagree
The wants and needs of people from different cultures are often misinterpreted by non-verbal cues.	2.21	0.671	Disagree
Using English to communicate often leads to misunderstandings.	2.09	0.726	Disagree
I have difficulty dealing with people who don't speak English or Thai.	2.02	0.651	Disagree
<b>Perceived barrier</b>	<b>2.14</b>	<b>0.591</b>	<b>Low</b>

In Table 11, the average score for perceived barriers in terms of communications was 2.14, which was considered to be of low significance as perceived by respondents. The construct with the highest mean score was "Sometimes, I cannot understand people from different cultures" (mean = 2.25, SD = 0.672); followed by "The wants and needs of people from different cultures are often misinterpreted by non-verbal cues" (mean = 2.21, SD = 0.671), "Using English to communicate often leads to misunderstandings" (mean = 2.09, SD = 0.726), and "I have difficulty dealing with people who don't speak English or Thai" (mean = 2.02, SD = 0.651).

### 2.3 Communication Styles

There were three styles of communication examined in this study, including rhetorical reflectors, rhetorical sensitive and noble selves.

#### A) Rhetorical Reflectors

There were nine constructs used in measuring rhetorical reflectors, including: "I usually avoid others rather than risk saying something that might hurt them"; "I prefer to go along with others rather than openly disagree with them"; "If what I would like to say might make others uncomfortable, I generally keep quiet instead"; "If at all possible I try to avoid arguing with others"; "Pleasing the other person is an important goal for me in most conversations"; "I feel uncomfortable when people argue in public"; "In conversations I am most successful when I am able to please the other person";

“I usually feel uncomfortable when I need to persuade others” and “I often felt that others take advantage of me during communication”.

Table 12 Descriptive Results of Rhetorical reflectors

	Mean	SD	Result
I usually avoid others rather than risk saying something that might hurt them.	4.13	0.691	Agree
I prefer to go along with others rather than openly disagree with them.	3.69	0.677	Agree
If what I would like to say might make others uncomfortable, I generally keep quiet instead.	4.02	0.710	Agree
If at all possible I try to avoid arguing with others.	4.04	0.751	Agree
Pleasing the other person is an important goal for me in most conversations.	3.86	0.779	Agree
I feel uncomfortable when people argue in public.	3.52	0.541	Agree
In conversations I am most successful when I am able to please the other person.	3.91	0.740	Agree
I usually feel uncomfortable when I need to persuade others.	3.63	0.734	Agree
I often felt that others take advantage of me during communication.	3.22	0.824	Moderately Agree
<b>Rhetorical reflector</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>0.467</b>	<b>High</b>

In Table 12, the average score for rhetorical reflectors in their communication styles was 3.78, which was considered to be of high significance, as perceived by the respondents. The construct with highest mean score included the following: “I usually avoid others rather than risk saying something that might hurt them” (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.691); followed by “If at all possible I try to avoid arguing with others” (mean = 4.04, SD = 0.751), “If what I would like to say might make others uncomfortable, I generally keep quiet instead” (mean = 4.02, SD = 0.71), “In conversations I am most successful when I am able to please the other person” (mean = 3.91, SD = 0.74), “Pleasing the other person is an important goal for me in most conversations” (mean = 3.86, SD = 0.779), “I

prefer to go along with others rather than openly disagree with them” (mean = 3.69, SD = 0.677), “I usually feel uncomfortable when I need to persuade others” (mean = 3.63, SD = 0.734), “I feel uncomfortable when people argue in public” (mean = 3.52, SD = 0.541), and “I often felt that others take advantage of me during communication” (mean = 3.22, SD = 0.824).

### **B) Rhetorical sensitive**

There were nine constructs that were used in measuring rhetorical sensitive, which included the following: “Others have told me that I communicate well with difficult people”; “In an argument, I can usually get my point across without hurting my relationship with the other person”;

“I’m good at figuring out the meanings behind what others say”; “I value my ability to adapt when faced with various communication situations”; “I have been told that I am able to give criticism in a way that does not hurt others”; “I am able to communicate easily with people from different generations”; “I can usually disagree with others without damaging our relationship”; “Most of the conflicts I have with others are resolved to everyone’s satisfaction”; and “More than a few times I’ve been told that I communicate well in difficult situations”.

Table 13 Descriptive Results of Rhetorical Sensitive

	Mean	SD	Result
Others have told me that I communicate well with difficult people.	2.56	0.756	Moderately Agree
In an argument, I can usually get my point across without hurting my relationship with the other person.	2.72	1.026	Moderately Agree
I'm good at figuring out the meanings behind what others say.	3.15	1.123	Moderately Agree
I value my ability to adapt when faced with various communication situations.	3.93	0.832	Agree
I have been told that I am able to give criticism in a way that does not hurt others.	3.93	0.868	Agree
I am able to communicate easily with people from different generations.	3.82	0.936	Agree
I can usually disagree with others without damaging our relationship.	3.72	0.740	Agree
Most of the conflicts I have with others are resolved to everyone's satisfaction.	3.29	0.591	Moderately Agree
More than a few times I've been told that I communicate well in difficult situations.	3.57	0.655	Agree
<b>Rhetorical Sensitive</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>0.608</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

In Table 13, the average score for the rhetorical sensitive communication styles was 3.41, and considered to be of a moderate significance by the respondents. The construct with the highest mean score was "I value my ability to adapt when faced with various communication situations" (mean = 3.93, SD = 0.832); followed by "I have been told that I am able to give criticism in a way that does not hurt others" (mean = 3.93, SD = 0.868); "I am able to communicate easily with people from different generations"; (mean = 3.82, SD = 0.936), "I can usually disagree with others without damaging our relationship"; (mean = 3.72, SD = 0.74), "More than a few times I've been told that I communicate well in difficult situations"; (mean = 3.57, SD = 0.655), "Most of the conflicts I have with others are resolved to everyone's satisfaction"; (mean = 3.29, SD = 0.591), "I'm good at figuring out the meanings behind what others say"; (mean = 3.15, SD = 1.123), "In an

argument, I can usually get my point across without hurting my relationship with the other person"; (mean = 2.72, SD = 1.026); and "Others have told me that I communicate well with difficult people" (mean = 2.56, SD = 0.756 ).

### C) Noble selves

There were eight constructs that were used in the measurement of noble selves, including the following: "Other people sometimes think that I am too direct with them"; "More than occasionally, I am honest to the point of being blunt when communicating with others"; "Others are sometimes uncomfortable because I do not hide my opinions from them"; "More than occasionally others react negatively because I am too honest with them"; "Most of the time, I tell others exactly what I feel"; "When I disagree with others, I find it difficult to back down"; "When asked for an opinion, I usually say the first thing that comes to mind"; and "Regardless of the consequences, I tell my friends what I think".

