English Speaking Problem and Solutions between Employees and Customers in Workplaces

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ABSTRACT

Language is a very important tool for human communication. To be successful in speaking, people may use both verbal and non-verbal communication. Using effective communication may not be easy for many people. This study examined 40 Thai employees and 17 foreign customers from three hotels and three tour agencies in Trang, Thailand. The data for this study were collected through a questionnaire from 40 Thai employees. 17 foreign customers answered two open-ended questions, and then the interview was asked. The participants answered about problems and solutions in speaking English. The finding of this study showed that most employees and foreign customers had more verbal communication than non-verbal communication. However, they used several solutions to solve those problems based on their perspectives and experiences.

Keywords: English speaking, problem, and solutions, employees and customers, verbal and non-verbal communication

INTRODUCTION

In globalization, English has become the official language of fifty-three countries and the most common second language worldwide, and it also causes an increasing number of foreign customers in each country. Therefore, English communication is an essential tool for employees to contact customers in international organizations.

In native English-speaking countries, speakers of English can communicate effectively, while others who use English as a second language and a foreign language may find it challenging to achieve the same level of communication dealing with misunderstandings in communication. Verbal and non-verbal language are used as communicative techniques to express people’s thoughts, opinions, or feelings when faced with some communication problems (Dörnyei, 1995). In general, communication
problems may occur from people who use different languages and have different cultural backgrounds.

Abuarqoub (2019) studied language barriers to effective communication. The study results showed that ineffective communication generally comes from linguistics competence and poorly explained words and messages. Similarly, Pandito (2017) said that “speaking problems are related to something which baffled or perplexed with what cannot understand clearly and applies to an utterance or behavior that is very difficult to interpret or unable to speak English fluently and correctly with people through spoken English.” A lack of understanding regarding English speaking may result in ineffective communication between employees and customers in workplaces. In addition, this issue may result in an ineffective work process which leads to low productivity, low customer satisfaction, and low profit. Moreover, communication management is interrelated with organizational resources, such as working networks and job stability. Furthermore, it can lead organizations to success and work as professional workers (Markaki et al., 2013). It is still uncertain whether communication problems come from language abilities or different backgrounds of culture and experience.

There is little research examining English-speaking problems and solutions between employees and customers in workplaces, especially not in the Thai business context. As told by many Thai employees and customers, they still commit English-speaking problems. Therefore, it is necessary to find out problems and solutions in English speaking, both verbal and non-verbal communication between employees and customers in workplaces located in Trang province of Thailand, where tourism is the major business. This can help Thai employees speak English with foreign customers more effectively and help them understand Thai employees when they speak English more easily.

**Research Questions**

This study seeks to address the following research questions.

1. What problems do employees and foreign customers have when they use verbal language in English speaking?
2. What problems do employees and foreign customers have when they use non-verbal language in English speaking?

3. How do they solve those problems?

Limitations of the Study

Since the study periods were between January and March, the study was time limitations due to the severe outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, it was difficult to collect the data and extremely risky for the researchers to speak and contact many people, either foreigners or Thais, in a long time. Moreover, the time periods of data collection in Trang province were in the low season, which could cause fewer respondents who were travellers. Therefore, the quantity of the information may be insufficient for the study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

English speaking is difficult when a sender and a receiver have different language backgrounds and uses especially verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication uses sounds and words to express something, in contrast to using gestures or mannerisms (non-verbal communication). Suchona & Shorna (2019) stated that “language learning is a procedure that involves several factors, such as motivation, attitude, anxiety and so on.” Wahyuni (2018) defines verbal abilities as one's skills related to the use of ideas through words, either oral or written. These skills involve vocabulary mastery to be able to choose the right words to give meaning to the audience.” Also, it refers to the ability to organize the words to make a great speaking. Gorawara-Bhat et al. (2017) mentioned that verbal communication is the inseparable heart of physician communication. When there is miscommunication among physicians, it may affect patients. In addition, Beyea (2004) indicated that verbal communication between clinicians generally is much less structured and consistent than written communication. Nevertheless, when information is transferred verbally, valuable data can be lost easily if a receiver does not emphasize and pay enough attention to it.
In successful communication, there is not only verbal speaking (oral communication) that can make people speaking succeed or get through the point of what both parties agree. Another important way to succeed in speaking is by using non-verbal communication or body language. One of the non-verbal definitions, that non-verbal is like generally spoken language. Each body language or gesture is like a word in spoken language; it means one gesture for one word, and one word can have several different meanings depending on the receiver’s thought (Yuksel, 2008).

