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**ENGLISH BARRIERS FOR THAI EMPLOYEES WORKING IN AN
INTERNATIONAL SETTING, A STUDY AT THOMSON REUTERS
COMPANY IN THAILAND**

KANKAMOL WITCHAIYUTPHONG

Adviser: Assistant Professor Preeyachat Uattamayodhin

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ABSTRACT

English is the world's leading language as it is widely spoken around the world. The English capabilities of employees play an important role in measuring the effectiveness of the communication in most of the international organizations.

Thomson Reuters, the world's leading source of intelligent information for business is one among those international companies where English is a major language used in all communication channels in the organization. This research studies which factors employees at Thomson Reuters in Thailand perceived as barriers that block them from effective communication in their work. The research data were collected from 100 responses to a questionnaire and the results were analyzed by the Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) programme to understand the relationship between English proficiency of the respondents and the factors that they perceive as barriers to their communication. The findings revealed that the lack of a large vocabulary repertoire causes problems to most Thai employees, while English speaking was the first skill most employees thought should be improved.

The result of the study were analyzed for listening, speaking, reading, writing and cross cultural skills in order to precisely identify employees' language barriers. Consequently, the company will be able to use the data for a development plan to improve employees' language capabilities to enhance more effective communication within the organization.

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Thammasat University
Bangkok, Thailand

Kankamol Wichaiyutphong
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

As a global company, the ability to use multiple languages helps expand and strengthen communication and gives the company a competitive edge. Gardner (1985:2) identifies second language learning as a social psychological phenomenon, it is important to consider carefully the conditions under which it takes place.

Thomson Reuters is an international company where English is a major language used in all communication channels. English language capabilities of employees play an important role in their career paths and work advancement. If they want to grow in the company, they must have good English skills. The higher an employee is promoted within the organization, the better the person is expected to communicate in English. All four English language skills; speaking, writing, reading and listening, are required to deal with the nature of work in this company. All written communications are carried out in English and speaking and listening skills are also critical as employees need to conduct meetings and presentations in English.

Thomson Reuters, according to their company profile, is the world's leading source of intelligent information for businesses and professionals. The company combines industry expertise with innovative technology to deliver critical information to leading decision makers in the financial, legal, tax and accounting, healthcare, science and media markets, powered by the world's most trusted news organization.

Thomson Reuters shares are listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX: TRI) and the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE: TRI).

Thomson Reuters in Thailand has registered under two different entities; Reuters (Thailand) Limited and Reuters Software (Thailand) Limited. The first entity focuses on editorial content and sales of company products while the business of the second entity focuses on software development, developing new technology products and features for the products. Thailand has been identified as one of the company's strategic development centers; apart from software development, the company has also been recognized as a care and maintenance hub for many major products of the company serving Thomson Reuters' major customers globally.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Thomson Reuters is a global company; the organization has more than 55,000 employees located in more than 100 countries around the world. The company provides first class working environments enabling staff to collaborate with each other, even though they are located far away from each other from one country to another. On many occasions, employees have to conduct their meetings through video or teleconferences with their teams in other countries. Many employees in Thailand have difficulties in delivering proper communication at this stage as their listening skills are not good enough to understand the other parties. Miscommunication occasionally happens because, due to the lower level of their spoken English, the employee does not communicate the message they want to deliver.

The company has consistently provided English language training as both class room training and online training resources for employees, however the improvement of employees' English capabilities have not yet met the management's expectation as language barriers still exist in most of the employees and those barriers block them from their career advancement.

This study intends to present which English barriers block Thai employees from effective communication in their work. The research work will focus on finding out barriers in all four English language skills of employees. The following factors will be included in the research questionnaire to investigate if employees perceive any of these factors as their language barriers that cause ineffective communication at work.

- The tendency of worry on grammar usage that block employees' confidence in speaking English.
- The language usage process to translate messages from Thai to English.
- The language usage attitude if employees are too shy to speak English.
- The English pronunciation and vocabulary problems.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 To find out which English barriers block Thai employees from effective communication in their work.

1.3.2 To find out factors that employees perceive as obstacles to their English language communications.

1.3.3 To find out language learning sources that employees perceive as the most effective way of improving their English.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definitions of the terms of this study are as follows:

Company refers to Reuters (Thailand) Limited and Reuters Software (Thailand) Limited, Thomson Reuters Companies in Thailand.

Communication refers to a process whereby information is enclosed in a package and is channeled and imparted by a sender to a receiver via some medium. The receiver then decodes the message and gives the sender feedback. All forms of communication require a sender, a message, and an intended recipient; however the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication in order for the act of communication to occur. Communication requires that all parties have an area of communicative commonality.

Language barriers refer to a figurative phrase used primarily to indicate the difficulties faced when people, who have no language in common, attempt to communicate with each other.

Cultural barriers refer to cultural communication that occurs when a person from one culture sends a message to a person from another culture. Cultural barriers or miscommunication occurs when the person who receives the message from the second culture does not understand or receive the sender's intended message.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research focuses on 100 employees of both entities in Thomson Reuters office in Thailand. However, the study has the following potential limitations:

- Different educational backgrounds of respondents could be a variable

outside the control of the researcher.

- Different assessment levels of respondents' language capabilities.

Respondents who have higher educational backgrounds could set a higher standard because of their language capabilities self-evaluation.

- Respondents' cooperation in responding to the questionnaires. This could depend on respondents' availability because could take longer for the researcher to collect research data.

1.6 CONSEQUENCES OF THE STUDY

The intent of this study is to present the factors that create English language communication barriers for Thai employees in Thomson Reuters. The findings can be used as a guideline for the company to better understand its employees' English language problems. In addition, the company could use the report to improve the design of English learning courses to make them more specific in eliminating language barriers for employees. The employees, in the same way could examine the report's implications and focus more on diminishing their language weakness.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This research study is divided into five chapters.

Chapter I includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, consequences of the study, definition of terms, research questions, limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter II presents a review of the literature relevant to this study. Five related topics are discussed in the review of literature. The first topic is a theory of the importance of English for business. The second topic discusses the meaning of effective communications. The third deals with barriers to effective communications. The fourth presents facts of English language teaching and learning in Thailand and the last topic shares relevant research on motivation and second language achievement.

Chapter III describe the methodology used in this research study. It includes

the selection criteria for participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter IV identifies the research study's findings, demographic information, testing the research questions and the result of the data analyses for the research questions.

Chapter V provides a summary of the entire study, discussion of the findings, implications of the findings, recommendations for further research, and conclusions.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in five main areas along with a summary: (1) the importance of English, (2) the importance of effective communication, (3) the barriers to effective communication, (4) cross-cultural miscommunication, and (5) English language teaching and learning in Thailand.

2.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH

According to Hamilton and Parker (1997) the communication skills of employees play an important role in the success of an organization.

English is the world's leading language as it is widely spoken around the world. The importance of English for international business does not only focus on just the number of people speaking the language but also what the language is used for. Bryson (1990) has illustrated in *The Mother Tongue* that more than 300 million people in the world speak English and a lot more people try to speak and learn English. If people wish to be successful in international business, learning English is extremely important. In many places such as Asia, Africa, and South America, the English capabilities levels determine who will manage to improve their living standards. There are a number of powerful tools that have allowed more people to learn English than ever before. One of these tools is the Internet.

In his book *English as a Global Language*, Crystal (1997) explains, “A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country” (p. 2). The definition describes English as an official language used for the majority (such as English is in the United States and Australia).

Swales (1987) estimated that more than fifty percent of the millions of academic papers published each year are written in English, and the percentage is growing every year. English is in the same manner widely used in science and technology, and scientific journals in many countries are now switching from local languages to English.

In a study commissioned by the British Council, Graddol (1997) speaks about the apparently “unstoppable” (p. 2) trend toward global English usage, but also points out that this could suddenly and unexpectedly change due to some relative minor change in world events.

According to Graddol (2000, p. 10) there are three kinds of English speaker in the world today and each has a different relationship with the language: Those who speak English as a first language and often the only language; those whose English is a second or additional language; and those who learn English as a foreign language.

The first-language countries

We can find English spoken as a first language in over thirty territories (Table 1). Crystal (1997) calculates that worldwide there are a little over 377 million speakers of English as a first language.

Table 1 Native Speaker of English (in Thousands) Incorporating Estimates by Crystal (1997)

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|----------------|-------|--------------------|-----|---------------------------|---------|
| Argentina and Barbuda | 61 | Guam | 56 | Papua New Guinea | 120 | Trinidad and Tobago | 1,200 |
| Australia | 15,316 | Guyana | 700 | Philippines | 15 | UK (England, Scotland) | |
| Bahamas | 250 | Hong Kong | 125 | Puerto Rico | 110 | N.Ireland, Wales | 56,990 |
| Barbados | 265 | India | 320 | Sierra Leone | 450 | UK Islands (Channel, Man) | 217 |
| Belize | 135 | Irish Republic | 3,334 | St Kitts and Nevis | 39 | US* | 226,710 |
| Bermuda | 60 | Jamaica | 2,400 | St lucia | 29 | Virginn Is (British) | 17 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------|----------------|-------|---------------------------------|-------|-------------------|-----|
| Brunei | 10 | Liberia | 60 | St Vincent and Grenadines | 111 | Virgin Is (US) | 79 |
| Canada | 19,700 | Malaysia | 375 | Singapore | 300 | Zambia* | 50 |
| Cayman Is | 29 | Montserrat | 11 | South Africa | 3,600 | Zimbabwe* | 250 |
| Gibraltar | 25 | Nambia | 13 | Sri Lanka | 10 | | |
| Grenada | 101 | New Zealand | 3,396 | Suriname | 258 | | |

The second-language areas

English competency among second-language speakers, such as English as a foreign language (EFL) speakers, varies from native fluency to extremely poor. In EFL areas English is primarily used for communication with speakers from other countries, whereas in the second-language (L2) area English is used for internal communication. The former colonial territories in South Asia, South-east Asia, Africa and the Caribbean areas, where English is extensively used as a second language usually develop a variety of English which reflects other languages used besides English. From this newly developed English, local forms of English have emerged that have their own strength and dynamic of change and there is often an underlying model of correctness. In the majority of countries this is British English with some exceptions such as the Philippines and Liberia, which orient to US English.