Table 14 Descriptive Results of Noble Selves

	Mean	SD	Result
Other people sometimes think that I am too direct with them.	2.72	1.026	Moderately Agree
More than occasionally, I am honest to the point of being blunt when communicating with others.	3.13	0.787	Moderately Agree
Others are sometimes uncomfortable because I do not hide my opinions from them.	2.86	0.697	Moderately Agree
More than occasionally others react negatively because I am too honest with them.	2.83	0.805	Moderately Agree
Most of the time, I tell others exactly what I feel.	2.86	0.725	Moderately Agree
When I disagree with others, I find it difficult to back down.	2.59	1.102	Moderately Agree
When asked for an opinion, I usually say the first thing that comes to mind.	3.12	0.769	Moderately Agree
Regardless of the consequences, I tell my friends what I think.	2.90	0.689	Moderately Agree
<b>Noble selves</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>0.661</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

In Table 14, the average score of noble selves in terms of communication styles was 2.88, which was considered to be of moderate significance, as perceived by the respondents. The construct with highest mean score was "More than occasionally, I am honest to the point of being blunt when communicating with others" (mean = 3.13, SD = 0.787). This was followed by "When asked for an opinion, I usually say the first thing that comes to mind" (mean = 3.12, SD = 0.769); "Regardless of the consequences, I tell my friends what I think" (mean = 2.9, SD = 0.689); "Others are sometimes uncomfortable because I do not hide my opinions from them" (mean = 2.86, SD = 0.697); "Most of the time, I tell others exactly what I feel" (mean = 2.86, SD = 0.725); "More than occasionally others react negatively because I am too honest with them" (mean = 2.83, SD = 0.805); "Other people sometimes think that I am too direct with them" (mean = 2.72, SD = 1.026); and "When I disagree with others, I find it difficult to back down" (mean = 2.59, SD = 1.102).

### **3. Descriptive Results of Perceived Communication Problems**

This section examined the perceived communication problems at an airline check-in counter from the perspective of the ground staff, including cultural barriers, language problems, non-verbal cue misinterpretation and stress. This is to answer research question two, What are the communication problems of airline ground staff?

#### **3.1 Cultural Barriers**

There were seven constructs that were used in measuring cultural barriers, including the following examples: "It is difficult for me to communicate with people from other countries";

"I need to learn more about the cultural differences of each individual"; "It is difficult for me to adapt communication and interaction styles when communicating with people from other countries"; "I encounter with difficulties in dealing with people from other countries in regard to differences among cultures"; "There are people from some countries I do not feel comfortable to communicate with because of cultural differences"; "Past experience with people from a particular country make me avoid communicating with others from the same country"; and "Harmony in communication decreases when people from different cultures are present."

Table 15 Descriptive Results for Cultural Barriers

	Mean	SD	Result
It is difficult for me to communicate with people from other countries.	2.11	0.680	Disagree
I need to learn more about the cultural differences of each individual passenger.	2.30	0.689	Disagree
It is difficult for me to adapt to different communication and interaction styles when communicating with people from other countries.	2.11	0.737	Disagree
I encounter difficulties dealing with people from other countries with regard to cultural differences.	2.17	0.682	Disagree
There are people from some countries I do not feel comfortable communicating with because of cultural differences.	2.42	0.713	Disagree
Past experience with people from a particular country made me avoid communication with others from the same country.	2.23	0.723	Disagree
Harmony in communication decreases when people from different cultures are present.	2.06	0.679	Disagree
<b>Cultural Barriers</b>	<b>2.20</b>	<b>0.612</b>	<b>Low</b>

In Table 15, the average score for cultural barriers was 2.2, which was considered low by the respondents. The construct with the highest mean score was "There are people from some countries I do not feel comfortable communicating with because of cultural differences" (mean = 2.42, SD = 0.713); followed by "I need to learn more about the cultural differences of each individual passenger" (mean = 2.3, SD = 0.689; " Past experience with people from a particular country made me avoid communication with others from the same country"; (mean = 2.23, SD = 0.723); "I encounter difficulties dealing with people from other countries with regard to cultural differences"; (mean = 2.17, SD = 0.682), "It is difficult for me to communicate with people from other countries;" (mean = 2.11, SD = 0.68), "It is difficult for me

to adapt to different communication and interaction styles when communicating with people from other countries"; (mean = 2.11, SD = 0.737) and "Harmony in communication decreases when people from different cultures are present" (mean = 2.06, SD = 0.679).

### 3.2 Language Problems

There were six constructs that were used in measuring language problems, including "Without an adequate English vocabulary, it is impossible to communicate with people from other countries"; "Different English pronunciation and accents are problems when communicating with people from other countries" and "I make grammatical errors in English when communicating with people from other countries".

Table 16 Descriptive Results of Language Problems

	Mean	SD	Result
Without an adequate English vocabulary, it is impossible to communicate with people from other countries	4.12	0.715	Agree
Different English pronunciation and accents are problems when communicating with people from other countries	3.98	0.666	Agree
I make grammatical errors in English when communicating with people from other countries	2.46	0.702	Disagree
<b>Language Problems</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>0.422</b>	<b>High</b>

In Table 16, the average score for language problems was 3.52, which was considered to be high by the respondents. The construct with highest mean score was "without an adequate English vocabulary, it is impossible to communicate with people from other countries (mean = 4.12, SD = 0.715); followed by "Different English pronunciation and accents are problems when communicating with people from other countries"; (mean = 3.98, SD = 0.666); and "I make grammatical errors in English when communicating with people from other countries" (mean = 2.46, SD = 0.702).

### 3.3 Non-Verbal Cues or Misinterpretation

There were two constructs that were used in measuring non-verbal cues misinterpretation, including "When communicating with people from other countries, I can understand nonverbal cues (body language, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.)", and

“Differences in the nonverbal cues used by people from different countries (body language, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.) create problems in communication”.

Table 17 Descriptive Results of Non-Verbal Cue Misinterpretation

	Mean	SD	Result
When communicating with people from other countries, I can understand nonverbal cues (body language, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.)	4.02	0.696	Agree
Differences in the nonverbal cues used by people from different countries (body language, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.) create problems in communication.	3.91	0.637	Agree
<b>Non-Verbal Cue Misinterpretation</b>	<b>3.97</b>	<b>0.637</b>	<b>High</b>

In Table 17, the average score for non-verbal cue misinterpretation was 3.97, which was found to be high by the respondents. The construct with highest mean score was “When communicating with people from other countries, I can understand nonverbal cues (body language, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.)” (mean = 4.02, SD = 0.696); while the construct with lowest mean score was for “Differences in the nonverbal cues used by people from different countries (body language, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.) create problems in communication” (mean = 3.91, SD = 0.637).

### 3.4 Stress

There were three constructs used to measure stress at work, including “I avoid communicating with dissatisfied customers as much as I can”, “I prefer communicating with who have the same culture and speak the same language as I do” and “Unfamiliarity with the demands of people from other countries makes me withdraw from communication with them”.

Table 18 Descriptive Results of Stress

	Mean	SD	Result
I avoid communicating with dissatisfied customers as much as I can.	2.64	0.905	Moderately Agree
I prefer communicating with who have the same culture and speak the same language as I do.	3.37	0.981	Moderately Agree
Unfamiliarity with the demands of people from other countries makes me withdraw from communication with them.	2.91	1.026	Moderately Agree
<b>Stress</b>	<b>2.97</b>	<b>0.830</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

In Table 18, the average score for stress was 2.97, which was considered moderate by respondents. The construct with highest mean score was “I prefer communicating with who have the same culture and speak the same language as I do.” (mean = 3.37, SD = 0.981); followed by “Unfamiliarity with the demands of people from other countries makes me withdraw from communication with them” (mean = 2.91, SD = 1.026), and “I avoid communicating with dissatisfied customers as much as I can (mean = 2.64, SD = 0.905).

#### 4. Qualitative Results for Communication Strategies

This section is concerned with the qualitative research intended to answer research question three - What should be the appropriate communication strategies for ground staff to solve the problems when dealing with English speaking passengers?