Non-verbal communication includes body language, facial expression, physical appearance, symbolism, and so on. In addition, some believe that non-verbal is more influential than verbal communication. For example, Knapp, M.L.; Hall, J.A, and Horgan (2013) stated that verbal communication can be less effective if non-verbal communication cannot be performed well. According to Birdwhistell’s journal (as cited in Islam & Kirillova, 2020), the data showed that 65% of human communication was used for non-verbal and the rest was verbal. It can be said that non-verbal is more important for judging emotional and attitudinal expressions, relational communication, and impression formation. The perception of emotional information, attitudinal cues, and ways of individuals' thinking is indicated through non-verbal communication (Burgoon, J.K.; Flyod, K.; Guerrero, 2010). Therefore, to make a successful conversation for a sender and a receiver of messages, they need to understand both verbal and non-verbal languages. People can share information, ideas, and feelings with spoken words as well as body language.

Using verbal and non-verbal communication cannot be effective if people cannot overcome the problems and use appropriate solutions. According to Jureddi, D.N., and Kirillova (2016), there are several aspects of communication problems that occurred from language use in communication, level of understanding language, developing relationships with others, talking with others in a way that facilitates openness and honesty, completeness of the message, clarity of the message, the integrity of the message, conciseness of the message, consideration of physical setting and the recipient, courtesy to be maintained, and correctness of the message. The barriers to effective communication mentioned can make a sender and a receiver lack of success in goals, jobs, and tasks because it prevents the flow of information between a sender and a receiver. Thus, the researcher stated that “the sender should send the right message to
the right receiver through the right channel at the right time and place with the right feedback.”

Abuarqoub (2019) studied language barriers to effective communication. This study showed that language or semantic barriers arise from different subjects such as meanings and uses of words, symbols, images, gestures, languages, and dialects. All these are relevant to the elements of the communication process involving a sender and a receiver, messages, channels, noise, feedback or response to the verbal and non-verbal messages, and environment. Communication problems could occur during the encoding or decoding of messages into words or ideas. This study also pointed out the solutions of solving those problems briefly. First, the language used should be clear, concrete, accurate, familiar, and meaningful words, and try to avoid grammatical mistakes, ambiguous words, dialect, and minimize the use of jargon. Second, feedback can be considered the response in comprehension of messages between a sender and a receiver. Other ways to solve communication problems can be hiring bilingual workers, qualified, licensed translators, or translation machines. The previous studies showed the common problems and solutions in communication, focusing on both speaking and writing skills.

However, this study is emphasized both verbal and non-verbal language in English speaking, which many employees and customers commonly use in workplaces.

METHOD

This research is quantitative research. It focuses on English-speaking problems and solutions between employees and customers in workplaces located in Trang, Thailand.

Participants

The participants were 40 employees who worked at three hotels and three tour agencies in Trang, Thailand, and 17 foreign customers who contacted those employees. The employees had experience using English to communicate with foreign customers for at least five years or above. Those employees were 30 females and 10 males. This study focused on both employees and foreign customers.
Data Collection

The data was collected from a quantitative questionnaire that was designed to identify English speaking problems, including verbal communication and non-verbal communication problems between Thai employees and foreign customers. The employees were assigned to do a questionnaire that consisted of three main parts. The first part was the employees’ personal information. The second part was the employees’ English-speaking problems that occurred when they spoke English with foreign customers. In this part, the data were rated by the 5-point scale, a scale of 5 to 1 where 5 was strong agreement till 1 was strong disagreement, respectively. In the third part, two open-ended questions were given to the employees to explain their solutions regarding the mentioned problems. In terms of customers, they were assigned to do two open-ended questions. The first question was the customers’ English-speaking problems that occurred when they spoke with Thai employees in English. The second question was the customers’ solutions regarding the mentioned problems. After finishing the questions, the customers were interviewed to get in-depth information.

Data Analysis

The survey data in a questionnaire were collected and analyzed using SPSS to answer the research questions. The first questionnaire was designed for the employees. The data from the first part of the questionnaire were calculated into a percentage. The employees’ problems towards English communication were presented in a table form and calculated into mean and standard deviation that could be interpreted into strong agreement till disagreement. Last, the employees’ solutions for solving those problems were summed up using a grouping technique. The second questionnaire was designed for the customers. The two open-ended questions were analyzed and summed up using a grouping technique. The interview data were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis by grouping under the same theme.
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

According to the employees’ responses, there were 40 respondents consisting of 30 females or 75% of the respondents and 10 males or 25% of the respondents. According to the respondents, 37 respondents, or 92.5% of the respondents, were aged between 22 and 35 years old, while 3 respondents or 7.5% of the respondents were aged between 36 and 45 years old. In response to their educational background, 35 respondents, or 87.5%, graduated with a bachelor’s degree. 4 respondents or 10% of the respondents graduated with a diploma’s degree. Only 1 respondent or 2.5% of the respondents graduated with a master’s degree. Most of them work as a receptionist, a customer service advisor, and a travel operator.

