

AN EXPLORATION OF COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS AMONG THAI VENDORS
AND FOREIGNERS AT KHAOSAN ROAD

A MASTER 'S PROJECT
BY
ORAPAT PRUKSANUBAL

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication
at Srinakharinwirot University
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AN ABSTRACT
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This study aimed to explore communication problems among Thai vendors and foreigners at Khaosan Road. This research covered how Thai vendors communicate with foreigners, the kind of communication problems that Thai vendors encountered and the ways they get through those problems. The participants of the study consisted of 25 Thai vendors who sell goods and services at Khaosan Road. The data were collected during March – April 2006 and were analyzed in frequency and percentage.

The findings of the study revealed the following:

1. Thai vendors communicated with their foreign customers by speaking English.

Although most vendors did not take any English courses before, some vendors tried to study by themselves using dictionaries and doing some English exercises. The long experience in selling goods and services to foreign customers helped them to improve their English. However, there were some vendors who could not speak English and they used non-verbal communication such as gestures to communicate with their foreign customers.

2. The communication problems that Thai vendors encountered when they communicated with their foreign customers were the lack of knowledge about English, the lack of vocabulary, English accent and noise. Besides, most Thai vendors indicated that their communication problems with foreign customers did not cause any serious problems in terms of business. However, some vendors remarked that this communication problems could cause misunderstanding, confusion or time-consuming.

3. The methods to get through the communication problems among Thai vendors and foreigners were the use of gestures, signs, pictures or photo albums, calculators and dictionaries. Moreover, confirmation was used to get through the problems as well. In addition, most Thai vendors accepted that those solutions such as using hands, signs or calculators helped them to communicate with foreigners successfully.

การสำรวจปัญหาการสื่อสารระหว่างพ่อค้ารายย่อยชาวไทย และลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ

บริเวณถนนข้าวสาร

บทคัดย่อ

ของ

อรพัฒน์ พุกษานุบาล

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ

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การศึกษานี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจปัญหาการสื่อสารระหว่างพ่อค้ารายย่อยชาวไทย และลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ บริเวณถนนข้าวสาร โดยการศึกษาครั้งนี้ครอบคลุมถึงวิธีการสื่อสารระหว่างพ่อค้ารายย่อยชาวไทย และลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ ปัญหาการสื่อสารที่พ่อค้ารายย่อยชาวไทยต้องเผชิญ และวิธีการแก้ปัญหาของพวกเขา สำหรับการศึกษานี้ผู้วิจัยได้สัมภาษณ์ พ่อค้ารายย่อยที่ขายสินค้า และการให้บริการทั้งสิ้น 25 ราย ทั้งนี้ผู้วิจัยได้ดำเนินการสัมภาษณ์ พร้อมทั้งเก็บข้อมูลตั้งแต่เดือน มีนาคม – เมษายน 2549 และข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ได้รับการวิเคราะห์ และแสดงในรูปแบบของความถี่ จำนวนร้อยละ และการอธิบายผล

ผลการวิจัย มีดังนี้

1. พ่อค้ารายย่อยชาวไทยติดต่อสื่อสารกับลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ โดยใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ แม้ว่าพ่อค้าชาวไทยส่วนใหญ่ไม่เคยเรียนภาษาอังกฤษมาก่อน แต่พวกเขาพยายามเรียนภาษาอังกฤษด้วยตนเอง โดยใช้พจนานุกรม และแบบฝึกหัดภาษาอังกฤษ นอกจากนี้ ประสบการณ์ในการขายสินค้าและบริการให้แก่ชาวต่างประเทศเป็นเวลานาน มีส่วนช่วยในการพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษของพ่อค้าชาวไทย อย่างไรก็ตาม มีพ่อค้าชาวไทยบางคนยังคงไม่สามารถพูดภาษาอังกฤษได้ พวกเขาใช้ภาษากาย เช่น ท่าทางจากการใช้มือ และนิ้วมือ ตลอดจนอิริยาบถ เป็นต้น ในการสื่อสารกับลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ

2. ปัญหาการสื่อสารที่พ่อค้าชาวไทย พบเมื่อติดต่อกับลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ คือการขาดความรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ ความรู้คำศัพท์ไม่เพียงพอ ไม่คุ้นสำเนียงภาษาอังกฤษ และเสียงรบกวน นอกจากนี้ พ่อค้าชาวไทยส่วนใหญ่ กล่าวว่า ปัญหาการสื่อสารกับลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศไม่ก่อให้เกิดปัญหาร้ายแรงต่อรายได้ และยอดขาย อย่างไรก็ตาม พ่อค้าชาวไทยบางคนให้รายละเอียดว่า ปัญหาการสื่อสารทำให้เกิดการเข้าใจผิด หรือก่อให้เกิดความสับสน และทำให้ต้องใช้เวลามากในการสื่อสาร

3. วิธีแก้ปัญหาการสื่อสารระหว่างพ่อค้าชาวไทย และลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ ได้แก่ การใช้ภาษากาย เช่น การใช้มือ และนิ้วมือประกอบท่าทาง การใช้ป้ายแสดงชื่อสินค้า รูปภาพ อัลบั้มรูป เครื่องคิดเลข และพจนานุกรม เป็นต้น นอกจากนี้ พ่อค้ารายย่อยชาวไทย ยอมรับว่า วิธีการแก้ปัญหาการสื่อสารเหล่านั้น เช่น การใช้มือ, ป้ายแสดงสินค้า หรือเครื่องคิดเลข มีส่วนช่วยในการสื่อสารกับลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศให้ประสบความสำเร็จ

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Orapat Pruksanubal

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. Background

Communication is one of the basic needs for mankind because it is used to exchange and share ideas, feelings, demands or other information from one person to another. In the last few decades, communication occurred not only between people within the same country but also between people in different countries and cultures in various situations. Therefore, communication between people in different countries, cultures or languages will be useful to get more knowledge, develop relationship and keep businesses running. However, when we communicate with these people, we frequently face communication problems.