The foreign-language areas

The number of people learning English has rapidly increased. This reflects important changes in public policy, such as lowering the age at which English is taught in schools. The main distinction between fluent English as a foreign language speaker and a second-language speaker depends on whether English is used within the

speaker's community (country, family). In the English as a foreign language world there is no local model of English, though speakers' English accents and patterns of error may reflect characteristics of their first language.

2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

According to Hamilton and Parker (1997) the communication skills of employees play an important role in the success of an organization. In a survey, eighty-four personnel officers from different organizations were asked, "In assessing an individual's chance of success in your company, how important do you think communication skills are, relative to other kinds of abilities?" Communication skills were rated "extremely important" and ninety five percent of the respondents reported that communication skills were one of the considered factors when they recruit employees. In addition another survey described in The Endicott Report has stated that applicants with poor communication skills have less tendency of getting a job.

In his article The Importance of Effective Communication, Wertheim stated that effective communication is an important component of organizational success. It is the key to our success in life, in work, and in relationships. Good communication skills can reduce misunderstandings, errors, frustration, and conflict on a daily basis. Although all of us have been communicating with others since early childhood, the process of transmitting information from an individual or group to another is a complex process with many sources of potential error. By the time a message gets from a sender to a receiver, there are four basic places where transmission errors can occur and at each place, there is 60% loss of meaning in the transmission of messages from sender to receiver. People in organizations typically spend over 75% of their time in interpersonal situations. Therefore, it is no surprise to find that at the root of a large number of organizational problems is poor communications. In a work setting, interactions involve people who often do not have years of experience communicating with each other. These interactions are further complicated by the complex relationships that exist at work. It is critical to understand and be aware of the potential sources of communication barriers and constantly avoid these barriers by making a conscientious effort to make sure there is a minimal loss of meaning in communication.

2.3 THE BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

In *Effective Models of Communication*, Hamilton and Parker (1997) describes a barrier as an obstruction that brings communication break down. An obstacle is a temporary blockage to communication that can be removed with effort. Communication obstacles are one of the most common communications problems in an organization. Communicator anxiety can hinder communication success in all situations. Language barriers can lead to culture shock for new non-English-speaking background migrants. They often assume that a complicated language like English can be learned quickly and easily. This is often the case. The problem is still a puzzle if the background language is very different to English and the migrants themselves lack literacy and spoken or written fluency in their first language (Pithers & Lim, 1997).

Wagner (1985) has pointed out the importance of learning English, mainly because proficiency in English language is regarded as an acceptable criterion for determining access to educational and employment opportunities for adults. Non-English-speaking background people themselves have experienced confusion with regard to the English barrier. They recognize the acquisition of the English language as being a major block and the key to understanding and being happy in an English-speaking society. Wagner identified what many migrants have called the “English-merry-go-around” when, after completing several English courses, they find themselves having not progressed to a course of study or job of their choice. These migrants believe that they have failed and will never be able to participate fully in society. Barriers to effective communication at work may include the choice of words or language which a sender uses which will influence the quality of the communicated message. In the English language, there are about 500 basic words that are used everyday. These words have lots of different meanings. Because language is a representative of a phenomenon, room for interpretation and misrepresentation of the meaning exists.

Jain referring to McFarland (2008) as cited in *The Barriers to Effective Communication*, has defined Communication as the process of meaningful interaction among human beings. More specifically, it is the process by which meanings are

perceived and understandings are reached among human being. But there may be some faults or barriers in the communication system that prevents the message from reaching the receiver, these barriers are as follows:

1. Language Barrier

Different languages, vocabulary, accents , and dialects represent national or regional barriers. Semantic gaps are words having similar pronunciation but multiple meanings such as badly expressed messages, wrong interpretations and unqualified assumptions. The use of difficult or inappropriate words, poorly explained or misunderstood messages can result in confusion.

2. Cultural Barriers

Age, education, gender, social status, economic position, cultural background, temperament, health, beauty, popularity, religion, political belief, ethics, values, motives, assumptions, aspirations, rules and regulations, standards, and priorities can separate one person from another and create a barrier. Adler (1991) stated that in order to understand a person, we have to put ourselves as much as we can into that person's cultural background.

3. Individual Barrier

It may be a result of an individual's perceptual and personal discomfort. Even when two persons have experienced the same event their mental perception may or may not be identical, which acts as a barrier. Style, selective perception, poor attention and retention, defensiveness, close mindedness, and insufficient filtration are the individual or psychological barriers.

4. Organizational Barrier

It includes Poor Organizational culture and climate, stringent rules, regulations, status, relationship, complexity, inadequate facilities, and opportunities of growth and improvement. Physical Organizational Barriers are the nature of the internal and external environment like large working areas physically separated from others, poor lightening, staff shortage, outdated equipments and background noise.

5. Interpersonal Barrier

Barriers from Employers include lack of Trust in employees; Lack of knowledge of non-verbal clues like facial expressions, body language, gestures,

postures, eye contact; different experiences; shortage of time for employees; no consideration for employee needs; wish to capture authority; fear of losing power of control; bypassing and informational overloading, while Barriers from employees includes Lack of Motivation, lack of co-operation, trust, fear of penalty and a poor relationship with the employer.

6. Attitudinal Barrier

It comes about as a result of problems with staff in the organization.

Limitation in physical and mental ability, intelligence, understanding, pre-conceived notions, and untrusted sources divide attention and creates a mechanical barrier which affects attitudes and opinions.

7. Channel Barrier

If the length of the communication is long, or the medium selected is inappropriate, the communication might break up; it can also be a result of the interpersonal conflicts between the sender and receiver; lack of interest to communicate; information sharing or access problems which can hamper the channel and affect the clarity, accuracy and effectiveness. To communicate effectively one need to overcome these barriers.

2.4 CROSS-CULTURAL MISCOMMUNICATION

Adler (1991) explained that every communication involves a message sender and a message receiver. Cross-cultural communication takes place when a person from one culture communicates to another person of different culture.

Miscommunication occurs whenever the person from a different culture does not receive, misevaluates or misinterprets the sender's intended message. Cross-cultural miscommunication tends to have more chance if the message sender and receiver have a larger gap of frame of reference. Culture strongly influences, and in many cases determines, our interpretations. Interpretation classifies our experience that guides our behavior. Based on our experience, we make assumptions about our perceptions and that we will not have to rediscover meanings each time we encounter similar situations. Perception tends to remain constant, once we see something in a particular way; we continue to see it that way. Our interests and culture act as filters and lead us to misrepresent, block and even create what we choose to see and hear.

We perceive things according to what we have been trained to see according to our cultural map. Adler (1991) has further illustrated sources of cross-cultural misinterpretation including subconscious cultural blinders, a lack of culture self-awareness, projected similarity and parochialism.

Subconscious Cultural Blinders

As most interpretation goes on at a subconscious level, we are not aware of the assumptions we make and their cultural basis. Our home culture actually never focuses on examining our assumptions or the extent to which they are culturally based, but we share our culture assumptions with most other citizens of our country. All we know is that things do not work as sensibly when we work outside our own cultures as when we work with people more similar to ourselves.

Lack of Culture Self-Awareness

Edward Hall has explained that people tends to think that the major obstacle in international business is in understanding the foreigner; the greater difficulty involves becoming aware of our own cultural conditioning. Nevertheless, we are generally least aware of our own cultural characteristics and are surprised when we hear the way foreigners describe us.

Projected Similarity

Projected similarity refers to the assumption that people are more similar to us than they actually are, or that a situation is more similar to ours when in fact it is not. It involves assuming, imagining and perceiving similarity when difference exists. Projected similarity particularly handicaps people in cross-cultural situations.

Parochialism

At the base of projected similarity is a subconscious parochialism. People tend to assume that there is only one way to see the world. This is the idea that they view other people in reference to them and to their way of viewing the world. People may fall into a fault impression while being unaware of their misunderstandings. Most international managers do not see themselves as parochial. They believe that as

world travelers they are able to see the foreigner's point of view which is not always correct.

Effective cross-cultural communication is possible. Adler identified that the most difficult skill in cross-cultural communication involves standing back from oneself. This means people should be aware and accept that they do not know everything, a situation may not make sense, their guesses may be wrong and the ambiguity in the situation may continue. Cross-cultural awareness complements in-depth-self awareness. Cultural differences are important for people working in an international setting. G. Hofstede and G.L.Hofstede (2005) illustrates, in his book *Cultures and Organizations*, the four dimensions of national cultures as follows:

Power Distance is the degree to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. Hofstede's dimension index reflects that Thai culture has high power distance which means Hierarchies play an important role in the culture.

Uncertainty Avoidance relates to the society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. This refers to the level of comfort people in a society feel when they have to confront events.

Individualism and Collectivism measures the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. The individual expects that everyone will take care of themselves rather rely on or attach to the group, while the word collectivism refers to the group, so the collectivists strongly attach to the group.

Masculinity and Femininity refers to the distribution of emotional roles between genders. The dimension describes how cultures differentiate or not between gender roles. Masculine cultures tend to be ambitious and need to excel. In workplaces masculine employees emphasize their work to a great extent (live in order to work) and they admire achievers who accomplished their tasks. Feminine cultures consider quality of life and helping others to be very important. Working is basically to earn money which is necessary for living. In business as well as in private life they look for harmony and develop sympathy for people who are in trouble.

2.5 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THAILAND

Holme and Tangtongtavy (1995) describe in their book “Working with Thais” that most Thais educated in Thailand have learned their English from Thai teachers of English. The emphasis in their classes has been on reading and writing; not very much on listening and less or very limited exposure to oral English. As a result, when English is being spoken to them, most Thais need to follow four steps:

- 1) translate it into Thai;
- 2) think of the response in Thai;
- 3) translate the response into English;
- 4) then speak it out in English

It is important that a non-Thai speak in deliberate, simple and carefully-pronounced English. George Bernard Shaw said that half the words in the English language are not spelled the way they are pronounced; while the other half are not pronounced the way they are spelled. It helps to be aware of one’s own regional accent and slang, and the most important part for a Non-Thai is to slow down when speaking English to Thais.