Table 1 Employees’ Verbal Communication Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Level of Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Accents can make the conversation difficult to understand.</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Grammar, Jargon, and wording can make the conversation difficult to understand.</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tone of voice can make the conversation difficult to understand.</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>.864</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Informal language can make the conversation difficult to understand.</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>.953</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Using affirmative sounds and words like “uh-huh” and “got you” can make the conversation difficult to understand.</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.019</td>
<td>Disagreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to Question 1 (Accents can make the conversation difficult to understand), there were 9 respondents or 22.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that accents could make the conversation difficult to understand, while 14 respondents or 35% of the respondents agreed with this issue. Next, there were 14 respondents, or 35% of the respondents moderately agreed that accents could make the conversation difficult to understand. Finally, there were 3 respondents, or 7.5% of the respondents disagreed with this issue, while no respondent strongly disagreed that accents could make the conversation difficult to understand. In conclusion, most of the respondents agreed and moderately agreed that accents could make the conversation difficult to understand.
In response to Question 2 (Grammar, jargon, and wording can make the conversation difficult to understand.), there were 5 respondents or 12.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that grammar, jargon, and wording could make the conversation difficult to understand, while 12 respondents or 30% of the respondents agreed with these issues. Next, there were 16 respondents, or 40% of the respondents moderately agreed that grammar, jargon, and wording could make the conversation difficult to understand. Finally, 7 respondents, or 17.5%, disagreed with these issues, while no respondents strongly disagreed that grammar, jargon, and wording could make the conversation difficult to understand. In conclusion, most respondents moderately agreed that grammar, jargon, and wording could make the conversation difficult to understand.

In response to Question 3 (Tone of voice can make the conversation difficult to understand.), there were 6 respondents or 15% of the respondents strongly agreed that tone of voice could make the conversation difficult to understand, while 14 respondents or 35% of the respondents agreed with this issue. Next, 16 respondents or 40% of the respondents moderately agreed that tone of voice could make the conversation difficult to understand. Finally, 4 respondents or 10% of the respondents, disagreed with this issue, while no respondent strongly disagreed that tone of voice could make the conversation difficult to understand. In conclusion, most of the respondents moderately agreed that tone of voice could make the conversation difficult to understand.

In response to Question 4 (Informal language can make the conversation difficult to understand.), there were 4 respondents or 10% of the respondents strongly agreed that informal language could make the conversation difficult to understand, while 11 respondents or 27.5% of the respondents agreed with this issue. Next, 14 respondents or 35% of the respondents moderately agreed that informal language could make the conversation difficult to understand. Finally, there were 11 respondents, or 27.5% of the respondents disagreed with this issue, while no respondent strongly disagreed that informal language could make the conversation difficult to understand. In conclusion, most of the respondents moderately agreed that informal language could make the conversation difficult to understand.

In response to Question 5 (Using affirmative sounds and words like “uh-huh” and “got you” can make the conversation difficult to understand.), there were 3 respondents or 7.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that using affirmative sounds and words could
make the conversation difficult to understand, while 8 respondents or 20% of the respondents agreed with these issues. Next, there were 13 respondents, or 32.5% of the respondents moderately agreed that using affirmative sounds and words could make the conversation difficult to understand. Finally, 14 respondents or 35% disagreed with these issues, and 2 respondents or 5% strongly disagreed that using affirmative sounds and words could make the conversation difficult to understand. In conclusion, most of the respondents disagreed that using affirmative sounds and words could make the conversation difficult to understand.

**Employees’ Solutions on Solving those Problems**

According to the employees’ solutions regarding verbal communication problems, there were many different solutions from their responses. The most common solution that employees used to solve their verbal communication problems could be divided into 10 main solutions.

The first solution was to use gestures and symbols instead of speaking to convey messages. According to the responses, half of the respondents stated that if a conversation went wrong, whether it occurred from weird accents, jargon, informal language, and so on, using gestures and symbols was an easy and effective way to solve the problem.