From the face-to-face personal interviews with ten participants working as ground staff for an airline at Suvarnabhumi Airport. All of the participants were female and aged between twenty six to thirty two years old. Their work experience in this position ranged from approximately one year to more than five years, in which the majority of the participants, six in total, had work experience as airline ground staff for three years. There were six major questions in the interviews, in which the responses of all participants were combined and were presented as follows:

First, each participant was asked "On average, how often do you communicate with people from different cultures?" Almost all of the eight participants indicated that they usually communicated with people from different cultures on a daily basis. A majority of the participants (seven out of ten), further stated that their work typically involved communication with foreign travelers from China, Europe and the Middle-East, checking in prior to travelling. Furthermore, three of the participants added that they also have foreign colleagues or friends.

Second, the participants were asked "What difficulties have you faced with cross-cultural communication?" Most of the participants, six in total, responded that different types of pronunciation and unfamiliar accents were major problems were often faced in terms of communicating with people from diverse cultures. Four of the participants added that they faced problems in communication with non-native English speaking customers; while another added that there was confusion about the pronunciation of foreign friends or colleagues.

Third, the participants were asked "What training have you completed in handling diversity or cross-cultural communication?" Nine of the participants stated that they had passed the job orientation required by the airline, the training program, and on-the-job training in order to communicate appropriately with customers as well as to handle their problems. Four of the participants stated that the job orientation provided them with an opportunity to get to know their colleagues, to understand work procedures, how to handle customers from different cultures, work standards, and the names of their managers. Apart from recruitment and selection of qualified staff, three participants stated that the airline also provided a training program to enhance their English communication skills. One participant observed that supervisors, managers and even experienced staff play an important role in guiding new staff in terms of handling diversity at work.

In the fourth question, the participants were asked "What factors are significant for you when working in a diverse environment?" Most of the participants, a total of seven, agreed that the accuracy of work procedures and service standards can help to avoid problems with customers. One participant stated that ground staff need to have information about the flight in order to answer the questions of the customers, and to follow airline procedure for checking the air tickets of different customers of the same standard. Another one participant further stated that service speed and differences in customer demand were other issues faced by ground staff.

In the fifth question, the participants were asked "What do you think are the major communication obstacles between people from different cultures at work?" Most of the participants, a total of eight, claimed that the English skills of the customers and different accents and types of pronunciation were the major problems when communicating with people from diverse cultures. Two

of the participants further suggested that rushing in the check-in process was a major obstacle in terms of effective communication with the customers.

In the last question, the participants were asked "What strategies or techniques do you use to resolve any miscommunications at work?" Most of the communication strategies or techniques often used by participants in order to avoid communicative misunderstandings, such as asking the passenger to write it down on a piece of paper as stated by eight of the participants, followed by asking colleagues or a supervisor to help as mentioned by six of the participants, trying to interpret the non-verbal language of the customer as mentioned by three participants, and calling a translator, as suggested by one of the participants. Most of the participants, a total of seven, indicated that if they could not recall vocabulary or failed to use accurate grammatical forms in communication, they often tried to use a familiar word or try to explain what they have said rather than being silent. Three of the participants agreed that the psycholinguistic perspective or psychology of language was mostly adopted as their verbal plan for communication strategies, used to overcome problems in planning and to achieve communication goals, for instance, avoiding trouble spots or compensating for not knowing a vocabulary item. Also, interactional perspective was another communicative strategy used with problem-solving behaviors, which may occur after some problems have come up during the course of communication, for example, "Pardon?" or "Could you say that again, please?", as suggested by one of the participants.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. Conclusion

The objectives of this research were to study the communication problems between the ground staff of an airline and their customers and to identify the communication strategies used when the ground staff are having trouble dealing with cross-cultural passengers and difficult situations. A partially mixed methodological approach was applied through conducting quantitative research with a questionnaire survey and qualitative research with in-depth personal interview separately before integrating the results for the purpose of interpretation. All of the respondents and the participants in this study were ground staff at an airline at Suvarnabhumi Airport.

Four dimensions of culture that affect the communication were studied, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism and long-term orientation. The results indicated that power distance was considered moderate in terms of communication; while uncertainty avoidance was considered “high” in terms of communication; collectivism was considered “high” with regard to communication; and the long-term orientation was considered “high” in communicative terms. With regard to high uncertainty avoidance, this indicated that the ground service staff seemed to be comfortable in structured communication situations. They are expected to have all of the answers and formal language is expected. In terms of collectivism, formal harmony in communicative situations were maintained at all times. The ground staff put an emphasis on trying not to make customers to lose face in communication situations. With regard to long-term orientation, the ground staff seemed to focus on asking “how” rather than “why”. While different solutions are possible, while perseverance was rated as the most important virtue. Overall, a perceived barrier in communications was considered “low” by the respondents.

The results indicated that the majority of respondents engaged in three styles of communication, including rhetorical reflectors, rhetorical sensitive, and noble selves; rhetorical reflectors were most often cited by respondents; followed by rhetorical sensitive and noble selves, respectively. With regard to the perceived communication problems; first, non-verbal cue misinterpretation was mostly concerned with the high level of agreement as the perceived communication problem of the respondents. Second, the language problem was a major problem, with which most of the respondents agreed that “Without an adequate English vocabulary, it is impossible to communicate with people from other countries”. Third, stress at work was another factor that was perceived to be a communication problem. They seemed to avoid communication with dissatisfied customers; people who spoke different languages and came from different cultures;

or those with unpredictable demands. Further, the results indicated that the perceived communication problems caused by cultural barriers was relatively low.

The results from the qualitative research suggested that different accents and pronunciation types were the major problems that were often faced in communication situations with people from a diverse range of cultures, particularly non-native English speaking customers. Apart from recruitment and selection to source qualified staff, the airline need to provide job orientation, training programs, and on-the-job training to improve their English communication skills, to understand the work procedures, how to handle with customers from different cultures, work standards and the names of their supervisors or managers. Supervisors and managers and even experienced staff play an important role in guiding new staff to appropriately handle diversity at work. The accuracy of work procedures and service standards can help avoid problems with customers. The English skills of the customers as well as different types of pronunciation and a variety of accents were both typical problems faced in terms of communicating with people from a variety of cultures. Similarly, Ekwannang (2004) found that Thais were unfamiliar with particular accents in terms of pronunciation and intonation, which caused misinterpretations. In addition, rushing the check-in process was a major obstacle in terms of communicating with customers.

Finally, most of the communication strategies or techniques were used to avoid misunderstandings in terms of communication by asking customers to write it down on a piece of paper, followed by asking colleagues or a supervisor to help, calling a translator and trying to interpret the non-verbal language of customers, which was consistent of the results of Wiwattananukul (as cited in Sriussadaporn, 2006), specifically that the misinterpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues were also problematic between Thais and foreigners.

## **2. Discussion**

### **Research Question 1: What are the communication problems of airline ground staff?**

#### **2.1 The Impact of Culture on Communication**

The results indicated that cultural dimensions, including moderate power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, high collectivism, and high long-term orientation had no negative influence on the communication of Thai ground staff and passengers. On the other hand, these factors allowed them to handle with passengers from either low or high power distance cultures with a certain level of good manners, such as politeness and empathy. The ground staff were willing to help passengers solve problems regarding distance with passengers, particularly high-value

customers. High uncertainty avoidance allowed a higher reliability of service made by ground staff in trying to avoid opened or unstructured communicating situations, and with the use of formal rather than informal language. High collectivism provides better service assurance to impress customers and to reduce dissatisfaction with service failure. This could be achieved through formal harmony in communication situations at all times, with an emphasis on enhancing customer experiences with the airline. Furthermore, high long-term orientation allowed for better service responsiveness. Ground staff would focus on asking “how” rather than asking “why” when passengers had problems. The flexible communication also allows for a better communicating results with an appropriate concern for prompt service.

