

**ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS OF A HOTEL CHAIN'S
THAI FRONT OFFICE STAFF FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF FRONT
OFFICE MANAGERS AND THE STAFF**



A MASTER'S PROJECT

BY

TANYAPORN PIPATTAMMAKUL

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts in Business English for International Communication**

Srinakharinwirot University

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The purpose of this research study was to explore the English oral communication problems and intercultural communication problems experienced by the Thai front office staff. These problems were examined by exploring the opinions of hotel front office staff themselves as well as the front office staff managers. The sample group consisted of 40 Thai hotel front office staff and 9 managers from four international hotel chains based in Bangkok. The instrument employed in this study was a survey questionnaire.

From the perspectives of the front office staff themselves in terms of English listening problems of the front office staff, it was found the staff did not understand foreign guests when they used English technical terms or idioms, and the staff always translated English into the Thai language before replying to foreign guests. In terms of English speaking problems, it was found that the problems included the use of incorrect grammar and inappropriate words and expressions.

From the perspectives of the front office managers in terms of English listening problems of the front office staff, it was found that the front office managers did not agree that their front office staff had English listening problems, but they agreed that their hotel front office staff had problems in English speaking in terms of grammar and vocabulary.

Regarding the intercultural communication problems as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves, it was found that the front office staff were concerned about the major problems including prejudices, stereotypes, and knowledge of foreign guests' cultures. From the perspectives of hotel front office managers, they agreed that misunderstanding in communication might happen because of prejudices and stereotypes between the hotel staff and foreign guests.

ปัญหาในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้วัจนภาษาของพนักงานชาวไทย
ประจำแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้า จากมุมมองของพนักงานและผู้จัดการ



เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ
สิงหาคม 2559

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งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจปัญหาในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้วัจนภาษา และปัญหาในการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรมของพนักงานชาวไทยประจำแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้าโรงแรม โดยสำรวจความคิดเห็นจากพนักงานและผู้จัดการแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้าโรงแรม กลุ่มตัวอย่างของงานวิจัยนี้ คือ (1) พนักงานชาวไทยประจำแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้าโรงแรม จำนวน 40 คน และ (2) ผู้จัดการแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้าโรงแรม จำนวน 9 คน จากโรงแรมในเครือนานาชาติจำนวน 4 แห่งในกรุงเทพมหานคร เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยนี้ คือ แบบสอบถามเกี่ยวกับปัญหาในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้วัจนภาษา และปัญหาในการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรม

ปัญหาในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้วัจนภาษาของพนักงานชาวไทยประจำแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้า จากมุมมองของพนักงานเอง พบปัญหาหลักด้านการฟัง ดังนี้ พนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้าไม่เข้าใจคำศัพท์เฉพาะหรือสำนวนภาษาอังกฤษบางสำนวน และพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้ามักจะแปลภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาไทยก่อนตอบกลับลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ ในด้านการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ พบปัญหาหลัก ได้แก่ การใช้ไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษไม่ถูกต้อง และไม่สามารถใช้คำหรือสำนวนภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างเหมาะสมเมื่อสื่อสารกับลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ

ปัญหาในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้วัจนภาษาของพนักงานชาวไทยประจำแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้า จากมุมมองของผู้จัดการแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้าโรงแรม พบว่า ผู้จัดการแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้าไม่เห็นด้วยว่าพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้ามีปัญหาด้านการฟังภาษาอังกฤษ แต่ ผู้จัดการแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้าโรงแรมเห็นด้วยว่าพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้ามีปัญหาในด้านการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ ในเรื่องของการใช้ไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษไม่ถูกต้อง และไม่สามารถใช้คำหรือสำนวนภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างเหมาะสม ในการสื่อสารกับลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ

จากการสำรวจปัญหาในการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรมที่มีผลต่อการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้วัจนภาษาของพนักงานชาวไทยประจำแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้ากับลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ จากมุมมองของพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้าโรงแรม พบว่าพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้าตระหนักถึงปัญหาหลัก 3 ปัญหา คือ (1) การสื่อสารที่มีประสิทธิภาพจะได้รับผลกระทบ หากพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้าและลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศมีอคติต่อกัน, (2) ทักษคติแบบเหมารวมในแง่ลบจะส่งผลในแง่ลบต่อประสิทธิภาพของการสื่อสาร และ (3) หากพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้าไม่รู้วัฒนธรรมของลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศอาจส่งผลในแง่ลบต่อการสนทนาระหว่างลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศกับพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้า ปัญหาในการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรมที่มีผลต่อการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้วัจนภาษาของพนักงานชาวไทยประจำแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้ากับลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ จากมุมมองของผู้จัดการแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้าโรงแรม พบว่าผู้จัดการแผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้าโรงแรม เห็นด้วยว่า ความเข้าใจผิดในการสื่อสารอาจเกิดขึ้นเนื่องจากพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้าและลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศมีอคติต่อกัน และทัศนคติแบบเหมารวมในแง่ลบระหว่างพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้าและลูกค้าชาวต่างประเทศ

The Master's Project

titled

“English Oral Communication Problems of a Hotel Chain's Thai Front Office Staff from
the Perspectives of Front Office Managers and the Staff”

By

Tanyaporn Pipattammakul

has been approved by the Graduate School as partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of
Srinakharinwirot University.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

English communication.

The English language is used as a communicative language between native and non-native speakers throughout the world and especially in business contexts. In Thailand, the English language plays a crucial role in international workplace situations. English communication has become necessary for people who have to work and interact with foreigners. English communication skills are required from employers in all fields of careers more now than before (Kassim & Ali, 2010). In business, people around the world have been using English as an international language for relationship building and business negotiation. Therefore, effective English communication skills are needed for staff in the international workplace, especially listening and speaking skills (Jeharsae, 2012).

Due to a high demand for English communication in careers, Thai employees need to have good English communication competency. The ability in English oral communication is essential and significant for staff in the business field (Jeharsae, 2012). International businesses that use English as a major language in communication include the Import and Export sector, Banking, and Hospitality and Tourism companies.

Tourism and Hospitality industry in Thailand.

In Thailand, the tourism industry plays an important role in terms of social development and economics (Jaisutthi, 2006). According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in 2014, the total number of international tourists who visited Thailand in 2013 was higher than that of 2012. Thailand welcomed 26.7 million visitors in 2013. There was a 19.6 percent increase in the number of foreign tourists in 2013. In addition,

the Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Mr. Thawatchai Arunyik, said “this achievement brings much joy to Thailand and the country’s travel and tourism industry as a whole, Thailand remains a popular and welcoming tourist destination” (Tourism Authority of Thailand Newsroom, 2014).

In the tourism industry, Jaisutthi (2006) points out that there are many services that are required, including accommodation, food and beverage, and local transportation. The increasing numbers of foreign tourists, who visit Thailand, affects the growth of the hospitality industry. At present, foreign hotel visitors in Thailand seem to expect a high quality of hotel staff and a high standard of services (Sriyam, 2010). Staff in a hotel need to have a basic ability in English listening and speaking communication skills to communicate with foreign guests, particularly, staff in the front office department. In a hotel, hotel front office staff (HFOS) is the first department that welcomes and offer services to both Thai and foreign guests to meet their needs satisfactorily. Moreover, the hotel front office staff is usually the first service station that guests will see when they walk through the hotel’s door. Hotel front office staff’s services thus have an influence on the guests’ impression about the hotel. For this reason, a hotel front office staff’s English competency is one of the most essential skills for career achievement in an international environment because hotel front office staff need to be able to interact with foreign guests or customers with their English communication skills.

Based on National Careers Service (2012), hotel front office staff refers to a person who is responsible for dealing with booking by phone, e-mail, letter, fax, or face to face, completing procedures when guests arrive and leave, taking and passing on messages to guests, dealing with requests from guests including answer question, handling guests account, and dealing with problems or complaints. The three main

functions of the hotel front office staff are to sell rooms, maintain balanced guest accounts and offer services (Walker, 2014).

The front desk is controlled by the front office manager who is responsible for monitoring everything in the department and motivating staff, in order to maintain a high quality service and effective communication when interacting with guests (Baker, Huyton, & Bradley, 2000). Moreover, the front office manager's main duty is to develop services, and supervise all front office staff and manage staff training. According to hotel career (2015) the assistances front office managers are responsible for assisting the front office manager and monitoring the front office staff in order to ensure the highest standard of services. They handle all guest requests and complaints addressed to the front desk (Hotel Mule, 2013).

According to Baker, Huyton, and Bradley (2000) the hotel reservation officers are responsible for taking bookings by telephone, fax, or e-mail. They have to ask guests to confirm their bookings and keep records of all booking details for each guest. Furthermore, the important staff members that have to welcome guests when they visit in hotel are the receptionists. The hotel receptionists are responsible for greeting the guests when they arrive, handling transactions from the guests' arrival to departure, assigning rooms and asking for the convenient method of guests' payment, and giving out information to guests (Baker, Huyton, & Bradley, 2000). The hotel receptionists need to know about the various activities in the hotel because they need to give accurate information to guests.

In addition, according to Setup My Hotel (2015) telephone operators are responsible for answering incoming calls and they take and distribute messages for guests includes provides information on guest services. Before the guest's departure, front office cashiers prepare the settlement of hotel accounts of guests to ensure that the

settlements are properly processed. They also have to provide a currency exchange service for foreign guests (Baker, Huyton, & Bradley, 2000). During the overnight shifts, night auditors are responsible for the front office operations. They control the front office department after the daytime team has left (Hotel Employers Group, 2015). All front office staff need good English communication skills, especially in listening and speaking because they have to use their English communication skills when interacting with the foreign guests for a high standard of service.

Guests or customers who visit Thailand come from different countries and cultures; therefore, Thai staff should have knowledge about different countries and also understand different cultures in order to build a good impression (Jeharsae, 2012). With an increasing awareness of intercultural communication in the business world, Thai hotel front office staff needs to possess intercultural communication competence for avoiding misunderstandings or misinterpretations. They have to display appropriate effective communication towards people from different cultures.

In the hotel business, lack of intercultural knowledge may result in a negative relationship between hotel front office staff and foreign guests. This is a prominent problem since the awareness of cultural diversity may bring a misinterpretation among Thai hotel front office staff. To recognize and value other's cultures, hotel front office staff have to comprehend cultural difference that influences their communication.

Effective English communication may be one of causes of the guests' willingness to return because they are impressed with quality staff. For this reason, it is important to know and understand what the problems in English oral communication are as well as intercultural communication problems that Thai hotel front office staff are facing.

Statement of the Problem

The hotel front office staff has duties and responsibilities in offering satisfactory services to their foreign guests, therefore, effective English communication competency is necessary for their career achievement. Breakdowns in communication may happen when non-native English speakers who are not proficient in English, communicate with native English speakers. Misunderstandings and misinterpretations may occur between Thai staff or employees and both native and non-native English speaking guests or customers during conversations.

