

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reveals a summary of the study, then continues with discussion and interpretation of the results, and finally makes conclusions and recommendations.

#### Summary of the Study

The purposes of this study were to evaluate the English proficiency of Chiang Mai hotel front desk staff in communication with their guests, and to survey the needs of English language skills by Chiang Mai hotel front desk staff in their careers. This study proposed to respond to the two research questions as following.

1. How proficient are Chiang Mai hotel front desk staff in using English in communication with their guests?
2. Which language skill(s) do Chiang Mai hotel front desk staff need to improve in performing their job responsibilities?

The subjects for this study were the front desk staff of five hotels in Chiang Mai who had the positions of front desk managers, receptionists, reservation clerks, telephone operators, and front desk cashiers, especially where they communicated with their guests frequently in English. The instruments used for this study were questionnaires and interviews to respond to the two research questions. The questionnaires were completed by 101 hotel front desk staff, and the interviews were completed by 53 hotel front desk staff. Finally, the data analyses were completed by using percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 11.0 for Windows). Chapter IV showed the statistical procedures of data analyses.

## Interpretation and Discussion of the Results

### Finding One

**The English proficiency of Chiang Mai hotel front desk staff in communication with their guests.**

1. The questionnaires were constructed to assess 54 functions of English which were the purposes of using language for communication (Blundell, Higgens, and Middlemiss, 1982:xvii-xx). There were 3 parts including 23 main functions, 23 social formulas, and 8 making communication work, which were also used to evaluate writing proficiency. The English writing proficiency was studied by the researcher and a native professional English teacher by using the Likert scale, mean, standard deviation, and the Next Generation TOEFL Test Independent Writing Rubrics (Chapter IV).

According to the data obtained from the questionnaires shown in Table 21 to Table 23, it indicated that the front desk staff of five hotels in Chiang Mai had high writing proficiency in communication with their guests in 43 English functions which consisted of main functions (19 functions), social formulas (17 functions), and making communication work (7 functions).

The main functions (19 functions) included:

- 1) saying you do not know/showing a limitation of knowledge
- 2) asking about remembering
- 3) saying something is correct/not correct
- 4) saying what you hope will happen
- 5) saying you are looking forward to something
- 6) asking how someone feels after something happen
- 7) asking about preference
- 8) giving your opinion
- 9) giving reasons
- 10) offering to do something for someone
- 11) asking for permission
- 12) giving permission
- 13) refusing permission

- 14) saying someone need not to do something
- 15) telling someone how to do something
- 16) advising someone to do something
- 17) requesting
- 18) saying you are willing to do something
- 19) refusing to do something

The social formulas (17 functions) included:

- 1) starting a conversation with a stranger
- 2) introducing someone
- 3) answering an introduction
- 4) greeting someone
- 5) giving someone your general good wishes
- 6) inviting someone
- 7) accepting an invitation
- 8) offering something
- 9) giving something to someone
- 10) thanking
- 11) responding to 'thanks'
- 12) complimenting
- 13) accepting an apology
- 14) showing sympathy
- 15) leaving someone politely for a short time
- 16) ending a conversation
- 17) saying goodbye

The making communication work (7 functions) included:

- 1) asking someone to say something again
- 2) checking that you have understood
- 3) saying something in another way
- 4) giving an example
- 5) showing you are listening
- 6) giving yourself time to think
- 7) changing the subject

Moreover, it also showed that the front desk staff of five hotels in Chiang Mai had moderate writing proficiency in communication with their guests in 11 English functions which consisted of main functions (4 functions), social formulas (6 functions), and making communication work (1 function).