In accordance with Arunee Wiriyaichitra (2001), like many other developing countries, the role of English is relatively important in Thailand. The adaptation and development of new technology like the internet have engaged in an important transition in terms of business, education, science and technological progress, all of in which high proficiency in English is an essential skill. Thai has always been an official language in Thailand, and Thailand has never moved into being a country with two languages (Thai and English). English can be, at most, the first foreign language that students must study in schools. However, the level of Thais’ English proficiency is lower than people in other countries in Asia (e.g. Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore). Researchers on the topic of English needs in workplaces have also recommended that the English curriculum in Thai universities do not meet the demands for English used in the workplace. The required skills at this level, which are listening and speaking, are not the focus skills in the English curriculum in Thailand. Thailand has not well prepared for the new world. Unless the teaching and learning of English is improved, Thailand will move behind other competitive countries in business, education, science and technology.

Dr. Rom Hiranyapruek, director of Thai Software Park, stated that English has as equal an importance to the domain of information technology as to other infrastructures. He has highlighted that Thais have high proficiency in technology but that English language capabilities could be a challenge. The below average English competency of Thais hinder the country from making progress in science and technology.

Mrs. Arunsi Sastramitri, director of the Academic Training Section of the Tourist Authority of Thailand, shared a similar view that tourism is one of the main sources of income in Thailand. Thai graduates in the tourism industry have poor command of English. This has contributed to misunderstanding and a negative attitude towards Thailand.

According to Biyaem (1997) the difficulties in English language encountered by teachers and learners could be identified as follows:

Obstacles for teachers:

- heavy teaching loads.
- too many students in a class (approximately 40-60 per class).
- -insufficient English language skills and native speaker cultural knowledge.
- -inadequately equipped classrooms and educational technology.
- university entrance examinations which demand a tutorial teaching and learning style.

Barriers for learners:

- interference from the mother tongue (Thai) especially in pronunciation, syntax and idiomatic usage.
- no exposure to English or lack of opportunity to use English on a daily basis.
- most Thai students are passive learners.

- inappropriate level of English lessons provision in class.
- being too shy to speak English with classmates
- lack of responsibility for their own learning.

Thai education, as a whole, does not cope with the fast changing world. Thailand's constitution which was implemented in 1997 has established the National Education Act which creates the most radical education reform in Thai history. Thai education restructure during 1996 and 2007 included four main areas: school, curriculum, teacher and administrative improvement. It's main concern is mainly focus on the learners' ability to learn and develop. Learners are the most important element and an ongoing learning must be encouraged. It is important that the required change is extended to teacher education to cope with the main concept in the education development.

2.6 RELEVANT RESEARCH

There were many research works conducted to measure language problems encountered by Thai employees working in an international setting. One of them was research conducted by Prapaisiri Srisitanon in March 2009. In her research she focused on intercultural communication problems of Thai employees working in an international shipping company. From her findings she concluded that four factors block most Thai employees from effective communication with foreigners.

The first factor was the inability to use correct grammar in English communication, second was the inability to understand technical terms, slang and idiomatic expressions, third was the problem of the selection of words and vocabularies to communicate in sentences, and the fourth was the unfamiliarity with accents and pronunciation. The results from her study further explained that differences in cultures did not cause any problem.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on which language barriers block Thai employees from effective communication. This study also focused on finding out and determining if Wagner's communication theory is true.. He proposes that barriers to effective communication at work may include the choice of words or language which a sender uses and will influence the quality of the communicated message. In addition the study also focused on describing how Thai employees have the need to follow four steps of translation into Thai; think of the response in Thai, translate the response into English and speak it out in English as described by Holme and Tangtongtavy (1995)

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The populations in this study were Thai employees of both entities of Thomson Reuters registered under Reuters (Thailand) Limited and Reuters Software (Thailand) Limited in Bangkok. The sampling group selection criteria mainly focused on those of local graduate Thai employees whose work requires dealing with foreigners on a regular basis. Expatriates and overseas graduate Thai employees were excluded from this research.

3.2 INSTRUMENTATION

The research instrument for this study was a questionnaire designed to find out what language barriers block Thai employees from effective communication. The questionnaire referred to the research conducted by Shotikarn Bhundhucharoen (2002), some of the questions were amended to make it more suitable for the research topic and the target respondent group.

The questionnaire used close-ended questions, open-ended questions, and four-point Likert weight scale. The questions in the various categories employed the Likert scales are credited as follows:

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|--------|
| Strongly Agree (SA) | = 4 | points |
| Agree (A) | = 3 | points |
| Disagree (D) | = 2 | points |
| Strongly Disagree (SD) | = 1 | point |

The questionnaire was divided into five parts as follows:

Part I: Demography of the respondents

The first part of the questionnaire consists of seven questions about general background information of respondents.

Part II: Information about English skills

The second part of the questionnaire consists of five questions regarding information on respondents' English capabilities.

Part III: Exposure to English

The third part of the questionnaire contains seven questions focused on respondents' exposure to English language.

Part IV: English language proficiency

The fourth part of the questionnaire consists of 41 opinion questions to figure out factors that contribute to ineffective communication and language factors that employees perceive as barriers to their communication. Respondents were asked about their attitude toward the English language, their listening, speaking, reading, writing proficiency skills, and cultural related attitudes respectively.

Part V: Suggestions for Language Learning & Improvement

The fifth part of the questionnaire consists of four open-ended questions. The respondents were asked to share their opinions on effectiveness of the English classes provided by the company, what could the company do to better improve employees' English proficiency, and to share one of their past experience on English language barriers.

3.3 PROCEDURES

The researcher has obtained approval from the Senior Site Officer of Thomson Reuters to conduct this survey, using 100 Thai employees as the sampling group. The questionnaires were distributed by hand to 100 respondents during 15-25 December, 2010. All questionnaires were collected upon completion of all answers or by 25 December, 2010.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The findings from this survey were analyzed by the Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) program to understand the relationship between English proficiency of the respondents toward factors that employees perceive as barriers to their communication. The result was presented in a descriptive form.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings on factors that respondents perceived as barriers that block them from effective communication in work. These results were obtained from the questionnaires distributed by hand to one hundred respondents in Thomson Reuters.

PART I BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

4.1 DEMOGRAPHY OF THE RESPONDENTS

Demographic information was divided into seven parts presenting gender, age range, educational background, nature of work, level of respondents' position, years of service in the company and if they have been recommended to attend an English course.

Table 1. Gender

| Gender | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Male | 42 | 42 |
| Female | 58 | 58 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Table 1 presents the majority of 58% respondents were female and the minority of 42% respondents were male.

Table 2. Age

| Age | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| 25-30 | 61 | 61 |
| 31-35 | 27 | 27 |
| 36-40 | 8 | 8 |
| 41-45 | 2 | 2 |
| 46-50 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Table 2 shows respondents aged between 25-30 years were significantly more than half, 61% of the total respondents. There was 27% aged between 31-35 years,

followed by approximately 8% aged between 36-40 and 2% equally shared from respondents of age between 41-45 and 46-50 respectively.

Table 3. Education Background

| Education background | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Vocational Certificate | 1 | 1 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 68 | 68 |
| Master's Degree | 31 | 31 |
| PhD | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

As can be seen in table 3 two third of the respondents, 68% hold Bachelor's Degree while 31% hold Master's Degrees. Only 1% graduated with a Vocational Certificate.

Table 4. Respondents' Nature of Work

| Nature of work | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Software Engineer | 33 | 33 |
| Sales & Customer Support | 7 | 7 |
| Data Content | 33 | 33 |
| Others | 27 | 27 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Software Engineers and Data Content staff had equally shared their responses, 33% from each group followed by 27% of respondents who were working in other support functions. Only 7% of the front lines employees responded to the questionnaire.

Table 5. Position

| Current position | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Senior Manager | 0 | 0 |
| Manager | 5 | 5 |
| Group Leader | 12 | 12 |
| Staff | 83 | 83 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

The majority of the respondents were general staff, representing 83% of the total together with 12 Group Leaders and 5 Managers. Senior Manager Level were not included in this survey as most of them were expatriates.

Table 6. Years of Service in the Company

| Year of service in the company | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1-3 | 38 | 38 |
| 4-6 | 39 | 39 |
| 7-9 | 14 | 14 |
| 10 years and above | 9 | 9 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

The majority of respondents had over 4-6 years experience working in the company, representing 39%, of the total, followed by 38% respondents who had 1-3 years working experience, 14% had 7-9 years with the company and the remaining 9% had 10 years or more experience working with the company.

Table 7. Have Been Recommended to Attend an English Course

| Have been recommended to attend an English course. | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|------------------|--------------------|
| Yes | 70 | 70 |
| No | 30 | 30 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

From table 7 it can be concluded that 70% of the respondents had been recommended to attend an English course to improve their language capabilities while 30% had not been recommended to obtain a course.

PART II INFORMATION ABOUT ENGLISH SKILLS

4.2 RESPONDENTS' INFORMATION ON ENGLISH PROFICIENCY SKILLS

Respondents were asked if they have taken an English proficiency test, what type of English proficiency test they have taken and best scores. In addition, they have been invited to share their opinions on what English skill they thought should be first improved, which of the English skills they have to deal with most and the least relevant skill used in their work.

Table 8. English Proficiency Test

| Have you ever taken an English proficiency test? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|------------------|--------------------|
| Yes | 60 | 60 |
| No | 40 | 40 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Table 8 illustrates 60% of respondents had taken an English proficiency test while the minority of 40% had never taken any English proficiency test.