This is confirmed by Jaisutthi (2006) who indicated that word choice and a lack of vocabulary were the most important barriers for hotel front office staff and caused misunderstandings during conversations between hotel front office staff and foreign guests. Also, Charunsri (2011) indicated that the main problematic situations encountered by hotel front office staff in hotels in Chinatown were listening to conversations by phone and negotiating for mutual understanding. Moreover, Jeharsae (2012) indicated Thai employees had problems in English oral communication when interacting with foreign customers in an international workplace. Although, several studies have confirmed that Thai staff or employees still have problems in English communication when they interact with foreign speakers. Studies investigating problems in English communication of hotel front office staff in terms of intercultural communication are still limited. Intercultural communication may cause a major problem in communication.

Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate Thai hotel front office staff's English oral communication problems as well as the intercultural communication problems that occur during their interaction with foreign guests by collecting the opinions

of both the front office managers and the hotel front office staff themselves in four international chain hotels based in Bangkok.

Thus, it is crucial to study what are the problems in English listening and speaking communication that Thai hotel front office staff encountered when communicating with foreign guests. The results from the study can be beneficial for hotels to realize the real problems of English oral communication encountered by hotel front office staff in order to plan or design effective English communication training courses for their staff in the future.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of the study were to:

1. Explore the problems in English oral communication that Thai hotel front office staff encounter, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves and the hotel front office managers.
2. Explore intercultural awareness problems that affect the English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves and the hotel front office managers.

Research Questions

This study addresses four research questions as follows:

1. What were the problems in English oral communication that Thai hotel front office staff encounter, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves?
2. What were the problems in English oral communication that Thai hotel front office staff encounter, as perceived by the hotel front office managers?
3. What were the intercultural awareness problems that affect English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves?

4. What were the intercultural awareness problems that affect English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office managers?

Significance of the Study

The hospitality industry is an important part of the overall economic system in the tourism industry. The growth of the hospitality industry in Thailand includes transportation, operation, and accommodation. According to, Baker, Huyton, and Bradley (2000) an important part of the hospitality industry is the hotel sector because hotels prepare many services for foreign tourists who are far away from home. The front office department is the communication center for hotel operations and the main department for guest services because most of services are handled by hotel front office staff (Baker, Huyton, & Bradley, 2000). Therefore, English communication skills are important for front office staff because effective oral communication can represent the quality of performances and services that they offer to meet the foreign guests' expectation.

The results of this research study will be useful for both the front office staff and the hotels in planning English communication skills training courses for front office staff in the future.

Definition of Terms

1. ***English Oral Communication*** refers to the process of communication when Thai hotel front office staff exchange information or messages and offers services to both native and non-native English speaking guests by using English listening and speaking skills in communication.

2. **Problems** refer to the troubles or difficulties in English communication that occur during the communication between Thai hotel front office staff and native and non-native English speaking guests.

3. **Hotel Front Office Manager** refers to those who are responsible for monitoring everything in the department and control the hotel front office staff's behavior in terms of communication and service quality in the international chain hotel based in Bangkok. The managers working in the front office department include the Front Office Managers and Assistant, Chef Concierge, At Your Service Manager and Assistant, and Room Division Manager and Assistant.

4. **Hotel Front Office Staff** refers to those who are responsible for welcoming and contacting both native and non-native English speaking guests in the international chain hotel based in Bangkok. The staff working in the front office department includes the Guest Service Supervisor and Agent, Concierge Officer, At Your Service Supervisor and Agent, and Lounge Executive and Agent.

5. **Hotel** refers to four international chain hotels. The four hotels include the luxurious four and five stars hotel that located in business area based in Bangkok and as accommodation for foreign tourists both native and non-native English speakers.

6. **Perspectives** refers to the opinions of the hotel front office managers and the hotel front office staff themselves regarding the hotel front office staff' English oral communication problems in an international chain hotel based in Bangkok.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discussed the contextual background of the study including English communication in an international workplace, and the Tourism and Hospitality industry in Thailand. The researcher also proposed the statement of the problem, the purposes of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and defined the key terms in this

study. It also presents the conceptual framework of the study. The conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 1.

The Conceptual Framework of the Study

This research study aims to explore the English oral communication problems and intercultural communication problems of a hotel chain's Thai front office staff. Thai hotel front office staff and managers will be asked for their opinions on the hotel front office staff's English oral communication problems as well as intercultural communication problems.

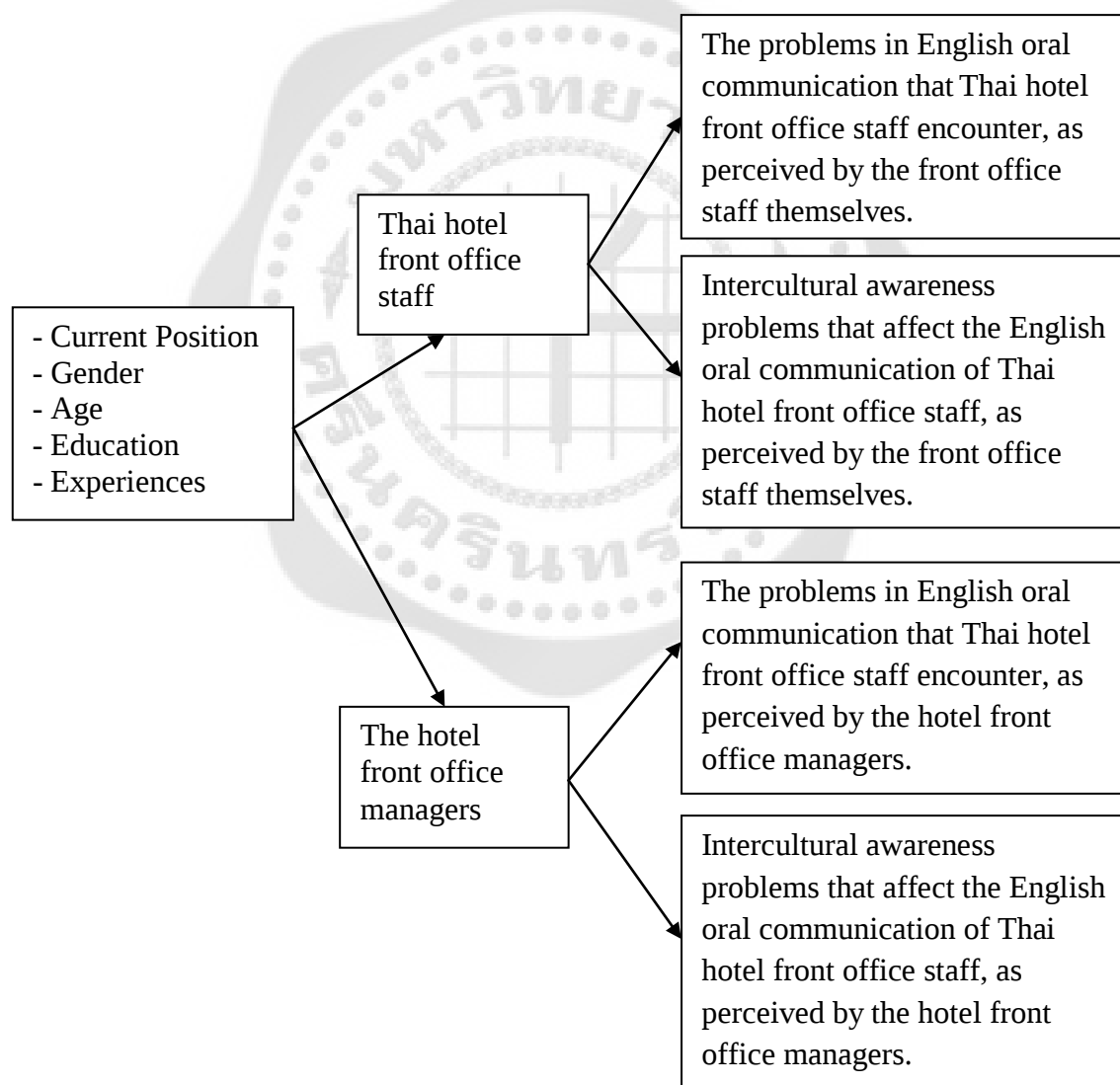


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Organization of the Research Study

The rest of this research study is organized as in the following.

Chapter II presents a review of the related literature that is relevant to the study including a definition of communication and communication process, effective oral communication, the importance of English oral communication in the workplace, problems in English communication of non-native English speakers, and intercultural business communication and problems. This research study also discusses previous studies related to English communication problems of non-native English speakers.

Chapter III presents the research methodology used in this study. It consists of research design, population and sample, research instrument, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter IV presents the personal information of the sample population, and the finding of hotel front office staff's English oral communication problems and intercultural communication from the perspectives of both Thai hotel front office staff themselves and managers.

Chapter V presents the discussion of the findings. It also includes limitations of the study, implications of the study, and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study was conducted to investigate the English oral communication problems as well as intercultural communication problems of hotel chain's Thai front office staff. These problems occur during conversations with foreign guests and are examined by exploring the opinions of hotel front office managers and the hotel front office staff themselves.

This chapter reviews the related literature and previous studies used to support this study. This chapter contains the following aspects of the study:

1. A Definition of Communication and Communication Process.
2. Effective Oral Communication.
3. The importance of English Oral Communication in the Workplace.
4. Problems in English Communication of Non-Native English Speakers.
5. Intercultural Business Communication and Problems.
6. Previous Studies Related to English Communication Problems of Non-Native English Speakers.
7. Summary of the Chapter.

A Definition of Communication and Communication Process

Communication is a very essential part of people's lives. According to Galvin and Terrell (2001) communication is “the process of sending and receiving messages in order to share meaning and understand each other's feeling, ideas, and attitude” (p. 13). In other words, Samovar (1998) communication is the idea that speech is a two way process. In Schramm's model (1954) there are at least three main elements always required in communication which are its source, the message, and the destination. People try to exchange information or share ideas and messages were transmitted from one person to another or a large number of people. This includes the ability to receive and deliver messages between people, both native, and non-native English speakers. Ideally, the sender encodes the idea as a message, and transmits it through a channel, thus the receiver decodes the message and returns the feedback back to the sender (Bovée & Thill, 2014) as shown in the diagram below:

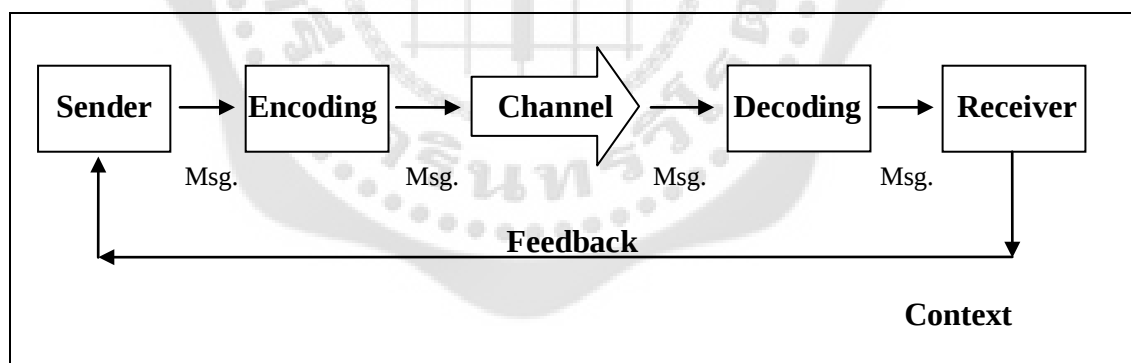


Figure 2. The Model of Communication Process

The communication process consists of the eight elements of sender, messages, encoding, channel, decoding, receiver, feedback, and context. The details of these elements are as follows:

1. Sender. Senders are the persons who give out the messages to the receiver (Gamble & Gamble, 1990). The sender has an idea, and conveys the message and

expresses it in words (Bovée & Thill, 2014). All communication starts with the sender. The sender's experiences, attitudes, knowledge, skill, perceptions, and culture can influence the message. In communication, senders can be an individual, group, or organization (Gamble & Gamble, 1990). In other words, senders are the persons who encode the idea into a message through channels to receivers, thus they stimulate feedback from receivers.

