

A STUDY OF ENGLISH COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS BETWEEN
THAI CABIN CREWS AND KOREAN PASSENGERS



Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication

At Srinakharinwirot University

May 2011

A STUDY OF ENGLISH COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS BETWEEN
THAI CABIN CREWS AND KOREAN PASSENGERS



A MASTER'S PROJECT

BY

THIYAPA KIATCHARAS

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Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication

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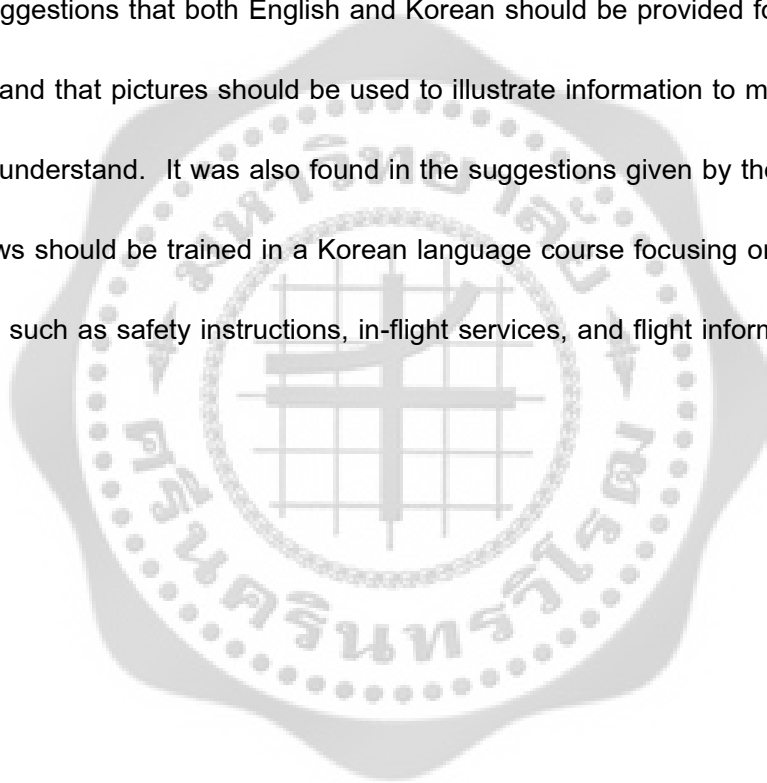
Project Advisor: Dr. Saiwaroon Chumpavan.

This study purposed to investigate communication problems in English between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers, the consequences of these problems for their working lives, and the communication strategies used by Thai cabin crews to solve the problems. Seventy five Thai cabin crews working with one of the International airlines flying between Thailand and Korea were asked to participate in this study. A questionnaire was used to collect data, and the data were analyzed to find the communication problems, the consequences of these problems, and the strategies that the Thai cabin crews used while they were communicating with Korean passengers.

The results of the study showed that two main communication problems between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers were: (a) the Korean passengers did not understand English and (b) the English vocabulary of Korean passengers was limited. The consequences of these communication problems for the working lives of Thai cabin crews were:

1. their professional time was lost, and this might reduce the effectiveness of their work;
2. the passengers did not follow instructions, and this might affect the safety on board;
- and
3. the communication problems possibly affected their professional advancement.

With respect to the effective communication strategies employed to solve the communication problems about safety on board, it was found that the cabin crews solved problems by using memorized Korean stock phrase and nonverbal languages to communicate with their passengers. For the in-flight service, it was found that the communication strategy used to solve the problem was using nonverbal languages. In addition, it was found from the participants' suggestions that both English and Korean should be provided for information given to passengers and that pictures should be used to illustrate information to make easier for passengers to understand. It was also found in the suggestions given by the participants that Thai cabin crews should be trained in a Korean language course focusing on board communication such as safety instructions, in-flight services, and flight information.



การศึกษาปัญหาในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างลูกเรือไทยและผู้โดยสารเกาหลี



บทคัดย่อ
ของ
วิทยานิพนธ์

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ

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งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาปัญหาในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างลูกเรือไทยและ
ผู้โดยสารเกาหลี รวมถึงผลกระทบที่เกิดขึ้นต่อการทำงานและวิธีการที่ลูกเรือใช้ในการแก้ไขปัญหา
ดังกล่าว ผู้วิจัยได้ขอให้ลูกเรือไทยจำนวน 75 คนที่ทำงานกับสายการบินหนึ่งในจำนวนหลายสายการ
บินที่บินระหว่างประเทศไทยและเกาหลีเข้าร่วมเป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่างของงานวิจัยนี้ โดยใช้แบบสอบถามเป็น
เครื่องมือในการเก็บข้อมูล ข้อมูลที่ได้จากแบบสอบถามได้รับการวิเคราะห์เพื่อหาปัญหาในการสื่อสาร
ผลกระทบของปัญหาและวิธีการที่ลูกเรือไทยใช้ในการสื่อสารกับผู้โดยสารเกาหลี

ปัญหาหลักระหว่างลูกเรือไทยและผู้โดยสารเกาหลีคือ ผู้โดยสารเกาหลีไม่เข้าใจภาษาอังกฤษ
และคำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษของผู้โดยสารชาวเกาหลีมีจำกัด ในด้านของผลกระทบของปัญหาในการ
สื่อสารต่อการทำงานของลูกเรือไทยพบว่า

1. เวลาในการทำงานของลูกเรือไทยเสียไปในการสื่อสารและอาจทำให้ประสิทธิภาพในการทำงานของ
ลูกเรือลดลง
2. ผู้โดยสารไม่ทำตามคำสั่งและอาจทำให้มีผลกระทบต่อความปลอดภัยบนเครื่องบินได้
3. ปัญหาในการสื่อสารอาจจะมีผลกระทบต่อความก้าวหน้าทางอาชีพของลูกเรือได้

ในด้านของวิธีการในการสื่อสารอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพที่นำมาใช้ในการแก้ปัญหาการสื่อสารที่
เกี่ยวข้องกับความปลอดภัยบนเครื่องบิน ผลจากการวิจัยพบว่าลูกเรือแก้ปัญหาด้วยการใช้วลีภาษา
เกาหลีและอวัจนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสารกับผู้โดยสาร ในด้านของการบริการบนเที่ยวบินและการให้ข้อมูล
ด้านการบิน ผลการวิจัยพบว่าวิธีการในการสื่อสารที่ใช้ในการแก้ปัญหาคือการใช้อวัจนภาษา
นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิจัยยังพบว่าลูกเรือที่เข้าร่วมในงานวิจัยแนะนำให้ใช้ทั้งภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาเกาหลี
ในการให้ข้อมูลแก่ผู้โดยสารและให้ใช้รูปภาพเข้ามาช่วยเพื่อให้ผู้โดยสารเข้าใจข้อมูลได้ง่ายขึ้น
นอกจากนี้ ลูกเรือที่เข้าร่วมในงานวิจัยยังให้คำแนะนำอีกด้วยว่า ลูกเรือไทยควรได้รับการอบรมภาษา
เกาหลีที่เน้นเกี่ยวกับการสื่อสารบนเครื่องบิน เช่น คำสั่งต่างๆด้านความปลอดภัย การให้บริการ และ
การให้ข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับการบิน

The master's project advisor, chair of Business English for International Communication and oral defense committee have approved this master's project *A Study of English Communication Problems Between Thai Cabin Crews and Korean Passengers* by Thiyapa Kiatcharas as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakarinwirot University.

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This master's project has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakarinwirot University.

....., Dean of Faculty of Humanities
(Dr. Wanee Aujsatid)

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

The advent of globalization is changing the fundamental nature of communication as we are no longer constrained by distance or geographical borders. The world of business has become a borderless international network through advancements in communication technology. Therefore, communication has become an even more crucial part in our lives. People from different countries with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds now enjoy unique methods of communication. Thus, language differences can cause problems in communications between people from different countries (Richmond & McCrosky, 1991). In addition, different patterns of verbal and nonverbal communications can create serious errors and lead to misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and confusion; and thus affecting perceptions and relations between people from diverse cultures (Comstock, 1985).

The rapid growth of multinational business makes effectiveness in international communication ever more critical (Dulex & Fielden, 1990). In a global business environment, people engage in cross-cultural communications with multinational business partners. Communicating across cultures refers not only to language differences, but also to social attitudes and behaviors. In addition, nonverbal communication is a part of communication. Nonverbal forms of communication include personal space, physical contact, and eye contact, each of which could make communication problematic. People in the business world have to

realize the importance of communication as it can aid or obstruct the business process.

Language is one of shortcomings in communication because it tends to be the most critical problem (Comstock, 1985). Language causes more problems than any other factor in the communication process as it is the most frequently used as a medium of communication (Ekwannang, 2004).