In terms of the results, it was clear that communication between ground staff and passengers were influenced by cultural factors. Despite working in an atmosphere of cultural diversity, Kim (2001) suggested that communication is essential for creating mutual understanding, reducing distance between people from different cultures and reducing their uncertainty during the interaction. Hofstede (2001) described power distance as the level of influence among people of a higher social status or power and those with a lower social status, which in turn represents the inequality or gap between them. The ground staff in this study were most influenced by high power distance. Most agreed that they needed to solve the problems of passengers. However, they expected passengers to initiate communication and kept a certain distance between the passengers and themselves.

The ground staff in this study were also influenced by strong uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede (2001) defined uncertainty avoidance as a level of tolerance for ambiguity when dealing with uncertain and ambiguous situations. Those from a society with high uncertainty avoidance are more likely to encounter more rules, laws, regulations and action codes for minimizing negative outcomes and they seemed to have a higher tolerance for different views. The results of this study indicated that uncertainty avoidance in terms of the communication between ground staff and passengers were considered to be “high” by the ground staff. Most of them were comfortable in structured communication situations, knowledgeable enough to answer all of their questions, and preferred to use more formal or technical words to communicate with.

The ground staff in this study was also influenced by collectivism. According to Aycan, et al (2010), collectivism can be defined as the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups or the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to a group. The concern for collectivism in the communication between the ground staff and the passengers were was considered “high” by the ground staff. Most of them agreed with the statement that “Formal harmony in communication

situations should be maintained at all times” mostly; followed by “Being accepted by passengers is very important”, and “Passengers should never be made to lose face”.

The ground staff in this study were also influenced by long-term orientation. Long-term orientation can be explained as the degree to which a society upholds traditional values. The primary values were not limited to only long-term orientation but also perseverance, ordering relationships by status, being thrifty, having a sense of shame, and emphasizing collective face-saving (Barker and Haertel, 2012). It also influenced cultural resistance or acceptance of changes (Hofstede, 1984). The concern for long-term orientation in communication between the ground staff and passengers were considered “high” by the ground staff. Most of them agreed that “If passengers have a problem, I usually focus on asking “how” rather than asking “why” and mostly followed by “I am willing to change the method of communication for better results”; and “Long-term success is more important than short-term benefits”.

Apart from the culture that affected communication among the ground staff of the airline, communication in terms of cultural diversity demanded that the ground staff acquired cultural intelligence, which was defined as a system of knowledge and skills, linked by the cultural meta-cognition that allows people to adapt to, select, and shape the cultural aspects of their environment (Thomas et al. 2008). Early and Ang (2003) explained that motivational cultural intelligence makes a concerted effort to learn about and to function in situations characterized by cultural differences. It helps people to develop self-efficacy, as well as the energy to put more effort into cross-cultural situations and to develop the trust needed to control an unfamiliar situation. The abilities of individuals to think carefully and deeply about cultural assumptions during cross-cultural interactions, which makes the ground staff more alert in terms of looking for explanation or unexpected reactions or behaviors of the person they are interacting with. They also need to think about other cultures and search for explanatory models that bring a certain order to cultural differences. It is concerned with the knowledge of norms, practices and conventions in different cultures that have been acquired from educational and personal experience. Furthermore, ground staff produce effective verbal and non-verbal behavior when interacting with people from other cultures. It supports individuals to use certain verbal and non-verbal behavioral repertoires which enable them to take the initiative in such an interaction. Such competence will enable ground staff to communicate in a more appropriate and effective way in cross-cultural business environments at the airport.

## **2.2 Communication Problems**

The results suggested that the major communication problems between the ground staff and the passengers at an airport can be caused by cultural differences, English language problems, nonverbal cue misinterpretation, and situational factors, such as stress. Among four major

communication barriers that were further investigated, the results suggested that non-verbal cue misinterpretation was mostly faced by ground staff in this study, followed by English language problems, stress, and cultural barrier, respectively.

#### **A) Non-Verbal Cue Misinterpretation**

In terms of non-verbal cue misinterpretation, the results indicated that these communication problems were considered to be high by the ground staff in this study. As explained by Clampitt and Downs (2010), message interpretation is rather subjective and may not be the same between the communicating parties. Basically, human beings infer what is being experienced and interpret the meaning under individual frames of reference through words and actions of others, for example; silence, long speeches, head nods, or even a glance, as explained by Maltz (2010). In the case of communication between ground staff and passengers, both parties need to engage in message interpretation, in which the differences in experience, culture, and other personal factors may lead to the misinterpretation of the communication message. At the same time, factors such as eye contact, smiling and head nodding movements affect customer perceptions and experiences during service transactions. Illustrators such as nodding head, headshakes and other gestures serve as illustrative to enhance a speech or argument, as suggested by Gregersen et al. (2009). The use of head shaking movements can be used by the ground staff, which did not understand the needs of the customers or to refuse a request. However, smiles can help to create comfortable feelings with customers, in which smiling has shown to emerge as the most effective indicator of interpersonal warmth, as stated by Sundaram and Webster (2000). It is the act of showing interest in and the acceptance of customers. The basis of this may lead to the development and satisfaction of relationships, and thus customers are willing to cooperate with ground staff during service interactions.

#### **B) English Communication Problems**

For English language problems, it is agreed that English communication is an important skill for the ground service of an airline because English is always used by the ground service staff as a means of communication with international passengers and non-Thai speaking staff. The ground service staff carried out their pre-flight duties, such as boarding and greeting passengers, and boarding assistance, at which time, the English listening and speaking problems occurred between ground service staff and passengers, which could in turn lead to problems with the operation of the airline. English language problems were considered to be high by the ground staff in this study. The strongest agreement was for "Without an adequate knowledge of English vocabulary, it is impossible to communicate with people from other countries"; followed by "English speakers with different accents are problems to communication with people from other countries", and "There are

grammatical errors in my communication with people from other countries". This is consistent with the study of Lumchan (2004), which found that the inability to use correct grammar, technical words, idiomatic expressions, and unfamiliarity with pronunciation caused communication problems between Thai staff and foreign colleagues. In addition, the results of Permtanjit (2003) confirmed that sometimes communication problems with the ground staff of an airline were job-related vocabulary knowledge, accents and pronunciation concerning English listening and speaking problems in which grammatical competence is vital for English listening and speaking. The results further suggested that the major English language problems included weak grammatical competence, a lack of adequate vocabulary, and problems with their pronunciation and accent.