Hybels and Weaver (1995) indicated that there were different kinds of communication. Those were intrapersonal, interpersonal, small-group, public, and intercultural communication. According to Levine and Adelman (1993), intercultural or cross cultural communication occurs between people from different cultures. This study focuses on intercultural or cross cultural communication. Communication occurs in numerous levels and situations such as working with expatriates or training with foreign professional. Intercultural communication also occurs among vendors and foreigners.

A traditional way of life will welcome many foreign tourists who will come for sight-seeings and shopping. One of the occupations that attracts tourists is side-road-sales or street vendors, especially in the tourist attractions. Everyday, these vendors have a chance to communicate with foreigners from different countries in the world. To communicate with foreigners, vendors use both verbal and non verbal communication. DuPraw and Axner (1997) stated that “the way people communicate varies widely between, and even within, cultures. One aspect of communication style is language usage. Another major aspect of communication style is the degree of importance given to non-verbal communication.”

In using verbal communication, one requires a language (Khan, 2001). Language is the core of human interaction. Hence, communication with people in different cultures and languages needs to have an international language for communicating. Nowadays, there are 4,000 to 5,000 living languages in the world but English is the most widely used language (Broughton; et al. 1980:1). Therefore, English is considered to be an international language to communicate with foreigners. Hybels and Weaver (1995) indicated that non-verbal communication involves the use of voice, body movement, clothing and body appearance, space, touch and time. It can help complement a verbal language to make foreigners able to understand more. However, misunderstanding can take place because of the differences in body language or gestures, different meanings for the same word and different assumptions made in the same situation (Potchanalak, 2004). These may lead to communication problems.

Communication between Thai vendors and foreigners can be seen in Thailand which has many interesting places that are unique for tourists to visit especially Bangkok which is not only the capital of Thailand but also a city where there are many fascinating places to visit such as the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and the Temple of Dawn, etc. Shopping in Bangkok is also very famous for foreigners especially sidewalk shopping. Sidewalks shopping on many streets in Bangkok are fun for tourists and it has become more and more popular because it is easily found at street junctions on the walkways, around places of entertainment, along sois or lanes and there are many kinds of goods with cheap prices to choose. This helps make sidewalk sales a unique tourist attraction.

In Bangkok, there are many popular shopping streets such as Jatujak, Silom/Surawong Roads, Pratunam and others including Khaosan Road. According to the information of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Khaosan Road which is in Rattanakosin Island has attracted much middle to lower level Thai and foreign tourists (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2000). Although Khaosan Road is a short street of about four hundreds and twelve meters, it is one of the most popular and well-known places where people around the world like to visit. Khaosan Road has many guesthouses with cheap rates, travel agencies, bookshops, small restaurants and pubs where local owners have to communicate with foreigners to run their businesses. Actually, there are more than 50 street vendors who sell foods, accessories and bags which has been the highlight of this area.

When communicating with foreign customers, Thai vendors use both verbal and non verbal communication. Verbal language carries the message directly to the receiver but 60-65 percent of the meaning is covered by non verbal language (Communicating for Results, 1997). English is an international language for communication in Thailand. Therefore, Thai vendors utilized English as the medium of communication with foreign customers from various countries. However, English is not the mother tongue and each Thai vendor has different English background. Some vendors have some knowledge of English but the others have never studied English before. Therefore, they may use non-verbal communication such as gestures to help them communicate with each other. Before undertaking study, the researcher interviewed some Thai vendors. From the interview, the researcher was reassured that their English background is different. Some vendors could speak English. Some vendors could speak a little English and used non verbal communication. With the information above, the communication problems can take place due to many causes.

II. Statement of the Problem

Communication is necessary for Thai vendors to sell their goods and to encourage foreign customers to buy their goods. Although they try their best in communicating with foreigners, they still have some problems to communicate successfully. As effective communication does not only promote a good relationship between Thai vendors and

foreigners, it also helps make their business grow substantially. Moreover, it may make a good image to foreigners about Thailand as well. Therefore, it is crucial to study what problems they encounter when communicating with foreigners.

III. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To find out how Thai vendors communicate with foreigners
2. To explore communication problems between Thai vendors and foreigners
3. To find the ways for Thai vendors to get through those communication problems.

IV. Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How do Thai vendors communicate with foreigners?
2. What are the communication problems between Thai vendors and foreigners?
3. How do Thai vendors get through the communication problems with foreigners?

V. Significance of the Study

Communication is necessary for all people to learn new ideas, get more knowledge or develop relationship. It also plays an important role for Thai vendors because they need to communicate with their customers to sell their goods or services. However, Thai vendors do not only sell their goods to Thai customers but also to foreigners, especially at tourist attractions such as Khaosan Road.

The researcher interviewed some foreigners who came from the United States, England and Australia before undertaking the research at Khaosan Road. The inspiration that made foreigners visit and spend their time at Khaosan Road was convenience in shopping, many kinds of goods to buy in this area, inexpensive accommodation, many restaurants and Khaosan Road is near other tourist attractions such as The Grand Palace or Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha), Wat Pho (Bangkok's centre for Thai massage) and the Royal Barges Museum, The National Gallery and Silpakorn University Gallery.

Along Khaosan Road, everyday Thai vendors have to meet many foreign customers. Obviously, those foreigners who come from different countries speak different languages. Therefore, this study is aimed to explore the problems of communication that Thai vendors encounter and the methods they use to solve those problems. It is necessary to get through and minimize the problems because effective communication can help them promote their

good relationship with foreigners. It can also facilitate their businesses to grow substantially.