Since the business environment in Thailand has become international, many foreigners travel to Thailand for many reasons, such as business, education, and sightseeing. Consequently, many researchers are interested in the way business people communicate with their multinational business partners. Ekwannang (2004) studied cross-cultural communication barriers between Western expatriates and Thai staff in Thailand. Her study focused on verbal cross-cultural communication barriers that Western expatriates encountered in their workplace, and 20 Western expatriates were interviewed to investigate communication problems. The findings showed that the major verbal cross-cultural communication problems among foreigners when communicating with Thais in the workplace were misinterpretations in terms of the contexts and contents of statements. According to Ekwannang, all of these problems came from the lack of English vocabulary, different levels of English proficiency, and English pronunciation and accent of Thai staff. Another possible explanation for these barriers was the traditional Thai characteristics of avoidance of conflict, lack of assertiveness, and verbal cross-cultural communication barriers (Ekwannang, 2004). Therefore, Ekwannang recommended that to minimize these problems, Thai staff should confirm the statement, be patient, and be sensitive to cultural differences (Ekwannang, 2004).

Similarly, Pruksanubal (2006) explored communication problems among Thai vendors and foreigners at Khao San Road in Bangkok. She found that when Thai vendors communicate with foreign customers, most of them encounter difficulties. These difficulties caused misunderstanding, confusion, and taking too much time in communicating. Thai vendors preferred to use gestures, signs, calculators, and a dictionary to overcome these communication difficulties. Pruksanubal found that the confirmation of a statement was helpful for Thai vendors to communicate with foreigners (Pruksanubal, 2006).

In the service industry, Chaiwongsa (2006) found that Thai staff often had problems when listening and speaking English with foreign customers. Asking customers to speak slowly and repeat sentences as well as using printed materials to explain and asking colleagues to help were among the most frequent ways for the staff to deal with foreign customers (Chaiwongsa, 2006).

Korean Tourists in Thailand

Among travelers coming to Thailand, Koreans are one of the major groups of Asian tourists that travel to Thailand. According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the number of Korean tourists to Thailand continues to increase rapidly and this number increased an additional 30% in 2008. Thailand and Korea celebrated the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2008, and this celebration served to promote tourism between the two countries. (TAT, 2008).

Due to the increased number of tourists between Thailand and Korea, there is a greater need for flights between Thailand and Korea. There are now more than 100 flights between Thailand and Korea, operated by Thai Airways International, Korean Air, Asiana Airlines, Jin Air, Jeju Air, and Business Air. This indicates that the quantity of Korean tourists traveling to Thailand continues to increase. This trend requires Thai people to develop effective methods to communicate with Koreans as communication between Thais and Koreans take place in many realms, including business, education, mass media, entertainment and tourism, and especially on flights between Thailand and Korean.

Communication Problems Between Cabin Crews and Passengers

Passengers are the lifeblood of every airline. Thus, every airline needs to realize the importance of effective communication to fulfill passengers' needs. In addition, communication is the essence of forming relationships with passengers. Cabin crews must attend to passengers not only to ensure their comfort, but also to serve as representatives of the airline. Cabin crews need to communicate, especially face to face, with multinational passengers. However, language differences are a primary communication obstacle between cabin crews and passengers (Suphakijyothin, 2001). Although English usage is international, the different intonation of multinational passengers affects the working process of cabin crews (Kulchol, 2007). Misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and confusion affect the relationship between cabin crews and passengers. Language differences can have a negative influence on the airline business when cabin crews deal with their foreign colleagues and passengers.

Conversely, effective communication can enhance relationships between cabin crews and their passengers that will lead to a more prosperous business. Awareness of language differences is essential to overcome communication problems between cabin crews and their multinational passengers. To minimize communication problems caused by language differences can create strong relationships between cabin crews and their passengers, which is a critical factor in an airline's ability to maintain and increase passenger loyalty.

Statement of the Problem

Effective communication promotes good relationships between passengers and the airline. Due to the increasing number of Koreans traveling to Thailand, awareness of communication between Thais and Koreans is important. One of the primary languages employed when The Thais and The Koreans communicate is English. However, Thais and Koreans are not English native speakers. When Korean passengers fly to Thailand, they have to communicate with Thai cabin crews on board which can sometimes lead to a communication breakdown. For this reason, it is necessary to determine the most effective strategies to overcome communication problems on board between cabin crews and passengers.

Therefore, the problems addressed to investigate in this study were:

1. To examine communication problems that Thai cabin crews encounter when communicating in English with Korean passengers.

2. To identify the consequences of communication problems that Thai cabin crews encounter when communicating in English with Korean passengers.
3. To explore communication strategies that have been used to overcome communication problems in communication in English between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions in this study.

1. What are communication problems that Thai cabin crews encounter when communicating with Korean passengers?
2. What are the consequences of communication problems for the working lives of Thai cabin crews?
3. What communication strategies have been used to overcome communication problems between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers?

Significance of the Study

The world has become a global village where producers of goods and services compete domestically and internationally. In the 21st century, advancements in technological innovation make it convenient for people to work with their multinational partners. Air transportation is an important aspect of both international and domestic business. According to business, tourism promotion, and education, a number of people travelling by airlines are higher than the past

decade (Doganis, 2001). People prefer air travel because it saves time and money, and is safer than other forms of transportation (Doganis, 2001). For this reason, the importance of communication has increased as the world has become smaller. In a global setting, people from various countries and cultures frequently interact for business and communication can become a very complicated process. Different languages in multinational communication may affect profits or losses in the exchange of products and services (Doganis, 2001).

This study focuses on the communication problems and strategies used by Thai cabin crews to overcome the problems between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers. The results could provide valuable information for the airline industry. Communication problems were discussed and the methods that cabin crews could employ to overcome communication problems in English with foreign passengers were proposed. Therefore, the results could contribute to an understanding of communication problems between Thai cabin crews and foreign passengers and the consequences of the communication problems for the working lives of Thai cabin crews. In addition, the findings may indicate the communication strategies that cabin crews used to solve the communication problems on board that concern safety, in-flight service, and giving flight information to passengers. Additionally, these findings may be employed by airlines to develop a flight attendant's communication skills in training programs. To develop a standardized service based on these findings and provide good service will be beneficial in improving relationships with passengers. Good relationships influence passenger loyalty, attract new passengers, and these contributes to the success or failure of the business (Mill, 2004).

Method

In this study, a questionnaire was used to collect the data. The data were obtained from 75 Thai cabin crews serving Korean passengers on a commercial airline flying more than three flights a month. The participants were all cabin crews working for Business Air. All cabin crews of this airline were Thais. During the time of this study, Business Air was one of the airlines that flew directly between Thailand and Korea. The airline had 20 direct flights from Thailand and Korea. Of these flights, 14 flights were between Seoul and Bangkok, 2 flights between Daegu and Bangkok, 4 flights between Seoul and Phuket, and 2 flights between Busan and Phuket. On all 15 weekly flights, the passengers were predominantly Korean. The data from the participants' level of agreement were analyzed quantitatively for percentage and mean scores, and the suggestions from the participants were analyzed qualitatively.

Confidentiality of Participants and Their Responses

Participants were informed that their personal information would be kept in strict confidentiality and that it would be destroyed after the study was completed. A cover letter providing information about the study and asking for participation was sent to the participants one week before contributing the questionnaire. They were asked to contact the researcher if they were not willing to participate in the study (see Appendix A).

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to Thai cabin crews working for Business Air at the time of the study and to those who were willing to participate in the study. All participants received the questionnaire on the same day, and they were asked to return the questionnaire to the researcher no later than one week after receiving it.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I of this study dealt with the problems and its background. Chapter II presents a review of the related literature and previous research studies related to communication problems between cabin crews and passengers. Chapter III presents the method. Chapter IV presents the results of the study, and Chapter V contains conclusion, discussion and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter discusses literature related to this study. It is divided into five parts:

1. Tourism Industry in Thailand
2. Korean Tourists in Thailand
3. Cabin Crews
4. Communication Problems Between Cabin Crews and Passengers
5. Communication Strategies, and
6. Previous Studies Related to This Study.

Tourism Industry in Thailand

The Board of Investment of Thailand (2010) stated that tourism has played a significant role to Thai economy by appealing foreign revenues of about many million baht a year. As a result, Thailand current account and balance of payment have been impacted positively.

Tourism also leads to the expansion in some linking industries such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, retails, and souvenirs. All of these contributions cause the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment, export, investment as well as the government expenditure. The information from the Office of Department of Tourism of Thailand (2008) revealed that 52.37% of international tourists were East Asian, with Malaysian, Japanese, and

Korean were the most visitors. Data from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) revealed that the numbers of tourist arrivals to Thailand in 2007 were 14.46 million and increased to 14.55 million in 2008 (TAT, 2010). In 2010, TAT released tourism statistics of international tourist arrivals to Thailand, and it revealed that the number of international tourists visited Thailand increased 22.23% from 2009 or 17.59 million visitors. In addition, TAT stated that more than five million international tourist visited Thailand from January to March, 2011. This statistics showed that tourism industry is very important to the Thai economy.