The second solution was to listen carefully to a key message more than worrying about grammar. Half of the responses believed that listening to a key message was more important than grammar because a key message was actual customer needs. If they paid more attention to grammar than a key message, they might lose track of actual customer needs, and this issue could lead to unsuccessful and ineffective conversation.

The third solution was to use a translator. According to the responses, half of them said that they used a translator to find the meaning of a word when their customers used difficult vocabulary that they did not understand. They believed that this was an easy way to solve the problem because it was comfortable and fast.

The fourth solution was to use simple vocabulary, grammar, and accent in case of speaking with a customer who had low English proficiency skills. According to the responses, most of them believed that using simple English would enhance
understanding between them and their customers who had low English skills because it was easier to understand than using professional English.

The fifth solution was to practice English regularly. According to the responses, most of the employees had to do regularly practice English skills, especially in listening skills and speaking skills, by listening to English podcasts, talking with English speaking partners who could speak English fluently, and so on. Moreover, these practices might not only help them speak English fluently, but it could train them to speak English confidently.

The sixth solution was to learn the most common English vocabulary in spoken English. According to the responses, most of them believed that verbal communication problems are caused by a lack of adequate vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, those problems would rarely occur to them if they knew enough vocabulary.

The seventh solution was to ask customers to write down their needs in a paper in case employees did not understand a key message that their customers were trying to speak. Most of the responses agreed that this was the most effective and easiest way to solve verbal communication problems.

The eighth solution was to speak slowly, in case of the customers had low listening proficiency skills. The responses believed that speaking slowly with the mentioned type of customers would enhance understanding between them and their customers. Moreover, speaking slowly would make a conversation relaxed and in control.

The ninth solution was to avoid using idioms and jargon. According to responses, some of them believed that using idioms and jargon would make their customers lose track of a key message that they were trying to tell their customers because some idioms and jargon could not be easily understood immediately. Some of those words and phrases often needed more explanations.

The last solution was to try not to be afraid of speaking. According to the responses, they believed that speaking without fear was a key factor to make their customers understand
**Table 2 Employees’ Non-Verbal Communication Problems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Inventory Score</th>
<th>Level of Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The kinesics (e.g., facial expression) can make the conversation</td>
<td>M = 3.20</td>
<td>Disagreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficult to understand.</td>
<td>SD = 1.144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. physical appearances (e.g., professional look, hairstyle) can affect</td>
<td>M = 3.02</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the conversation.</td>
<td>SD = .987</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The proxemics (e.g., serving from a proper distance, appropriate</td>
<td>M = 3.05</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical touch) can affect the conversation.</td>
<td>SD = .864</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Symbolism can make the conversation difficult to understand. For</td>
<td>M = 3.80</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>example, the thumb is a symbol for “good job” in the USA. But in</td>
<td>SD = 1.077</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia, it is used to point rather than a finger.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The differences in beliefs can affect conversation when it comes to</td>
<td>M = 3.62</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dealing with a customer.</td>
<td>SD = .913</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to Question 1 (The kinesics (e.g., facial expression) can make the conversation difficult to understand.), there were 7 respondents or 17.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that the kinesics could make the conversation difficult to understand while 9 respondents or 22.5% of the respondents agreed with this issue. Next, there were 10 respondents, or 25% of the respondents moderately agreed that kinesics could make the conversation difficult to understand. Finally, there were 13 respondents, or 32.5% of the respondents disagreed with this issue, while only 1 respondent or 2.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that kinesics could make the conversation difficult to understand. In conclusion, most respondents disagreed that kinesics (e.g., facial expression) could make the conversation difficult to understand.

In response to Question 2 (The physical appearances (e.g., professional look, hairstyle) can affect the conversation.), there were 3 respondents or 7.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that the physical appearances could affect the conversation while 9 respondents or 22.5% of the respondents agreed with this issue. Next, there were 16 respondents, or 40% of the respondents moderately agreed that physical appearances could affect the conversation. Finally, 10 respondents, or 25% of the respondents, disagreed with this issue while 2 respondents or 5% strongly disagreed that physical appearances could affect the conversation. In conclusion, most of the respondents moderately agreed that the physical appearances (e.g., professional look, hairstyle) could affect the conversation.
In response to Question 3 The proxemics (e.g., serving from a proper distance, appropriate physical touch can affect the conversation.), there were 2 respondents or 5% of the respondents strongly agreed that the proxemics could affect the conversation while 9 respondents or 22.5% of the respondents agreed with this issue. Next, there were 19 respondents, or 47.5% of the respondents moderately agreed that the proxemics could affect the conversation. Finally, there were 9 respondents, or 22.5% of the respondents disagreed with this issue, while only 1 respondent or 2.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the proxemics could affect the conversation. In conclusion, most respondents moderately agreed that the proxemics (e.g., serving from a proper distance, appropriate physical touch) could affect the conversation.

