

Foreign Guests' Satisfaction with Hotel Front Office Staff's English-Speaking Communication Ability and Cross-Cultural Communication

Sarinrat Sertpunya* Tanuya Petsong And Prasit Nakpathumswat

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Abstract

This study investigated foreign guests' satisfaction with hotel front office's English-speaking communication ability case study Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel and focused on English Skills and Cross-Cultural communication.

The objectives of this study were to find out the level of foreign guests' satisfaction with hotel front office's English-Speaking communication ability case study Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel and to find out the ways to improve Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's English-Speaking communication ability Cross-Cultural communication.

The research instrument in this study was a questionnaire asking about personal data, guests' satisfaction with Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's English-speaking communication ability, 20 closed-ended questions using a Likert rating scale and an open-ended question. The questionnaire was distributed to 100 foreign guests both male and female, who stayed at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel from March 1- 31, 2023. The convenience sampling method was used in this study. The data were analyzed and presented in descriptive statistics in the form of frequency, Percentage and mean using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The findings show that most guests were male and businesspeople. They came from Asian countries and visited the hotel to do business. Overall the guests' satisfaction with Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's English-Speaking communication ability was at a high level with a 4.03 mean score. Moreover, overall the guests' satisfaction with Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office with the Cross-Cultural communication was at a high level with a 4.04 mean score. For the open-ended question, none respondents offered any

*ผู้ประสานงานหลัก (Corresponding Author)

E-mail : sarinrat.se@northbkk.ac.th

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opinions in this part, indicating that Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's English-Speaking communication ability was sufficient.

Keywords : Foreign Guests' Satisfaction, English-speaking Communication Ability, Front Offices Staff's, Cross-Cultural Communication

Introduction

The English language is used in numerous countries and has become a global language used as the medium of communication in several businesses such as tourism, international trade, international organizations and the hotel business. English Speaking communication plays a significant role in the success of a firm or company (Krizan, Merrier, Logan & William, 2008, p.419). English speaking is one of the English skills used to communicate with foreigners when doing business or other activities. If people who do business with foreigners can trade with foreign quest efficiently, the business will be successful. People who do business with foreigners try to improve their English skills so that they are able to deal with foreign guest efficiently. In regards to the hotel industry, hotel front office has to communicate with both Thai and foreign customers daily, Misunderstandings or misinterpretations when communicating in English with foreign quest occur because English is not the native language of Thais. Thai people who have to do business with foreigners in when communicating English with foreign quests occur because English is not the native language of Thais. Thai people who have to do business with foreigners when communicating English with foreign quests occur because English is not the Native language of Thais. Thai people who have to do business with foreigner thus typically seek to improve their English-speaking skills so that they are able to deal with foreign customer more efficiently.

In addition, service business tries to improve their service quality in order to make customers satisfied, especially in the hotel industry. If hotels can provide high quality products and services, they can build strong relationships with customers who will return to stay in their hotels (Johnson & Gustafsson, 2000, P.1). As hotels are experiencing increased competition,

they need to offer high-quality staff as an amenity in addition to nice room. Hotel receptionists have to communicate with both Thai and foreign customer in English with foreign guest. To overcome the communication barriers, hotel front office staff should pay attention to effective communication including verbal and body language because communication is a vital factor in the success of a business.

Therefore, the significance of the hotel industry led the researcher to undertake this research in order to improve and develop hotel front office's staff English speaking communication ability case study Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel and focused on English Skills and Cross-Cultural communication

Research Questions

1. What is the satisfaction level of foreign guests when communicating in English with Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel Front Office staff?
2. In what ways does Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel's front office need to improve English Speaking communication when they communicate with foreign guests?

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To find out the level of foreign customers' satisfaction with Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's staff English Speaking communication ability.
2. To find out the ways to improve Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's staff English Speaking communication ability.

Research Methodology

Subjects / participants

The population of this study were 100 foreign guests, both male and female, who stayed at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel from March 1- 31, 2023. The convenience sampling method (Nunan & Bailey, 2009, p.128) was used in this study. The sampling were 100 foreign guests, both male and female, who stayed at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel from March 1- 31, 2023. The researcher distributed the questionnaires at the Front Office counter of

Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel to sample group until the target number of participants was achieved. The researcher then picked up the questionnaires during the afternoon at two o'clock and the evening at six o'clock.