Korean Tourists in Thailand

Among travelers coming to Thailand, Koreans are one of the major groups of Asian tourists that travel to Thailand, and they are continually increasing every year. Thailand is an attractive destination for Korean tourists. Korea Tourism Organization (2011) stated that Thailand attracts Korean tourists by scenery and cost; for example, new couples admire to honeymoon trip in Thailand. According to the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) (2005), 501,613 Korean tourists arrived in Thailand at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in 2005, with a 26.80% increase in 2006. Based on the information from TAT (2008), 1,075,516 Korean tourists arrived in Thailand in 2007 and this number increased another 30% in 2008. In 2008, the two countries celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, and held a number of events and activities throughout the year to commemorate this auspicious occasion. This was not only a celebration of the diplomatic relations between Thailand and Korea, but the events also promoted Thai tourism to Koreans. When the Office

of Tourism Department, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports released tourism statistics of international tourist arrivals to Thailand, it revealed that more than 1.7 million Koreans visited Thailand between 2009 and 2010. In 2009, TAT launched a project called, "Come to Thailand. Let's take a break" to encourage Koreans to visit Thailand. In 2010, the number of Korean tourists that visited Thailand increased 25% from 2009. These indicate that the quantity of Korean tourists traveling to Thailand is continually increasing.

Airlines business between Thailand and Korea.

As of December 2010, there were 86 weekly direct scheduled flights between Korea and Thailand by Thai Airways International, Korean Air, and Asiana Airlines. Of these, 60 flights were between Seoul and Bangkok, 11 flights between Busan and Bangkok, 11 flights between Seoul and Phuket, and 4 flights between Seoul and Chiang Mai. In addition, there were 35 weekly direct chartered flights between Korea and Thailand by Jeju Air, Jin Air, and Business Air. Jeju Air and Jin Air operated flights between Seoul and Bangkok one flight a day. Business Air had 20 flights a day between Korean and Thailand. This information shows that almost 100 flights a week between Korea and Thailand transport a numbers of Korean tourists to Thailand.

Business Air is one of the airlines fly directly between Thailand and Korea, employing Thai flight attendants and transporting Korean passengers. Business Air was begun in 2008 in Thailand. The airline's mission is to provide business air services with an emphasis on security. Business Air has four aircrafts with three types which are Boeing 767-200, 767-300, and 767-300er. It operates flights between Thailand and Korea to transport both Thais and

Koreans. The airline has 20 direct flights from Thailand and Korea. There are 14 flights are between Seoul and Bangkok, 2 between Daegu and Bangkok, 4 between Seoul and Phuket, and 2 flights between Busan and Phuket. On all 15 weekly flights, the passengers are predominantly Korean.

Cabin Crews

All airlines are required by law to provide cabin crews for safety and security of the public. The minimum number of cabin crews working on a particular flight is determined by the number of passengers and/or the aircraft type and its number of emergency exits. The maximum number of cabin crew is determined by the airlines, and this depends on the level of service required.

Cabin crews are required by law to work on the aircraft for reasons of safety (Parasakul, 2008). As well as their major role in any emergencies, they have responsibilities to enforce safety regulations. They must ensure that passengers fasten their seatbelts and do not smoke. Cabin crews patrol the cabin to watch out for any disruptive passenger behavior such as drunkenness, violations of aviation regulations, and criminal acts which might lead to a dangerous situation. Although the primary job of cabin crews is to ensure security and safety regulations, cabin crews also aim to make flights comfortable and enjoyable for passengers. Cabin crews have the most contact with the passengers. The passengers' impression of the airline will depend largely upon how well the cabin crews do their job (Business Air, 2010).

On board communication between cabin crews and passengers starts when passengers board and finishes when passengers deplane. During flights, the general job roles of the cabin crew are to monitor passenger's compliance with airline safety rules, to inform passengers about flight details, to assist passengers with basic requests, and to serve food and drink. Cabin crews need to be able to communicate with passengers. They most often communicate through verbal communication, especially face-to-face, even with passengers from different countries. Misunderstandings may occur when the cabin crews communicate with passengers from different backgrounds who speak different languages. However, if cabin crews and passengers share the same mother-tongue, communication problems can be minimized.

Communication Problems Between Thai Cabin Crews and Korean Passengers

Breakdown in communication occur when the message being sent is not understood by the receiver. This study focused on communication problems in English between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers. Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers communicate with each other in the English language, but Thais and Koreans are not native English speakers. Both parties speak a different language and have different cultural backgrounds. Communication difficulties may occur between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers. These communication problems can affect job process of cabin crews and airlines profits.

Problems in verbal communication.

The basis of communication is interaction between people. Verbal communication is a simple way for people to communicate with others. It is the most frequent form of communication used in everyday life. Verbal communication generally refers to written or spoken words; however, it has to do with more than just the words that people speak. It includes pronunciation or accent, the meanings of the words used, and a range of variation in the way people speak a language which depends on their regional backgrounds and other factors such as age, gender, race, education and occupation. Verbal communication is important because of the role it plays in an identity group and relationship development (Gudykunst, 2003). Gudykunst (2003) described verbal communication as language use. It is composed of four components that include phonology (sounds), syntax (structure or rules), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (use).

When people communicate, language differences and culture are major difficulties in verbal communication. With respect to language differences, over 3,000 languages and major dialects are spoken in the world today. The huge variety of languages often creates difficulties between people with different languages, but even within a single language there can be many problems in understanding (Knapp & Daly, 2002). Language is always in the process of change (Young, 2006). Anne (2001) stated that words can be discarded because the things they refer to are obsolete or because the words of one generation are outmoded by the next, replaced by language that characterizes a new generational in-group. In addition, a word in one language does not always have an equivalent meaning in another language, and often

describe completely different concepts. For this reason, language can be a major barrier to communication for people with different first languages (Jess, Judith & Nakayama, 2007).

With respect to cultural differences, Carte and Fox (2004) studied roles of behavior, assumptions and cultural values in the international communication arena. They concluded that clear communication across cultures is never easy. They said that although English was the common language of international business, talking to non-native speakers of any language or different cultures may create confusion. They suggested that when dealing with people from different cultures, speakers need to think carefully about how they express themselves. Peterson (2004) suggested that using English as a global language should be with clear, articulate and simple English that is free of slang, relaxed expressions, idioms and complex grammatical constructions.

Problems in nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal communication is defined as all messages that people transmit through means other than words. It occurs when nonverbal behavior has symbolic meaning (Gudykunst, 2003). In order to understand the meaning of nonverbal communication, the entire behavioral context, including culture, relationship, background, knowledge, and gender is considered.

Nonverbal communication consists of physical signals of affects, which can be communicated through facial expressions, the body, hands, feet and vocal quality. In addition, nonverbal communication also includes how we utter words (inflection, volume) and features of environments that affect personal images and interaction patterns (dress, jewelry, furniture) (Wood, 2010). Nonverbal communication is more than mere gestures or body language as it

can establish relationships and express both personal identity and cultural values. Nonverbal behavior and our interpretations of others' nonverbal behavior are determined by the rules of a particular culture. Nonverbal behaviors are a significant part of communication, particularly when mixed messages are sent. There are various subtypes of nonverbal behaviors in communication according to Walton (1995) which are outlined below.

Kinesics refers to body position and movement, including the face. Despite a powerful capacity for verbal language, the role of the face is to convey more intricate messages. Body movement is focused on the movement of hands and arms, posture and gross bodily movements. Facial and bodily movement can be used to reflect an emotion or to emphasize or contradict what is being said.

Haptics refers to touch and the types of physical contact that people use to achieve a sense of connection, indicate their intentions and to express emotion. In close family relationships, such as family and friends, touch is a particularly significant indicator of affection (Bruce & Dahley, 1997). Conversely, touch can also inspire negative feelings when it is perceived to be manipulative and insincere. Additionally, touch also communicates power and status. People with high status touch and invade the space of people who are considered to be lower status. (Katz & Lazarfield, 1955)

Proxemics refers to personal space, the physical distance that individuals maintain between themselves and others. The way people use personal space is an important component of nonverbal communication and may provide insights into individuals and how they feel about other people.

Paralanguage refers to vocal communication that does not use word. It includes sounds, such as murmurs and gasps and vocal qualities, such as volume, rhythm, pitch, and inflection. Paralanguage also includes pronunciation, accent and the complexity of our sentences. Voices also express feeling, for instance; whispering signals intimacy, while shouting conveys anger.

With respect to problems in nonverbal communication, culture is one of the more important factors that influences the meaning of nonverbal languages. Cultural differences are a major difficulty in nonverbal communication because nonverbal languages vary from one culture to another (Richmond, 1991). For instance, most Westerners greet others by shaking hands. However, in other cultures, the handshake is not as common. For instance, Koreans bow when they meet and Thais *wai* each other as a greeting. Another important aspect of nonverbal communications is facial expression. People show emotion through their faces and by eye contact. For instance, it is common for two people from the United States to look each other in the eye while communicating, and frequent eye aversion may communicate a lack of trust in another. However, in other cultures, such as Korea, direct eye contact is rejected because it is perceived as communicating disrespect.

In addition, interpretations of personal space vary from culture to culture. In an individualistic culture, people tend to view themselves as individuals and focus on the needs of individuals. In general, Western culture tends to be individualist. Most Asian cultures, such as Japan, China, and Korea, tend to be collectivist. A collectivistic culture is one in which people view themselves as members of groups; families, work units, and nation, and usually prioritize the needs of the group. Generally, people from individualistic cultures require more space than

people from collectivistic cultures. Nonverbal communication should always be understood within a cultural context. People cannot assume that others automatically understand their nonverbal displays because their meaning can differ significantly within and across cultures.