2. Messages. "The message is the content of a communicative act" (Gamble & Gamble, 1990, p. 10). People express their thoughts and feelings in words or images in communication. Messages are the main ideas that the sender would like to communicate to receivers in both the verbal and non-verbal messages (Gamble & Gamble, 1990). Verbal messages are all types of spoken communication, whereas non-verbal communication messages are the types of communication that people convey without using words. Misunderstanding also arises in communication when the sender and the receiver have differences in cultural background, vocabulary, and emotional state (Bovée & Thill, 1989).

3. Encoding. Encoding is the process of translating information into a message. People put their ideas, thoughts, and feelings into a message and express them in various forms such as languages, words, or gestures (Bovée & Thill, 2014). When encoding a message, senders have to begin by deciding what they want to transmit and use symbols that are familiar to the intended receiver (Sanchez, 2000).

4. Channel. The sender transmits the message through the communication channel and uses it deliver the message. The channel of communication can be a face to face conversation, telephone, email, memo, the internet, or any method that senders are capable of using to deliver the messages (Bovée & Thill, 2012). People send and receive messages through all their senses. When people communicate with each other, there are

five senses which are the senses of hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell that act as the primary channels for interpersonal communication (Gamble & Gamble, 1990). The sender may send messages through both verbal and non-verbal communication.

5. Decoding. Decoding is conducted by the receiver. When the message is received, the receiver begins to interpret the meaning or symbols sent by the sender and translating the message to their own set of experiences in order to make the symbols meaningful (Sanchez, 2000). When the receiver correctly interprets the message that is sent by the receiver, successful communication occurs.

6. Receiver. The receiver is the individual or individuals who received the message from the sender. Receivers have to understand the message when they interpret the meaning or signals sent by senders. The signal in communication can be in the forms of words, images, symbols, or manners and these will represent ideas, feelings, and emotions (Bové & Thill, 2014). “All interpretation by the receivers have been influenced by their experiences, attitudes, knowledge, skills, perceptions, and culture” (Sanchez, 2000, p. 1).

7. Feedback. Feedback is an important component in communication. Feedback can be both verbal (using written or spoken words) or non-verbal (using gestures, facial expression, or other signals) feedback that people perceive in reaction to their communication function (Gamble & Gamble, 1990). After receiving a message, the receiver responds in some way to the sender, thus helping the sender evaluate the effectiveness of the message (Bové & Thill, 1989). Moreover, feedback from the receiver can contain both positive and negative feedback. Positive feedback enhances people behavior in progress, whereas negative feedback helps to eliminate unwanted and ineffective behavior (Gamble & Gamble, 1990). When people communicate with each

other, they should pay attention to not only their own reactions but also the reactions of others.

8. Context. Context is the circumstances surrounding a message. According to Gamble and Gamble (1990) context refers to the extent to which people present environmental influences the way you act toward others. The circumstances might include the setting, the value positions of the people, and appropriateness of a message (Gamble & Gamble, 1990).

Effective Oral Communication

Communication is the way of sending and receiving information and meaning between the sender and the receiver. “Effective business communication depends on skill in receiving messages as well as on skill in sending them” (Bovée & Thill, 1989, p. 37). To convey communication in business, a high quality of work does not occur without effective communication. Moreover, effective communication requires an awareness of grammatical skills, the phonetics of language, and vocabulary, including various social and cultural aspects (Improta, 2011). Therefore, listening and speaking are two important ingredients of communication and both listener and speaker have crucial roles in two-way communication.

There are the difference of purposes and a variety of reasons for listening such as empathic listening, informational listening, evaluative listening, and appreciative listening (Samovar, 1998). There are six steps that are combined in the process of listening which are hearing, attending, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding (Samovar, 1998). When the listeners receive the messages from speakers, they need to interpret the words before responding to the speakers.

To be effective listeners, “they not only should evaluate the messages that they have received from the speaker, but they should also be aware of what messages they

have given the speaker” (Samovar, 1998, p. 118). If messages are delivered effectively and received accurately, the listener can respond to the message results or feedbacks to the speaker and become communication senders in communication (Suwanpakdee, 2012).

At the same time, Speakers must understand their listeners and must also know how to react to their messages (Samovar, 1998). Feedback is an important component in successful speaking communication. In the four main English skills, speaking is the most important skill that is required in communication (Boonkit, 2010). Speaking is the direct way for communication from one to another. When people want to give an explanation, or ask a question, they usually choose the method of speaking rather than writing (Hybels & Weaver II, 2007).

Competence and confidence should be considered in effective English speaking performance (Boonkit, 2010). Speakers have to be concerned about their responsibility by trying to empathize with the listeners and making sure that the message is clear and well organized (Samovar, 1998). To avoid communication problems when communicating with non-native speakers, Novinger (2001) people should be aware of many elements that affect language competency that include accent, cadence, connotation, context, idiom, polite usage, silence, and style. When communicating with non-native speakers, idioms, jargon, and figurative expression can cause misunderstanding and misinterpretation; thus, people should avoid idioms, slang, and metaphors (Novinger, 2001). Therefore, communicative competence involves both appropriate knowledge and language usage (Improta, 2011).

In conclusion, effective communication can shape the outcome of communication. Effective communication has an importance in both doing business and building relationships in personal life because it can account for success or failure in communication. In addition, Suwanpakdee (2012) claimed that Thai staff cannot avoid

communication problems when interacting with foreigners, who use English in communication. They need to understand the varieties and styles of English used by each person. Speakers have to understand the words or sentences in order to respond correctly.

The Importance of English Oral Communication in the Workplace

In business competition, many international organizations consider the qualification of applicants in English communication competence; so, the person who has effective English communication skills will have an improved opportunity to gain a good job. Nowadays, the listening and speaking skills in English communication are required in all fields of careers (Kassim & Ali, 2010).

Prachanant (2012) conducted a study to analyze the English language needs, functions, and problems in listening, speaking, reading, and writing that are encountered by tourism employees who work in international tour companies in Thailand. Tourism employees have to contact or communicate with foreign customers in their routine work; so, they believed that speaking skill was the greatest skill needed for their work (Prachanant, 2012).

The results indicated that most tourism employees considered that speaking was the most important skill for their work, followed by listening, reading, and writing, respectively. Therefore, effective English communication skill is very necessary for people who work in the international tour companies because of the increasing number of foreign tourists who visit Thailand.

Moreover, Jeharsae (2012) conducted a study to investigate English oral communication problems faced by Thai employees in an international workplace including strategies used by them when communicating with native and non native English speakers. Jeharsae suggested that effective English communication especially in speaking and listening are very crucial skills for Thai employees because English oral

communication competence can enhance their opportunity in the broader international community or in the ASEAN Economic Community (Jeharsae, 2012). This study also suggested that it is possible that if Thai speakers or learners improve their English oral communication skill in working, it can overcome the problems when they interact with not only native English speakers but also non-native English speakers.

In conclusion, staff members' effective English oral communication ability can affect the service satisfaction of the foreign guests and customers. In an international workplace, staff are required to be attentive when interacting with foreigners in order to communicate effectively. Effective communication may lead to better business success. In contrast, poor communication may reduce quality and lead to a lack of trust among people who are being communicated with. Therefore, staff will garner more potential success in their careers when they are capable in English communication, and possess capable listening and speaking skills.

Problems in English Communication of Non-Native English Speakers

When people from different countries and cultures communicate in English with each other, the problems in communication may take place during conversations. Misunderstandings and misinterpretations may occur between Thai employees and both native and non-native English speaking guests during conversations. Non-native English speakers are people who do not speak English as their mother tongue, and speak English with native English speakers (Boonkit, 2010).

According to Himstreet, Baty, and Lehman (1993) communication barriers can consist of these many factors which are physical and mental distractions, differences in sender and receiver, speaker and listener characteristics, and speaker and listener hindrance. These affect the ability to communicate with others. Sometimes, Thai employees struggle with grammatical errors, limitation of vocabulary or mispronunciation

when working in an international environment because their English communication skills are impaired.

Bovée and Thrill (2012) identified some of the communication problems that can affect effective communication as follows:

1. **Poor Listening Comprehension.** Listening is a crucial activity of humans in daily life. According to Samovar (1998) people are estimated to spend 40 to 50 percent of their total communication time in listening. Boonkit (2010) listening is one of the most important parts of communication in any language. Therefore, listening skill is used more than other communication skills. Himstreet, Baty, and Lehman (1993) there are four purposes for listening (1) to receive information, (2) to solve problems, (3) to share with others, and (4) to persuade or dissuade. Listening involves more than hearing and receiving because the message must be interpreted by the receiver (Himstreet, Baty, & Lehman, 1993). Listening is a crucial beginning step towards communicative proficiency and language achievement (Suwanpakdee, 2012).

In Thailand, English listening comprehension is problematic for Thai staff or employees who work in an international workplace. Some causes of barriers to effective English listening comprehension are that the listener cannot control the speed of delivery, have a limited vocabulary, or feel difficulty in concentrating on a foreign language (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011, as cited in Suwanpakdee, 2012). Furthermore, Fahmongkolchai (2011) revealed that the most serious listening problems of the CIMB Thai bank tellers was “being familiar with foreign customer’s accents” including “knowing vocabulary”, “understanding customers’ rapid speech” “catching customers’ main ideas”, and “differentiating final sounds” respectively. Moreover, Fahmongkolchai suggested that it is important for listeners to learn how a word is stressed, whereas, the speakers should know how to pronounce it.