In response to Question 4 (Symbolism can make the conversation difficult to understand. For example, the thumb is a symbol for “good job” in the USA. However, in Malaysia, it is used to point rather than a finger.), there were 14 respondents or 35% of the respondents strongly agreed that symbolism could make the conversation difficult to understand while 10 respondents or 25% of the respondents agreed with this issue. Next, 10 respondents or 25% of the respondents moderately agreed that symbolism could make the conversation difficult to understand. Finally, 6 respondents, or 15% of the respondents disagreed with this issue, while no respondent strongly disagreed that symbolism could make the conversation difficult to understand. In conclusion, most of the respondents strongly agreed that symbolism could make the conversation difficult to understand.

In response to question 5 (The differences in beliefs can affect conversation when it comes to dealing with a customer.), there were 8 respondents or 20% of the respondents strongly agreed that the differences in beliefs could affect the conversation, while 13 respondents or 32.5% of the respondents agreed with this issue. Next, 15 respondents or 37.5% of the respondents moderately agreed that the differences in beliefs could affect the conversation. Finally, there were 4 respondents, or 10% of the respondents disagreed with this issue, while no respondent strongly disagreed that the differences in beliefs could affect the conversation. In conclusion, most of the respondents moderately agreed that the differences in beliefs could affect conversation when it came to dealing with a customer.
Employees’ Solutions on Solving those Problems

According to the employees’ solutions regarding non-verbal communication problems, there were many different solutions from their responses. The most common solutions employees used to solve their non-verbal communication problems could be divided into 6 main solutions. The first solution was to try to learn customers’ cultural backgrounds before speaking with them. Most of the responses believed that non-verbal communication problems were often caused by different cultural backgrounds between the employees and their customers. Therefore, learning customers’ cultural backgrounds before speaking with them was important to avoid those problems and successfully communicate with customers. The second solution was maintaining nice facial expressions, although the employees and their customers were having trouble trying to understand each other. According to the responses, most of them believed that non-verbal communication, especially nice facial expressions, could make a successful conversation because it could give a good context that could promote a conversation. The third solution was to joint personality development courses. According to the responses, most of them believed that non-verbal communication problems are often caused by inappropriate personalities rather than different cultural backgrounds. They suggested that personality development courses such as how to dress like a professional, how to use appropriate body language, and so on, could effectively improve them to be good looking people. The fourth solution was to maintain good eye contact. According to the responses, many of them claimed that good eye contact was important because it built rapport between the employees and their customers and kept their customers engaged with their message. However, too much eye contact could be intimidating. The fifth solution was to practice regularly. According to the responses, most of them stated that the only way to overcome non-verbal communication problems was to learn from their own experiences. They believed that those problems were more complicated than verbal communication problems because most of them were psychological issues that only speaking skills could not solve. The last solution was to use good postures. According to the responses, most of them believed that postures could convey communication patterns. For example, the arms crossed gesture may appear defensive while the open body position conveys a willingness to listen. Therefore, in order to make a successful conversation, good postures were important to practice.
From the above mentioned, many different suggestions could help employees to improve their English speaking when contacts with their customers. It could be divided into 4 main suggestions. First, it was important to find English-speaking partners to talk with. They believed that this was the fastest way to improve their English speaking skills. Moreover, those English-speaking partners would give a lot of encouragement and inspiration to practice English, and they could also help them to correct their common mistakes in English speaking. The second was to try not to be afraid of making mistakes, afraid of not fully understanding everything someone said, or afraid that someone would not understand what you were saying. After that, you had to learn from those mistakes and solve them. By doing this, you would definitely be a better English speaker. The third was to focus more on English pronunciation, the stressing and listening skills of English than the use of grammar because English speaking skills required good listening and speaking skills more than knowledge of grammar. The last suggestion was to watch English movies with English soundtracks and English subtitles. You would get used to the native sound, the pronunciation, and the stress of the English language through the practices. Moreover, this is considered the easiest way to practice English speaking skills.