Cabin Crews and Customers' Satisfaction

Language difference is the main communication problem in conversational difficulties between Thai cabin crew and foreign passengers during in-flight service (Parasakul, 2008). Cabin crews and passengers communicate with each other by employing extremely diverse cultural concepts that contribute to communication failure (Kuchol, 2007). It is often difficult for them to realize the nature of these problems. The ways in which cabin crews deal with passengers have major effects on the airlines such as customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and service quality. These factors can contribute failure or success of the business (Mill, 2004).

In the service industry, the achievement of customer satisfaction leads to company loyalty and product repurchase (Capioppo, 2000). Furthermore, a 5% increase in loyalty can increase profits by 25 to 85%. On the other hand, most dissatisfied customers will abandon a company and run to their competitors (Mill, 2004). Logically, less positive consumer responses to service will have a negative impact on the consumer's overall service satisfaction and intention to repurchase the service product.

Furthermore, customer satisfaction is an antecedent of loyalty. For airlines, customer loyalty has become a key element in their strategies in the competitive milieu in which they operate. Like customer satisfaction, word-of-mouth also influences customer loyalty.

Word of mouth refers to the passing of information from person to person about something which satisfied customers tell other people how much they like a business, product, service, or event. Word of mouth is ranked the most important information source when a consumer is making a purchase decision. Negative word of mouth has been documented to spread quicker than positive (Wangenheim, 2005). In addition, according to Statt (1997), the average customer with a problem eventually tells nine other people and satisfied customers tell five other people about their good treatment. Researchers also hypothesize that people pay more attention to and give more weight to negative information than they do to positive information. This means that negative information is more influential than positive information.

Grewal, Cline, and Davies (2003) studied negative word of mouth and its influences on new providers and concluded that word of mouth is powerful. It forms the basis of interpersonal communications and significantly influences product evaluations and purchase decisions. Word of mouth has also been shown to be more powerful than printed information because word of mouth information is considered to be more credible. This study showed how important word of mouth information is created by customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is influenced by service quality. These influences are especially important in the service and tourism industry, whose intangible products are difficult to evaluate prior to their consumption.

Communication Strategies

Communication strategies pertain to the employment of verbal and nonverbal mechanisms or the productive communication of information in the arena of linguistic interaction; it is sometimes difficult, of course, to distinguish between the two. Faerch and Kasper (1983) defined communication strategies as potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal. Brown (2000) has list of such strategies that reflects accepted categories over several decades of research, adapted from Dornyei (1995), which include

1. Avoidance Strategies

- a. Message abandonment: Leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties.
- b. Topic avoidance: Avoidance of topic areas or concepts that pose language difficulties.

2. Compensatory Strategies

- a. Circumlocution: Describing or exemplifying the target objective of action (e.g., the thing you open bottles with for corkscrew).
- b. Approximation: Using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target word as closely as possible (e.g., ship for sailboat).
- c. Use of all-purpose words: Extending a general, empty word to contexts where specific words are lacking (e.g., the overuse of thing, stuff, what-do-you-call –it, thingie).
- d. Word coinage: Creating a nonexistent Language 2 word based on a supposed rule (e.g., vegeterianist for vegetarian).

- e. Prefabricated patterns: Using memorized stock phrase, usually for “survival” purposes (e.g., Where is the ____ or comment allez-vous?, where the morphological components are not known to the receiver).
- f. Nonlinguistic signals: Gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation.
- g. Literal translation: Translating literally word, idiom, compound word, or structure from Language 1 to Language 2.
- h. Foreignizing: Using a Language 1 word by adjusting it to Language 2 phonology (i.e., with a Language 2 pronunciation) and/or morphology (e.g., adding to it a Language 2 suffix).
- i. Code-switching: Using a Language 1 word with Language 1 pronunciation or a Language 3 word with Language 3 pronunciation while speaking in Language 2.
- j. Appeal for help: Asking for aid from the interlocutor either directly (e.g., What do you call ...?) or indirectly (e.g., rising intonation, pause, eye contact, puzzled expression).
- k. Stalling or time-gaining strategies: Using fillers or hesitation devices to fill pauses and to gain time to think (e.g., well, now let's see, uh, as a matter of fact).

Communication strategies are used to solve communication problems regarding language differences. These communication strategies can be combined to minimize misunderstanding and confirm understanding which depends on the situation (Pruksanubal, 2006).

Previous Studies Related to This Study

Studies on cabin crews and passengers.

Gountas, Ewing, and Gountas (2007) conducted a customer satisfaction survey of 1,160 airline passengers. This survey was concerned with the relationship between service provider's positive affective displays, the consumers' perception of authentic service delivery and their reported satisfaction. A combination of facial expressions, voice, gestures, and body movements transmit emotion, which form expressive displays. The research was analyzed to measure the influence of the service provider's positive expressive display with service satisfaction and intention to repurchase. The findings indicated that a service providers' positive expressive display has a highly significant direct effect on overall satisfaction and the likelihood of repurchase.

An and Noh (2009) confirmed that in-flight service quality, especially such intangible factors, such as responsiveness and empathy, influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Responsiveness is defined as the intention to provide services promptly to customers. Empathy means consideration for customers' needs and an interest in customers. Four hundred and ninety four passengers comprised their sample group. All passengers were customers using the North America-Korea route or the Europe-Korea route, which requires more than 10 hours of flight time. The result of the analysis for customer loyalty showed that the passengers or customer loyalty to airline companies were based more on empathetic services by cabin crews than tangible in-flight services, such as food quality and alcohol beverages, because they were travelling for a long time in cramped conditions. This result

means that the empathetic services by cabin crews play a crucial role in passenger loyalty and passenger retention.

Forgas, Moliner, Sanchez, and Palua (2010) studied the antecedents of airline user loyalty. One thousand, seven hundred and ten personal interviews were conducted in 2007, which provided a large sample base. The results showed that one of the main antecedents of loyalty was satisfaction. According to Forgas, Moliner, Sanchez, and Palua (2010), if the level of satisfaction is low, the customer's level of loyalty to the airline will suffer, conversely, when the consumer experiences an increase in satisfaction, his or her loyalty also increases.

Studies on communication problems and communication strategies.

Suphakijyothin (2001) studied factors constraining English conversational behavior of Thai cabin crew during in-flight service for non-Thai passengers. Qualitative methods to collect the data were observation and in-depth interviews. Two hundred sixty two flights of Thai Airways were observed within eleven months. This study concerns the roles of culture in intercultural communication, barriers to intercultural interaction, and intercultural interaction in an in-flight service context. The results indicated that different languages and cultures were the major barriers in intercultural communication. There were frequent misunderstandings because of differences in intonation and the different use of words, idioms and phrases, and pronunciation. To survive in a context where English ability was in high demand, the passengers who could speak a little English mostly used body language as the crucial means of communication. These passengers not only used body language, but passengers tried to speak some words in English, or speak some words of their own languages. However, good English speech did not

equate to effective communication in spoken English. On board communication required cabin crews to do more than combining words into a grammatical sentence and combining sentences into a chunk of speech. Cabin crews who could speak English well faced problems in miscommunication on international flights because differences of intonation, slang, and nonverbal languages (Suphakijyothin, 2001).

Ekwanang (2004) explored verbal cross-cultural communication barriers among Western expatriates and Thai staff in Thailand. Twenty Western expatriates who were English native speakers participated in in-depth face-to-face interviews. The results showed that there are four major problems when communicating across culture were misinterpretation of the contexts and contents, unfamiliarity with English accents, the level of language, and what were considered the common characteristics of Thais. Misinterpretation of the contexts and contents was the main verbal communication barrier because of the Thais lack of knowledge of English vocabulary. When communicating verbally with Thai staff in English language, misunderstandings occurred because the Thais were unfamiliar with English accents and could not understand idioms and slangs. Another barrier concerned culture, the common characteristics of Thais. Most Thais always say “yes” when they did not really understand at all because they were culturally conditioned to avoid conflict and demonstrate a lack of assertiveness. These barriers cause many disadvantages including work delays, such as the work progress, and misunderstandings of instructions that could cause an undesirable outcome. Moreover, the job might take a long time to complete because Westerners and Thais

did not understand each other. Although communication problems may never be completely eliminated, they could be reduced and often avoided (Ekwannang, 2004).

Pruksanubal (2006) explored communication problems among Thai vendors and foreigners at Khao San road, Thailand. This research concerned how Thai vendors communicate with foreigners, the kind of communication problems that Thai vendors encountered, and the way they got through those problems. Twenty five Thai vendors who sold goods and services at Khao San road were the participants. More than 80% of them did not have a senior high school education. The findings of this study revealed that the English language was the main medium to communicate between Thai vendors and their foreign customers, although most Thai vendors could not understand English well. They tried to study by themselves using dictionaries and doing some English exercises. The methods to get through their communication problems with foreign customers were using gestures by hands and fingers to point and count numbers. Signs and pictures were used to avoid misunderstanding or confusion. A calculator was used to show the price of goods and help customers to bargain with vendors. This study showed that although the Thai vendors were not educated beyond senior high school, they found a way to solve the communication problems by themselves. Moreover, they did not employ only one communication strategy, but several mixed strategies could be used to get through communication problems and depending on the situation.