The main functions (4 functions) included:

- 1) saying you are not sure
- 2) saying someone is obliged to do something
- 3) suggesting
- 4) persuading

The social formula (6 functions) included:

- 1) attracting someone's attention
- 2) asking how someone is
- 3) declining an offer of something
- 4) congratulating
- 5) responding to compliments or congratulations
- 6) saying sorry

Making communication work (1 function) included:

- 1) saying something again

2. The interviews were constructed to assess 54 functions of English which are the purposes of using language for communication (Blundell, Higgins, and Middlemiss, 1982:xvii-xx). There are 3 parts including 23 main functions, 23 social formulas, and 8 making communication work, which were also conducted in order to assess listening and speaking proficiency. The English listening and speaking proficiency were evaluated by the researcher and a native professional English teacher by using the Likert scale and the PET ( Preliminary English Test) Assessment (Diana, 1991) that includes five bands which consist of four main aspects: fluency, accuracy and appropriacy of language, pronunciation, and task achievement (Chapter IV).

Based on the data obtained from the questionnaires shown in Table 24 to Table 26, it stated that the front desk staff of five hotels in Chiang Mai had high listening and speaking proficiency in communication with their guests in 45 English functions which consisted of main functions (19 functions), social formulas (18 functions), and making communication work (8 functions).

The main functions (19 functions) include:

- 1) saying you do not know/showing a limitation of knowledge
- 2) asking about remembering
- 3) saying something is correct/not correct
- 4) saying what you hope will happen
- 5) saying you are looking forward to something
- 6) asking how someone feels after something happen
- 7) asking about preference
- 8) giving your opinion
- 9) offering to do something for someone
- 10) giving permission
- 11) refusing permission
- 12) saying someone is obliged to do something
- 13) saying someone need not to do something
- 14) telling someone how to do something
- 15) suggesting

- 16) requesting
- 17) persuading
- 18) saying you are willing to do something
- 19) refusing to do something

The social formulas (18 functions) included:

- 1) starting a conversation with a stranger
- 2) introducing someone
- 3) answering an introduction
- 4) greeting someone
- 5) asking how someone is
- 6) giving someone your general good wishes
- 7) accepting an invitation
- 8) offering something
- 9) giving something to someone
- 10) thanking
- 11) responding to thanks
- 12) complimenting
- 13) saying sorry
- 14) accepting an apology
- 15) showing sympathy
- 16) leaving someone politely for a short time
- 17) ending a conversation
- 18) saying goodbye

Making communication work (8 functions) included:

- 1) asking someone to say something again
- 2) checking that you have understood
- 3) saying something again
- 4) saying something in another way
- 5) giving an example
- 6) showing you are listening

- 7) giving yourself time to think
- 8) changing the subject

In addition, it also showed that the front desk staff of five hotels in Chiang Mai had moderate listening and speaking proficiency in communication with their guests in 9 English functions which consisted of main functions (4 functions), and social formulas (5 functions).

The main functions (4 functions) included:

- 1) saying you are not sure
- 2) giving reasons
- 3) asking for permission
- 4) advising someone to do something

The social formulas (5 functions) included:

- 1) attracting someone's attention
- 2) inviting someone
- 3) declining an offer of something
- 4) congratulating
- 5) responding to compliments or congratulations

### **Finding Two**

**The needs of English language skills by Chiang Mai hotel front desk staff in their careers.**

1. The research finding showed that 60.64% of the hotel front desk staff still continue their study of English for reasons of communication based on the questionnaires. It was interesting to say that the hotel front desk staff needed listening and speaking skills most, and the listening skill was the biggest problem in communication with their guests.

Hotel staff in general used the four English language skills in descending order of importance; listening, speaking, writing, and finally reading. It was obvious after reviewing the results that hotel staff would use listening and speaking as the most used skills while dealing with guests. In daily work situations, hotel staff would deal with foreigners to communicate, solve problems and provide services. It was also discovered that during working hours the employees did not need to read or write as often as they spoke and listened to guests. Overall hotel employees desired a method to improve these two skills, listening and speaking to enhance their work performance.

The third importance was writing and the least importance was reading related to the need for listening and speaking. Based on these findings, listening and speaking should be given priority when designing a course to train employees.

In part three of the questionnaires, question four asked employees to give accounts of problems they encountered during working hours, and which problems they had encountered more than once. The findings showed that hotel staff had problems with listening while on the job, and was ranked as the most difficult of all four skills. In descending order of difficulty came speaking, writing and reading. Hotel staff rarely encountered a situation where they needed to read, so it was listed as the easiest or least important.