Canale and Swain (1980) pointed out that grammatical competence involves learning how to accumulate a wealth of information about language as well as the ability to use its rules to create understanding among people. For the ground staff, their inability to use correct tenses, pronouns, and prepositions of place and time properly are examples of a lack of grammar knowledge, which may cause English communication problems such as the wrong meaning caused by from the use of the wrong tense. Moreover, the lack of grammatical knowledge caused listening problems such as the fact that the ground service staff were unable to identify the tenses of the sentences spoken by the passengers and the flight attendants were unable to use the basic expressions properly. Uraipan (2011) observed that vocabulary usage is another important factor in the ability to communicate, especially those who were not fluent in English. This was agreed upon by the ground service staff. The effectiveness of the spoken message depended on their ability to use the most appropriate words with particular listeners in specific situations. However, some of the ground service staff lacked sufficient vocabulary and their language skills were too limited to fully express their thoughts. In addition, vocabulary also affected English communication. A knowledge of vocabulary knowledge not only enabled the ground service staff to increase their communicative effectiveness, but was also a necessary courtesy toward passengers. A ground service staff with a knowledge the most accurate and precise words can help promote the understanding that is critical for effective communication. In addition, for effective communication, the ground staff of airlines need to acquire pronunciation accurate enough for the important sounds to become distinctive from one another. As suggested by Uraipan (2011), the ground service staff assigned to make public announcements were expected to pronounce difficult words properly, especially the names of foreign cities or destinations. In addition, they should know how to pronounce names in their native language. The mistakes in pronunciation can detract from good communication and avoided by effort and practice. Furthermore, various accents often cause certain problems for ground service staff when they

attempted to interpret what is being said by passengers. Experienced ground staff can help colleagues to improve their knowledge of communication with accents from many places.

### **C) Stress**

The level of stress faced by the ground staff were perceived as being moderate, in particular, handling dissatisfied customers, communicating with people with different language, and cultures, which in turn can be a communication barrier in that they would try to avoid communicating with dissatisfied customers or unfamiliarity in communicating with people from other countries and thus withdrawing from communicating to them. Durvasula et al. (2005) explained that service employees played a significant role in determining feelings or emotions of customers, in which customer satisfaction will be high when they are interacting with helpful service staff members, as well as experienced and pleasant service ones, which will further enhance their loyalty to the service organization. This was also consistent with the suggestion of Miller (2006), which claimed that service employees had to interact and communicate with customers and they usually dealt with a number of tasks that contained a certain degree of emotion. Hoschild (1983) asserted that service employees are emotional labor jobs that require an emotional state in another person. Miller (2006) observed that service employees, such as ground staff usually have to behave towards clients according to the rules established by organizations, such as emotion display rules, in other words, to tell individual employees whether or not and how to express emotion in social interactions. Understanding emotional display rules in communication can help individuals to improve their relationships with customers. Rafaeli (1989) argued that employees in front lines service should be trained to perform positive emotions towards customers. For instance, ground staff at the check-in counter smiling at passengers may have an impact on their emotional state; and thus may affect their assessment and their view of the services of the airline.

### **D) Cultural Difference**

The results revealed that cultural difference affected the interpretation of non-verbal cues and communications made by ground staff, which can result in communication problems. Uraipan (2011) stated that social and cultural knowledge can lead to sociolinguistic competence, which in turn specifies ways of using language appropriately in a given situation. Blundell (1996) stated that sociolinguistic competence is related to the language functions required for ground service staff in order to use appropriate language in diverse situations with a concern for politeness, formality, metaphors, registers, and other culturally related aspects of language. As suggested by Broersma (2001), good sociolinguistic competence can be defined as service employees who know when to be quiet, when to talk, when to give compliments to passengers, and when to apologize. It also means being able to read situations and to know the right thing to do or say. There are an infinite

number of combinations in terms of the roles, tasks, contexts, and feelings that govern what is appropriate behavior at the service counter.

### **2.3 Communication Styles**

According to Wofford, Gerloff and Cummins (1977), a communication style can be defined as a “specialized set of interpersonal behaviors with related purposes and similar approaches used consistently by a person in similar situations.” There were three styles of communication examined in this study, including rhetorical reflectors, rhetorical sensitive, and noble selves, based on the theory of rhetorical sensitivity. This theory seems remarkably responsive to both intercultural sensitivity and intercultural transformation, and may be even more powerful in determining the behaviors associated with intercultural competence. The results indicated that the majority of respondents engaged in three styles of communication, including rhetorical reflectors, rhetorical sensitive, and noble selves; the rhetorical reflector was most commonly used and agreed upon by the respondents; followed by rhetorical sensitive, and noble selves based on the mean score of each. This means that sometimes the ground staff may need to exhibit deference in their messages to others and a profound concern for the needs of passengers; while sometimes the ground staff also needed to display message behavior, located between the extremes of the noble selves and the rhetorical reflectors. Appropriate communication strategies can help people to convey messages, resolve communication problems and ensure effective communication with others, as recommended by Somsai and Intaraprasert (2011).

#### **Research Question 2: What are the communication strategies for ground staff in dealing with English speaking passengers?**

As suggested by experienced ground staff in this study, most communication strategies or techniques that were often used at work to avoid misunderstanding in communications are asking the customer to write down the word in the paper. In this case, it was convenient for most of the airline check-in ground staff because they would know exactly what passengers want. Sometimes it is difficult for them to understand passengers from different countries speak English in different accents, so they chose this method to make them understand clearly and passengers were also willing to do. Followed by the next method which was asking colleagues or supervisors to help, this method was easy for them if they need help from someone. The colleagues and supervisors who have more experiences could help them know what passengers want. Trying to interpret customer's non-verbal language also found in this study. Passengers always try to communicate with staff by using non-verbal language when they feel like the staff do not understand them. For example, they sometimes use their hands to point somewhere or show their belongings to staff. These mean they

want to go somewhere or want to check their belongings which allow to the flight or not. If airline check-in ground staff communicate with passengers and they seem confusing, they allow to call translator from the airport help desk. It was the last choice in this study because there were few translators at the help desk and passengers had to wait too long so they tried to solve problems by themselves before calling translators to help.

Furthermore, the case studies could not recall the vocabulary or even failed to use correct grammatical forms in communication; they often tried to use familiar words or try to further explain the sentence rather than remaining silent. With regard to the results of the research, a psychological perspective had been adopted for verbal plan communication strategies, used to overcome problems in the planning and achievement of a communication goals, for instance, avoiding trouble spots or compensating for not knowing a vocabulary item. Also, interactional perspective was another communication strategy that was often used for helping and problem-solving behaviors, which occurred after some problems during the course of communication, for example, "Pardon?" and "Could you say that again, please?", as one of the participants added.

Information technology is widely used at the present and people normally use it in the course of their daily life, for example, smart phone, notebook, or tablet. Many smart phone applications claim that they can help people translate or understand languages, such as Google Translate and numerous online dictionaries. Nevertheless, airline check-in ground staff do not use these tools to communicate with passengers. This might be because technology may not help the staff to effectively communicate with passengers or because of the need to serve passengers rapidly.

### **3. Recommendations**

There were three recommendations based on the findings of this study.

1. Non-verbal cue misinterpretation was mostly concerned with a high level of agreement with the perceived communication problems of the respondents. Job orientation and training allowed them to understand work procedures and how to handle with customers from different cultures and avoid non-verbal cue misinterpretation.