2. Cultural differences. Hybel and Weaver II (2007) identified culture as being significant in our life because it is part of us. Culture showed the different characteristics of people. The difference in people's background and culture includes religion, customs, and nationality may cause misinterpretation in communication because they perceive the same things in different meanings (Suwanpakdee, 2012). Culture includes repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting; so that, it not only influences the perception of each person but that the perception affects other people with which they have contact (Hybel & Weaver II, 2007). When Thais and foreigners communicate with each other, they have a difference in both language and culture; therefore, these may lead to significant problems in communication.

Sriussadaporn (2006) conducted the study to investigate the intercultural business communication problems at work in eight foreign companies in Thailand. The participants of the study included eight Thai employees and six expatriate executives. They were interviewed face to face and were also asked how both Thai employees and expatriates manage with communication problems in an intercultural environment. According to the study, the results found that Thai employees had difficulty in expressing their ideas in English oral presentations. Furthermore, Thai employees felt that they could not speak English well enough; so that, they were not willing to communicate in English (Sriussadaporn, 2006; Suwanpakdee, 2012).

In addition, Wiwattananukul (as cited in Sriussadaporn, 2006) conducted the study to investigate the intercultural communication problems between Thais and expatriate from 31 countries. The results found that lack of language understanding, attitude and prejudice problems, misinterpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues, and lack of trust and openness were all intercultural communication problems.

Moreover, Gibson, Ivancevich, and Donnelly (1997) also indicated that there were additional communication problems between senders and receivers:

1. Semantic problems. Semantic problems can be the cause of a serious barrier to effective communication. Unclear language and a poor choice of words can cause semantic problems (Upamai, 2012). Moreover, the same words may mean completely different things to different people because different groups use words differently, (Gibson, Ivancevich, & Donnelly, 1997). Semantic noises can be defined as the ambiguity in words or sentences between sender and receiver (Suwanpakdee, 2012). This ambiguity may cause semantic problems in communication because people interpret the same words with different meanings. As a result, misunderstandings can occur when people try to express their ideas, but they have limited vocabulary and poor English grammar.
2. Mixed message. Mixed message can happen when receivers verbally communicate one meaning, but their non-verbal communication, such as gesture or body language conveys another (Upamai, 2012). People need to consider the relationship between non-verbal behavior and the verbal messages (Matin & Nakayama, 2010). Therefore, mixed message can also cause confusion in communication.

Intercultural Business Communication and Problems

In an international workplace, acts of intercultural communication are part of everyday life at work. Intercultural communication is defined by Hybels and Weaver II (2007, p. 60) as “when a message is created by a member of one culture, and this message needs to be processed by a member of another culture”. Culture not only includes mastery of nature but also people’s knowledge, ideas and meaning (Luzio, 2011). Moreover, behavior is dictated by culture. The cultural differences can lead to significant barriers in intercultural communication (Novinger, 2001).

According to Hooker (2012) when considering cultural differences in business communication, the most useful concept for understanding different culture is that people need to understand the distinction between low-context and high-context cultures.

In low-context communication, people are direct, precise, and send explicit verbal messages. A style of low context communication is conveyed in words rather than in non-verbal cues and contexts and the majority of meaning is in the verbal code (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). On the other hand, high context communication people are indirect and ambiguous. People who are communicating with a person in a high context culture cannot understand the message without a great deal of background information (Hooker, 2012). A style of high context communication is contained in the contexts and non-verbal cues rather than expressed in explicit verbal messages (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). However, when people from different ethnic groups communicate with each other, some cultural groups may prefer a more indirect style in communication, whereas other cultural groups may prefer a more direct style.

As the business environment in the approaching ASEAN Economic Community grows, communication among people from different languages and different countries group is also increased. Schmidt, Conaway, Easton, and Wardrope (as cited in Suwanpakdee, 2012) multinational companies required intercultural business communication. When people do not know about other cultures, this can be an important barrier in intercultural communication. Due to the increasing number of foreign visitors in Thailand, Thai staff have an increased opportunity to communicate with people from other countries and cultures in the workplace especially, in the hotel business. Some problems in terms of stereotypes, prejudice, and racism may take place during intercultural communication (Ekwanang, 2004 & Suwanpakdee, 2012).

According to Lustig and Koester (2003) and Hybels and Weaver II (2007) intercultural communication barriers can be categorized as the following:

Stereotypes

One group often imagines a mental picture of another group's the main characteristics (Himstreet, Baty, & Lehman, 1993). These pictures are stereotypes. According to Hybels & Weaver II (2007, p. 66) "The problem with stereotypes is that whether they are positive or negative, once they are established, it is difficult to remove them". When people stereotype others, they take people's category about the characteristics of all people who belong to that category (Lustig & Koester, 2003). According to Lustig and Koester (2003) categories that are used to form stereotypes about groups of people include regions, countries, race, religion, physical characteristics, and cultures.

When people have positive or negative opinion about another ethnic group, it is difficult to change their belief. In addition, Lustig and Koester (2003, p. 151) "The consequence of stereotyping is that the vast degree of differences that exists among the members of any one group may not be taken into account in the interpretation of messages". These stereotypes can get in the way of communication. Stereotypes can be a factor that leads to the intercultural communication problems, including communication difficulties if people are less aware of them.

Prejudice

According to Lustig and Koester (2003, p. 154) "prejudice refers to negative attitudes toward other people that are based on faulty and inflexible stereotypes". "The stereotype told us what a group was like; the prejudice told us how to feel about the group" (Hybels & Weaver II, 2007, p. 67). When people are prejudiced about others, they may distort the circumstance to fit their prejudices. Prejudicial attitudes include

irrational feelings of dislike, biased perceptions and beliefs, and a behavior in negative ways (Lustig & Koester, 2003). Therefore, these prejudices may lead to problems in intercultural communication. However, the level of prejudice can be reduced, if people are aware or sensitive when communicating with other ethnic groups (Suwanpakdee, 2012).

Racism

According to Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel, 2007 (as cited in Suwanpakdee, 2012, p. 23) racism can be defined as “the belief in the inherent superiority of a particular race and denies the basic equality of humankind”. Moreover, racism is dependent on the degree of unfamiliarity with other groups; thus, people may create negative attitudes to others because they have not enough experience with the characteristics of that group (Lustig & Koester, 2003). Racism may occur between people from different races or ethnic groups communicating with each other and it often plays a major role in communication (Lustig & Koester, 2003). This may become a communication problem when people from different race or background communicate with each other.

In an international workplace, the success or failure at work will likely depend on the ability in communication when in an international environment. Intercultural communication problems may not be a major problem in communication but they can cause misunderstanding and confusion during conversation (Suwanpakdee, 2012). However, people need to accept and understand language differences and cultural diversity both verbal and non-verbal communication styles.

Increasing the level of cultural awareness helps to reduce misinterpretations. When people are more concerned about cultural awareness, they can choose and use the suitable level of cultural awareness in situations. If people have cultural awareness, they

can manage in culturally diverse ways when each situation is different and may require a different solution.

Previous Studies Related to English Communication Problems of Non-Native English Speakers.

Several studies have confirmed that Thai learners or employees still have problems in English listening and speaking communication when they interact with foreign speakers and these problems are detailed as follows:

Prachanant (2012) who conducted a study to analyze the English language needs, functions, and problems in listening, speaking, reading, and writing that are encountered by tourism employees who work in international tour companies in Thailand. The result revealed that giving information was the most relevant function of English language skills for tourism employees. In addition, the study showed the result of English communication problems in regards to listening, speaking, reading, and writing according to the tourism employees' opinions.

This study indicated the most serious problems of four main skills among tourism employees, including the inability to understand foreign accents in listening, inappropriate use of words and expressions in speaking, inadequate vocabulary in reading, and the lack of grammatical knowledge in writing. Therefore, the results have an advantage for persons who are interested in this field of career.

In addition, Jaisutthi (2006) conducted a study to survey a guests' opinion toward the listening and speaking skill of hotel front office staff. The result of the study showed that word choice and a lack of vocabulary were the most important barriers for hotel front office staff and caused misunderstanding when they communicate with foreign guests. The finding also investigated problems of the limiting of vocabulary, mispronunciation, and using incorrect grammar.

Furthermore, Jeharsae (2012) conducted a study to investigate the problems in English oral communication of Thai employees when interacting with native and non-native speaking customers in an international workplace. The finding indicated that Thai employees encountered English oral communication problems when interacting with foreign customers. They were unable to understand words or sentences when foreigners speak too fast and feel difficulty in understanding foreign accents. The results also indicated problems such as producing grammatical errors, and insufficient knowledge in the cultural background of the customers.

In addition, Upamai (2012) conducted a study to explore English oral communication problems between foreign executives and Thai subordinates working in the banking sector in Bangkok. The results of the study showed that Thai subordinates could not understand foreign executives' English technical terms, idioms, jargon, or slang because of their limited vocabulary and they always translated English into Thai language. In addition, Thai subordinates did not know how to use English technical terms, idioms, jargon, or slang appropriately when they communicated with foreign executives.

Suwanpakdee (2012) conducted a study to explore English communication problems between Thai film crews and non-native English speaking film crews. The results revealed the major English communication problems experienced by Thai film crews when communicating with non-native English speaking film crews. In terms of listening problems, the results revealed that Thai film crews did not clearly understand the speech of non-native English speakers including tone of voice, accent, stress pattern, and pronunciation. It also showed other speaking problems such as Thai film crews lack of voice quality and failure to use the right pronunciation. Furthermore, Thai film crews reported that they experienced intercultural communication problems when they spoke

with non-native English speaking film crews because they were prejudiced against each other, which had a negative impact on communication.

In conclusion, many staff or employees who have to use English as a major language for communication among foreign people seem to have problems or difficulties with English oral communication. Moreover, cultural awareness becomes important when people have to interact with people from other cultures. Therefore, based on previous studies, speakers should be aware of listening comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, English accent, fluency, and self-confidence, which includes aspects of cultural awareness. These can be barriers in effective communication. English oral communication problems will be reduced when they pay more attention to communication skills (Jeharsae, 2012).

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presents a review of the related literature that is relevant to the study including a definition of communication and communication process, effective oral communication, the importance of English oral communication in the workplace, problems in English communication of non-native English speakers, and intercultural business communication and problems. This research study also discusses previous studies related to English communication problems of non-native English speakers.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This research study explored the English oral communication problems and intercultural communication problems of hotel chain's Thai front office staff. This chapter presents the data collection procedures of the study consisting of research design, instrument, population and sample, and includes data analysis procedure.

Research Design

The research study is a non-experimental research designed to investigate the English oral communication problems as well as intercultural communication problems of hotel chain's Thai front office staff. The survey questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect data in the study. The research advisor and two professors in the Business English for International Communication Program were asked to examine the content of the questionnaire that it is valid and appropriate to use in the study. The target population in this study was 40 Thai hotel front office staff and 9 managers from four international chain hotels based in Bangkok. To collect quantitative data, Thai hotel front office staff and managers were asked for their opinions on the hotel front office staff's English oral communication problems as well as intercultural communication problems. These problems occur during conversations with foreign guests and were examined by exploring the opinions of front office managers and the front office staff themselves.