The research Instrument

The research instrument in this study was a questionnaire containing closed-ended questions and open-ended question and a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was divided into three parts as follows:

Part one obtained demographic data concerning gender, nationality, occupation, the purpose of the trip and frequency of visit to Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel.

Part two asked the foreign guests to indicate their satisfaction with Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's staff English speaking communication ability using closed-ended questions.

Part three was an open-ended question. The open-ended questions in this part asked for the guests' opinions or suggestions for improving Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's staff English Speaking communication ability.

The criteria used in this satisfaction rating with the five-point Likert scale are described as follows:

5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = moderate; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree.

Each range of mean score (\bar{x}) represents the following degree of responses:

4.21 – 5 = the highest satisfaction

3.41 – 4.20 = high satisfaction

2.61 – 3.40 = moderate satisfaction

1.81 – 2.60 = low satisfaction

1.00 – 1.80 = the lowest satisfaction

Research Design

A cross-sectional design was used in this study to explore the level of foreign guest's satisfaction with Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's staff English speaking communication ability. In this type of study, the whole sampling as asked to provide answers to the research question at one point in time. Like a rehearsal before the real performance on the stage, the pilot study was used to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed to 20 colleagues at the hotel who were familiar with the sampling in this study in order to identify any unclear questions, confusing instructions, mistakes, and misspellings and then get feedback. After the pilot study, the questionnaires were distributed to the target group using the convenience sampling method; and picked up after they answered the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences on Personal Computer (SPSS). The statistical method used to analyze data were frequency, percentage and mean.

Frequency and percentage were used to describe the foreign customers' personal data and information concerning Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's staff English Speaking communication ability.

The arithmetic mean was employed to evaluate foreign guest satisfaction with Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's staff English Speaking communication ability.

An open-ended question asked for suggestions from the respondents to find out ways to improve

Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel front office's staff English Speaking communication ability.

Research result

Personal data of the respondents

The first part of the questionnaire investigated the demographic data concerning gender, nationality, occupation, purpose of the trip and frequency of visiting Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel. The information is shown in the form of frequency and percentage of the respondents as follows:

Table 1. Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	62	62
Female	38	38
Total	100	100

From Table 1, the total number of respondents was 100, with 62 male and 38 female respondents. In other words, males accounted for 62% and the rest, 38% of the respondents, were female.

Table 2. Nationality of the Respondents

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
American	21	21
Asian	44	44
Australian	10	10
European	25	25
Others (please specify)	-	-
Total	100	100

According to Table 2, the nationality of respondents, the majority of respondents; 44 respondents, came from Asian countries, accounting for 44%. Next, 25% of respondents were Europeans, 21% of respondents were Americans and 10% of respondents were Australians.

Table 3. Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Businessperson	53	53
Employee	37	37
Government Official	6	6
Other (Please specify)	4	4
Total	100	100

As shown in Table 3, regarding the occupation of the respondents, the majority were businesspeople (53), accounting for 53%. A total of 37% of respondents were employees while 6% of respondents were government officials. The remainder included housewives and others, and accounted for 4%.

Table 4. Purpose of the trip

Purpose of the trip	Frequency	Percentage
Business	54	54
Seminar	23	23
Holiday	23	23
Other (Please specify)	-	-
Total	100	100

As shown in Table 4, 54 respondents visited Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel for business, accounting for 54%, while 23% came for both seminars and holidays (46 respondents).

Table 5. Frequency of visits per year to Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel

Frequency of visits per year to Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel	Frequency	Percentage
1 time	62	62
2-3 times	26	26
More than 3 times	12	12
Total	100	100

As shown in Table 5, the majority of respondents, 62 respondents, visited the hotel one time per year, accounting for 62%. Moreover, 26% of respondents visited the hotel two to three times per year. Only 12% of respondents visited the hotel more than three times per year.