VI. Expected Outcome

This study will be useful for general Thai people to know how Thai vendors communicate with foreigners. Besides, it is also helpful for other related sectors such as government sector to realize the nature of communication problems that Thai vendors usually face. Therefore, the government may implement a language program for them. These can help authorities involved understand the major problems and find ways for improvements to generate more incomes for Thai economy.

Table 1 Target of tourism in Thailand 2000 – 2006

Year	International						
	Tourist		Average	Average Expenditure		Revenue	
	Number	Change	Length of Stay	/person/day	Change	Million	Change
	(Million)	(%)	(Days)	(Baht)	(%)	(Baht)	(%)
2000 ^{/1}	9.51	10.82	7.77	3,861.19	4.23	285,272	12.75
2001 ^{/1}	10.06	5.82	7.93	3,748.00	-2.93	299,047	4.83
2002 ^{/1}	10.80	7.33	7.98	3,753.74	0.15	323,484	8.17
2003 ^{/1}	10.00	-7.36	8.19	3,774.50	0.55	309,269	-4.39
2004 ^{/1}	11.65	16.46	8.13	4,057.85	7.51	384,360	24.28
2005 ^{/2}	13.38	14.84	8.10	4,150.00	2.27	450,000	17.08
2006 ^{/2}	15.12	13.00	8.20	4,300.00	3.61	533,000	18.44

Note: /1=Actual, /2= Tourism Strategy of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports

Source: TAT Statistics Division, Tourism Authority of Thailand.

VII. Scope of the Study

This study aims to present the communication problems among Thai vendors and foreigners. It focuses on speaking and listening skills that they use to communicate with foreigners. The participants are 25 Thai vendors on Khaosan Road. The data derived from the exploration made through the interview.

The study consists of five chapters. Chapter One contains the introduction, statements of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance, expected outcome, scope and definitions of terms. Chapter Two presents review of the related literature that is relevant to the study. Chapter Three is methodology. Chapter Four includes the findings of the study. The last chapter, Chapter Five brings up conclusions, discussions and recommendations.

VIII. Definitions of Terms

1. **“Intercultural” or “cross cultural communication”** means face to face interactions among people of diverse cultures (Jandt, 1995:30). In this study, it means face to face interactions among Thai vendors and foreigners.

2. **“Intrapersonal Communication”** means communication that occurs within us. It involves thoughts, feelings, and the way we look at ourselves. It is centered in the self; you are the only sender-receiver (Hybels and Weaver, 1995).

3. **“Verbal communication”** means spoken communication. In other words, language, including the use of words and intonation to convey meaning (Potchanalak, 2004). In this study, verbal communication is referred to English that Thai vendors use to communicate with foreigners.

4. **“Non verbal communication”** means communication without words. It includes facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, body posture and motions, and positioning.

5. **“Thai vendors”** mean Thai people who sell their goods or services such as foods, clothes, accessories, paint henna etc. along the road or footpath. This study focuses on Thai vendors on Khaosan Road.

6. **“Foreigners”** mean people who come from around the world as tourists.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides related secondary data from previous research concerning cultural communication, from the textbooks, and from other related sources necessary for this research. This research reviews five areas as follows: (a.) Additional Definitions of Communication (b.) Additional Definitions of Intercultural or Cross Cultural Communication (c.) Individualism-Collectivism (d.) Communication Process (e.) Intercultural Communication Problems

I. Additional Definitions of Communication

Lewis and Slade (1994:4) indicated that “communication is the sharing of ideas, knowledge of feelings”. They also defined that “communication is something done by people not by machines”. Moreover, “communication is ability to share information with people and to understand what information and feelings are being conveyed by others”. Communication can take place in many forms including gestures, facial expressions, signs, vocalizations (including pitch and tone), in addition to speech and written communication”. (www.para.unl.edu.) Besides, “communication is the process of exchanging information and ideas. An active process involves encoding, transmitting, and decoding intended messages”. (www.senate.psu.edu.)

II. Additional Definitions of Intercultural or Cross Cultural Communication

According to Chapter 1, intercultural or cross cultural communication is one kind of communication. This study focuses on intercultural communication among Thai vendors and foreigners. This section will give more definitions on intercultural or cross cultural communication. Cross cultural communication is about how people from different cultures communicate (Lewis and Slade, 1994:122). In addition, “cross cultural communication is the process of understanding and sharing meaning among individual from various cultures.” (Pearson, 1997:38) Moreover, Samovar and Porter (1985:15) stated that “cross cultural communication occurs wherever a message producer is a member of one culture and a message receiver is a member of another culture”.

III. Individualism- Collectivism

Individualism- Collectivism defines broad differences between cultures. An individualist culture tends to emphasize personal goals, to think of themselves as independent, and to be direct in communicating. In an individualist culture, there are many ingroups (your family, your school, your church, your occupation), but their influence is specific and often limited (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997:57). The sample of individualist culture is the United States, Australia, Canada and France.

In collectivist cultures, the emphasis is on the importance of fitting into the group. Because they are strongly connected with the group, they tend to regard the self as

interdependent and to be aware of group goals and welfare rather than focusing on individual achievements and desires. And they tend to avoid direct conflict (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997:57). The sample of collectivist culture is Thailand, Japan, Korea and China. According to the definitions of individualism and collectivism, Western and Asian cultures are totally different.

IV. Communication Process

The communication process consists of sender, message, channel, receiver, feedback and context (Fowler, 2005). The figure of the communication process is as below.