Instrument

The close ended questionnaire.

The instrument in this research study was a survey questionnaire that consists of two parts (See Appendix B). The questionnaire exclusively includes close-ended questions. The copy of the questionnaire was sent together with a covering letter to the sample group in each hotel. The questionnaire focuses on English oral communication

problems and intercultural communication problems of hotel front office staff by exploring the opinions of front office managers and the front office staff themselves. The questionnaire was developed from previous and related studies. Therefore, based on the previous studies, the questionnaire of the English oral communication problems was identified as listening comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, accent, fluency, self-confidence, and cultural awareness.

The questionnaire of English oral communication problems and intercultural communication problems was adapted from two master's projects of two researchers including (1) "Sorodda Upamai" (2012), and (2) "Asadang Suwanpakdee" (2012).

In part I, the sample group was asked for their personal information which is position, gender, age, education, and working experiences.

In part II, the sample group was asked for their opinions on the English oral communication problems of hotel front office staff in regard to English listening and speaking problems, as well as intercultural communication problems. The sample group was asked to answer a questionnaire and rate the level of opinions by choosing one of five items on a Likert scale – (5) = strongly agree, (4) = agree, (3) = moderately agree, (2) = disagree, and (1) = strongly disagree.

Table 1

Questionnaire Description Part II

Communication Problems	Number of items	Items used in the questionnaire
Listening problems	8	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Speaking problems	11	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19
Cultural Awareness	6	20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
Total	25	

Therefore, the sample group was asked to complete the questionnaire in terms of English oral communication problems and intercultural communication problems.

Validity and Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire.

The research advisor and two experts were asked to check the validity of the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 26 questions. After the questionnaire was examined by all three experts, they had comments that there was one irrelevant question in this study. Therefore, that irrelevant item was removed from the questionnaire. As a result, the questionnaire used in this study consisted of 25 questions. All three experts examined the content and agreed that it was appropriate to use in this study. The Index of Item – Objective Congruence (IOC) scores from the three experts was 0.93 for the Thai and English versions. Therefore, the questionnaire was pilot tested.

The purpose of the pilot test was to check the reliability of the questionnaire before it was sent to the sample group in the actual study. Thus, Cronbach's alpha (α), was used to measure of internal consistency of questions in the questionnaire. A commonly accepted rule to describe internal consistency is as follows (Wikipedia, 2015):

Cronbach's alpha	Internal Consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

Table 2

Reliability Analysis of the Pilot Study Questionnaire (N = 13)

		N	%	Reliability Statistics	
Cases	Valid	13	100.0	Cronbach's	N of Items
	Excluded ^a	0	.0	Alpha (α)	
Total		13	100.0	.94	25

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 2 shows the results of the reliability analysis of the questionnaire used in the pilot study. To check for clarity of the language and content that it was valid to use in this study. In the pilot study, the sample group was 13 Thai front office staff in hotels at Khao San Road, in October 2015. All of them used English as a major language in communication because most of guests were foreigners. They communicated with foreign guests from both native and non-native English speaking countries. The questionnaire used in the pilot study consisted of 25 questions. The Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient for the 25 items scale of the pilot study was 0.94, which indicated a high level of internal consistency. Then, the questionnaire was employed in the actual study.

Population and Sample

The target population in this study comprised of Thai hotel front office staff and managers who work in the hotel front office department based in Bangkok. In this study, a convenience sampling was used as the sampling criterion. A simple random sampling was used for selecting the sample group from four international chain hotels based in Bangkok. All four chain hotels are situated in business areas and are easy to travel to and for the researcher to visit for collecting data. The researcher asked for permission from

front office managers through the Human Resources Department of each hotel to distribute the questionnaires for the sample group. Therefore, the sample population of this study was 49 hotel front office staff and managers consisting of 40 Thai hotel front office staff and 9 managers from four international chain hotels based in Bangkok. The positions of the sample population in this study are presented in table 3 and 4.

Table 3

Sample Population's Positions: Thai hotel front office staff (N = 40)

Current Position (Thai hotel front office staff)	N	%
Guest Service Supervisor and Agent	22	55.00
Concierge Officer	6	15.00
Lounge Executive and Agent	6	15.00
At Your Service Supervisor and Agent	6	15.00

In terms of Thai hotel front office staff, there were 40 Thai hotel front office staff consisting of 22 Guest Service Supervisors and Agents (55.00%), followed by 6 Concierge Officers (15.00%), 6 Lounge Executives and Agents (15.00%), and 6 At Your Service Supervisors and Agents (15.00%).

Table 4

Sample Population's Positions: Thai hotel front office managers (N = 9)

Current Position (Thai hotel front office managers)	N	%
Front Office Manager and Assistant	3	33.34
Chef Concierge	2	22.22
At Your Service Manager and Assistant	2	22.22
Room Division Manager and Assistant	2	22.22

In terms of hotel front office managers, there were 9 Thai hotel front office managers consisting of 3 Front Office Manager and Assistant (33.34%), followed by 2 Chef Concierge (22.22%), 2 At Your Service Manager and Assistant (22.22%), and 2 Room Division Manager and Assistant (22.22%).

Since the hotels provide services to many foreign businessmen, the sample group needs abilities and skills in English communication to be able to interact with foreign guests because they are the first department to welcome and provide services to the guests' satisfaction. It is possible that the sample group may encounter English oral communication problems when interacting with foreign guests. Therefore, the hotel front office department is required to have strong English communication skills, especially listening and speaking skills. To find out the English oral communication problems and intercultural communication problems of Thai hotel front office staff, the sample group was asked for their opinions on the English oral communication problems of hotel front office staff in regard to English listening and speaking problems, as well as intercultural communication problems.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher was asked for permission from hotel front office department's manager of each hotel to facilitate this research study. The questionnaire was firstly approved by the Human Resources Department's manager at the selected hotels to ensure the validity and appropriateness of the content before it was sent to the sample group. The sample group was asked to complete the questionnaire in October 2015. The sample group was participated in this study when they work in night shift in order not to affect their working time. Therefore, the sample group was given two weeks to complete the questionnaire. The covering letter and providing information about the study including

the contact information of the researcher were sent to the sample group together with the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed quantitatively to answer all four research questions; (1) What were the problems in English oral communication that Thai hotel front office staff encounter, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves?; (2) What were the problems in English oral communication that Thai hotel front office staff encounter, as perceived by the hotel front office managers?; (3) What were the intercultural awareness problems that affect English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves?; and (4) What were the intercultural awareness problems that affect English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office managers?

The data was collected by hotel front office managers' and hotel front office staff's perspectives. The data was analyzed by using the descriptive statistics. To answer the four research questions, the results were calculated as follows:

1. The personal information obtained from both Thai hotel front office staff and hotel front office managers which are position, gender, age, education, and working experiences were presented as a percentage.
2. The problems in English oral communication that Thai hotel front office staff encounter, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves were illustrated in terms of mean scores ($\bar{X}$) and standard deviation (SD).
3. The problems in English oral communication that Thai hotel front office staff encounter, as perceived by the hotel front office managers were illustrated in terms of mean scores ($\bar{X}$) and standard deviation (SD).

4. The intercultural awareness problems that affect English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves were illustrated in terms of mean scores ($\bar{X}$) and standard deviation (SD).
5. The intercultural awareness problems that affect English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office managers were illustrated in terms of mean scores ($\bar{X}$) and standard deviation (SD).
6. A five point Likert scale was used to score the sample group's level of agreement in terms of the English oral communication problems and intercultural communication problems of the hotel front office staff, based on criteria established by Rensis Likert (1932) as follows:

Table 5

Interpretation of the Likert Scale

Scale	Level of Agreement	Mean Range
5	Strongly Agree	4.21 – 5.00
4	Agree	3.41 – 4.20
3	Moderately Agree	2.61 – 3.40
2	Disagree	1.81 – 2.60
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.80

The scale ranges from the maximum level of agreement “strongly agree” to the minimum level of agreement “strongly disagree”.

7. The mean score ($\bar{X}$) and standard deviation (SD) were used to interpret the average level of the English oral communication problems and intercultural communication problems of hotel front office staff. According to Rensis Likert (1932) the items with mean scores from 2.61 – 5.00 indicated a high level of problems in English oral

communication and intercultural communication problems. On the other hand, a lower mean scores were indicated fewer problems in English oral communication and intercultural communication problems.

The results of the study are presented in tables together with a descriptive analysis. All data from the sample group is used to answer the research questions in this study without any bias from the researcher.

Summary of the Chapter

Thai hotel front office staff and managers working in the hotel front office department were selected as the sample group in this study. There were 49 respondents, which consisted of 40 Thai hotel front office staff and 9 front office managers in four international chain hotels based in Bangkok.

The instrument used to collect the data in this study was a survey questionnaire which was developed by the researcher and was validated by three experts. The questionnaire consisted of two parts and includes only close-ended questions. The questions focused on the English oral communication problems and intercultural communication problems of hotel chain's Thai front office staff. The data were collected during the first semester of the 2015 academic year.

The sample group was asked to complete the questionnaire about the English oral communication problems of hotel front office staff in regard to English listening and speaking problems, as well as intercultural communication problems by exploring the opinions of hotel front office managers and the hotel front office staff themselves.

The data were based on the sample group's level of agreement with the items on the questionnaire. The data were illustrated in terms of percentage (%), mean score ($\bar{X}$), and standard deviation (SD). The results of the questionnaire were analyzed to answer four research questions and were presented in tables together with descriptive analysis.



CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The questionnaire was distributed to the sample group, including forty Thai hotel front office staff and nine hotel front office managers from four international chain hotels based in Bangkok. The information was obtained from Part I of the questionnaire asking about current position, gender, age, education, and working experience of the sample group (Thai hotel front office staff and managers). The personal information of the sample group calculated into the percentage.

Personal Information of the Sample Group (Thai hotel front office staff).

Table 6

Personal Information: Thai hotel front office staff (N = 40)

Personal Information (Thai hotel front office staff)	N	%
Current Position		
Guest Service Supervisor and Agent	22	55.00
Concierge Officer	6	15.00
Lounge Executive and Agent	6	15.00
At Your Service Supervisor and Agent	6	15.00
Gender		
Male	13	32.50
Female	27	67.50
Age		
20 – 30 years	32	80.00
31 – 40 years	7	17.50
More than 40 years	1	2.50

(continued)

Table 6

Personal Information: Thai hotel front office staff (N = 40)

Personal Information (Thai hotel front office staff)	N	%
Education		
Less than Bachelor's Degree	1	2.50
Bachelor's Degree	36	90.00
Higher than Bachelor's Degree	3	7.50
Working Experience		
1 – 5 years	33	82.50
6 – 10 years	6	15.00
More than 10 years	1	2.50

Current Position (Thai hotel front office staff).

In terms of the sample group's position, the results showed that there were 40 Thai hotel front office staff consisting of 22 Guest Service Supervisors and Agents (55.00%), followed by 6 Concierge Officers (15.00%), 6 Lounge Executives and Agents (15.00%), and 6 Service Supervisors and Agents (15.00%).