Summary

In daily life, people spend a lot of time communicating with others. There are many aspects, such as sharing opinions, making relationships, and dealing with business. When people communicate with others, they send a message to the other and receive a return message to be translated and to be understood. Messages can be sent through verbal and nonverbal language. In the 21st century, social diversity, the increasing number of long-distance relationships, and the influence of technology on interpersonal interaction are the significant trends that affect communication between people around the world. These factors promote communication with others from different countries and different cultures. Understanding verbal and nonverbal communication is essential to successful interaction with others who live in different parts of the world and are from a diverse range of vastly different social backgrounds.

Language differences lead to communication problems. Communication problems affect relationship between people. Communication strategies are used to minimize communication problems and create understanding. Several communication strategies can be combined for effective communication.

In airline business, it is best for airlines to build a long-term relationship with their customers. Cabin crews are front line representatives of the airline, interacting with passengers face to face. It is essential for cabin crews to satisfy passengers and minimize passenger dissatisfaction to improve customer loyalty, which in turn leads to an increase in profits for the firm and the ability to gain competitive advantage.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter presents the method of the study, which consists of participants, research instrument, data collection, and data analysis.

Participants

Selection of airlines.

This study focused on communication problems in English between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers. The selected airline was the airlines flying between Thailand and Korea, employing Thai cabin crews and transporting Korean passengers. Although there were six airlines flying directly between Thailand and Korea, including Thai Airways International, Korea Air, Asiana Airlines, Jeju Air, Jin Air, and Business Air. However, there were only from 4 airlines employing Thai cabin crews, with the exception of Jeju Air and Jin Air.

The researcher selected Business Air for this study because the airline has 20 direct flights from Thailand to Korea a week and employs Thai cabin crews only. On all 15 weekly flights, the passengers are predominantly Korean. Business Air does not have an on-board interpreter, so the Thai cabin crews must deal with the Korean passengers without any assistance. Additionally, the researcher is a member of the cabin crew working for Business

Air. This study may be useful to the researcher in order for her to develop a practical model for work based on the results of this study.

Participants.

All 75 Thai cabin crews working for Business Air were asked to participate in this study. The participants operated flights between Thailand and Korea more than three times a month, serving Korean passengers. They were not trained in a Korean language class by the airlines. Their English skills were assessed using the Test of English for International Communication or TOEIC which is an English language proficiency test based on listening and reading. The TOEIC is a standardized international tool used by many corporations within Thailand and internationally to measure English language proficiency for various corporate positions. TOEIC scores range from 10 to 990. A TOEIC score of over 600 was a requirement when the participants applied to be flight attendants.

Research Instrument

The study was conducted by using a questionnaire to collect data. It focused on communication problems and communication strategies described in Chapter II.

The questionnaire was developed from a pilot study concerning how Thai cabin crews communicated with Korean passengers. It was first tested with 10 Thai cabin crews working for Thai Airways International, and they were not included in the main study. The pilot study tested the understanding of the content of and the context of the questionnaire. The questionnaire used in the main study was guided by the pilot study, and its development was

based on communication strategies adapted from Dornyei (1995) as described in Chapter II. In the questionnaire, the technical terms used in Dornyei communication strategies were adjusted in order to be easier for the participants to understand. The questionnaire was checked validity by a research project advisor and an expert in business.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts, as follows:

Part I: Personal information. The personal information of the participants includes educational background and working experience. In this part, the participants chose the answer that best describes them.

Part II: Communication problems. This part asked about communication problems on board, such as problems on limitations of English vocabulary and confusion of nonverbal communication.

Part III: Consequences of communication problems on the working lives of cabin crews. This part asked about consequences of communication problems when the participants communicate with passengers, such as passengers feel frustrated and passengers complain.

Part II and Part III were in the form of a rating scale model. The format of five-level item was 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = moderately agree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Part IV: Communication strategies. This part asked about communication strategies to overcome communication problems used by the participants and their suggestions, such as leaving messages unfinished, avoiding topic that difficult to communicate, and using nonverbal languages. The same scaling with five-level items used in Part II and Part III of the

questionnaire was a method to measure the level of agreement of the participants in communication strategies. Additionally, the participants were asked to provide other problems, consequences, and strategies if they wish at the end of each part.

Data Collection

The group of participants included all 75 Thai cabin crews working for Business Air. The questionnaire was distributed to each participant in March 2011. The researcher dropped the questionnaire in the mailbox of each participant on the same day. When the questionnaire had been completed, the participants were asked to return the questionnaire by dropping it into the researcher's mailbox within a week after the distribution.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively. Personal information of participants (Part I) was analyzed. Communication problems between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers (Part II), the consequences of these communication problems (Part III), and communication strategies to overcome communication problems on board and in-flight service and flight information (Part IV) were calculated for mean and percentages. Participants' suggestions were analyzed for qualitative data. Tables were also used for illustrating the participants' answers.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the study. The data which is presented in this chapter were collected from questionnaires completed by the participants. The results are presented in terms of frequency, percentage, and mean. The findings were divided into four parts:

Part I: Personal information of the participants which includes educational background and working experience. In this part, the data on educational background and working experience are shown in tables with frequency and percentage.

The data in Part II: Communication problems on board, Part III: the consequences of communication problems when the participants communicate with passengers, and Part IV: communication strategies to overcome communication problems used by the participants and their suggestions were displayed in a table with percentage, mean, and level of agreement. Level of agreement is classed by mean and divided into five groups: strongly agree, agree, moderately agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Personal Information Obtained From Part I of the Questionnaire

This part showed the personal information of the participants. The questionnaire was distributed to 75 Thai cabin crews working for Business Air and all of them (100%) were

returned to the researcher. The educational background and working experience were shown in Tables 1, as follows:

Table 1 shows the participants' educational background. From a total of 75 participants, 96% of them graduated with a Bachelor's Degree and 4% of them graduated with a Master's Degree.

Table 1

Educational Background

Educational Level	N = 75	%
Bachelor's Degree	72	96.0
Master's Degree	3	4.0

Table 2 shows the participants' TOEIC score by range of score. Almost 60% of participants had TOEIC scores between 600 and 730, 37.3% of them had TOEIC scores ranging from over 730 to 860, and 5.3% of them have TOEIC scores of over 860 to 900. The minimum score of cabin crew in this study was 600 and the maximum score was 940. The mean score was 724.31.

Table 2

TOEIC score

TOEIC score	<i>N</i> = 75	%
Between 600 to 730	43	57.3
More than 730 to 860	28	37.3
More than 860 to 990	4	5.3

Table 3 shows that there were 23 participants (30.70%) who had working experience as cabin crew for more than five years. Twenty one of them (28%) had working experience between three to five years, and 31 of them (41.30%) had worked as cabin crew for less than three years.

Table 3

Working Experience

Period of Working	<i>N</i> = 75	%
More than 5 years	23	30.7
Between 3 to 5 years	21	28.0
Less than 3 years	31	41.3

Research Question 1: What are Communication Problems That Thai Cabin Crews Encounter When Communicating With Korean Passengers?

Results of research question 1 came from data from Part II of the questionnaire. Table 4 contains quantitative data that presents the mean and standard deviation scores that the participants rated their level of agreement.

Table 4 displays communication problems in English between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers. Base on the level of agreement rated by the participants on the questionnaire, it was found that the communication problems were: (a) Korean passengers did not understand English ($M = 3.59$) and (b) they had a limited English vocabulary ($M = 3.39$), respectively. There were no any items on the questionnaire that the participants did not agreed. Therefore, the participants stated that all of them strongly agreed, agreed, and moderately agreed with all problems provided in the questionnaire.

Table 4

Communication Problems Between Thai Cabin Crews and Korean Passengers (N = 75)

	Communication Problems	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Level of Agreement
1.	Korean passengers do not understand English.	3.59	0.89	Agree

(continued)

Table 4

Communication Problems Between Thai Cabin Crews and Korean Passengers (N = 75)

	Communication Problems	M	SD	Level of Agreement
2.	Korean passengers speak English with an accent that is hard to understand.	3.12	0.83	Moderately agree
3.	Korean passengers have a limited English vocabulary.	3.39	0.80	Agree
4.	Korean passengers have poor English grammar.	3.12	0.90	Moderately agree
5.	Korean passengers use body languages that confuse cabin crews.	2.73	0.94	Moderately agree

Research Question 2: What are the Consequences of Communication Problems for the Working Lives of Thai Cabin Crews?

Results of research question 2 came from data from Part III of the questionnaire. Table 5 contains quantitative data that presents the mean and standard deviation scores that the participants rated their level of agreement.

Table 5 shows the consequences of communication problems in English between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers. Three consequences of problems were (a) their professional time was lost, thereby reducing cabin crew effectiveness ($M = 3.56$), (b) the passengers did not follow instructions ($M = 3.79$), and (c) cabin crew professional advancement maybe affected ($M = 3.37$).