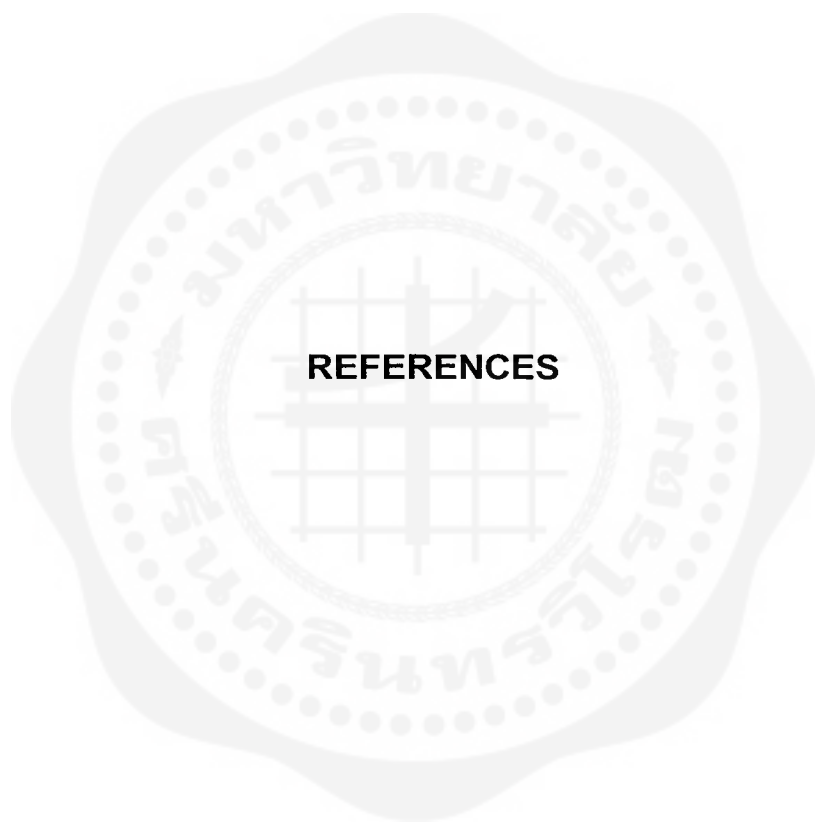
2. Problems with Language was the second major problem, as it is impossible to communicate with international customers without good English language skills. The results suggested that different pronunciation and accents were the major problems often faced in communicating with people from diverse cultures, particularly non-native English speakers. Apart from the recruitment and selection of qualified staff, the airline should also provide training programs to further enhance the English communication skills. Effective training can also be useful in helping

staff to communicate appropriately with customers, as well as handling the problems of customers and to enhance communicative effectiveness through intercultural competence.

3. The results also suggested that the accuracy of both work procedures and service standards may help to avoid problems with customers. However, rushing the passengers through the check-in process could be a major obstacle in terms of enhancing communication with customers. To reduce the stress of ground service staff at work, the results suggested that communication strategies or techniques to avoid misunderstandings in communication, including asking customers to write down the words on a piece of paper, followed by asking colleagues or supervisors for help, trying to interpret the non-verbal language of customers and calling a translator.

#### **4. Suggestions for Future Research**

The researcher intended to investigate communication among check-in ground staff of Thai Airways at Suvarnabhumi Airport. This study considered only one work environment and hence questioned the generalization of the study. Thus, the results of this results may not be applicable for communicative effectiveness for other positions and for the check-in ground staff in other airports. Therefore, the results suggested that further research was required to further study the communicative effectiveness for other airports and other types of places. Also, the researcher collected the data at Suvarnabhumi airport with one hundred respondents for quantitative research and ten participants for qualitative research. Therefore, a recommendation for future research was data collection from a larger sample size and across the country for more generalized findings.



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**APPENDIX**

## Appendix

### Reliability Test

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.984	4

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.933	5

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.916	4

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.812	3

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.739	4

#### Reliability Statistics

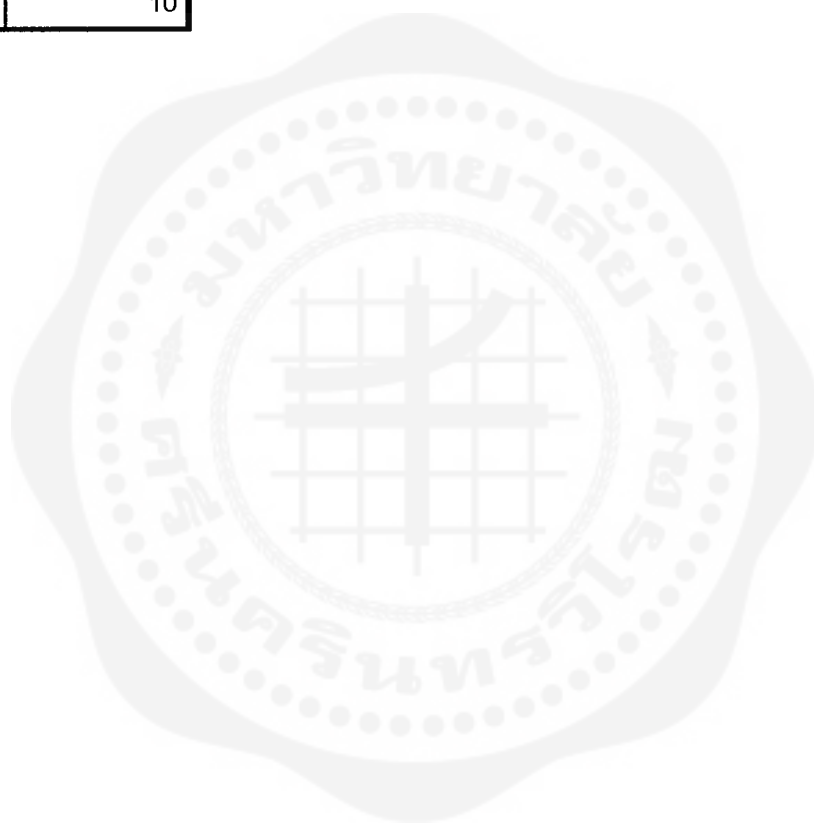
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.779	9

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.877	9

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.659	10



## Frequency Table

**S1. Are you airline ground staff working at the check-in counter at a Thai airport?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

**S2. Do you have the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) score of more than 500?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

### Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid male	9	9.0	9.0	9.0
Valid female	91	91.0	91.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

### Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18 - 25 years old	8	8.0	8.0	8.0
Valid 25 - 32 years old	86	86.0	86.0	94.0
Valid 33 - 40 years old	6	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Marital Status**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
single	75	75.0	75.0	75.0
Valid married	25	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Educational Background**

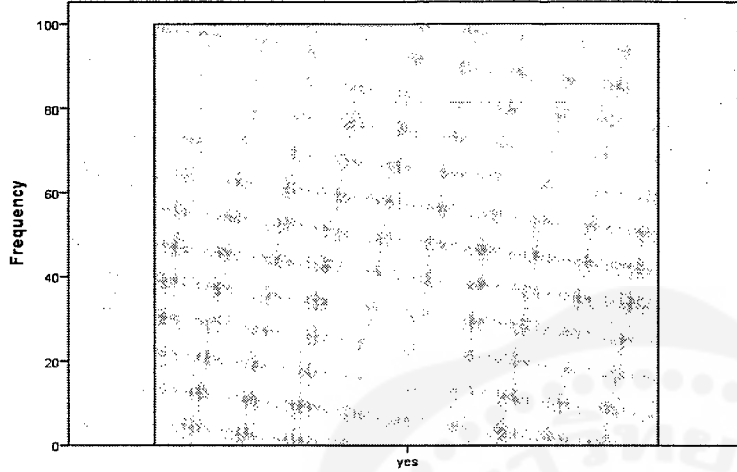
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bachelor's degree	81	81.0	81.0	81.0
Valid Master's degree	19	19.0	19.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**How long have you been working at the check-in counter?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
less than 1 year	8	8.0	8.0	8.0
1 - 3 years	58	58.0	58.0	66.0
Valid 4 - 6 years	29	29.0	29.0	95.0
7 - 9 years	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