Table 9. Type of English Proficiency Test Taken and Scores

| Please indicate type of English proficiency test you've taken and scores. | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--|------------------|--------------------|
| TOEFL Min-max scores: 500-700 | 8 | 8 |
| TOEIC Min-max scores: 400-915 | 30 | 30 |
| IELS Min-max scores: 550-700 | 4 | 4 |
| CU-TEP Min-max scores: 358-600 | 11 | 11 |
| TU-GET Min-max scores: 420-700 | 7 | 7 |
| Total | 60 | 60 |

As can be seen in table 9 the total English proficiency tests taken aligned with the test result in table 4.2.1, 60% of respondents had taken an English proficiency test. Most respondents had taken the test at least once or the most frequent at three times. The majority of 30% respondents had taken TOEIC test with a maximum score of 915 and minimum 400. 11% of respondents had taken CU-TEP test and the highest score was 600 while the lowest score was 358. TOEFL had been taken by 8% of the respondents with 700 as the highest and 500 as the lowest scores. The remaining 7% and 4% of respondents had taken TU-GET and IELS, both groups achieved the same highest score of 700 and the lowest scores of 420 and 550 respectively.

Table 10. Opinion on What English Skill Should Be First Improved

| In your opinion, what English skill should be first improved? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--|------------------|--------------------|
| Speaking | 37 | 37 |
| Listening | 34 | 34 |
| Reading | 5 | 5 |
| Writing | 24 | 24 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

The majority of 37% respondents thought they should first improve their spoken English. This may be because Thai employees do not have confidence speaking English as English is not their mother tongue, moreover, it is not officially used as a major communication language in Thailand. Additionally, 34% of respondents thought listening skill was critical and should be prioritized for improvement; only 24% thought writing skill should be the first skill to be improved.

Table 11. English Skills That Respondents Have to Deal With Most in Work

| Which of the following English skills you have to deal with most in your work? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--|------------|-------------|
| Speaking | 14 | 14 |
| Listening | 9 | 9 |
| Reading | 35 | 35 |
| Writing | 42 | 42 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

The table shows 42% of respondents dealt with English writing skill most in their work, followed by 35% who thought reading was the skill used most of the time. Only 14% dealt most with spoken English and 9% with listening skills respectively.

Table 12. English Skills That is the Least Relevant or Least Used in Work

| Which of the following English skills is the least relevant or the least used in your work? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|------------|-------------|
| Speaking | 62 | 62 |
| Listening | 19 | 19 |
| Reading | 15 | 15 |
| Writing | 4 | 4 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Most respondents thought English speaking was the least relevant skill used in work. This may be because they are based in Thailand where Thai is still an official

communication language among local people; thus, if they do not report to an expatriate, or in their course of work they do not have to deal with people in other locations, they do not have to speak English. Consequently, 19% thought listening skill was the least relevant skill used in work as they neither work for an expatriate boss nor dealt with people in other locations. On the other hand, approximately 15% thought reading was the least used skill at work while the remaining 4% thought writing was the one.

PART III EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH

4.3 RESPONDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD ENGLISH AND EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH

In this part respondents were asked to share their outlooks on English language proficiency and reveal their language usage opportunities.

Table 13. Good English Proficiency is One of the Critical Criteria for Job Promotion

| Are you convinced that good English proficiency is one of the criteria for job promotion in most companies? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|------------|-------------|
| Yes | 93 | 93 |
| No | 7 | 7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

From table 13 it can be inferred that most of the respondents (93%) were convinced that good English proficiency is one of the criteria for job promotion in most of the companies in Thailand.

Table 14. An Obligation to Learn English for Career Development

| Do you consider learning English as an important obligation for your career development and advancement? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--|------------|-------------|
| Yes | 100 | 100 |
| No | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

From table 14 it can be concluded that all respondents (100%) considered learning English as an important obligation for career development and advancement.

Table 15. Ability to Work More Efficiently with Good English Skill

| Do you believe that you will be able to work more efficiently if you have good English skill? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 97 | 97 |
| No | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

The majority (97%) of respondents believed that they would be able to work more efficiently if they have good English skills.

Table 16. Reporting to An Expatriate Boss

| Do you report to an expatriate boss? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 63 | 63 |
| No | 37 | 37 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Most of the respondents (63%) reported to expatriates with the remaining 37% reported to Thai bosses.

Table 17. Regularly Interact With Foreigners in the Company

| Do you have regular interaction with foreigners in the company? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 71 | 71 |
| No | 22 | 22 |
| No response | 7 | 7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

The figures in table 17 shows 71% of respondents had regular interaction with foreigners in the company. This could be means they interacted with foreigners via written emails, phone calls or face to face meetings.

Table 18. Regularly Conduct Meetings in English

| Do you regularly conduct your meetings, teleconference or video conference in English? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 73 | 73 |
| No | 25 | 25 |
| No response | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

The majority (73%) of respondents have regularly conducted their meetings, teleconferences or video conferences in English while only 25% conducted their regular meetings in Thai.

Table 19. Use English Correspondence On a Daily Basis

| Do you correspond in English via emails and phone on a daily basis? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 76 | 76 |
| No | 22 | 22 |
| No answer | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

More than half, 76% of respondents, corresponded in English via emails and phones on a daily basis. The remaining 22% did not correspond in English in their day-to-day work.

PART IV ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

4.4 LISTENING, SPEAKING, READING, WRITING AND CULTURAL PROBLEMS

Respondents were asked to share their opinions on factors that they perceive as obstacles in their listening, speaking, reading and writing proficiency. They were also asked to rate on cultural related factors if they perceived any of the factors as barriers to their communication.

4.4.1 Listening problems

Item 20 I tend to translate what I heard into Thai and first think of the response in Thai.

Item 21 Different English accents and pronunciation affect my understanding of the communicated content.

Item 22 I'm unfamiliar with foreign accents and pronunciation.

Item 23 I'm unable to understand technical terms

Item 24 I'm unable to catch words/conversation

Item 25 I'm unable to understand idiomatic expression or colloquialisms

Item 26 I'm unable to remember entire pieces of information discussed in a meeting.

Figure 1. Listening Problems

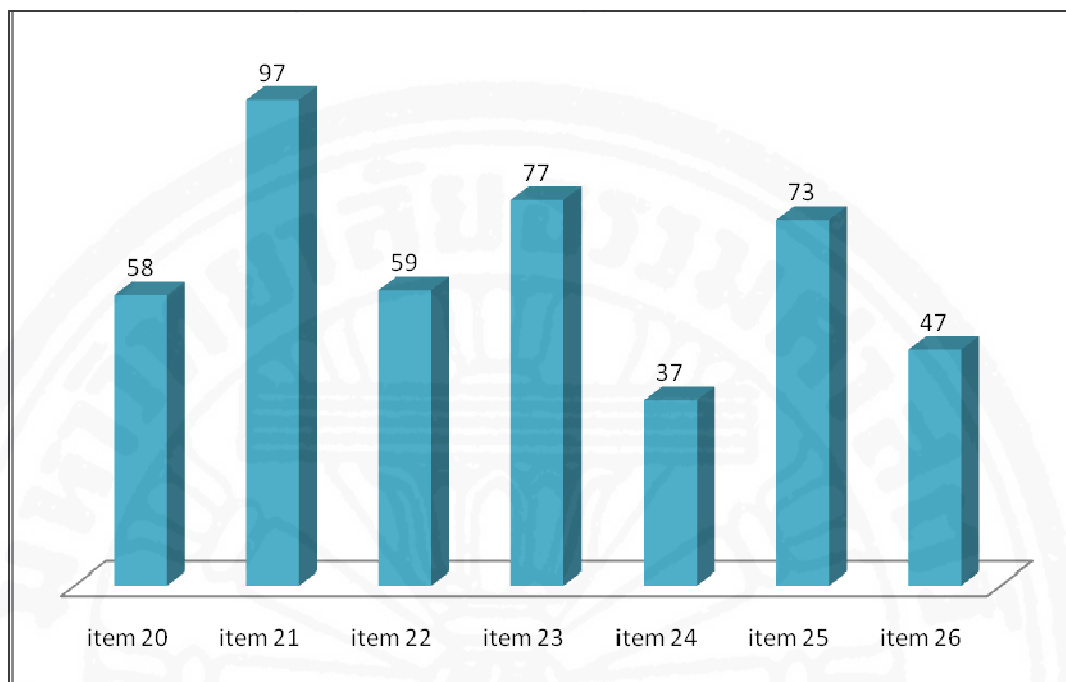


Figure 1 shows the majority of 97 respondents perceived different English accents and pronunciation as barriers that block them from effective communication. As seen in item 22, more than half or 59 respondents had regularly encountered unfamiliarity with foreigners' accents and pronunciation at work. 77 respondents were unable to understand technical terms, while 73 of them were unable to understand idiomatic expression or colloquialisms. Furthermore, 58 respondents had a tendency to translate what they heard into Thai and always think of the response in Thai prior to responding in English.

4.4.2 Speaking problems

Item 27 I do not speak English fluently.

Item 28 I am nervous when I have to speak English.

Item 29 I am unable to pronounce precisely.

Item 30 I am unable to speak English with correct grammar.