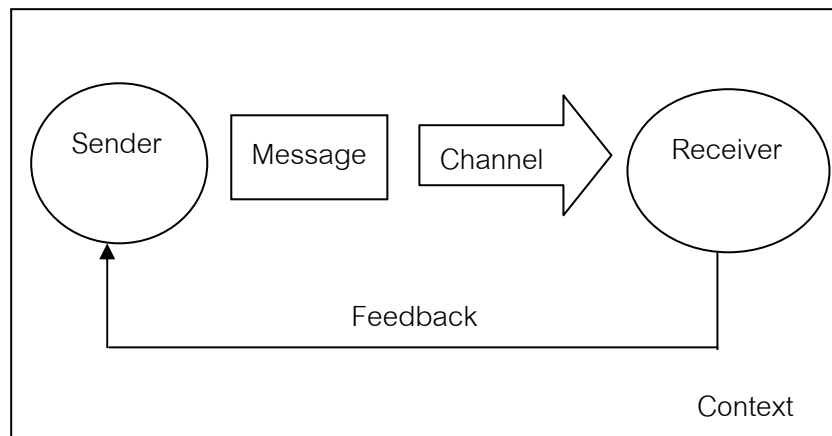


Figure 1 The Communication process

Communication problems can take place between the communication process and have the potential to create misunderstanding and confusion. The common problems related to communication process are as follows:

1. Encoding and Decoding

Encoding is the process of putting a message into the form which is to be communicated. Devito (1995:12) stated that “encoding refers to the act of producing message”.

Decoding is the process the receiver goes through in trying to interpret the exact meaning of the message (Communicating for Results, 1997). Devito (1995:12) indicated that “decoding refers to the act of understanding messages”.

Speakers and writers are called encoders. This study focuses on speakers. Listeners and receivers are called decoders. This study also focuses on listeners. The term encoding-decoding is used to emphasize that the two activities are performed in combination by each participant (Hybels and Weaver, 1995).

The communication problems can occur in this stage. For example, when people of different languages communicate to each other, they may not understand each other completely because they use different languages for communicating.

2. Noise

Anything that interferes with communication by distorting and blocking the message is noise. Noise can be divided into two groups: external and internal noise (Communicating for Results, 1997)

External noise comes from the environment and keeps the message from being heard or understood (Hybels and Weaver, 1995). They also indicated that external noise did not always come from sound but may come from weather. For example, while people are communicating to each other, the area where they are talking is too noisy such as honking horn. It may cause communication problems.

Internal noise occurs in the minds of the sender-receivers when their thoughts or feeling are focused on something other than the communication at hand (Hybels and Weaver, 1995). In addition, internal noise refers to the conditions of the receiver, such as headache, daydreaming, lack of sleep, preoccupation with other problems and lack of knowledge on the topic. Internal noise can interrupt the communication (Communicating for Results, 1997).

3. Frame of reference

Each person's frame of reference includes educational background, race, sex, the place where the person grows up, the characteristics of parents, attitudes, personality, all past experience, and many more (communicating for results, 1997). Frame of reference of both sender and receiver is identical; problems may develop in accurate encoding and decoding message. Some vendors find it is difficult to understand some cultures. For example, Asian tourists are too shy. They wait to be asked, and they do not express their desire, so it is difficult for vendors to know their need.

V. Intercultural Communication Problems

Communication can only be successful if messages are appropriately delivered and received. Especially in intercultural communication, two-sides of people are from two different countries with different cultures, custom, thoughts and languages. This would make a communication more difficult to achieve. Therefore, it is important to explore the problems of intercultural communication (Chang, 2004). Some problems which may happen during the intercultural communication are as follows:

1. Ethnocentrism

Pearson and Nelson (1997) defined that “ethnocentrism is the belief that your own group or culture is superior to all other groups or cultures”. Therefore, it can be said that problems occur because people interpret and evaluate other cultures by using their own norms or standards. Pearson and Nelson (1997) also stated that “ethnocentrism can be dangerous because it invites defensiveness on the part of the person who is being treated as in some way deficient or inferior”.

2. Stereotype

According to Pearson and Nelson (1997), “a stereotype is a belief, based on previously formed opinions and attitudes that all members of a group are more or less alike and think and act in a similar fashion. Stereotyping becomes troublesome in communication

when people make assumptions about an individual based on simplified notions about the group to which he or she belongs”.

3. Ambiguity

When communicating with some people who have different cultures or language, it is easy to receive an unclear message. According to Cushner (1999:72) “Most people, when faced with an ambiguous situation, try to resolve it by applying culturally familiar criteria”. Therefore, people who would like to achieve intercultural communication have to be patient with ambiguity. When they do not have a clear understanding of what is going on, they are able to ask appropriate questions and modify their behavior accordingly.

4. Language barriers

Language may be the barriers even in effective communication. Problems will occur when people use different languages to communicate to each other.

According to Sigband and Bell (1994:18) “Language used words to convey ideas, facts, and feelings. Sometimes semantics problems arise in the interpretation of words because the meanings are not in words but in the minds of the people who receiver them”. Therefore, when communicating with people from different cultures, it increases more misinterpretation. In addition, Robbins (1996) mentioned that some words could not be translated across cultures because the words meant different things to different people.

Chan (2004) stated that sometimes one word could be interpreted to a lot of different meanings depending on one's culture, environment and occasions. Robbins (1996) indicated that words implied different things in different languages. When people from different cultures communicate, they may have misunderstanding because of word connotation.

Moreover, the lack of vocabulary is also another problem in communication. When people want to communicate or explain their thoughts, feelings or any other information and their vocabulary to explain them is not enough, that can be the cause of communication problem as well.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology which explains the procedures of this research. The following subjects have been described namely, participants, research instrument, data collection and data analysis.

I. Participants

The target participants of this study were 25 Thai vendors. The researcher chose 25 vendors by considering from the types of goods and services that Thai vendors provided for their customers at Khaosan Road. The researcher surveyed Khaosan Road and divided the participants as follows:

Table 2 Types of goods and services and number of Thai vendors in each type

Types of Goods and Services	Number of Thai Vendors
Food & Beverages	5
Clothes	5
Accessories	5
Handbags & Shoes	5
Others (Hair plaiting, Decoration, etc.)	5
Total	25

The others mean other goods and services that could not be grouped into the four categories of goods and services above. Although this study focuses on Thai vendors, the researcher also interviewed ten foreigners who stayed or bought goods or services at Khaosan Road to understand their perspective about the communication problems with Thai vendors. The foreigners were selected by random.