Gender (Thai hotel front office staff).

In terms of the sample group's gender, it was revealed that the majority of respondents in the sample group in the hotel front office department of four international chain hotels were 27 females (67.50%), while 13 respondents were males (32.50%).

Age (Thai hotel front office staff).

In terms of the sample group's age, the results showed that 32 respondents were 20 – 30 years (80.00%), followed by 7 respondents were 31 – 40 years (17.50%), and only one respondent was more than 40 years (2.50%).

Education (Thai hotel front office staff).

In terms of the sample group's educational background, the results revealed that there were 36 respondents (90.00%) who graduated from university with a Bachelor's Degree. There were 3 respondents (7.50%) who had completed a higher than Bachelor's Degree. Only one respondent (2.50%) graduated without a Bachelor's Degree.

Working Experience (Thai hotel front office staff).

In terms of the years of working experience, the results revealed that there were 33 respondents (82.50%) who had one to five years working experience. There were 6 respondents (15.00%) who had six to ten years working experience. Only one respondent (2.50%) had more than ten years working experience.

Conclusion, most of the respondents in the sample group in terms of hotel front office staff in this research study were female. They were Guest Service Supervisor and Agent working in hotel front office department. They were 20 – 30 years and earned a Bachelor's Degree with one to five years working experience.

Personal Information of the Sample Group (Thai hotel front office managers).

Table 7

Personal Information: Thai hotel front office managers (N = 9)

Personal Information (Thai hotel front office managers)	N	%
Current Position		
Front Office Manager and Assistant	3	33.34
Chef Concierge	2	22.22
At Your Service Manager and Assistant	2	22.22
Room Division Manager and Assistant	2	22.22

(continued)

Table 7

Personal Information: Thai hotel front office managers (N = 9)

Personal Information (Thai hotel front office managers)	N	%
Gender		
Male	2	22.20
Female	7	77.80
Age		
20 – 30 years	0	0.00
31 – 40 years	6	66.70
More than 40 years	3	33.30
Education		
Bachelor's Degree	8	88.90
Higher than Bachelor's Degree	1	11.10
Working Experience		
1 – 5 years	0	0.00
6 – 10 years	2	22.20
More than 10 years	7	77.80

Current Position (Thai hotel front office managers).

In terms of the sample group's position, the results showed that there were 9 Thai hotel front office managers consisting of 3 Front Office Manager and Assistant (33.34%), followed by 2 Chef Concierge (22.22%), 2 At Your Service Manager and Assistant (22.22%), and 2 Room Division Manager and Assistant (22.22%).

Gender (Thai hotel front office managers).

In terms of the sample group's gender, it was revealed that the majority of the respondents were 7 females (77.80%), while 2 respondents were males (22.20%).

Age (Thai hotel front office managers).

In terms of the sample group's age, the results showed that 6 respondents were 31– 40 years (66.70%), while 3 respondents were more than 40 years (33.30%).

Education (Thai hotel front office managers).

In terms of the sample group's educational background, the results revealed that there were 8 respondents (88.90%) who graduated from university with a Bachelor's Degree. There was 1 respondent (11.10%) who had completed a higher than Bachelor's Degree.

Working Experience (Thai hotel front office managers).

In terms of the years of working experience, the results revealed that there were 7 respondents (77.80%) who had more than ten years working experience. There were 2 respondents (22.20%) who had six to ten years working experience.

In conclusion, most of the respondents in the sample group in terms of hotel front office managers in this research study were female. They were Front Office Manager and Assistant working in hotel front office department. They were 31 – 40 years and earned a Bachelor's Degree with more than ten years working experience.

The problems in English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff

The results of the four research questions acquired from part II of the questionnaire. Table 8, 9, 10, and 11 shows quantitative data that present the mean ($\bar{X}$) and standard deviation (SD) scores of the sample group's rating of their level of agreement.

According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) the standard deviation (*SD*) is “the most useful index of variability and it is a single number that represents the spread of a distribution” (p. 198-199). The standard deviation (*SD*) shows that “the more spread out scores are, the greater the deviation scores will be and hence the larger the standard deviation, whereas the closer the scores are to the mean, the less spread out they are and hence the smaller the standard deviation” (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012, p. 199).

The results will be arranged the following four research questions:

Research Question 1

What were the problems in English oral communication that Thai hotel front office staff encounter, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves?

Table 8

English Oral Communication Problems of Thai Hotel Front Office Staff, as Perceived by the Hotel Front Office Staff Themselves (N = 40)

English Oral Communication Problems	$\bar{X}$	SD
English Listening Problems		
I do not understand foreign guests when they use English technical terms or idioms.	2.80	.91
After foreign guests speak English to me, I always listen to and translate English into Thai language before replying to them.	2.63	.90
I do not clearly understand the accent, tone of voice, and pronunciation of foreign guests.	2.20	.85
I do not understand the main point when foreign guests speak.	2.18	.68
I have problems understanding the meaning of words when listening to foreign guests.	2.10	.74

(continued)

Table 8

English Oral Communication Problems of Thai Hotel Front Office Staff, as Perceived by the Hotel Front Office Staff Themselves (N = 40)

English Oral Communication Problems	$\bar{X}$	SD
English Listening Problems		
I have listening problems because I am not good enough at English grammar.	2.05	.78
I do not understand words or sentences when foreign guests speak.	2.03	.80
I do not understand what foreign guests say because of my limited English vocabulary problems.	1.93	.73
English Speaking Problems		
I use incorrect grammar when speaking English with foreign guests.	2.78	.97
I cannot use appropriate words and expressions when speaking English with foreign guests.	2.63	.93
I have speaking problems because of my poor English grammar.	2.15	.66
I have problems in English pronunciation and accents when speaking with foreign guests.	2.13	.94
I have speaking problems when expressing my opinions in English to foreign guests.	2.08	.86
I do not speak English fluently.	2.03	.86
I always translate everything from English language to Thai language before saying it in English to foreign guests.	1.98	.80

(continued)

Table 8

English Oral Communication Problems of Thai Hotel Front Office Staff, as Perceived by the Hotel Front Office Staff Themselves (N = 40)

English Oral Communication Problems	$\bar{X}$	SD
English Speaking Problems		
I cannot speak English in complete sentences when interacting with foreign guests.	1.95	.78
I have too limited an English vocabulary to be able to hold discussions with foreign guests.	1.95	.81
I understand what foreign guests say, but I am unable to respond because of my limited English vocabulary.	1.93	.83
I have little confidence when speaking English with foreign guests.	1.90	.78

Results.

Table 8 shows the English oral communication problems of Thai hotel front office staff experienced by Thai hotel front office staff themselves.

In terms of English listening problems, according to the study findings, there were the two most problems that Thai hotel front office staff demonstrated a moderately level of agreement were: (a) the hotel front office staff did not understand foreign guests when they used English technical terms or idioms ($\bar{X} = 2.80$, $SD = .91$), and (b) after foreign guests spoke English to hotel front office staff, they always listened to and translated English into Thai language before replying to foreign guests ($\bar{X} = 2.63$, $SD = .90$).

In terms of English speaking problems, according to the study findings, there were also the two most problems that Thai hotel front office staff demonstrated a moderately level of agreement were: (a) the hotel front office staff used incorrect grammar when

speaking English with foreign guests ($\bar{X} = 2.78$, $SD = .97$), and (b) they cannot use appropriate words and expressions when speaking English with foreign guests ($\bar{X} = 2.63$, $SD = .93$).

For other English listening and speaking problems, which indicated at the low level of agreement, mean that the respondents were not encountered in those problems.

Research Question 2

What were the problems in English oral communication that Thai hotel front office staff encounter, as perceived by the hotel front office managers?

Table 9

English Oral Communication Problems of Thai Hotel Front Office Staff, as Perceived by the Hotel Front Office Managers (N = 9)

English Oral Communication Problems	$\bar{X}$	SD
English Listening Problems		
HFOS do not understand foreign guests when they use English technical terms or idioms.	2.11	.60
HFOS do not clearly understand the accent, tone of voice, and pronunciation of foreign guests.	2.00	.87
HFOS do not understand what foreign guests say because of their limited English vocabulary problems.	1.89	.60
After foreign guests speak English to HFOS, they always listen to and translate English into Thai language before replying to foreign guests.	1.89	.78
HFOS do not understand words or sentences when foreign guests speak.	1.78	.83

(continued)

Table 9

English Oral Communication Problems of Thai Hotel Front Office Staff, as Perceived by the Hotel Front Office Managers (N = 9)

English Oral Communication Problems	$\bar{X}$	SD
English Listening Problems		
HFOS have problems understanding the meaning of words when listening to foreign guests.	1.78	.44
HFOS do not understand the main point when foreign guests speak.	1.67	.87
HFOS have listening problems because they are not capable enough at English grammar.	1.56	.53
English Speaking Problems		
HFOS use incorrect grammar when speaking English with foreign guests.	2.78	.44
HFOS cannot use appropriate words and expressions when speaking English with foreign guests.	2.67	.50
HFOS have problems in English pronunciation and accent when speaking with foreign guests.	2.11	.60
HFOS cannot speak English in complete sentences when interacting with foreign guests.	1.89	.93
HFOS have speaking problems because of their poor English grammar.	1.78	.44
HFOS have too limited English vocabulary to be able to hold discussions with foreign guests.	1.78	.83

(continued)

Table 9

English Oral Communication Problems of Thai Hotel Front Office Staff, as Perceived by the Hotel Front Office Managers (N = 9)

English Oral Communication Problems	$\bar{X}$	<i>SD</i>
English Speaking Problems		
HFOS have problems when expressing their opinions in English to foreign guests.	1.78	.83
HFOS understand what foreign guests speak, but they are unable to respond because of their limited English vocabulary.	1.67	.71
HFOS always translate everything from English language to Thai language before saying it in English to foreign guests.	1.67	.71
HFOS do not speak English fluently.	1.67	.50
HFOS have little confidence when speaking English with foreign guests.	1.56	.53

Results.

Table 9 shows the English oral communication problems of Thai hotel front office staff perceived by the hotel front office managers.

In terms of English listening problems of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office managers, it was found that the hotel front office managers did not agree that their hotel front office staff had problems in English listening. There were no items on the questionnaire that the hotel front office managers agreed with in terms of English listening problems of the Thai hotel front office staff.

In terms of English speaking problems of Thai hotel front office staff, there were the two most problems that hotel front office managers demonstrated a moderately level

of agreement were: (a) the hotel front office staff used incorrect grammar when speaking English with foreign guests ($\bar{X} = 2.78$, $SD = .44$), and (b) they cannot use appropriate words and expressions when speaking English with foreign guests ($\bar{X} = 2.67$, $SD = .50$).

For other English speaking problems, which indicated at the low level of agreement, mean that the respondents were not agreed in those problems.

Research Question 3

What were the intercultural awareness problems that affect English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves?