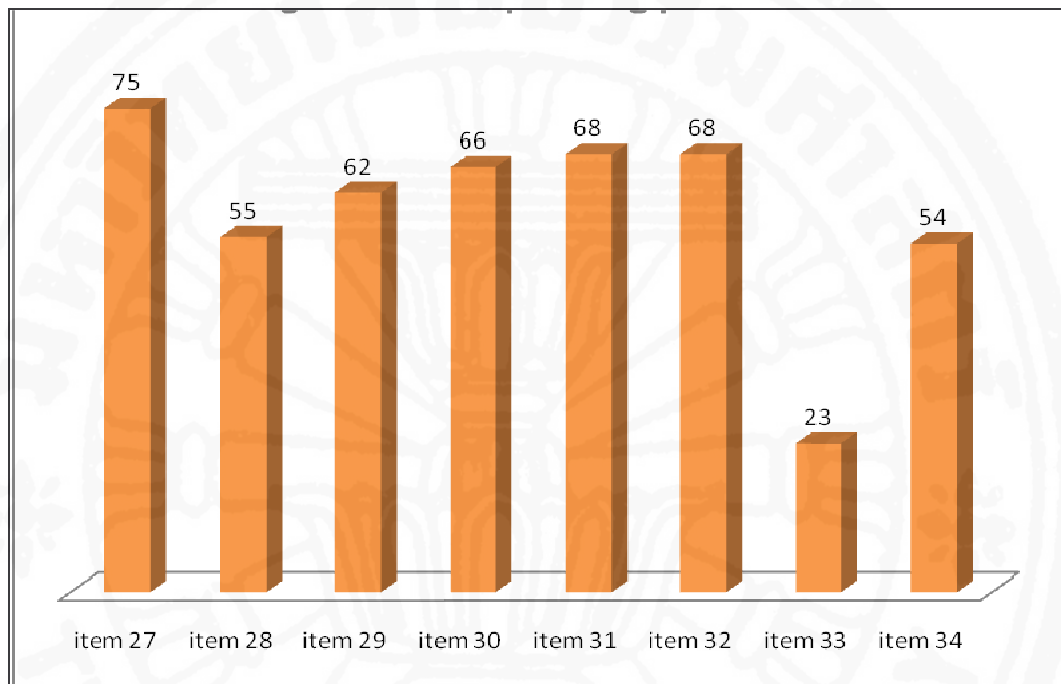
Item 31 I am unable to select the right words or vocabulary when I speak English.

Item 32 I have problems presenting the information in order.

Item 33 My foreign colleagues do not understand my message when I speak English.

Item 34 I have to translate from Thai to English when I speak.

Figure 2. Speaking Problems



The bar chart in figure 2 demonstrates that 75% of respondents admitted that they do not speak English fluently. 68% felt they neither managed to select the right words or vocabulary to communicate nor were able to present the information in order. In addition, 62-66% were unable to speak with correct grammar or pronounce precisely. Ultimately, more than half of the respondents were nervous when having to speak English and they had a tendency to translate what they wanted to communicate in Thai to English before they speak.

4.4.3 Reading Problems

Item 35 I do not have a large vocabulary repertoire.

Item 36 I do not know most of the abbreviations.

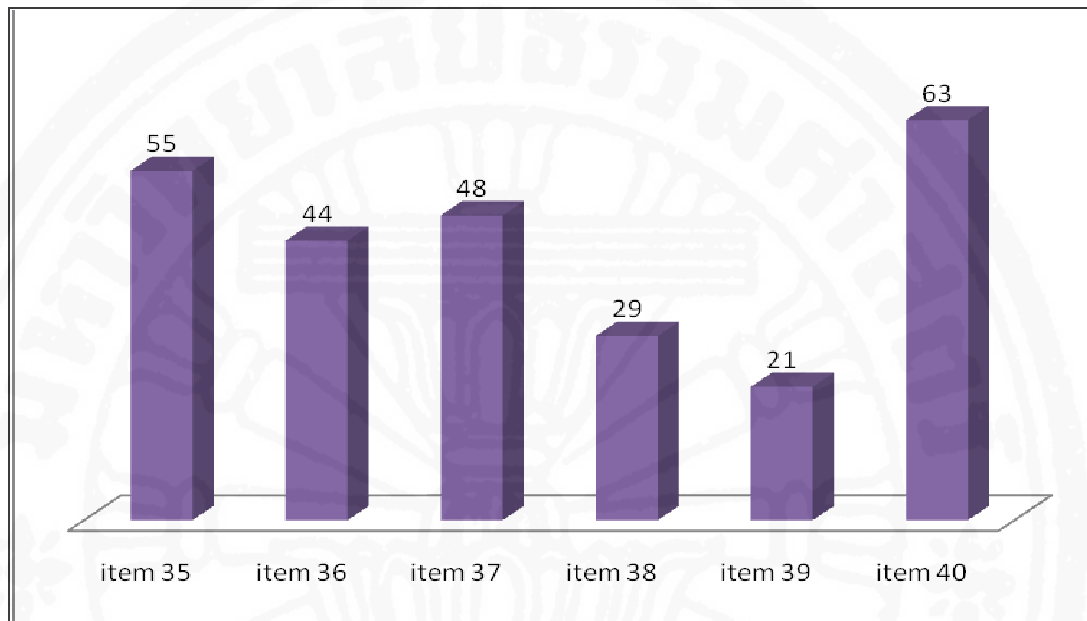
Item 37 I do not manage to read with speed and fluency.

Item 38 I am unable to interpret the complex sentences.

Item 39 It is difficult for me to draw a main idea of what I have read.

Item 40 I have to read a long article or long messages more than once in order to understand the content.

Figure 3. Reading Problems



From the chart it can be inferred that most Thai employees had less problems in their reading skill. The only two areas that most respondents thought they had a problem were problems with reading long sentences as they have a tendency to read them more than once in order to understand the content of a long article (63%), and problem with vocabulary.

4.4.4 Writing Problems

Item 41 I am unable to convey a 100% clear and precise message in my writing.

Item 42 I have some problem with grammar usage for my writing.

Item 43 I am unable to use varied vocabulary without consulting a dictionary.

Item 44 I am unable to choose the right words to communicate in my writing.

Item 45 My boss has to check my writing before I can release the message.

Item 46 Miscommunication occasionally exists as the person I contact can hardly understand my point when I write to them.

Item 47 I have a high tendency to miscommunicate with people when I write emails.

Item 48 It takes time for me to write an email.

Figure 4. Writing Problems

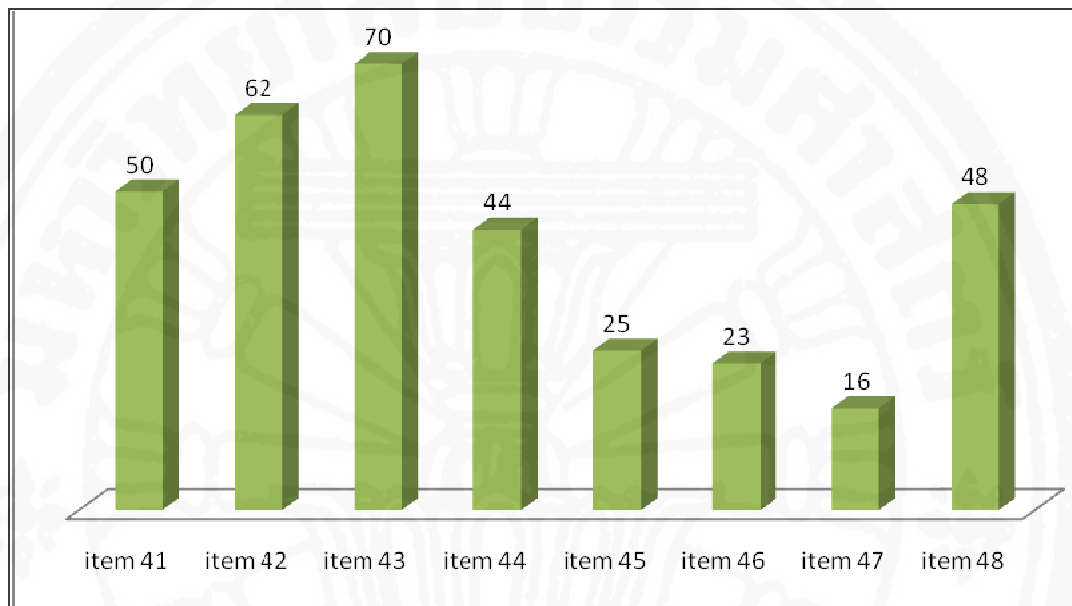


Figure 4 explicates three areas which most of the respondents perceived as barriers that block them from their written communication. Most respondents, 70% were unable to use varied vocabulary without consulting a dictionary, while 62% had problem with grammar usage in their writing. In addition, half of the respondents were unable to convey a 100% clear and precise message in their writings.

4.4.5 Cultural Problems

Item 49 I am nervous when I have to speak to a person at the management level.

Item 50 I feel uncomfortable being asked to speak up in a meeting.

Item 51 I feel that foreigners are too straight forward.

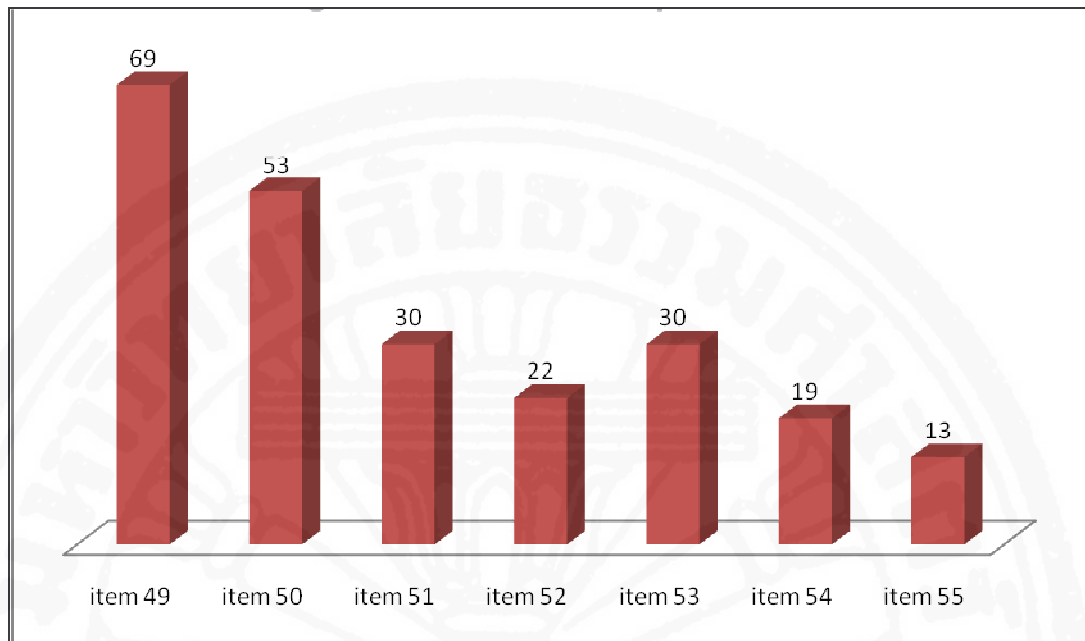
Item 52 I tend to misinterpret my foreign colleagues' nonverbal language.