II. Research Instrument

The instrument used to collect data for this study was a face to face interview with a list of questions for both Thai vendors and foreigners. The list of questions was designed with relevance to the objectives of the study. Some questions provided some choices to help Thai vendors and foreigners answer the questions and ask them to answer from choices. Some choices were obtained from the communication process theory and the intercultural communication problems from Chapter 2 Review of the Related Literature. The list of questions for Thai vendors is divided into two parts.

Part 1: The Personal Information

The personal information of interviewees who were asked to answer questions on sex, age, education, types of goods that they sell, experience in selling, time that Thai vendors sell their goods and experience in English training course. This part is helpful to provide the background of each Thai vendor. It might affect his or her communication with foreigners.

Part 2: Communication with Foreign Customers

This part focused on Thai vendors' communication with foreign customers. The questions were about how the Thai vendors communicate with their foreign customers, what communication problems they faced and how they solved the problems.

The list of questions included their nationality, the length of their stay in Thailand, the communication problems that they faced and how they got through these problems.

III. Data Collection

The data were collected through the interview with the list of questions. The researcher interviewed 25 Thai vendors and 10 foreigners about the communication problems during March and April, 2006.

IV. Data Analysis

After the researcher received and collected the complete information from the participants with the results from the data illustrated in frequency, percentage and description. Finally, the researcher concluded and discussed the results with recommendation for further studies.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter reported the findings of the study. The data which presented in this chapter were collected from interviewing the participants who were Thai vendors at Khaosan Road. The results were presented in frequency, percentage with description.

The findings were presented into three parts. The first part presented the personal information of the Thai vendors. The second part described the communication results of foreign customers and Thai vendors. The third part showed the communication problems among Thai vendors and foreign customers. Although this study focused on Thai vendors' perspective in communication problems with foreigners, it was also interesting to know foreigners' perspective through interviews.

The summaries were reported according to the information gathered from the interviews.

I. Personal Information of Thai Vendors

This part provided personal information of participants consisted of 25 Thai vendors at Khaosan Road. The information of Thai vendors was as follows:

Table 3 Sex of Thai vendors

Sex	Number of Thai Vendors	Percentage
Male	9	36.00
Female	16	64.00
Total	25	100.00

Table 3 identified that the total number of 25 interviewees of Thai vendors at Khaosan Road amounted to 64% were female and 36% of them were male. Most participants were female. Some male Thai vendors were not the owners but only the employees and just worked at Khaosan Road for a few months. Therefore, they refused to be interviewed.

Table 4 Age of Thai vendors

Age	Number of Thai Vendors	Percentage
Under 20 years old	2	8.00
20 - 29 years old	8	32.00
30 - 39 years old	10	40.00
40 - 49 years old	5	20.00
Over 50 years old	0	0.00
Total	25	100.00

Table 4 demonstrated that 40% of participants were in the range of 30 -39 years old. 32% of them were ranged of 20 -29 years old. Another 20% and 8% of them were in the range of 40 -49 years old and under 20 years old respectively. None was over 50 years old.

Table 5 Education of Thai vendors

Educational Level	Number of Thai Vendors	Percentage
Elementary School	6	24.00
Junior High School	7	28.00
Senior High School	9	36.00
Diploma	2	8.00
Bachelor Degree	1	4.00
Total	25	100.00

Table 5 indicated that the highest educational level of the participants was 36% with senior high school level and 28% of them were junior high school. 24% of them were elementary school. 8% and 4% of them held diploma and bachelor degree respectively.

Table 6 Types of goods that Thai vendors sell

Types of Goods	Numbers of Thai Vendors	Percentage
Food & Beverages	5	20.00
Clothes	5	20.00
Accessories	5	20.00
Shoes & Handbags	5	20.00
Others	5	20.00
Total	25	100.00

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the participants of this study consisted of 25 Thai vendors who were classified into five groups. These groups were divided by the types of goods sold by Thai vendors at Khaosan Road. From Table 6, 20% of each group of participants had been selling food & beverages, clothes, accessories, shoes & handbags and other goods. The other goods consisted of drawing pictures, hair plaiting, tattoo and decoration respectively.

Table 7 Experience in selling goods at Khaosan Road

Number of Year	Number of Thai Vendors	Percentage
Under 1 year	2	8.00
1 - 3 years	8	32.00
4 - 6 years	7	28.00
7 - 9 years	5	20.00
10 years	3	12.00
Total	25	100.00

Table 7 revealed that 32% of the participants had been selling goods from 1-3 years at Khaosan Road. 28% of them had been selling goods from 4-6 years. 20% of them have been selling goods between 7-9 years. 12% and 8% of them had been selling goods for ten years and under one year respectively.

Table 8 Length of time in selling goods

Period of Time	Number of Thai Vendors	Percentage
From 10 am to 11 pm	5	20.00
From 1 pm to 12 pm	13	52.00
From 3 pm to 1 am	7	28.00
Total	25	100.00

Table 8 informed the length of time that participants sold their goods. The summary of the length of time was that 52% of the participants sold their goods from 1 pm to 12 pm. 28% of them sold their goods from 3 pm to 1 am. Another 20% of them sold their goods from 10 am to 11 pm.

Table 9 Experience in English training course

Experience in English Training Course	Number of Thai Vendors	Percentage
Yes	4	16.00
No	21	84.00
Total	25	100.00

Table 9 showed that 84% of the participants had never taken any English courses and 16% of them had taken some English courses. Thai vendors who studied some English said that they had studied English from the schools that they graduated.