Foreign Guests' Satisfaction toward Hotel Front Office Staffs' English-Speaking Communication Ability and Cross-Cultural Communication

The second part sought to determine the foreign guests' satisfaction with the hotel front office's English-speaking communication ability case study Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel focused on English Skills and Cross-Cultural communication. Closed-ended questions with a five-point Likert scale were used to measure the degree of opinions. The findings are shown in the form of frequency and mean.

Table 6 the Foreign Guests' Satisfaction toward Hotel Front Office Staffs' English-Speaking Communication Ability

Statement	Level of Satisfaction					Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	\bar{x}
English-Speaking Communication Ability						
The Front Office Staffs at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel						
1. speak English fluently and clearly.	-	-	9 (9%)	78 (78%)	13 (13%)	4.04
2. give clear directions and instructions.	-	-	13 (13%)	68 (68%)	19 (19%)	4.06
3. do not speak English too fast.	-	-	38 (38%)	49 (49%)	13 (13%)	3.75
4. always understand my English.	-	-	28 (28%)	53 (53%)	19 (19%)	3.91
5. speak English with customers using appropriate conversation formats.	-	-	12 (12%)	63 (63%)	25 (25%)	4.13
6. respond to your request using appropriate intonation patterns.	-	-	16 (16%)	55 (55%)	29 (29%)	4.13
7. are attentive to customers.	-	-	6	67	27	4.21

			(6%)	(67%)	(27%)	
Overall						4.03

From table 6, the overall findings showed that foreign guests most were highly satisfied ($\bar{X} = 4.03$) with the front office's English-Speaking communication ability of Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel. The details of the findings showed that 78% of foreign guest agreed that the front office's English-Speaking communication ability of Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel fluently and clear ($\bar{X} = 4.04$). A total of 68% of the foreign guest agreed that the front office's English-speaking communication ability of Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel gave clear directions and instructions ($\bar{X} = 4.06$). Meanwhile, 49% of foreign guest agreed that front office's English-Speaking communication ability of Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel did not speak English too fast ($\bar{X} = 3.75$). A total of 53% of foreign guest agreed that the front office's English-speaking communication ability of Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel always understood customers' English ($\bar{X} = 3.91$). Moreover, 63% of foreign guest agreed that front office's English-speaking communication ability of Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel using appropriate conversation formats ($\bar{X} = 4.13$). Finally, 55% of foreign guest agreed that front office's English-Speaking communication ability of Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel responded to customers' request using appropriate intonation patterns ($\bar{X} = 4.13$) while the remaining 67% of foreign guest agreed that the front office's English-Speaking communication ability of Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel was attentive to customers ($\bar{X} = 4.21$).

Table 7 The Foreign Guests' Satisfaction with the Cross-cultural communication of the Front Office Staff at Novotel Bangna Hotel

	Level of Satisfaction	
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Statement	1	2	3	4	5	ean \bar{x}
English – Speaking with the Cross-cultural Communication Ability						
The Front Office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel						
1. speak English with a friendly and polite manner.	-	-	5 (5%)	7 (57%)	8 (38%)	.33
2. provide service with a smile.	-	-		7 (47%)	3 (53%)	.53
3. use appropriate business terms and expressions.	-	-	8 (18%)	0 (60%)	2 (22%)	.04
4. are consistently courteous to customers.	-	-	0 (10%)	7 (67%)	3 (23%)	.13
5. reach appropriately to customers' complaints.	-	-	0 (40%)	0 (40%)	0 (20%)	.81
6. use appropriate gestures to show that they understand customers' needs.	-	-	1 (31%)	2 (52%)	7 (17%)	.86
7. never ask a question in an aggressive manner.	-	-	2 (12%)	3 (63%)	5 (25%)	.13
8. can understand me very well when I use slang words.	-	-	58 (58%)	34 (34%)	8 (8%)	.50
Overall						4.04

Table 7 illustrated the foreign guests' satisfaction with the cross-cultural communication of the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel. Overall the findings showed that most of the foreign guests were highly satisfied with the cross-cultural communication of the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel (\bar{x} = 4.04). The details of the findings showed that 57% of foreign guests agreed that the Front Office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel spoke English in a friendly and polite manner (\bar{x} = 4.33). Meanwhile, 53% of the foreign guests strongly agreed that Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel provided service with a smile (\bar{x} = 4.53). A total of 60% of foreign guests agreed that the Front Office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel used appropriate business terms and expressions (\bar{x} = 4.04).