2. The research finding also showed that hotel front desk staff (62.20%) still continue studying English for reasons of communication based on the interviews. It was possible to reveal that the hotel front desk staff needed listening and speaking skills most, and their speaking skill was the most considerable problem in communication with their guests.

Needs for hotel staff of the four primary language skills showed that speaking was used most in their day to day interaction and personal lives, followed by listening, writing and finally reading. The conclusion was drawn that hotel employees mainly used speaking and listening when they performed on the job tasks. It was also shown that listening was the second most important skill in English usage. When a person communicates, they use listening as well as speaking in most instances. It is mandatory to understand what a guest says and to understand the request before replying or helping; the two skills go hand in hand. Verbal conversation with hotel guests occurred daily while writing instructions and reading a document or note was rarely encountered, so therefore the least important.

By comparison, the interview questionnaires and the questionnaires came to the same conclusion, that speaking and listening were the most widely used aspects of the communication skills. Additionally in both instances there seemed to be a problem with speaking and listening. Reading and writing figured in minimally since neither were used frequently.

These conclusions were identical to Naruartsenie (1989) and Inpin's (2000) study. Naruartsenie and Inpin revealed that reading and writing are last in the importance of job performance and communication with hotel guests.



In summary, the subjects of this study showed some deficiencies in both speaking and listening, and they also had problems of grammar and the word order in sentences with random vocabulary.

## **Conclusions**

From this research, it could be concluded as follows:

1. The hotel front desk had high English proficiency in communication with their guests in Chiang Mai based on the researcher's evaluation.
2. Listening and speaking skills were rated as the skills the hotel front desk staff needed most in their careers. Moreover, the hotel front desk staff still had problems of listening and speaking skills in performing their job responsibilities.

## **Recommendations**

1. Recommendations for Hotel Management
  - 1.1 Evaluating a suitable English language program for hotel staff should not focus only on front desk employees. The course needs to be designed for all employees and all departments that come in contact with hotel's guests.
  - 1.2 It is highly recommended that each and every hotel hire an on-site English teacher with English as a Second Language (ESL) skills.
  - 1.3 Instructors should focus on speaking, listening, writing and reading to increase the staff's level of speaking and understanding abilities.
  - 1.4 The course should fit to enhance the staff's daily usage of English in situations which they will likely encounter in the hotel with guests.
2. Recommendations for English Course Design
  - 2.1 English programs need to be designed specifically for Chiang Mai hotel front desk staff. Taking into account the 54 functions presented in this thesis, an accurate survey of a hotel employee's responsibilities needs to be understood before an appropriate course can be designed. By use of questionnaires and interviews the information gathered can be analyzed to make sure the most proper language training program is designed for and tailored to employees.

2.2 Some preparation is needed to allow hotel employees to feel comfortable talking to guests. Therefore it is essential that an English training program be started to set the base for employee's future development.

2.3 Any designed English program should be aimed at improving the overall proficiency of speaking and listening of the English language. Writing and reading skills should also be included to make a well-rounded curriculum.

### 3. Recommendations for further study

3.1 Continued monitoring of the hotel staff's performance is recommended in order to upgrade the English needs of particular hotel departments. Additionally, coordination between hotels as a group would better meet the needs of all of the hotels in the study. One hotel could learn from the mistakes or positive outcomes from a particular style of teaching or training that could benefit the group as a whole.

3.2 Other famous linguists agree with point 2.1 as well, including Wilkins (1976), Dobson (1978), Jones (1983) and Blundell, Higgens and Middlemiss (1982) that monitoring should continue and study of other functions of language be slowly included in order to judge speaking proficiency and re-tailor a course exclusively for that group of employees and managers.

3.3. A countrywide survey throughout Thailand including Bangkok should be conducted to survey the needs and problems of hotel front desk staff. This broader survey should not only focus on English communication of the hotel front desk staff, but include the use of English for other hotel staff as well.