II. The Communication Results of Thai Vendors with Foreign Customers

This part provided the communication data of Thai vendors with foreign customers.

According to the interview, the results were as follows:

Table 10 The frequency of Thai vendors use of English when communicating with foreign customers

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Seldom	Total
In communicating with foreign customers, Thai vendors speak English.	11	8	6	0	25
(Percentage)	44.00	32.00	24.00	0.00	100.00

Table 10 illustrated the frequency and percentage of Thai vendors who spoke English when communicating with foreign customers. The table showed that 44% of the participants always spoke English with foreign customers. 32% percent of them frequently spoke English and 24% of them occasionally spoke English with their foreign customers.

Table 11 The frequency of Thai vendors who had problems with their foreign Customers

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Seldom	Total
During Thai vendors' communication, do they have any problems with the foreigners?	0	3	15	7	25
(Percentage)	0.00	12.00	60.00	28.00	100.00

Table 11 indicated that 60% of the participants occasionally had some problems with the foreigners during their communication. 28% of them seldom had some problems and 12% of them frequently had some problems with the foreigners during the communication.

1. The communication problems that Thai vendors confront

This section concluded the results about the communication problems that Thai vendors faced when communicating with foreign customers. The communication problems were as follows:

1.1 Lack of English knowledge

According to the interview, some vendors not only never studied English but also never learned English by themselves. They could not speak English except using a numeral

to tell prices or a “yes” and “no” reply. Therefore, when foreigners asked them about their goods, they usually said only “No” or “Yes”. Answering “No” or “Yes” it did not mean that Thai vendors understood what foreign customers said. Sometimes, the lack of English knowledge might cause misunderstanding among Thai vendors and foreigners. However, both Thai vendors and foreigners spent more time understanding each others.

1.2 Lack of vocabulary

Many Thai vendors had never studied English before. When their customers were foreigners, Thai vendors needed to use some vocabularies to communicate with them. Most vocabularies involved goods that Thai vendors sold. For example, Thai vendors who sold clothes learnt about numeral words (one, two, three, etc.) for telling prices and quantities, colors (blue, white, pink, etc.) and sizes (large, middle, small, etc.), etc. Sometimes, Thai vendors heard some words that they did not know before. The lack of vocabulary occasionally caused a problem to Thai vendors because they did not understand those words. For example, when a foreigner asked a Thai vendor who sold Thai Fried Noodles (Phad Thai) where they sold Deep- Fried Locusts (Tuktan Thod), he might not know that locusts meant “Tuktan”.

1.3 Different accents in English

The different accents in English were one of the communication problems as well. According to the interview, Thai vendors at Khaosan Road not only sold their goods to Thai customers but also to foreign customers. They needed to use English to communicate with foreign customers who came from different countries such as England, Japan, Australia, France, Israel and the Netherlands. Those foreigners had different accents in English. Some foreigners were native English speakers but some were not. Normally, the native English speakers pronounced with accent that was easier to understand than the non-native English speakers. However, English's accent was easier to follow than Aussies', although both were native English speakers. From the interview, the researcher found that Thai vendors could understand native English speakers better than non-native English speakers. Moreover, the researcher also found that foreigners who had higher education could speak English with accent that was easier to understand.

1.4 Noise

According to the interview, noise was one of the problems that Thai vendors faced when they communicated with customers. Khaosan Road not only had a lot of people visiting but also many shops, restaurants and pubs. There were external and internal noises during the conversation there. The external noises on Khaosan Road came from the loud music from the restaurants or pubs and noises of people's conversations. Those noises also caused misunderstanding among Thai vendors and foreign customers. For example, a

foreign customer told a Thai vendor that she wanted “pineapple juice” but the vendor brought “apple juice” to her. Because of the loud music, Thai vendor could only hear “apple juice”.

Besides, internal noises such as a headache also caused the communication problem. Some Thai vendors had to sell their goods from morning to night almost everyday so sometimes they felt sleepy and too tired to get a perfect message.

2. The methods that Thai vendors used to get through their communication problems with foreign customers were as follows:

2.1 Using gestures

The first solution that was usually used to communicate with foreign customers when both Thai vendors and foreigners wanted to get through the communication problems was the use of hands and fingers. Some vendors could not speak English so they used hands and fingers to help them communicate with foreign customers. For example, at the grilled meat balls’ cart, when a foreign customer wanted to buy the grilled meat balls, he pointed to the meat balls. If Thai vendor would like to know how many sticks the customer wanted, he would raise his fingers. One finger meant one stick. When the vendor raised two fingers and the foreign customer nodded his head, Thai vendor knew that he wanted two sticks.

2.2 Signs, pictures or photo albums

Signs, pictures and photo albums were also one of the solutions that many Thai vendors used to avoid misunderstanding or confusion in communicating with foreign customers. Thai vendors who sold foods or beverages listed the names and prices of foods and beverages in English for their customers. Along Khaosan Road, there are many shops doing hair plaiting and many foreign customers would like to do it. Hair plaiting had many designs and styles such as pigtails, pony-tails, plait extensions and dreadlock. It was difficult for Thai vendors to understand what styles of hair plaiting foreign customers wanted to have and they could not explain it to the vendors, either. Therefore, Thai vendors had pictures and photo albums that showed various designs and styles of hair plaiting for customers to choose. Moreover, there were pictures or photo albums of tattoo, nail extension and body painting as well.

2.3 Calculator

A calculator was another solution that Thai vendors used to get through their communication problems. It was not only useful for Thai vendors but also for foreign customers in communicating with each other. Thai vendors used it to show the price of goods and it helped customers in bargaining with vendors more easily. A calculator also helped in getting rid of misunderstanding and confusion among Thai vendors and foreign customers.

For example,

Customer: How much is this pair of earrings?

Vendor: Twenty Baht.

Customer: Seventy Baht.