Table 10

Intercultural Communication Problems of Thai Hotel Front Office Staff, as Perceived by the Hotel Front Office Staff Themselves (N = 40)

Intercultural Communication Problems	$\bar{X}$	SD
Intercultural Communication Problems		
I believe that communication will be negatively affected if foreign guests and I have prejudices against each other.	3.43	.98
I believe that negative stereotypes cause prejudice against foreign guests and will have a negative impact on effective communication.	3.18	1.22
I believe that a conversation between foreign guests and I will be negatively affected if I do not know their cultures.	2.63	.84
I believe different cultures will affect the expression of both ideas and emotions when I speak to foreign guests.	2.45	1.11

(continued)

Table 10

Intercultural Communication Problems of Thai Hotel Front Office Staff, as Perceived by the Hotel Front Office Staff Themselves (N = 40)

Intercultural Communication Problems	$\bar{X}$	<i>SD</i>
Intercultural Communication Problems		
I believe that communication will be negatively affected if there are racial issues.	2.25	1.06
I do not understand the manners and customs of foreign guests when communicating with them.	2.13	.82

Results.

Table 10 shows intercultural awareness problems that affected English oral communication experienced by Thai hotel front office staff themselves.

In terms of intercultural communication problems, according to the study findings, there were two problems that Thai hotel front office staff agreed in the high level of agreement were: (a) the hotel front office staff believed that communication was negatively affected if they and foreign guests had prejudices against each other ($\bar{X} = 3.43$, $SD = .98$), and (b) the hotel front office staff believed that negative stereotypes caused prejudice against foreign guests and had a negative impact on effective communication ($\bar{X} = 3.18$, $SD = 1.22$). Moreover, the hotel front office staff also demonstrated a moderately level of agreement was: (c) the hotel front office staff believed that conversation between themselves and foreign guests could have a negatively affected if the staff did not know the foreign guests' cultures ($\bar{X} = 2.63$, $SD = .84$).

Research Question 4

What were the intercultural awareness problems that affect English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office managers?

Table 11

Intercultural Communication Problems of Thai Hotel Front Office Staff, as Perceived by the Hotel Front Office Managers (N = 9)

Intercultural Communication Problems	$\bar{X}$	SD
Intercultural Communication Problems		
Communication will be negatively affected if HFOS and foreign guests have prejudices against each other.	2.78	1.20
Negative stereotypes may cause prejudice against foreign guests and HFOS and will have a negative effect on effective communication.	2.67	1.00
Conversations between HFOS and foreign guests will be negatively affected if HFOS do not know foreign guests' cultures.	2.56	1.01
Communication will be negatively affected if there are racial issues.	2.33	1.00
Different cultures will affect the expression of both ideas and emotions when HFOS speak to foreign guests.	2.22	.97
HFOS does not understand the manners and customs of foreign guests when communicating with them.	1.67	.50

Results.

Table 11 shows intercultural awareness problems of Thai hotel front office staff that affect English oral communication, as perceived by the hotel front office managers.

In terms of intercultural communication problems of Thai hotel front office staff, there were two most problems that hotel front office managers demonstrated a moderately level of agreement were: (a) communication would be negatively affected if the hotel front office staff and foreign guests had prejudices against each other ($\bar{X} = 2.78$, $SD = 1.20$), and (b) negative stereotypes may cause prejudice against foreign guests and hotel front office staff and had a negative impact on effective communication ($\bar{X} = 2.67$, $SD = 1.00$).

Summary of the Chapter

The major English listening problems of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves were that: (a) the hotel front office staff did not understand foreign guests when they used English technical terms or idioms ($\bar{X} = 2.80$, $SD = .91$), and (b) after foreign guests speak English to the hotel front office staff, they always translated English into Thai language before replying to foreign guests ($\bar{X} = 2.63$, $SD = .90$).

The major English speaking problems of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves were that: (a) the hotel front office staff used incorrect grammar when speaking English with foreign guests ($\bar{X} = 2.78$, $SD = .97$), and (b) they cannot use appropriate words and expressions when speaking English with foreign guests ($\bar{X} = 2.63$, $SD = .93$).

In terms of English listening problems of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office managers, it was found that hotel front office managers did not agree that their hotel front office staff had problems in English listening. There were no

items on the questionnaire that the hotel front office managers agreed with in terms of English listening problems of Thai hotel front office staff.

The major English speaking problems of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office managers were that: (a) the hotel front office staff used incorrect grammar when speaking English with foreign guests ($\bar{X} = 2.78$, $SD = .44$), and (b) they cannot use appropriate words and expressions when speaking English with foreign guests ($\bar{X} = 2.67$, $SD = .50$).

The intercultural communication problems that affect English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves were that: (a) the hotel front office staff believed that communication was negatively affected if they and foreign guests had prejudices against each other ($\bar{X} = 3.43$, $SD = .98$), (b) the hotel front office staff believed that negative stereotypes cause prejudice against foreign guests and had a negative impact on effective communication ($\bar{X} = 3.18$, $SD = 1.22$), and (c) the hotel front office staff believed that a conversation between themselves and foreign guests could have a negatively affected if the staff did not know foreign guests' cultures ($\bar{X} = 2.63$, $SD = .84$).

The intercultural awareness problems that affected English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff, as perceived by the hotel front office managers were that: (a) communication would be negatively affected if hotel front office staff and foreign guests had prejudices against each other ($\bar{X} = 2.78$, $SD = 1.20$), and (b) negative stereotypes may cause prejudice against foreign guests and hotel front office staff and had a negative impact on effective communication ($\bar{X} = 2.67$, $SD = 1.00$).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to investigate the English oral communication problems and intercultural communication problems of a hotel chain's Thai front office staff. This chapter consists of four parts: a discussion of the findings, limitations of the study, implications of the study, and recommendations for further studies.

Discussion of Results of Research Questions 1 and 2

1. Hotel front office staff's English listening communication problems from the perspectives of Thai hotel front office staff and managers.

The English listening problems that Thai hotel front office staff encountered when communicating with foreign guests were that the staff did not understand foreign guests when they used English technical terms or idioms, and after foreign guests spoke English to hotel front office staff, they always translated English into the Thai language before replying to foreign guests.

From the perspectives of hotel front office managers, in terms of the English listening communication problems of hotel front office staff, it was found that the front office managers did not agree that the front office staff had problems in English listening communication. From the perspectives of Thai hotel front office managers, the front office staff had an ability to keep to the main point when communicating with foreign guests. There were no items on the questionnaire that the front office managers agreed with in terms of English listening problems of the Thai hotel front office staff.

According to the results of research questions, at least in terms of the front office staff's English listening problems from the perspectives of the front office staff and managers, the study found that the sample group (Thai hotel front office staff) encountered major English listening communication problems in terms of using English

technical terms or idioms and always translated English into the Thai language before replying to foreign guests. These front office staff did not understand foreign guests when they used English technical terms or idioms. The English listening problems occurred because of the staff's limited vocabulary, especially English technical terms and idioms. The Thai staff were not native English speakers, but they nonetheless had to use English as a major language in the international workplace.

Moreover, hotel front office staff most often listened to and translated English into Thai language before replying to foreign guests. This habit of Thai staff affected the meaning of words in communication when they in turn communicated with foreign guests. As a result, it also interrupted the process of communication because Thai hotel front office staff had to think and translate the words into Thai language before they spoke to foreign guests. Therefore, a lack of knowledge about technical terms and idioms, and the fact that the staff almost always translated English into Thai language before replying to foreign guests were the two main English listening problems of Thai hotel front office staff.

On the other hand, the perspectives of the hotel front office managers were not consistent with the staff's perspectives because the front office managers did not agree that their hotel front office staff had problems in English listening. From the primary brief interviews of Human Resources Department's managers of each hotel, it was found that all Thai hotel front office staff had passed their English interview test at the international standard level with foreign experts at the hotels. As a result, from the perspectives of hotel front office managers, all staff in the hotel front office departments had adequate ability in effective English listening communication. The hotel front office managers did not agree with the hotel front office staff's English listening problems, but, from the perspectives of hotel front office staff themselves, they still did have English

listening communication problems in terms of using English technical terms and idioms, and generally had to translate English into the Thai language when communicating with foreign guests. It is, of course, possible that Thai hotel front office staff might underestimate their own ability in English listening skill. To make sure about the hotel front office staff's English listening problems, the hotels might explore the perspectives of foreign guests to cross check these problems.

The results of the current research were consistent with the findings of Jaisutthi (2006), who found that word choice and a lack of vocabulary were the most important barriers for hotel front office staff and caused misunderstanding when they communicated with foreign guests. Similarly, Upamai (2012) also found that Thai subordinates could not understand foreign executives' English technical terms, idioms, jargon, or slang because of their own limited vocabulary. Moreover, Thai subordinates generally first translated English into the Thai language when communicating with foreign executives. These results showed that a lack of knowledge in terms of English technical terms or idioms, and the fact that the staff first translated English into Thai, were still the two main English listening problems of Thai staff when communicating with foreigners.

2. Hotel front office staff's English speaking communication problems from the perspective of Thai hotel front office staff and managers.

In terms of English speaking problems of hotel front office staff from the perspectives of the office staff themselves, it was found that the problems included the use of incorrect grammar and inappropriate words and expressions when speaking English to foreign guests.

Interestingly, the perspectives of hotel front office managers were consistent with the staff's perspectives in terms of English speaking problems of hotel front office staff

because hotel front office managers also agreed that their hotel front office staff had problems in English grammar and vocabulary.

The results of this study were consistent with the research results of Jaisutthi (2006) who conducted a study to survey guests' opinions towards the listening and speaking skill of hotel front office staff. The result of her study showed that word choice and a lack of vocabulary were the most important barriers for hotel front office staff, which caused misunderstanding when they communicated with foreign guests. The finding of her study also showed problems in using incorrect grammar of hotel front office staff. Furthermore, Jeharsae (2012) conducted a study to investigate the problems in English oral communication of Thai employees when interacting with native and non-native English speaking customers in an international workplace. The finding of her study indicated that one of the main problems of Thai employees was grammatical errors. Additionally, Prachanant (2012) conducted a study to analyze the English language needs, functions, and problems in listening, speaking, reading, and writing that are encountered by tourism employees who work in international tour companies in Thailand. Her study suggested that the most serious problems of English speaking skills among tourism employees were using inappropriate words and expressions when speaking.

Discussion of Results of Research Questions 3 and 4

Hotel front office staff's intercultural communication problems from the perspectives of Thai hotel front office staff and managers.

From the perspectives of hotel front office staff in terms of intercultural communication problems, it was found that the office staff believed communication was negatively affected if they and foreign guests had prejudices against each other. Also, the hotel front office staff believed that negative stereotypes caused prejudice against foreign guests and had a negative impact on effective communication. In addition, the hotel front

office staff believed that conversation between themselves and foreign guests could have a negative effect if the staff did not know the foreign guests' culture or were unfamiliar with the cultures of foreign guests. According to the results of the research questions, in terms of intercultural communication problems that affected English oral communication of Thai hotel front office staff as perceived by the hotel front office staff themselves, it was found that the front office staff were concerned about the major intercultural communication problems in terms of prejudices, stereotypes, and knowledge of foreign guests' cultures.