Table 5

Consequences of Communication Problems for the Working Lives of Thai Cabin Crews (N = 75)

Consequences of communication problems	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Level of Agreement
1. Professional time is lost, thereby reducing cabin crew effectiveness.	3.56	0.79	Agree
2. Passengers feel frustrated.	2.92	0.87	Moderately agree
3. Passengers' particular needs cannot be fulfilled.	3.37	0.91	Moderately Agree
4. Passengers do not follow instructions.	3.79	0.93	Agree
5. Passengers are not satisfied with the overall service.	2.45	0.81	Disagree
6. Passengers complain.	2.49	0.78	Disagree

(continued)

Table 5

Consequences of Communication Problems for the Working Lives of Thai Cabin Crews (N = 75)

Consequences of communication problems	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Level of Agreement
7. Passengers avoid communicating with cabin crews.	2.65	0.94	Moderately agree
8. Passenger loyalty is reduced.	2.52	0.81	Disagree
9. Negative word of mouth will adversely affect the company's image.	2.95	1.11	Moderately agree
10. Cabin crew professional advancement possibly affected.	3.37	0.82	Agree

Research Question 3: What Communication Strategies Have Been Used to Overcome Communication Problems Between Thai Cabin Crews and Korean Passengers?

Data from Part IV of the questionnaire provided communication strategies to overcome communication problems used by the participants. This part contains (a) communication strategies to solve communication problems regarding safety on board and (b) communication strategies to solve communication problems regarding in-flight service and flight information.

The information is illustrated in Table 6 and Table 7.

Communication strategies for safety on board.

Table 6 shows that two communication strategies that cabin crews used as effective ways to communicate with Korean passengers regarding safety on board were (a) using memorized stock phrases ($M = 4.35$) and (b) using nonverbal languages ($M = 4.43$).

It also found that two communication strategies were not used to solve communication problems on board were (a) leaving messages unfinished because of language difficulties ($M = 2.44$) and (b) avoidance of topics areas that pose language difficulties ($M = 2.56$).

Table 6

Communication Strategies to Solve Communication Problems in Safety on Board

($N = 75$)

Communication strategies	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Level of Agreement
1. Leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties	2.33	0.89	Disagree
2. Avoidance of topic areas that pose language difficulties	2.56	1.14	Disagree
3. Describing or exemplifying the target objective of action	3.76	0.68	Agree

(continued)

Table 6

Communication Strategies to Solve Communication Problems in Safety on Board (N = 75)

Communication strategies	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Level of Agreement
4. Using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target word as closely as possible	3.91	0.84	Agree
5. Extending a general word to contexts where specific words are lacking	3.73	0.64	Agree
6. Creating a nonexistent word	2.80	1.01	Moderately agree
7. Using memorized stock phrases	4.35	0.69	Strongly agree
8. Using nonverbal languages	4.43	0.76	Strongly agree
9. Literal translation	3.43	1.11	Agree
10. Using both English and Korean.	3.47	1.01	Agree
11. Using English with Korean pronunciation.	3.92	0.94	Agree
12. Asking for aid from colleagues who can speak Korean or passengers who can speak English	4.15	0.77	Agree

(continued)

Table 6

Communication Strategies to Solve Communication Problems in Safety on Board (N = 75)

Communication strategies	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Level of Agreement
13. Using fillers or hesitate devices to fill pauses and to gain time to think	3.25	0.87	Moderately agree

Communication for in-flight service and flight information.

Table 7 shows that one strategy was used as an effective way to communicate with Korean passengers during in-flight service and about flight information was using nonverbal languages such as gestures or facial expressions ($M = 4.40$).

It also found that two communication strategies were not used to solve communication problems during in-flight service and about flight information were (a) leaving messages unfinished because of language difficulties ($M = 2.95$) and (b) avoidance of topics areas that pose language difficulties ($M = 3.13$).

Table 7

Communication Strategies to Solve Communication Problems in In-Flight service and Flight Information (N = 75)

Communication strategies	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Level of Agreement
1. Leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties	2.95	0.82	Moderately agree
2. Avoidance of topic areas that pose language difficulties	3.13	1.04	Moderately agree
3. Describing or exemplifying the target objective of action	3.53	0.70	Agree
4. Using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target word as closely as possible	3.72	0.85	Agree
5. Extending a general word to contexts where specific words are lacking	3.36	0.83	Agree
6. Creating a nonexistent word	2.79	1.06	Moderately agree
7. Using memorized stock phrases	4.15	0.82	Agree
8. Using nonverbal languages	4.40	0.74	Strongly agree

(continued)

Table 7

Communication Strategies to Solve Communication Problems in In-Flight service and Flight Information (N = 75)

Communication strategies	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Level of Agreement
9. Literal translation	3.39	1.04	Agree
10. Using both English and Korean.	3.36	0.98	Agree
11. Using English with Korean pronunciation.	3.96	0.91	Agree
12. Asking for aid from colleagues who can speak Korean or passengers who can speak English	4.15	0.63	Agree
13. Using fillers or hesitate devices to fill pauses and to gain time to think	3.33	0.88	Moderately agree

Qualitative Data Obtained From Each Part of the Questionnaire

The qualitative data of this study were obtained from each part of the questionnaire. The participants were asked to provide other communication problems, consequences for their working lives, and communication strategies, if they wished.

With respect the communications problems that the participants encountered when they communicated with Korean passengers, one of them stated that Korean passengers were not

familiar with cabin crews' English pronunciation. In addition, one of the participants further stated that Korean passengers did not understand the body languages of the cabin crews.

With respect to the consequences of communication problems for cabin crews' working lives, one of the participants stated that the participant could not understand what Korean passengers said when they explained the symptoms of an illness. In this situation, the passengers' health might be affected, and the cabin crews might be sued by the passengers because the cabin crews could not proper medical attention for the passengers. One of the participants also stated that the cabin crews might be sued if they could not communicate with passengers in case of emergency.

With respect to the communication strategies employed to solve these problems, it was found that many participants used a dictionary and pictures to explain and communicate with Korean passengers. One of the participants recommended that it saved time to communicate with the passengers by drawing a picture to explain. Another participant also recommended that the passengers could understand better when the information was illustrated by a picture.

Recommendations for the airlines.

This study found that communication problems between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers in English concerned verbal communication, both spoken and written. The Korean passengers could not follow the safety and service instructions because they did not understand instructions from cabin crews, public announcements, and instruction cards. Thai cabin crews used stock Korean phrases and nonverbal communication to overcome these

barriers to effective communication. To ensure safety and passenger comfort, the participants recommended that:

1. All information given to passengers, such as public announcements, safety instruction cards and other instruction, should be in two languages, both English and Korean. The pictures should be used to illustrate the text, as it makes it easier for passengers to understand.
2. Thai cabin crews need to be trained in a Korean language course in order to better understand their passengers' needs and wants. The course should be concerned mainly with on board communication, such as safety instructions, in-flight services, and flight information.

Summary

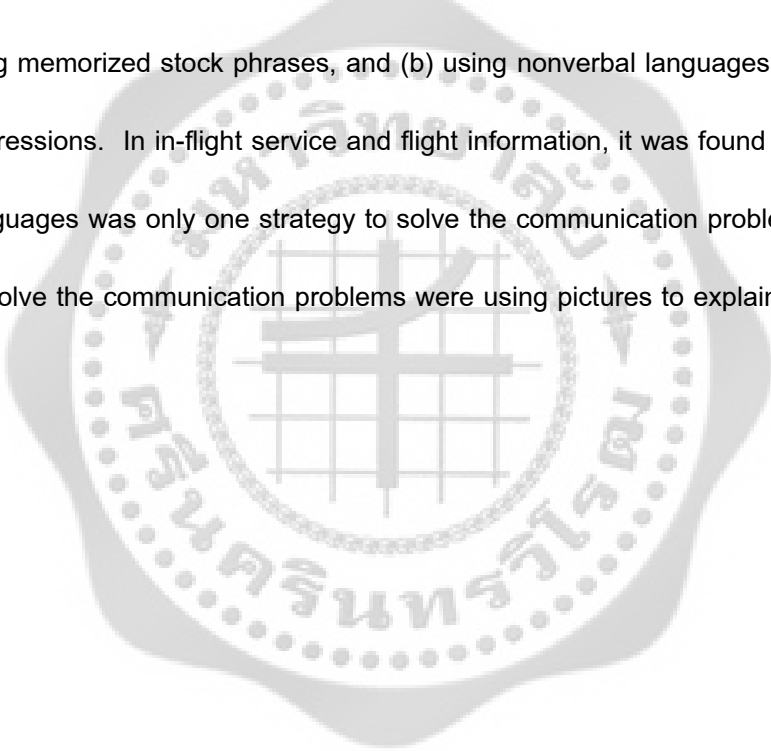
In this chapter the results of this study were provided. The data were collected from questionnaire of 75 participants. Most of them educated with a Bachelor's Degree and had TOEIC score between 600 and 730 and had working experiences less than 3 years.

Communication problems in English between cabin crews and Korean passengers were:

(a) cabin crews could not communicate with Korean passengers because the passengers did not understand English and (b) cabin crews did not understand what Korean passengers said because of passengers' limited English vocabulary. Other problems were found; for example; Korean passengers were not familiar with Thai cabin crews' English pronunciation and Thai cabin crews' body languages confused Korean passengers.