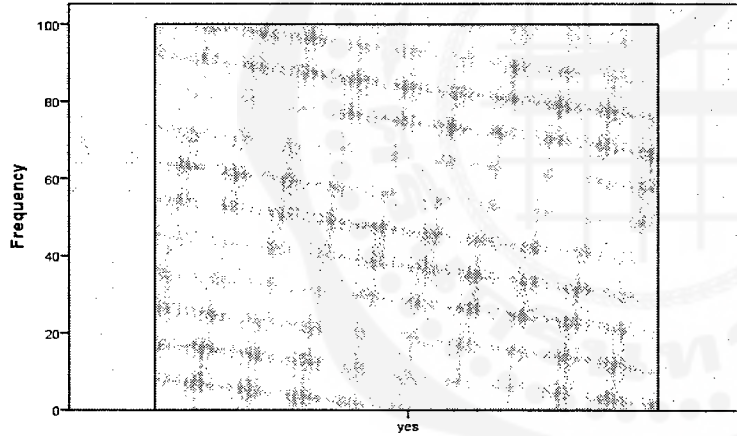
### Bar Chart

S1. Are you airline ground staff working at the check-in counters of Thai airports?

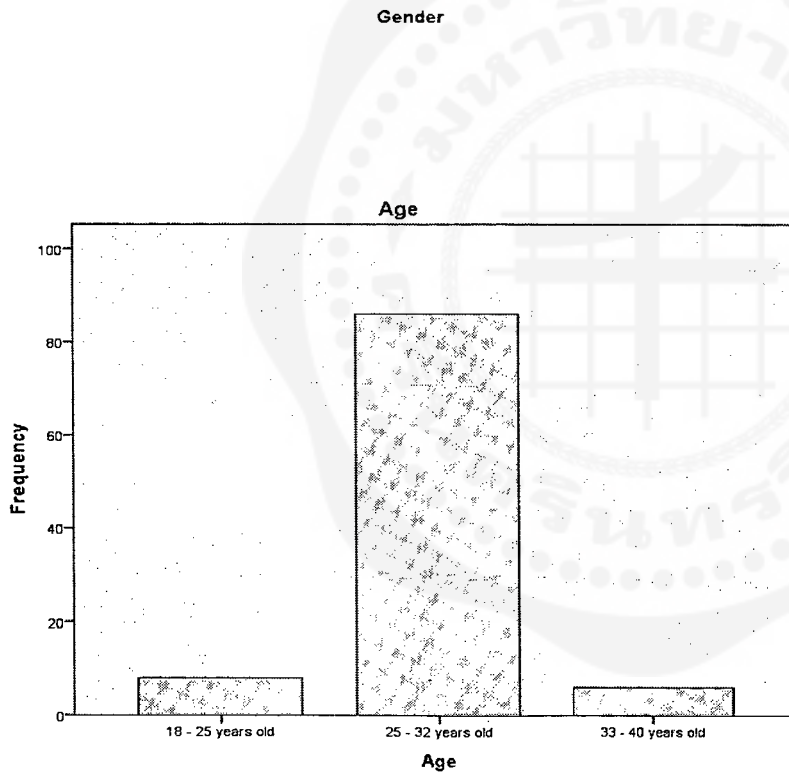
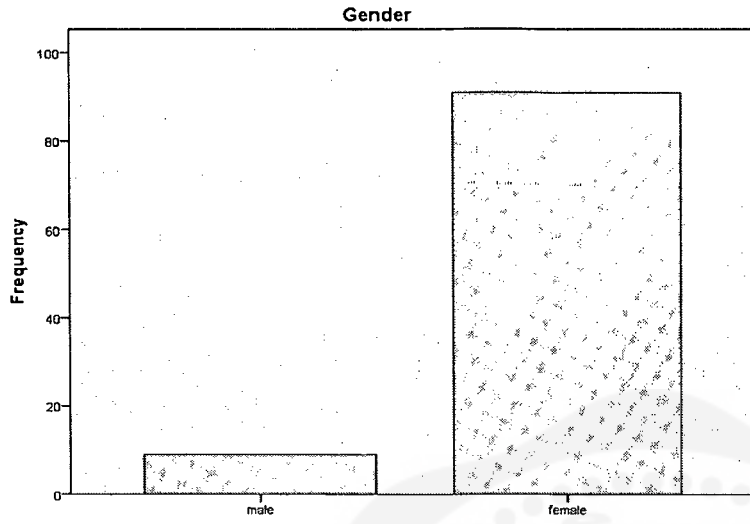


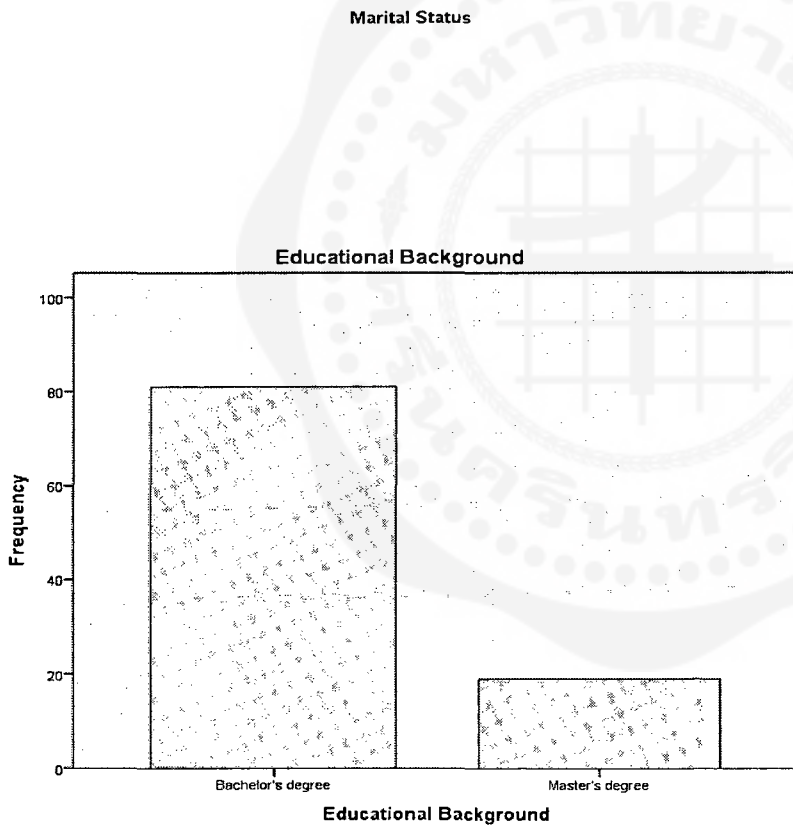
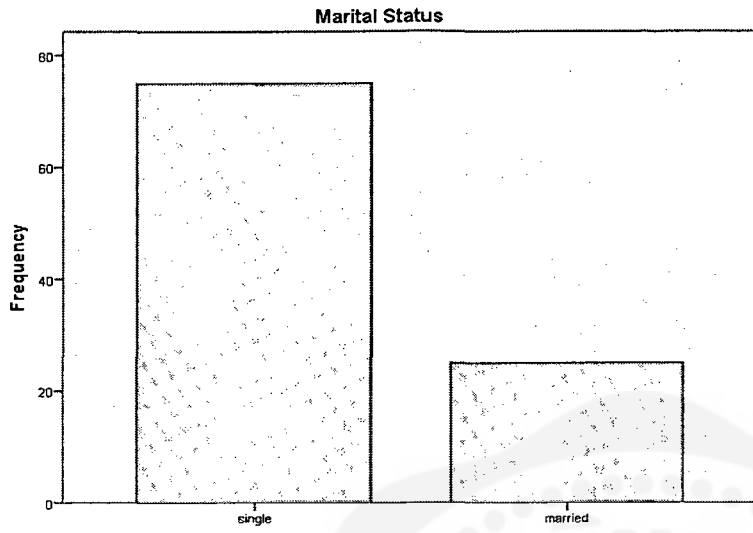
S1. Are you airline ground staff working at the check-in counters of Thai airports?