From the perspectives of hotel front office managers in terms of intercultural communication problems that affected English oral communication of their front office staff, it was found that communication would be negatively affected if the front office staff and foreign guests had prejudices against each other. The perspectives of hotel front office managers, in terms of intercultural communication problems, were consistent with the staff members' own perspectives. Hotel front office managers agreed that their front office staff should be concerned with the cultural awareness issue because misunderstanding in communication might happen because of prejudices and stereotypes between the hotel staff and foreign guests.

The study showed that both Thai hotel front office staff and their managers agreed that prejudices and stereotypes had a negative impact on effective communication. The results also indicated that the front office staff were concerned about knowledge of foreign guests' cultures when communicating with them.

These results were consistent with the findings of Suwanpakdee (2012), who found that prejudices were a primary cause of the communication problems of Thai film crews when communicating with non-native English speakers. Additionally, the results were similar to the findings of Jeharsae (2012), which indicated that Thai customer

service employees encountered problems in English communication during conversation with foreign customers and that they also had insufficient knowledge of the customers' cultural background.

To sum up, when people from different countries and cultures communicate with each other, they each should be aware of the meaning of the words used in communication between them. Speakers have to be concerned about their responsibility by trying to empathize with the listeners, making sure that the message is clear and well organized (Samovar, 1998). Effective communication can shape the outcome of communication. As a result, communicative competence involves not only appropriate knowledge in terms of vocabulary and words, but also the correct language usage. In addition, hotel front office staff should be able to present appropriate behaviors in communication and understand the cultural differences of people from foreign countries. Therefore, English oral communication and intercultural communication competence need to be at a higher level among hotel front office staff when communicating with foreign guests.

Limitations of the Study

1. The populations of the study were selected from only the staff working in the front office department. Therefore, the results of the study could not be generalized nor applied to hotel staff in other departments.
2. This study investigated the intercultural communication problems and focused on the three main types of cultural difference problems: stereotypes, prejudice, and racism. The results could not be generalized nor applied to other types of cultural difference issues.

Implications of the Study

According to the main duties of staff in hotel front office departments, all staff members have to contact and provide good service to the foreign guests. Therefore, the ability in English communication, both listening and speaking, is very necessary and significant in peoples' career. The results of this study indicated that Thai hotel front office staff had problems in English oral communication as well as with intercultural communication problems.

According to the results of this study, the Thai hotel front office staff nearly all agreed that English technical terms and idioms, grammar errors, and inappropriate words or expressions were the main problems in English oral communication when communicating with foreign guests. In addition, they were also concerned about the issue of cultural difference in terms of prejudices and stereotypes. These problems could have a negative effect on effective communication between Thai hotel front office staff and foreign guests.

The results of this study can be used as a guideline to solve the real existing problems in English oral communication and intercultural communication problems of Thai hotel front office staff. As a result, the hotels should provide not only better English oral communication training courses, but also knowledge about diverse cultural differences for hotel front office staff.

Recommendation for Further Studies

1. Further studies should be conducted with Thai staff in other hotel departments, such as the Food and Beverage department, because the staff in this department also have to use English language when communicating with foreign guests.
2. In this study, the researcher focused on exclusively close-ended questions. Further studies would be better served if the researcher also focused on qualitative

research, such as in-depth interviews to identify the English oral communication problems from a variety of the populations' perspectives.

3. Further studies should investigate the co-relation between the perspectives of Thai hotel front office staff and managers regarding the hotel front office staff's English oral communication problems.





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October 13, 2015

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Tanyaporn Pipattammakul. I am studying in the Master's program in Business English for International Communication at Srinakarinwirot University. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study entitled "English Oral Communication Problems of a Hotel Chain's Thai Front Office Staff from the Perspectives of Front Office Managers and the Staff".

In this study, a questionnaire will be used as an instrument to collect data. Therefore, you will be asked to complete the questionnaire. All information will only be used for the purpose of the study. The demographic and opinion data will be treated as confidential and will be destroyed after the completion of this study.

Your willingness to participate in this study is highly appreciated. Please return the form to me after completion. If you have any enquiries, please feel free to contact me at 089-671-4298 or at Tanyaporn.preaw@gmail.com. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Tanyaporn Pipattammakul



APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

**English Oral Communication Problems of a Hotel Chain's Thai Front Office Staff
from the Perspectives of Front Office Managers and the Staff**

Research Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the English oral communication problems of Thai hotel front office staff that occur during conversations with foreign clients by exploring the opinions of front office managers and the front office staff themselves. All information will only be used for the purpose of the study. The demographic and opinion data will be treated as confidential and will be destroyed after the completion of this study. Please answer this questionnaire concerning your English oral communication problems. Your cooperation in completing this questionnaire is greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Tanyaporn Pipattammakul



QUESTIONNAIRE
(FOR HOTEL FRONT OFFICE STAFF)

Part I: Personal information of hotel front office staff**Instruction:** Please put ✓ in the appropriate box or fill in the blanks

Current Position

1. Gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age (Years)

☐ 20 – 30 years
☐ 31 – 40 years
☐ More than 40 years

3. Education

☐ Less than Bachelor's Degree
☐ Bachelor's Degree
☐ Higher than Bachelor's Degree

4. How many years have you been working in the Hotel Front Office Department?

☐ 1 - 5 years
☐ 6 - 10 years
☐ More than 10 years

Part II: English Oral Communication Problems with Foreign Guests in Your Workplace

Instruction: Please answer all questions by marking a check (✓) for each statement that most accurately reflects the level of your agreement with each of the following English oral communication problems.

(5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Moderately Agree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree)

Problems in English Oral Communication	Level of Agreement				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
English Listening Problems					
1. I do not understand words or sentences when foreign guests speak.					
2. I do not understand the main point when foreign guests speak.					
3. I have listening problems because I am not good enough at English grammar.					
4. I do not understand what foreign guests say because of my limited English vocabulary problems.					
5. I do not understand foreign guests when they use English technical terms or idioms.					
6. After foreign guests speak English to me, I always listen to and translate English into Thai language before replying to them.					
7. I do not clearly understand the accent, tone of voice, and pronunciation of foreign guests.					
8. I have problems understanding the meaning of words when listening to foreign guests.					

Problems in English Oral Communication	Level of Agreement				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
English Speaking Problems					
9. I use incorrect grammar when speaking English with foreign guests.					
10. I have speaking problems because of my poor English grammar.					
11. I cannot use appropriate words and expressions when speaking English with foreign guests.					
12. I have problems in English pronunciation and accents when speaking with foreign guests.					
13. I cannot speak English in complete sentences when interacting with foreign guests.					
14. I have too limited an English vocabulary to be able to hold discussions with foreign guests.					
15. I understand what foreign guests say, but I am unable to respond because of my limited English vocabulary.					
16. I have speaking problems when expressing my opinions in English to foreign guests.					
17. I always translate everything from English language to Thai language before saying it in English to foreign guests.					
18. I have little confidence when speaking English with foreign guests.					
19. I do not speak English fluently.					

Problems in English Oral Communication	Level of Agreement				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
Cultural Awareness					
20. I believe that a conversation between foreign guests and myself will be negatively affected if I do not know their cultures.					
21. I do not understand the manners and customs of foreign guests when communicating with them.					
22. I believe that communication will be negatively affected if foreign guests and I have prejudices against each other.					
23. I believe that negative stereotypes cause prejudice against foreign guests and will have a negative impact on effective communication.					
24. I believe that communication will be negatively affected if there are racial issues.					
25. I believe different cultures will affect the expression of both ideas and emotions when I speak to foreign guests.					

*****Thank you very much for your assistance in completing the questionnaire*****

QUESTIONNAIRE
(FOR HOTEL FRONT OFFICE MANAGER)

Part I: Personal information of hotel front office Manager**Instruction:** Please put ✓ in the appropriate box or fill in the blanks

Current Position

1. Gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age (Years)

- ☐ 20 – 30 years
- ☐ 31 – 40 years
- ☐ More than 40 years

3. Education

- ☐ Less than Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Higher than Bachelor's Degree

4. How many years have you been working in the Hotel Front Office Department?

- ☐ 1 - 5 years
- ☐ 6 - 10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

Part II: Problems in English Oral Communication of Hotel Front Office Staff when Interacting with Foreign Guests from Your Perspectives

Instruction: Please answer all questions below by marking a check (✓) for each statement that most accurately reflects the level of your agreement with the following English oral communication problems.

(5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Moderately Agree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree)

Problems in English Oral Communication	Level of Agreement				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
English Listening Problems					
1. HFOS do not understand words or sentences when foreign guests speak.					
2. HFOS do not understand the main point when foreign guests speak.					
3. HFOS have listening problems because they are not capable enough at English grammar.					
4. HFOS do not understand what foreign guests say because of their limited English vocabulary problems.					
5. HFOS do not understand foreign guests when they use English technical terms or idioms.					
6. After foreign guests speak English to HFOS, they always listen to and translate English into Thai language before replying to foreign guests.					
7. HFOS do not clearly understand the accent, tone of voice, and pronunciation of foreign guests.					
8. HFOS have problems understanding the meaning of words when listening to foreign guests.					

Problems in English Oral Communication	Level of Agreement				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
English Speaking Problems					
9. HFOS use incorrect grammar when speaking English with foreign guests.					
10. HFOS have speaking problems because of their poor English grammar.					
11. HFOS cannot use appropriate words and expressions when speaking English with foreign guests.					
12. HFOS have problems in English pronunciation and accent when speaking with foreign guests.					
13. HFOS cannot speak English in complete sentences when interacting with foreign guests.					
14. HFOS have too limited English vocabulary to be able to hold discussions with foreign guests.					
15. HFOS understand what foreign guests speak, but they are unable to respond because of their limited English vocabulary.					
16. HFOS have problems when expressing their opinions in English to foreign guests.					
17. HFOS always translate everything from English language to Thai language before saying it in English to foreign guests.					
18. HFOS have little confidence when speaking English with foreign guests.					
19. HFOS do not speak English fluently.					

Problems in English Oral Communication	Level of Agreement				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
Cultural Awareness					
20. Conversations between HFOS and foreign guests will be negatively affected if HFOS do not know foreign guests' cultures.					
21. HFOS does not understand the manners and customs of foreign guests when communicating with them.					
22. Communication will be negatively affected if HFOS and foreign guests have prejudices against each other.					
23. Negative stereotypes may cause prejudice against foreign guests and HFOS and will have a negative impact on effective communication.					
24. Communication will be negatively affected if there are racial issues.					
25. Different cultures will affect the expression of both ideas and emotions when HFOS speak to foreign guests.					

*****Thank you very much for your assistance in completing the questionnaire*****



VITAE

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