Consequences of communication problems in the working lives of cabin crews were (a) cabin crews' professional time was lost, (b) passengers did not follow instructions, and (c) cabin crew professional advancement might be affected. Other consequences were mentioned, such as, cabin crews might be complained or sued by passengers if they could not communicate with passengers in case of emergency.

Two communication strategies to solve communication problems in safety on board that were: (a) using memorized stock phrases, and (b) using nonverbal languages such as gestures and facial expressions. In in-flight service and flight information, it was found that using nonverbal languages was only one strategy to solve the communication problems. Other strategies to solve the communication problems were using pictures to explain and using a dictionary.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusion and discussion of the study. Recommendations for a further study are also presented.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the communication problems in English between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers, the consequences of these problems, and the strategies to overcome these problems. Koreans are one of the major groups of Asian tourists to visit Thailand and the number of Korean tourists trends to increase every years. This trend requires Thai cabin crews develop effective ways to communicate with Korean tourists because communication between Thai cabin crews and Korean tourists take place when Koreans fly to Thailand. Although English usage is international, Thais and Koreans are not English native speakers. Communication breakdown may occur between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers because of language differences. In addition, these communication difficulties can affect the job performance of cabin crews and ultimately affect the airline's profits.

Discussion

Research Question 1: What are Communication Problems That Thai Cabin Crews

Encounter When Communicating With Korean Passengers?

Research question 1: Results.

Two communication problems that Thai cabin crews encounter when they communicate with Korean passenger in English were (a) Thai cabin crews could not communicate with Korean passengers because Korean passengers did not understand English and (b) Thai cabin crews did not understand what Korean passengers say because of the Korean passengers' limited English vocabulary.

Research question 1: Discussion.

According to two main communication problems between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers. Firstly, cabin crews could not communicate with Korean passengers because they did not understand English, so they could not understand what members of cabin crews said, English public announcements, and onboard English instruction cards. Secondly, cabin crews did not understand what Korean passengers said because of their limited English vocabulary, so Korean passengers could not express what they needed and wanted to cabin crews.

From the results of the questionnaire in Part 1, it was found that verbal communication was major onboard communication problems between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers. The results of this study were similar to Ekwannang (2004) and Chaiwongsa (2006). Communication problems in English between non-native English speakers concerned English proficiency of non-native English speakers. In this study, English was used as a

medium when Thai cabin crews communicate with Korean passengers. However, Thais and Koreans were not English native speakers. Language differences could create difficulties in communication for people with different first languages.

Research Question 2: What are the Consequences of Communication Problems for the Working Lives of Thai Cabin Crews?

Research question 2: Results.

Three consequences of communication problems for the working lives of cabin crews were (a) professional time was lost, thereby reducing cabin crew effectiveness, (b) passengers did not follow instructions, and (c) cabin crew professional advancement was possibly affected.

Research question 2: Discussion.

According to Korean passengers who did not understand English, cabin crews must spend a great deal of time communicating with Korean passengers. The Korean passengers did not follow the safety and service instructions because they did not understand instructions from cabin crews, public announcements, and instruction cards. In addition, they could not ask more information from cabin crew or give feedback to confirm information because of their limited English vocabulary. These consequences were consistent to Pruksanubal (2006). She also found that language differences caused misunderstanding, confusing, and taking too much time to communicate.

In addition, cabin crews thought that professional advancement could possibly be affected their inability to effectively communicate with passengers. The cabin crews were monitored by

the purser or senior cabin crew members while on duty. Their job performance were evaluated and reported to the chief of the cabin crew. Effective communication skill is important to cabin crews who often communicate with passengers, especially face-to-face. As a result, it is necessary to develop their communication skills in order to improve their overall job performance and as part of the criteria for promotion.

Although communication problems between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers occurred, the cabin crews claimed that most passengers seem to be satisfied with the overall service because they did not complain or express frustration. However, based on the data obtained from the questionnaire, it was found that the cabin crews thought that passenger satisfaction and loyalty might not be affected. It was opposite to the studies of Gountas, Ewing, and Gountas (2007) and An and Noh (2009), which confirmed that relationship between service provider and consumers influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, Forgas, Moliner, Sanchez, and Palua (2010) stated that if level of satisfaction was low, the customer's level of loyalty to the airline would suffer.

Research Question 3: What Communication Strategies Have Been Used to Overcome Communication Problems Between Thai Cabin Crews and Korean Passengers?

Communication strategies to solve the problems were divided into two fields which are (1) safety on board and (2) in-flight service and flight information.

Research question 3: Results of communication strategies for safety on board.

Regarding communication strategies to deal with Korean passengers about safety on board, two effective communication strategies were (a) using memorized Korean stock phrases such as *un-ja-ju-se-yo* for *please sit down* and (b) nonverbal languages such as gestures or facial expression.

Cabin crews disagreed with two strategies regarding safety onboard that were (a) leaving messages unfinished and (b) avoiding topics that are difficult to communicate. In addition, cabin crews stated that the communication strategies were mixed to deal with the communication problems. Using picture to explain was used as one of the communication strategies to get through the communication problems.

Research question 3: Discussion of communication strategies for safety on board.

The use of memorized Korean stock phrases was used to overcome language difficulties. Cabin crews have to instruct passengers what they must do and what they must avoid. For example, passengers must be seated and have their seat belts fastened during taxi, take off, and landing. Cabin crews must ensure that all passengers understand these instructions within a certain period of time. However, the Korean passengers did not understand English, the cabin crew must inform them of the safety instructions in Korean to ensure they all understand.

Using nonverbal languages, such as gestures or facial expressions, was another effective method to solve communication problems regarding onboard safety. This strategy was concerned with nonverbal communication. Cabin crews used their body languages to make passengers understand them when they could communicate in English. In addition, cabin crews suggested that these strategies can be mixed in order to communicate more effectively with passengers.

The results of this study were similar to the studies of Suphakijyothin (2001) and Pruksanubal (2006). They found that nonverbal languages were an effective method to solve communication problems between non native English speakers. They also found that not only one communication strategy was employed to deal with communication problems, but several mixed strategies could be used.

Research question 3: Results of communication strategies for in-flight service and flight information.

Communication strategies to deal with Korean passengers regarding in-flight service and about flight information, using nonverbal languages such as gestures or facial expressions was the most effective communication strategy. Cabin crews suggested that pictures and dictionary were used to deal with communication difficulties and minimize misunderstanding. Moreover, cabin crews stated that more than one communication strategies should be mixed to get through communication problems.

Research question 3: Discussion of communication strategies for in-flight service and flight information.

During flights, cabin crews need to monitor passengers' compliance with safety rules as well as keep passengers informed about flight details and assist them with their requests. Passenger satisfaction is concerned with the relationship between the cabin crews' displays and passengers' perceptions. During in-flight service, the amount of time cabin crews spend communicating with passengers depends on the length of flight times. Cabin crews can spend their time to try to communicate and to make the passengers satisfied with the service. They suggested that when there were time constraints on communication, they could use more than one strategy to communicate with passengers, such as drawing a picture, using a dictionary, or showing an object.

The results of this study were consistent to Suphakijyothin (2001) and Pruksanubal (2006). Using nonverbal languages was an effective way to solve communication problems and minimize misunderstanding between non-native English speakers. Moreover, several communication strategies can be combined to deal with communication problems

The difference between communication strategies regarding onboard safety and those used during in-flight service were the use of memorized Korean stock phrases and nonverbal languages. However, one strategy used during in-flight service, regarding flight information was using nonverbal languages, such as gestures or facial expressions.

There were two strategies to solving communication problems that cabin crews disagreed with, regarding onboard safety, in-flight service and flight information. These two strategies

were (a) leaving messages unfinished and (b) avoiding topics that are difficult to communicate. Cabin crews suggested that they could not leave messages to passengers unfinished and avoid topics that were difficult to communicate when it concerns safety instructions. Safety was the most important matter onboard. Cabin crews were required by law to ensure safety on the aircraft and were responsible for the personal safety of all passengers.

Recommendations for Further Studies

1. This study focused on the communication problems between Thais and Koreans. Thais and Koreans are both Asian, so cultural differences may not have an effect on nonverbal communication. A further study should investigate communication problems from different language groups in different regions of the world, such as European or Western. In addition, a further study should focus on differences regarding gender, educational background, and working experience to see how these factors affect communication problems between cabin crews and passengers.
2. This study obtained the data from cabin crews' views. A further study should investigate communication problems, consequences of communication problems, and communication strategies to get through the problems from passengers' opinion in order to more understand the problems of passengers.
3. A further study should focus on qualitative research, such as in-depth interviews to discover communication strategies from a variety of perspectives.