Vendor: No. Twenty Baht. (Show the customer the calculator with
number twenty on it.)

Customer: Oh, twenty Baht.

A calculator could reduce time-consuming for Thai vendors in communicating with customers. The vendors usually used the calculator when selling clothes, shoes, bags and accessories.

2.4 Dictionary

A dictionary was another tool to help Thai vendors understand the meaning of English words. Many Thai vendors studied English by themselves. They bought dictionaries to study words involved their goods. They also used dictionaries to learn new words that they did not know before.

2.5 Confirmation

According to the problems, external noise was one of them. In order to solve it, Thai vendors repeated what the customers said or asked the customers to say it one more time. It helped Thai vendors to confirm the information with their customers.

Table 12 The frequency show the success in using non verbal communication, sign, calculator, etc. to help Thai vendors communicate with foreign customers

	Very Successful	Successful	Slightly Successful	Not Successful	Total
How successful Thai vendors' communication with foreign customers is in using non verbal communication, sign, calculator, etc.?	10	15	0	0	25
(Percentage)	40.00	60.00	0.00	0.00	100.00

From Table 12, 60% of the participants answered that the communication among them and foreign customers was successful when they used non verbal communication such as sign, calculator, etc. to help them. 40% of them admitted that those help make their communication successful.

III. The Communication Results of Foreigners with Thai Vendors

This part presented the communication results among Thai vendors and foreigners in foreigners' perspective. The communication results were the following:

Table 13 Nationalities of the interviewees

Nationality	Number of Interviewees	Percentage
American	3	30.00
Israeli	2	20.00
Canadian	2	20.00
Japanese	2	20.00
Dutch	1	10.00
Total	10	100.00

Table 13 showed the total number of 10 interviewees from different countries. 30% of the interviewees came from the United States of America. 20% of them came from the Israel, Canada and Japan respectively, and 10% of them came from the Netherlands.

Table 14 Length of stay at Khaosan Road

Period of Staying	Number of Foreigners	Percentage
Less than 1 week	3	30.00
Less than 2 weeks	7	70.00
Less than 3 weeks	0	0.00
Total	10	100.00

Table 14 showed that 70% of the foreigners stayed at Khaosan Road for less than 2 weeks and 30% of them stayed at Khaosan Road less than 1 week.

Table 15 The frequency of foreigners' problems in communicating with Thai vendors

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Seldom	Total
In communicating with Thai vendors, how often did foreigners encounter problems?	0	0	6	4	10
(Percentage)	0.00	0.00	60.00	40.00	100.00

Table 15 demonstrated that 60% of the interviewees occasionally had some problems in communicating with Thai vendors. Another 40% of them seldom had some problems in communicating with Thai vendors.

1. The communication problems that foreigners faced when communicating with

Thai vendors were as follows:

1.1 English accent and fast speed

Some foreigners had some problems when they communicated with Thai vendors because of their English accent and fast speaking. Each foreigner had different English accents and sometimes some foreigners were accustomed to speaking fast. Some vendors occasionally could not follow what they said.

1.2 Noise

Noise came from the loud music of the restaurants or pubs on Khaosan Road and also from other people talking. This problem made Thai vendors misinterpreted which could cause misunderstanding.

1.3 Unfamiliar Vocabulary

Each Thai vendor had different educational backgrounds. Sometimes foreign customers used some vocabularies that some Thai vendors were not familiar with. This problem could cause unsmooth communication among Thai vendors and foreigners.

2. The methods used to get through the communication problems.

According to the interview, the solutions that foreigners used to solve their communication problem were as follows:

2.1 Clear and slow speaking

One of the problems was English accent and fast speaking which made Thai vendors unable follow the customers' message. Therefore, foreign customers tried to use clear and simple words and also spoke slowly.

2.2 Non-verbal languages

Foreigners used non verbal languages such as their hands and fingers to point to things that they wanted. Besides, foreigners used calculators to negotiate the prices when they bought clothes, handbags, shoes, etc.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part concludes the study according to the objectives. The second part discusses the data from the interview and the findings. The third part contains recommendations for further studies.

I. Conclusions

This study explored the communication problems among Thai vendors and foreigners at Khaosan Road. The conclusions are the following:

1. The methods that Thai vendors used to communicate with foreigners.

According to the findings, Thai vendors communicated with foreigners by speaking English. Although most Thai vendors did not have any experience in English training course, they tried to study English by themselves. Some vendors bought dictionaries and English exercises to study English. Those vendors learnt simple words from dictionaries and the exercise book such as numeral and vocabularies related to their goods. This helped Thai vendors in communicating with foreign customers. Furthermore, the long experience in selling goods and services at Khaosan Road of many vendors helped them improve their English. Therefore, some Thai vendors could communicate even with their

broken English. However, there were some Thai vendors who could not speak English so they used nonverbal communication such as hands and fingers to communicate with foreign customers.

2. The communication problems among Thai vendors and foreign customers

This study focused on the communication problems that Thai vendors encountered. Besides, this research also interviewed some foreigners to find out their perspective about the communication problems with Thai vendors.

For the Thai vendors' perspective, the results indicated that the communication problems that Thai vendors faced were the lack of knowledge of English. Some vendors could not speak English except a numeral, "yes" and "no". That could cause misunderstanding and time-consuming in communicating with foreigners. Moreover, the lack of vocabulary was also one of the problems. Some Thai vendors studied simple and basic words but sometimes they faced some words that they did not know before. Besides, English accent could cause problems too because Thai vendors were not familiar with foreigners' accents which were different from one another. The last problem was noise that came from the loud music of the restaurants and pubs and also from people talking.

According to foreigners' perspective, the communication problems that foreigners encountered were English accent and fast speed. Moreover, noise from restaurants and

pubs and unfamiliar vocabulary that foreigners talked to Thai vendors could cause the problems as well.