Item 53 I think showing respect to my boss is not challenging him.

Item 54 Directness shows no respect and could hurt me.

Item 55 I feel that foreigners are too aggressive.

Figure 5. Cultural Problems



As shown in figure 5, it can be concluded that Thai employees had encountered some cultural problem as they work in an international settings. The chart reflects that 69% of respondents were nervous when having to speak to a person at the management level. That can be interpreted that Heirachies in Thai society play an important role; Thais were taught to respect those who have more seniority and people at the management level were ranked at senior level by the position identified. Additionally, more than half felt uncomfortable being asked to speak up in a meeting.

PART V OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

4.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

This was the last part of the questionnaire where respondents were asked if they thought the current English classes provided by the company were good and if they thought the courses help them to improve their language capabilities. They were also invited to provide suggestions on what else the company could do to improve their English proficiency.

Table 20. Effectiveness of Current Provided English Classes

| Do you think the current English classes provided by the company are good and could help with employees' language improvement? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--|------------|-------------|
| Yes | 64 | 64 |
| No | 33 | 33 |
| No answer | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Table 20 shows that 64% of respondents thought the English classes provided by the company were effective and could help them to improve their English.

Table 21. Effective Source of Learning English

| What learning source that you think is the most effective way of improving your English? | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--|------------|-------------|
| English Class Room | 20 | 20 |
| E-learning | 2 | 2 |
| on the job learning | 78 | 78 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

As reflected in table 21 it can be concluded that on the job learning was the most effective way of English learning for the majority (78%). This may be because they have to use at least one of their English skills in their day-to-day work, especially because when they have to deal with foreigners they could learn the language from communicating with them.

4.5.1 What else could the company do to improve employees' English skills?

Most of the respondents suggested that the company should conduct a survey on what English language skills employees thought should be first improved. It is also relevant to encourage everyone to use English, not only written but spoken English as a major communication language in the organization.

4.5.2 Share one of your past experiences on English language barriers.

In this section barriers from all five skills were shared by respondents.

Problems from each language skill could be highlighted as follows:

Listening skill

Most respondents had problem with unfamiliar accents and vocabularies. This created problems when they have to conduct teleconferences, especially with Indians. Some of the respondent had problem getting the main idea and did not understand the meeting contents.

Speaking skill

Most respondents admitted that they did not have confidence when have to speak English as they did not manage to speak fluently. They did not manage to use the right words and did not know variety of vocabularies and as they spoke with incorrect grammar, they felt that sometime expatriates did not want to communicate with them.

Reading skill

Most respondents had problems reading long articles. They had a tendency to take a long time reading the article in order to understand the content and part of the problem was not having sufficient vocabulary repertoires, while some had problems understanding technical terms.

Writing skill

Grammar usage and vocabulary are the two main problems most of the respondents dealt with. They also had problem presenting their ideas in good order when they wrote in English.

Cultural skill

Some of the respondents expressed their feeling hat they felt embarrassed when have to speak in a meeting. They did not want to express their thought to the boss as they were afraid that the boss could be upset by their opinion.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) a discussion on language proficiencies, (4) conclusions, and (5) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This research focused on investigating factors that Thai employees perceived as barriers that block them from effective communication in work. The measurement covered five areas, English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills together with measurements on cultural problems.

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To find out what English barriers or which of the five language skills block Thai employees from effective communication in their work.
- To evaluate factors that employees perceive as obstacles to their English language communications.
- To measure language learning sources that employees perceive as the most effective way of improving their English.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

- **Subjects**

The population sampling of this study was 100 Thai employees from both entities of Thomson Reuters, Bangkok office.

- **Materials**

The instrument used in this research study was a questionnaire divided into five parts consisting of closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, and four –point Likert weighted scale to find out; 1) Background information of the respondents, 2) Information about English skills, 3) Exposure to English language, 4) English

language proficiency, and 5) Respondents' suggestions for language learning and improvement.

- Procedures

The questionnaires were distributed to 100 respondents in Thomson Reuters, Bangkok office and were collected within two weeks. The findings from this survey were analyzed by the Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) program to understand the relationship between English proficiency of the respondents toward factors that employees perceive as barrier to their communication. The findings were presented in a frequency distribution and relevant descriptive statistics.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

58 respondents were female and 42 were male. The majority of respondents held Bachelor's degrees, aged between 25-30 years old. Most respondents were Software Engineers and Data Content staff who had 4-6 years working experience with the company. The majority of respondents had been recommended to attend an English course to improve their language capabilities.

5.2.2 Respondents' information on English proficiency skills

TOEIC was the most popular language proficiency test taken by most of the respondents. English speaking skill was ranked the first skill that needs priority for improvement followed by listening, and writing skills respectively. Writing skill was the skill people use most in their work while speaking was the least relevant skill used in their work.

5.2.3 Respondents' attitude toward English and exposure to English

The result reflects that all respondents (100%) consistently considered learning English as an important obligation for career development as good English skill will enable them to work more efficiently. They were convinced

that good English proficiency is one of the criteria for job promotion in most companies. Most of them have regular interaction with foreigners in the company.

5.2.4 The four English proficiency skills and cultural problems

- **Listening Problems**

From the findings, most respondents perceived different English accents and pronunciation as barriers that block them from effective communication. The inability to understand technical terms, and idiomatic expressions or colloquialisms critically blocked their communication. Interestingly, the result reveals that more than half of the respondents had a tendency to translate what they heard into Thai and always think of the response in Thai before they respond in English.

- **Speaking Problems**

The overall results confirmed that most respondents admitted that they do speak English fluently or do not have confidence when they have to speak English. The biggest part of the problem includes the inability to select the right words or present the information in a good order, grammar usage and pronunciation problems. Additionally, approximately half of respondents had to translate their thoughts from Thai to English when they speak and were nervous when having to speak English.

- **Reading Problems**

Most respondents had problem reading long sentences as there was a high tendency for them to read the sentences more than once in order to understand the content in a long article. The problem has clearly been identified by lack of sufficient vocabulary repertoire.

- **Writing Problems**

Most respondents agreed that wrong grammar usage and the inability to use a variety of vocabulary block them from composing a good piece of writing work. Approximately half of the respondents thought they did not manage to convey a clear and precise message in their writings.

- **Cultural Problems**

Although Thais have improved a lot in reducing cultural gaps in order to be able to work more effectively in an international setting, one of the problems that seem to be difficult for Thais to overcome is the courage to express their thoughts, especially with people who are in a higher position. The result reveals more than two third of the respondents felt nervous when having to speak to a person at the management level, likewise, half of the respondents felt very uncomfortable being asked to speak up in a meeting.

5.3 DISCUSSION

This section concerns barriers to effective communication at work. It is critical to learn and understand the potential sources of communication barriers and constantly avoid these barriers by making a conscientious effort to make sure of a minimal loss of meaning in the message. The following findings suggest a number of barriers to effective communication at work:

5.3.1 Listening problems mainly focused on the difficulties of understanding different English accents and pronunciation and the lack of understanding of technical terms, idiomatic expression or colloquialisms. These problems block people from effective communication as people did not manage to fully understand the received messages. This corresponded to McFarland, as cited in *The Barriers to Effective Communication* by Jain (2008), regarding how different languages, vocabulary, accents and dialects represents national or regional barriers. As illustrated in the result, most respondents identified Indian English as one of the most difficult accents they had dealt with. Indian

English has a strong dialect accent and Thais educated in Thailand have learned their English from Thai teachers. The emphasis in their classes has been on reading and writing; not very much on listening and less to very limited exposure to oral English (Holme & Tangtongtavy, 1995).

5.3.2 Most Thai employees admitted that they could not speak English fluently. They were unable to select the right words to communicate the message and did not manage to speak English with correct grammar.

Additionally, more than half of the respondents need to follow the four steps of; translate the message into Thai; think of the response in Thai; translate the response into English; speak it out in English. This is parallel to Holme and Tangtongtavy (1995) and their view on the obstacles of English for Thais, as well as to Biyaem (1997) who remarks on the difficulties in English language encountered by Thai learners, including interference from the mother tongue (Thai) especially in pronunciation, syntax and idiomatic usage. Thai students have no exposure to English or lack of opportunity to use English on a daily basis so they tend to be too shy to speak English.

5.3.3 Reading problems relate to vocabulary as most respondents thought a lack of a large vocabulary repertoire causes disruption in their reading. This relates to a theory on the Barriers to Effective Communication by Wagner (1985). He explains that in the English language, there are about 500 basic words that are used everyday. These words have lots of different meanings and because language is a representative of a phenomenon, room for interpretation and misrepresentation of the meaning exists. This supports the fact that most of the respondents had a high tendency of reading a long article more than once in order to understand the content.

5.3.4 Barriers to effective communication at work may include the choice of words or language which a sender uses influencing the quality of the communicated message (Wagner, 1985). Wagner's theory aligns with the results which illustrate the inability to use a variety of vocabulary and wrong grammar usage being responsible for the largest part of writing problems. Both factors create obstacles for Thai employees being able to convey a clear and precise writing message.