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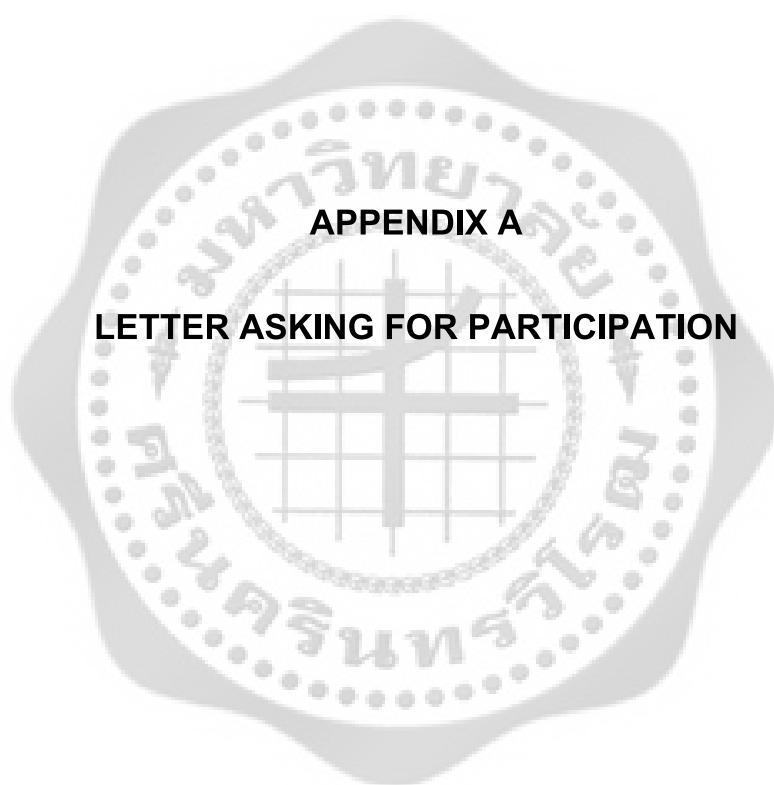
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APPENDIX A

LETTER ASKING FOR PARTICIPATION

March 17, 2011

Dear all participants,

My name is Thiyapa Kiatcharas, and I am a student in the Master's Degree Program in Business English for International Communication at Srinakharinwirot University. The purpose of this letter is to request that you participate in a research study entitled, "A Study of English Communication Problems between Thai Cabin Crews and Korean Passengers."

In this study, a questionnaire will be used as an instrument to collect data. Therefore, you will be asked to fill out the questionnaire. The demographic and opinion data will be confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone, and they will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Your willingness to participate in this study would be highly appreciated. Please use the following form to indicate your willingness or unwillingness to participate in this study. Please return the form to me by March 24, 2011. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

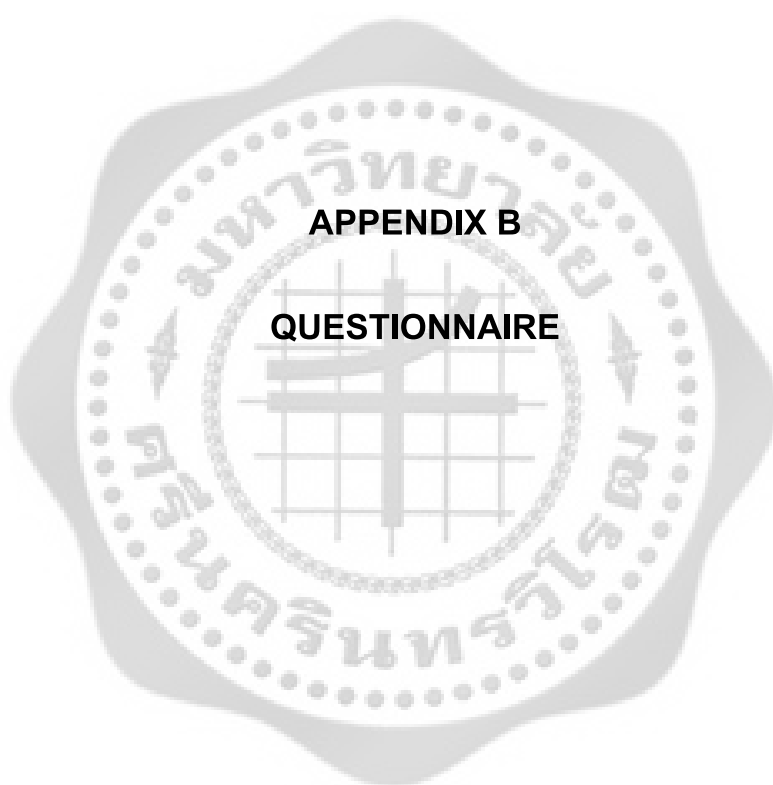
Sincerely,

Thiyapa Kiatcharas

My name is (please print) _____

☐

I am willing to participate in Ms. Thiyapa Kiatcharas's study.



QUESTIONNAIRE

You have been asked to participate in a study designed to investigate the English communication problems between Thai cabin crews and Korean passengers. The information you provide will be used only for purposes of this study and the information about individuals will not be provided to anyone. Your cooperation in completing this questionnaire will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Thiyapa Kiatcharas

Part 1: Personal Information

Directions: Please mark (✓) in front of the answer that best describes you.

1. Educational background
 - () Bachelor's degree, Major _____
 - () Master's degree, Major _____
 - TOEIC score _____
2. Working experience as a cabin crew
 - () Less than 3 years
 - () Between 3 to 5 years
 - () More than 5 years

Part II: Communication Problems with Korean Passengers

Directions: Please mark (✓) in a blank for each statement that comes closest to reflecting your opinion.

		5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Moderately agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
1.	I cannot communicate with Korean passengers because they do not understand English.					
2.	I do not understand what Korean passengers say because I am not familiar with their English pronunciation.					
3.	I do not understand what Korean passengers say because of their limited English vocabulary.					
4.	I do not understand what Korean passengers say because of their poor English grammar.					
5.	I do not understand what passengers need/want because I do not understand their body languages.					

6. Other problems (please specify) _____

Part III: Consequences of Communications Problems on the Working Lives of Cabin Crews

Directions: Please mark (✓) in a blank for each statement that comes closest to reflecting your opinion.

		5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Moderately agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
1.	Professional time is lost, thereby reducing cabin crew effectiveness.					
2.	Passengers feel frustrated.					
3.	Passengers' particular needs cannot be fulfilled.					
4.	Passengers do not follow instructions.					
5.	Passengers are not satisfied with the overall service.					
6.	Passengers complain.					
7.	Passengers avoid communicating cabin crew.					
8.	Passenger loyalty is reducing.					
9.	Negative word of mouth will adversely affect the company's image.					
10.	Cabin crew professional advancement may be affected.					

11. Other consequences (please specify) _____

Part IV: Communication Strategies to Solve the Communication Problems

Directions: Please mark (✓) in a blank for each statement that comes closest to reflecting your opinion.

A. Safety on board

		5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Moderately agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
1.	I leave messages unfinished.					
2.	I avoid topics that difficult to communicate.					
3.	I describe or paraphrase the target object or action, for example, by saying the things that are used for eating noodles are chopsticks.					
4.	I use alternative words which mean approximately the same as the target word.					
5.	I use all-purpose words when specific words are lacking, for example, by saying "stuff" for material or articles of a specified or indeterminate kind that are being referred to, indicated, or implied.					
6.	I create a new word based on a supposed rule, for example, by saying "vegeterianist" for "vegetarian."					
7.	I use Korean memorized stock phrase.					
8.	I use nonverbal language such as gestures or facial expressions.					
9.	I translate directly from English to Korean.					
10.	I speak English with Korean pronunciation, for example, by saying "fineapple" for "pineapple."					
11.	I speak both English and Korean.					
12.	I ask for help from my colleagues who can speak Korean or passengers who can speak English.					

		5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Moderately agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
13.	I speak some words to allow me to have more time to think, for example, by saying “well,” “let’s see,” or “uh.”					

14. Other strategies (please specify) _____

B. In-flight service and flight information

		5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Moderately agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
1.	I leave messages unfinished.					
2.	I avoid topics that difficult to communicate.					
3.	I describe or paraphrase the target object or action, for example, by saying the things that are used for eating noodles are chopsticks.					
4.	I use alternative words which mean approximately the same as the target word.					
5.	I use all-purpose words when specific words are lacking, for example, by saying "stuff" for material or articles of a specified or indeterminate kind that are being referred to, indicated, or implied.					
6.	I create a new word based on a supposed rule, for example, by saying "vegeterianist" for "vegetarian."					
7.	I use Korean memorized stock phrase.					
8.	I use nonverbal language such as gestures or facial expressions.					
9.	I translate directly from English to Korean.					
10.	I speak English with Korean pronunciation, for example, by saying "fineapple" for "pineapple."					
11.	I speak both English and Korean.					
12.	I ask for help from my colleagues who can speak Korean or passengers who can speak English.					
13.	I speak some words to allow me to have more time to think, for example, by saying "well," "let's see," or "uh."					

14. Other strategies (please specify) _____





CURRICULUM VITAE

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Miss Thiyapa Kiatcharas

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Place of Birth: Bangkok

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Educational Background:

2011 Master of Arts (Business English for International
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2002 Bachelor of Arts (Urban Community Development)
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Working Experience:

2008 - Present Flight attendant, Business Air

2006 – 2008 Flight attendant, Skystar Airways