Those communication problems created misunderstanding, confusion and time-consuming among Thai vendors and foreigners.

3. The methods that Thai vendors used to get through their communication problems with foreign customers.

According to Thai vendors' perspective, the results revealed that Thai vendors used hands and fingers to show the number of goods that helped them get through the communication problems. Besides, signs, pictures, photo albums and calculators were also used to solve the problems. Additionally, confirmation of information was another way that Thai vendors used to get through the communication problems.

From foreigners' perspective, speaking slowly and clearly could solve the problems because that helped Thai vendors follow the message. Moreover, foreigners also used non verbal communication such as gestures to get through the problems.

II. Discussions

The purpose of this study was to explore the communication problems among Thai vendors and foreigners at Khaosan Road. This part discussed the findings as follows:

1. According to the interview, both male and female Thai vendors did not have different communication problems. The communication problems that they faced were quite similar. Besides, the difference of ages did not cause difficult communication problems. The problems collected from interviewing the vendors of different sexes and ages were concluded and revealed in Chapter 4.

2. The educational background of each Thai vendor was not the main cause of the communication problems. Thai vendors who finished junior school did not mean that they had to face more communication problems than Thai vendors who graduated with a bachelor degree. The communication problems happened often or not also depending on the experience of each vendor and which types of goods he or she sold. For example, Thai vendors who graduated only with a school certificate but had experience in selling goods for many years might not face communication problems very often.

3. According to the results, at present, most Thai vendors who were interviewed indicated that they occasionally had communication problems because they had gained experience from selling goods and services to foreigners at Khaosan Road for a long time. Therefore, they had opportunities to learn to communicate with foreigners and solved the problems. However, there were a few vendors who frequently had the communication problems because they just sold their goods at Khaosan Road for less than one year. Their experience was not enough so they were not familiar to communicate with foreigners.

4. Some communication problems indicated in Chapter 4 related to theories that were reviewed in Chapter 2. For example, according to the intercultural communication theory, the lack of vocabulary was one of the language barriers that caused communication problems among people who used different languages. Besides, noise was the communication problems during the communication process between Thai vendors and foreigners.

5. The different accent in English was one of the communication problems. The main reason was that Thai vendors were unfamiliar with foreigners' accent. Besides, some foreigners might not speak standard English so their accent was difficult to understand. It also probably might be due to the different language structure because Thai language was a tonal language. It did not stress like English which was a inflected language. English stressed on words or sentences. Therefore, Thai vendors might have a problem when communicating with foreigners due to the accent.

III. Recommendation for further studies

1. This study focused on the communication problems that Thai vendors ran into. Although the researcher interviewed some foreigners to find out their perspectives, the gathered data were not specific enough. Further study should focus on the communication problems that foreigners encountered when communicating with Thai vendors.

2. Thai vendors had to communicate with foreigners who came from different countries such as England, France, Australia and Japan. Some foreigners came from English speaking countries but some came from France or Japan whose accents were not standard English. A comparison to find out if there is any difference between standard and non-standard English in communication with Thai vendors is recommended.

APPENDIX A
THE LIST OF A FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
FOR THAI VENDORS

The List of a Face-to-Face Interview Questions for Thai Vendors

An Exploration of Communication Problems among Thai Vendors and Foreigners at Khaosan Road, Bangkok

Directions:

This questionnaire is used as a guide in interviewing Thai vendors to explore their communication problems with foreigners on Khaosan Road, Bangkok in order to understand the nature of the problems.

Part 1 Personal Information

1. Sex

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. Age

☐ Under 20 years old

☐ 20 – 29 years old

☐ 30 – 39 years old

☐ 40 – 49 years old

☐ Over 50 years old

3. Education

☐ Elementary School

☐ Junior High School

☐ Senior High School

☐ Diploma

☐ Bachelor Degree

☐ Others.....

4. Types of goods you sell

☐ Food & Beverages

☐ Accessories

☐ Handbag & Shoes

☐ Clothes

☐ Anything else, please specify.....

5. Experience in selling

☐ Under 1 year

☐ 1 – 3 years

☐ 4 – 6 years

☐ 6 – 9 years

☐ Over 10 years

6. Time that you sell your goods from to

7. Experience in English training course

- ☐ No ☐ Yes. Please specify the place and time.....

Part 2 Communication with foreign customers

8. In communicating with foreigners, you speak English.

- ☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom

9. During your communication, do you have any problems with your foreign customers?

- ☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom

10. What are your problems when communicating with foreign customers during selling goods?

- ☐ Lack of vocabulary ☐ Unfamiliar with English accent ☐ Noise
☐ Others

11. How do you solve your communication problems?

- ☐ Using non verbal communication such as hands
☐ Using calculator
☐ Using sign, picture, or photo album
☐ Others

12. How do you make your communication with your foreign customers successful with non-verbal clues?

- ☐ Very successful ☐ Successful ☐ Slightly successful
☐ Not successful

APPENDIX B

THE LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR FOREIGNERS

The List of Questions for Foreigners

This list is used to as a guide in interviewing foreigners who stay or buy goods at Khaosan Road.

1. Which country are you from?
2. How long have you stayed in Thailand?
 - ☐ Less than 1 week
 - ☐ Less than 2 weeks
 - ☐ Less than 3 weeks
3. In communicating with Thai vendors, how often do you have problems?
 - ☐ Always
 - ☐ Frequently
 - ☐ Occasionally
 - ☐ Seldom
4. What are the communication problems you run into?
 - ☐ Noise
 - ☐ English accent
 - ☐ Fast speaking
 - ☐ Using difficult vocabulary to Thai vendors
 - ☐ Others
5. How do you get through the communication problems?
 - ☐ Speaking slowly
 - ☐ Confirm what you say
 - ☐ Using non verbal communication
 - ☐ Others

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