5.3.5 This study found there were two main areas of cultural problems. Most respondents feel uncomfortable when they have to speak to a person at a higher position and when asked to speak up in a meeting. As explained earlier, although Thais have improved in reducing cultural gaps in order to be able to work more effectively in an international setting, one of the problems that seem to be difficult for Thais to overcome is the courage of expressing their thoughts, especially with people who are in a higher position. Seniority plays an important role in Thai society as Thais were taught to respect older or more senior people. Furthermore, Thailand is a country of high power distance which means less powerful members of the organization and institutions (family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality and the level of inequality in Thai society is endorsed by others (Hofstede, 2005). That is why most respondents were reluctant to speak to people at a higher level in position. Hofstede also illustrates in his power distance index theory that Thailand is a collectivism society, which means most Thais are attached to the group so people feel more comfortable doing group activities. Thailand is also highly ranked in uncertainty avoidance so people do not like to confront uncertain situation; they feel reluctant to express their thoughts in a meeting as they are uncertain of the result; whether or not their idea will be accepted by the manager. This is why Thai employees tend to leave the discussion part with the managers while they would prefer to play an observer's role in a meeting.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The summary of the study and findings were presented above. Factors that respondents perceived as barriers in each of their communication skills as well as cultural problems were discussed. The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

5.4.1 The lack of a large vocabulary repertoire cause major problem to most respondents' effectiveness in their English communication. This can be concluded from the survey results, as the problem exists in all language

capabilities areas. Respondents could not understand the vocabulary in their listening and reading skills and they did not manage to use the right words or vocabulary in their speaking and writing skills. The inability to use a variety of vocabulary blocks them from delivering a good piece of writing work.

5.4.2 English speaking is the skill that most respondents ranked as the first skill to improve. Speaking skill requires an immediate and equal interaction between the message sender and receiver so this is one of the most difficult skills for most second language learners. English language teaching in Thailand did not allow sufficient exposure and practice for students and most language learners are passive learners so the problem needs to be addressed in order to properly adjust the language teaching approach by allowing more opportunity for Thai students to liaison with foreigners and encouraging them to regularly speak English to practice their speaking skills.

5.4.3 Unfamiliarity with different accents and pronunciations was considered the major problem in most respondents' listening skills. The problem mostly exists whenever they have to conduct teleconferences, especially with Indians. Indians speak English with a strong Indian accent and they normally speak fast. Indian's English capabilities are also better than Thais as English is one of the major languages studied and widely used in India.

5.4.4 Wrong grammar usage is another barrier that blocks most respondents from their writing and speaking skills. The problem causes ineffective messages or communication as most respondents did not manage to convey a clear and precise message in their writing.

5.4.5 More than half of the respondents need to follow the four steps of transmitting their English communication. They have to translate what they heard into Thai, translate the message into English and they have to think in Thai then translate into English before they speak it out. This is not a natural way of communicating in English and the respondents were confused and blocked by the different usage of local languages.

5.4.6 The last factor that respondents perceived as factors that block them

from effective communication was the difference in cultures. Thai employees felt reluctant when they have to speak to people at a higher level position and they did not feel comfortable expressing their thoughts in a meeting.

5.4.7 Most respondents were happy with the current English classes provided by the company. They believed they have more or less benefited from the class room learning and that they managed to improve their English. Ultimately, most of the respondents also believe that they could learn English from their work, so on the job learning were also considered another effective way of English learning for them.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTHRE RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher has the following recommendations:

5.5.1 The questionnaire was designed for respondents to express their opinion on self evaluation so researcher could not control the evaluation standard. In order to better measure the level of barriers, proficiency tests in listening, reading, writing and speaking skills should be carried out.

5.5.2 Specific vocabulary proficiency tests should be conducted to measure how far Thai employees need to improve vocabulary weakness.

5.5.3 An explicit study of how internal cultural training in Thomson Reuters could help employees in changing their cultural perception and if cultural training could help them to handle their original embedded cultural problems.

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สำนักหอสมุด

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

English Barriers for Thai Employees Working in an International Setting

This questionnaire is part of the research for the purpose of fulfillment of the independent study requirement for the Master of Arts (English for Careers) Program, Language Institute, Thammasat University. The objective of this questionnaire is to study which English language barriers block Thai employees of Thomson Reuters from effective communication in work. The questionnaire completion is not an evaluation of your language performance and the exercise is on a voluntary basis. All the information will be treated confidentially and anonymously and will only be used for this research study.

สำนักหอสมุด

QUESTIONNAIRE

แบบสอบถาม

Part I: Background Information of the Participant

หมวดที่หนึ่ง ข้อมูลส่วนตัวของผู้ให้ข้อมูล

Please put on the answer of each question that corresponds to your personal data.

กรุณาตอบคำถามลงในช่องว่างที่กำหนดให้โดยทำเครื่องหมาย ลงในช่อง ที่ตรงกับข้อมูลของท่าน

1. Gender เพศ

Male ชาย

Female หญิง

2. Your age อายุ

25-30

31-35

46-50

36-40

41-45

51 up

3. Educational background การศึกษา

Vocational Certificate ปวช/ปวส

Bachelor's Degreeปริญญาตรี

Master's Degreeปริญญาโท

PhDปริญญาเอก

4. Nature of your work ลักษณะงานของท่าน

Software Engineer วิศวกร

Sales & Customer Support ฝ่ายขาย

หรือ บริการลูกค้า

Data Content ผลิต/ป้อนข้อมูล

others อื่นๆ

5. Your current position ตำแหน่งงานปัจจุบัน

Senior Managerผู้บริหารระดับสูง

Manager ผู้จัดการแผนก

Group Leaderหัวหน้าฝ่าย

Staff พนักงานทั่วไป

6. Years of service in the company ระยะเวลาในการทำงานกับบริษัท

1-3

4-6

7-9

10 years and above

7. Have you been recommended to attend an English course?

ท่านเคยได้รับคำแนะนำให้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเพิ่มเติมหรือไม่

Yes เคย

No ไม่เคย

Part II Information about English Skills

หมวดที่สอง ข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับความสามารถทางด้านภาษาอังกฤษของท่าน

8. Have you ever taken an English proficiency test?

ท่านเคยเข้ารับการทดสอบความสามารถทางด้านภาษาอังกฤษหรือไม่?

Yes

เคย

No (go to question 10)

ไม่เคย (ไปตอบข้อสิบ)

9. Please indicate the type of English proficiency test you've taken and scores.

กรุณาระบุชนิดหรือประเภทของแบบทดสอบภาษาอังกฤษที่ท่านได้ทดสอบและระบุคะแนนสูงสุดที่สอบได้

TOEFL, โทเฟล

TOEIC โทอิก

No. of tests taken...best score.... No. of tests taken.....best score.....

จำนวนทดสอบ..... คะแนนสูงสุด.....จำนวนทดสอบ..... คะแนนสูงสุด.....

IELTS ไอเอล

CU-TEP ชียูเทบ

No. of tests taken...best score.... No. of tests taken.....best score.....

จำนวนทดสอบ..... คะแนนสูงสุด.....จำนวนทดสอบ..... คะแนนสูงสุด.....

TU-GET ทียูเก็ท

Others (indicate type) อื่นๆ

ระบุประเภท.....

No. of tests taken...best score.....o. of tests taken.....best score.....

จำนวนทดสอบ..... คะแนนสูงสุด.....จำนวนทดสอบ..... คะแนนสูงสุด.....

10. In your opinion, what English skill should be first improved? (please choose only one answer) ตามความเห็นของท่านทักษะทางภาษาอังกฤษทางด้านไหนควรได้รับการปรับปรุงเป็นอันดับแรก (กรุณาเลือกคำตอบเดียว)

การปรับปรุงเป็นอันดับแรก (กรุณาเลือกคำตอบเดียว)

Speaking การพูด

Listening การฟัง

Reading การอ่าน

Writing การเขียน

11. Which of the following English skills do you have to deal with most in your work?

ทักษะภาษาอังกฤษด้านใดที่ท่านต้องใช่มากที่สุดในงาน ?

Speaking การพูด

Listening การฟัง

Reading การอ่าน

Writing การเขียน

12. Which of the following English skills is the least relevant or the least used in your work? ทักษะภาษาอังกฤษด้านใดที่ท่านต้องใช้น้อยที่สุดในงาน ?

Speaking การพูด

Listening การฟัง

Reading การอ่าน

Writing การเขียน

Part III: Exposure to English

หมวดที่สาม ความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับโอกาสหรือช่องทางการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ

13. Are you convinced that good English proficiency is one of the criteria for job promotion in most companies? ท่านเชื่อหรือไม่ว่าความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษเป็นตัววัดความสามารถ เพื่อเลื่อนตำแหน่ง.

Yes เชื่อ

No ไม่เชื่อ

14. Do you consider learning English as an important obligation for your career development and advancement? ท่านคิดหรือไม่ว่าการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษจำเป็นต่อการความเจริญก้าวหน้าในอาชีพ

Yes คิด

No ไม่คิด

15. Do you believe that you will be able to work more efficiently if you have good English skill? ท่านเชื่อหรือไม่ว่าท่านสามารถทำงานได้อย่างราบรื่นหากท่านมีความรู้ภาษาอังกฤษที่ดี

Yes เชื่อ

No ไม่เชื่อ

16. Do you report to an expatriate boss? ท่านมีหัวหน้างานเป็นชาวต่างชาติหรือไม่

Yes ใช่

No ไม่ใช่

17. Do you have regular interaction with foreigners in the company?

ท่านต้องร่วมงานกับเพื่อนชาวต่างชาติเป็นประจำหรือไม่

Yes ใช่

No ไม่ใช่

18. Do you regularly conduct your meetings, teleconferences or video conferences in English? ท่านดำเนินการประชุมรวมถึงการประชุมทางโทรศัพท์และวิดีโอเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ

Yes ใช่

No ไม่ใช่

19. Do you correspond in English via emails and phone on a daily basis? ปกติท่านได้ตอบอีเมลล์ และพูดทางโทรศัพท์ที่เป็นภาษาอังกฤษเป็นประจำทุกวัน

Yes ใช่

No ไม่ใช่

Part IV: English language proficiency

หมวดที่สี่ ความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ

Please check one box which best describes your opinion in each statement below.

กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย X ในช่องคำตอบที่ตรงกับความคิดเห็นของท่านมากที่สุดเพียงข้อเดียว

SA = strongly agree เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง, A = agree เห็นด้วย, D = disagree ไม่เห็นด้วย,

SD = strongly disagree ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง

Listening Problems ปัญหาในการฟัง

| No. ข้อ | Statement คำถาม | SA เห็นด้วย อย่างยิ่ง | A เห็น ด้วย | D ไม่เห็น ด้วย | SD ไม่เห็น ด้วย อย่างยิ่ง |
|------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 20 | I tend to translate what I heard into Thai and always think of the response in Thai first. เมื่อได้ยินภาษาอังกฤษ ข้าพเจ้ามักแปลภาษาอังกฤษเป็นไทย แล้วคิดคำตอบเป็นภาษาไทยก่อน ค่อยแปลจากไทยเป็นอังกฤษ | | | | |
| 21 | Different English accents and pronunciation affect my understanding on the communicated content. สำเนียงและการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษที่แตกต่างมีผลต่อความเข้าใจของข้าพเจ้า | | | | |
| 22 | I'm unfamiliar with foreign accents and pronunciation. ข้าพเจ้าไม่คุ้นกับสำเนียงของชาวต่างชาติ | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|
| 23 | I'm unable to understand technical terms ข้าพเจ้าไม่เข้าใจศัพท์เฉพาะ | | | | |
| 24 | I'm unable to catch words/conversation ข้าพเจ้ามักไม่สามารถจับคำ หรือใจความระหว่างสนทนา ภาษาอังกฤษ | | | | |
| 25 | I'm unable to understand idiomatic expression or colloquialisms ข้าพเจ้ามักไม่เข้าใจสำนวน หรือโวหารต่างๆ | | | | |
| 26 | I'm unable to remember entire pieces of information discussed in a meeting. ข้าพเจ้ามักมีปัญหาในการจับใจความหรือจำข้อความที่คุยกันในที่ประชุม | | | | |

Speaking Problems ปัญหาในการพูด

| No. ข้อ | Statement คำถาม | SA เห็นด้วย อย่างยิ่ง | A เห็น ด้วย | D ไม่เห็น ด้วย | SD ไม่เห็น ด้วย อย่างยิ่ง |
|------------|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 27 | I do not speak English fluently ข้าพเจ้าพูดภาษาอังกฤษได้ไม่คล่อง | | | | |
| 28 | I am nervous when have to speak English ข้าพเจ้ามักจะตื่นกลัวเวลาพูดภาษาอังกฤษ | | | | |
| 29 | I am unable to pronounce precisely ข้าพเจ้าไม่สามารถออกเสียงได้ถูกต้อง | | | | |
| 30 | I am unable to speak with correct grammar ข้าพเจ้าไม่สามารถพูดภาษาอังกฤษให้ถูกต้องไวยากรณ์ | | | | |
| 31 | I am unable to select the right words or vocabulary when I speak English ข้าพเจ้าไม่สามารถเลือกคำศัพท์ที่ถูกต้องในการพูดคุย ภาษาอังกฤษ | | | | |
| 32 | I have problems presenting the information in order. ข้าพเจ้ามีปัญหาในการเรียบเรียงลำดับการเสนอข้อมูล | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|
| 33 | My foreign colleagues do not understand my message when I speak to them in English เพื่อนชาวต่างชาติของข้าพเจ้าไม่เข้าใจเวลาข้าพเจ้าพูดภาษาอังกฤษ | | | | |
| 34 | I have to translate from Thai to English when I speak ข้าพเจ้าต้องประมวลความคิดจากภาษาไทยแล้วค่อยแปลงเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ | | | | |

Reading Problems ปัญหาในการอ่าน

| No. ข้อ | Statement คำถาม | SA เห็นด้วย อย่างยิ่ง | A เห็น ด้วย | D ไม่เห็น ด้วย | SD ไม่เห็น ด้วย อย่างยิ่ง |
|------------|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 35 | I do not have a large vocabulary repertoire ข้าพเจ้าไม่ได้มีรายการประมวลศัพท์ หรือรู้คำศัพท์มากพอเพื่อ เลือกใช้ในการสื่อสาร | | | | |
| 36 | I do not know most abbreviations โดยส่วนใหญ่ข้าพเจ้าไม่รู้จักคำย่อ | | | | |
| 37 | I do not manage to read with speed and fluency ข้าพเจ้าไม่มีความสามารถในการอ่านให้เร็วและคล่อง | | | | |
| 38 | I am unable to interpret complex sentences ข้าพเจ้ามักจะไม่สามารถแปลประโยคยาวๆ ได้ | | | | |
| 39 | It is difficult for me to draw a main idea of what I have read. ข้าพเจ้าไม่สามารถจับใจความหรือ แยกแยะใจความสำคัญของ เรื่องที่อ่านได้ | | | | |
| 40 | I have to read a long article or long messages more than once in order to understand the content. ข้าพเจ้าต้องอ่านหลายครั้งเวลาอ่านเรื่องยาวๆ เพื่อทำความเข้าใจ กับสิ่งที่อ่าน | | | | |

Writing Problems ปัญหาในการเขียน

| No. ข้อ | Statement คำถาม | SA เห็นด้วย อย่างยิ่ง | A เห็น ด้วย | D ไม่เห็น ด้วย | SD ไม่เห็น ด้วย อย่างยิ่ง |
|------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 41 | I'm unable to convey a 100% clear and precise message in my writing. การเขียนภาษาอังกฤษของข้าพเจ้าไม่สามารถสื่อความหมายที่ ข้าพเจ้าต้องการสื่อได้ 100% | | | | |
| 42 | I have some problems with grammar usage for my writing. ข้าพเจ้ามีข้อบกพร่องในการใช้ไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษหลายกรณี | | | | |
| 43 | I am unable to use a variety of vocabulary without consulting a dictionary ข้าพเจ้าไม่สามารถเลือกใช้คำศัพท์ที่หลากหลายโดยไม่พึ่งพาค ดิกชันนารี | | | | |
| 44 | I'm unable to choose the right words to communicate in my writing. ข้าพเจ้าไม่สามารถเลือกใช้คำที่ถูกต้องในการเขียน | | | | |
| 45 | My boss has to check my writing before I can release the message. หัวหน้าของข้าพเจ้ามักต้องตรวจเช็คและแก้ไขงานเขียน ของข้าพเจ้าก่อนส่งข้อความนั้นออก | | | | |
| 46 | Miscommunication occasionally exists as the person I contact can hardly understand my point when I write to them. บ่อยครั้งผู้ที่ข้าพเจ้าติดต่อด้วยไม่เข้าใจหรือเข้าใจคลาดเคลื่อน กับสิ่งที่ข้าพเจ้าสื่อสาร | | | | |
| 47 | I have high tendency to miscommunicate with people when I write them emails. ข้าพเจ้ามีแนวโน้มที่จะสื่อสารผิดเมื่อเขียนเมลภาษาอังกฤษ | | | | |
| 48 | It takes time for me to write an email ข้าพเจ้าใช้เวลาค่อนข้างนานในการเขียนเมลแต่ละฉบับ | | | | |

Cultural Problems ปัญหาทางวัฒนธรรม

| No. ข้อ | Statement คำถาม | SA เห็นด้วย อย่างยิ่ง | A เห็น ด้วย | D ไม่เห็น ด้วย | SD ไม่เห็น ด้วย อย่างยิ่ง |
|------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 49 | I am nervous when have to speak to a | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|--|--|--|--|
| | person at the management level. ข้าพเจ้ามักจะตื่นกลัวเวลาต้องพูดคุยกับผู้บริหารระดับสูง | | | | |
| 50 | I feel uncomfortable being asked to speak up in a meeting. ข้าพเจ้ารู้สึกอึดอัดไม่สบายใจเวลาถูกเรียกให้พูดหรือเสนอความคิดเห็นในที่ประชุม | | | | |
| 51 | I feel that foreigners are too straight forward. ข้าพเจ้ารู้สึกว่าชาวต่างชาติพูดตรงเกินไป | | | | |
| 52 | I tend to misinterpret my foreign colleagues' nonverbal language. ข้าพเจ้ามักจะแปลท่าทีและเจตนาของเพื่อนต่างชาติผิด | | | | |
| 53 | I think showing respect to my boss is not challenging him. ข้าพเจ้าคิดว่าการให้เกียรติหัวหน้างาน คือไม่ได้แข็งหรือท้าทายความคิดเห็นของหัวหน้างาน | | | | |
| 54 | Directness shows no respect and could hurt me. การพูดตรงเป็นการไม่ให้เกียรติและทำให้ข้าพเจ้ารู้สึกเสียใจ | | | | |
| 55 | I feel that foreigners are too aggressive. ข้าพเจ้ารู้สึกว่าชาวต่างชาติก้าวร้าวเกินไป | | | | |

Part V: Suggestions for Language Learning & Improvement

หมวดที่ห้า ความคิดเห็นในการเรียนรู้และพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษ

56. Do you think the current English classes provided by the company are good and could help with employees' language improvement?

ท่านคิดว่าการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษที่บริษัทจัดให้นั้นดีพอที่จะทำให้พนักงานสามารถพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษ

หรือไม่

Yes ใช่

No ไม่ใช่

Please indicate the reason กรุณาระบุเหตุผล:

57. What learning source do you think is the most effective way of improving your English? การเรียนแบบไหนที่ท่านคิดว่าเป็นวิธีการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษที่ได้ผลดีที่สุด

- English Class Room E-learning on the job learning
 เรียนในห้องเรียน เรียนทางอินเทอร์เน็ต เรียนรู้จากการใช้งานจริง

58. What else could the company do to improve employees' English proficiency?

ข้อเสนอแนะอื่นใดที่คิดว่าบริษัทฯ สามารถจัดทำเพื่อพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษของพนักงาน

59. Please share one of your past experiences on English language barriers.

กรุณาเล่าประสบการณ์ที่ท่านประสบปัญหาในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ

Thank you very much for your participation. ขอขอบคุณที่กรุณาตอบแบบสอบถาม

ชำนาญ หอสมุด