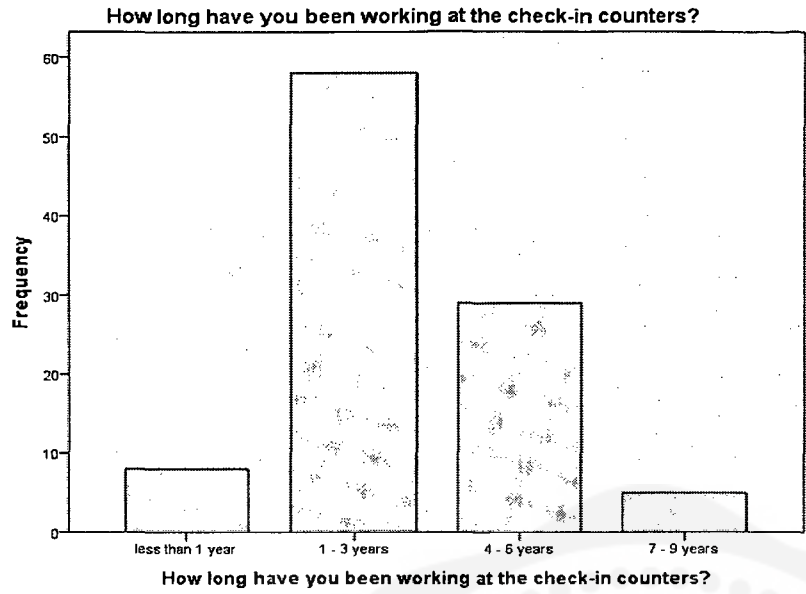
S2. Do you have the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) score of more than 500?



S2. Do you have the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) score of more than 500?







## QUESTIONNAIRE

Kindly complete all questions by marking “✓” in the space given below. There are no right or wrong answers.

### Screening Question

S1. Are you an airline ground staff member working at the check-in counters at Thai airports?

Yes.

No, Thank you for your time. End of Survey

### Part 1: General Information

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. Age

Under 18 years old

18 – 25 years old

25 – 32 years old

33 – 40 years old

Over 40 years old

3. Marital Status

Single

Married

Widowed/Divorced

4. Educational Background

Lower than a Bachelor's degree

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Ph.D.

5. How long have you been working at a check-in counter?

Less than 1 year

1 – 3 years

4 – 6 years

7 – 9 years

10 years or more

**Part 2: Attitude Rating**

There are: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 =strongly agree

No.	Item	Level of Agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
<b>Culture</b>						
Power distance						
	I expect passengers to initiate communication.					
	I need to help passengers with solving their problems.					
	The power distance between the passengers and I.					
Uncertainty avoidance						
	I am comfortable in structured communication situations.					
	I am expected to have all of the answers for passengers.					
	I always use formal language.					
Collectivism						
	Formal harmony in communication situations should be maintained at all times.					
	Passengers should never be made to lose face.					
	Being accepted by passengers is very important.					
Long-term Orientation						
	If a passenger has a problem, I usually focus on asking "how" rather than asking "why".					

	I am willing to change the method of communication for a better result.					
	Perseverance is rated as the most important virtue.					
<b>Perceived Barriers</b>						
	Sometimes, I cannot understand people from different culture.					
	The wants and needs of people from different cultures are often misinterpreted by non-verbal cues.					
	Using English to communicate often leads to misunderstandings.					
	I have difficulty dealing with people who don't speak English or Thai.					
<b>Communication Style</b>						
<b>Rhetorical Reflectors</b>						
	I usually avoid others rather than risk saying something that might hurt them.					
	I prefer to go along with others rather than openly disagree with them.					
	If what I would like to say might make others uncomfortable, I generally keep quiet instead.					
	If at all possible I try to avoid arguing with others.					
	Pleasing the other person is an important goal for me in most conversations.					
	I feel uncomfortable when people argue in public.					
	In conversations I am most successful when I am able to please the other person.					
	I usually feel uncomfortable when I need to persuade others.					
	I often felt that others take advantage of me during communication.					

Rhetorical Sensitive						
	Others have told me that I communicate well with difficult people.					
	In an argument, I can usually get my point across without hurting my relationship with the other person.					
	I'm good at figuring out the meanings behind what others say.					
	I value my ability to adapt when faced with various communication situations.					
	I have been told that I am able to give criticism in a way that does not hurt others.					
	I am able to communicate easily with people from different generations.					
	I can usually disagree with others without damaging our relationship.					
	Most of the conflicts I have with others are resolved to everyone's satisfaction.					
	More than a few times I've been told that I communicate well in difficult situations.					
Noble Selves						
	Other people sometimes think that I am too direct with them.					
	More than occasionally, I am honest to the point of being blunt when communicating with others.					
	Others are sometimes uncomfortable because I do not hide my opinions from them.					
	More than occasionally others react negatively because I am too honest with them.					
	Most of the time, I tell others exactly what I feel.					
	When I disagree with others, I find it difficult to back down.					

	When asked for an opinion, I usually say the first thing that comes to mind.					
	Regardless of the consequences, I tell my friends what I think.					
<b>Cultural Barriers</b>						
	It is difficult for me to communicate with people from other countries.					
	I need to learn more about the cultural differences of each individual passenger.					
	It is difficult for me to adapt to different communication and interaction styles when communicating with people from other countries.					
	I encounter difficulties dealing with people from other countries with regard to cultural differences.					
	There are people from some countries I do not feel comfortable communicating with because of cultural differences.					
	Past experience with people from a particular country made me avoid communication with others from the same country.					
	Harmony in communication decreases when people from different cultures are present.					
<b>Language Problems</b>						
	Without an adequate English vocabulary, it is impossible to communicate with people from other countries					
	Different English pronunciation and accents are problems when communicating with people from other countries					
	I make grammatical errors in English when communicating with people from other countries					
<b>Non-Verbal Cue Misinterpretation</b>						

	When communicating with people from other countries, I can understand nonverbal cues (body language, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.)					
	Differences in the nonverbal cues used by people from different countries (body language, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.) create problems in communication.					
<b>Stress</b>						
	I avoid communicating with dissatisfied customers as much as I can.					
	I prefer communicating with who have the same culture and speak the same language as I do.					
	Unfamiliarity with the demands of people from other countries makes me withdraw from communication with them.					

Comments or Suggestions.....  
 .....

**Part 3: Open-End Interview**

1. On average, how often do you communicate with people from different cultures?

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2. What difficulties have you faced when communicating cross-culturally?

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3. What training have you completed on diversity or cross-cultural communication?

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4. What factors are critical to you when working in a diverse environment?

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5. What do you think of the major communication obstacles with people from different cultures at work? Give examples...

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6. Have you developed any communication strategy-adjustments during the work and in communication?

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\*\*\*\*\*Thank You\*\*\*\*\*





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