**English Communication Problems of Thai Employees Affecting Foreign Customers**

This section presents foreign customers who responded to the open-ended questions that asked them about their problems of English communication with Thai employees and interviewed to ask them to explain more about those problems. The analysis of their responses showed that all 17 foreign customers experienced verbal communication problems more than non-verbal communication problems when talking with Thai employees. Most of them said that the most common problems were intonation, pronunciation, and accent. According to the responses, some of them pointed out that they could not understand the Thai accent. In addition to the accent, they often faced misused and weird intonation when speaking with Thai employees. If intonation was misused, it could make a conversation confused and difficult to understand. In addition to the mentioned problems, they are sometimes encountered with differences in language backgrounds and skills. Some of them pointed out that Thai employees did not
speak English fluently. Moreover, when they rapidly spoke with Thai employees, they found that Thai employees were unable to understand.

**Foreign Customers’ Solutions on Solving those Problems**

Their solutions regarding verbal communication problems could be divided into 5 main solutions based on their own perspectives and experiences. In this era, where technology was considered as a tool providing endless convenience, a translation application was an interesting alternative that could effectively and rapidly help people understand languages. According to the first solution, many customers said they used a translation application such as Google Translate to solve their English-speaking problems when speaking with their employees. However, some of them believed that using a translation application was not the best solution. According to the second solution, they also stated that too repeatedly and slowly speaking could enhance a better understanding rather than speak rapidly. The third solution was to listen carefully and to pay enough attention to the message. They believed that this was the primary solution to solve verbal communication problems. According to the fourth solution, some of them used simple sentences, words, and grammar that effectively solved verbal communication problems as it could enhance a better understanding more than using academic sentences, words, and grammar. In the last solution, they would write down English sentences as their desire on a paper in case their employees did not understand what they were trying to say.

In terms of their solutions regarding non-verbal communication problems, there were only 2 main solutions as most of the customers did not think that non-verbal communication was problematic when it came to speaking with employees. The first solution mentioned different cultural backgrounds often caused that non-verbal communication problem. Therefore, the best way to solve the problem was to follow the customs of those who live when visiting a foreign land as a famous proverb “When in Rome, do as the Roman do.” The second solution was to use good postures when speaking. According to their responses, posture was very important when speaking with people because it could convey a positive and negative message. For example,
appropriate postures indicated leadership and confidence, while bad or inappropriate postures indicated disinterest, lack of confidence, and possibly low self-esteem.

DISCUSSIONS

Most Thai employees and foreign customers agreed that they had encountered more English communication problems on verbal communication than non-verbal communication. The majority of the employees and foreign customers agreed that accents could make the conversation difficult to understand. Besides, misused voice tone when speaking English could directly affect listeners and make a conversation confused and difficult to understand. However, the employees solved the problems using gestures and symbols instead of speaking to convey messages. On the other hand, the foreign customers tried to speak English slowly or wrote down English messages on a piece of paper. Other several useful solutions were offered as mentioned above. For the reasons, the employees need more practice to gain experience that can enable them to improve their English communication skills. The foreign customers also need to understand the language barriers of Thai people in order to speak slowly and pay attention when speaking English with them.

CONCLUSION

According to the data collected from the employees’ English-speaking problems, the employees had problems when speaking English with customers that mostly related to verbal communication. Most problems came from the accent, related to the tone of voice and grammar or jargon. In terms of non-verbal communication, most of the respondents moderately agreed that it could make the conversation more difficult to understand, except the symbolism, the differences in beliefs, and facial expressions that many people agreed that could affect their conversations, as you can see at the percentage table shown in Table 1 and 2. According to Question 2, the solutions of verbal communication problems, most of the employees, hotel and tour agency employees seemed to have the same solutions to solve the problems as they tried to speak and listen carefully, using gestures more than speaking, and watching movies.
to practice their English skills. According to the solutions of non-verbal communication problems, most respondents agreed that learning customers’ cultural backgrounds and nice facial expressions were important when speaking with foreigners. Besides, most of them said that learning from previous experiences could help them improve their English-speaking skills.

Secondly, 17 foreign customers were assigned to do open-ended questions. The results indicated that the most common problems were verbal communication, including pronunciation and intonation. Suchona & Shorna (2019) study indicated that pronunciations were the most important tool for having effective English speaking. On the other hand, foreign customers experienced a few non-verbal communication problems. This is probably because they could understand the different cultures in each country. For the solutions, most of them preferred to use an application on a smartphone to help. Some said that if the receiver could not understand their language correctly, they used gestures and body language to help their conversation. According to Knapp, M.L.; Hall, J.A, and Horgan (2013) study, they claimed that verbal speaking would be less effective if non-verbal communication could not be performed well.

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