Furthermore, 67% of foreign guests agreed that the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel were consistently courteous to customer ($\bar{X} = 4.13$). A total of 40% of foreign guests both agreed and moderately agreed that the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel reacted appropriately to customers' complaints ($\bar{X} = 3.80$). On top of that, 52% of respondents agreed that the receptionists at Shangri-La Hotel used appropriate gestures to show that they understood customers' needs ($\bar{X} = 3.86$). Finally, 63% of foreign guests agreed that the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel never asked a question in an aggressive manner ($\bar{X} = 4.13$) while the remaining 58% moderately agreed that the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel could understand customers very well when foreign customers used slang words ($\bar{X} = 3.50$).

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

The open-ended question asked for the opinion or suggestions of the foreign guests in regarding improve the Hotel Front Office Staff's English-Speaking Communication Ability. None of the foreign guests offered any opinions or suggestions in this part. This may indicate that the Hotel Front Office Staffs' English-Speaking Communication Ability is already quite satisfactory.

DISCUSSION

This section concerns how the results relate to the theories and the previous studies as follows:

The Personal Data of the Foreign Guest

The study shows that most foreign guests were male businesspeople from Asian countries who visited Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel to do business one time per year. This result is the same as in Napat Runnakit's (2007), study of the customers' satisfaction with English language communication skill (listening-speaking) of the front desk staff at the Windsor Suites Hotel, with 60.59% of respondents from Asian countries, 17.52% of respondents Europeans, 16.42% of respondents Americans and 5.11% of respondents Australians. Moreover, the comparative study of Waraporn Jitjenkarn (2011) on foreign customers'

satisfaction towards the Bank of Ayudhya PCL staff's English oral communication ability showed that most of respondents were Asian, accounting for 19%.

The Foreign Guests' Satisfaction with English-Speaking Communication and Cross-Cultural Communication Ability of the Front Office Staff at Novotel Bangna Hotel

The results of this study show that most of the foreign guests were highly satisfied with English skills of the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel. This study can be compared with Waraporn Jitjenkam's (2011), study of foreign customers' satisfaction towards the Bank of Ayudhya PCL staff's English oral communication ability, with the findings showing that most of the respondents had the highest satisfaction level toward their ability. Moreover, the results are in line with Napat Runnakit's (2007), study of customers' satisfaction with the English language communication skill (listening-speaking) of the front desk staff at the Windsor Suites Hotel, with the findings showing that the respondents were highly satisfied in terms of speaking English fluently and clearly, giving clear directions and instructions, and always understanding their English.

In terms of not speaking English too fast, speaking English with customers using appropriate conversation formats, being attentive to customers and responding to customer requests using appropriate intonation patterns, the current study is in line with the study of Waraporn Jitjenkam (2011), study of foreign customers' satisfaction towards the Bank of Ayudhya PCL staff's English oral communication ability, with the findings showing that most of respondents were satisfied with these skills of BAY's staff.

The Foreign Guests' Satisfaction with Cross-cultural Communication of the Front Office Staff at Novotel Bangna Hotel

The results of this study showed that most foreign guest were highly satisfied with the cross-cultural communication of the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel. The results are in line with Napat Runnakit's (2007), study of customer's' satisfaction with the English language communication skill (listening-speaking) of the front desk staff at the Windsor Suites Hotel, with the cross-cultural study showing that most of respondents were highly satisfied with the cross-cultural communication of the front desk staff. Moreover. The findings concur

of the study of Waraporn Jitjenkam (2011) on foreign customers' satisfaction towards the Bank of Ayudhya PCL staff's English oral communication ability, which found that most of respondents were highly satisfied with BAY staff's English oral communication ability.

In terms of speaking English with a friendly and polite manner, the findings for this statement showed that most of the respondents had the highest satisfaction level. This indicates that most of respondents were pleased with Thai manners. This is in line with the study of Napat Runnakit (2007), study of customers' satisfaction with the English language communication skill (listening-speaking) of the front desk staff at the Windsor Suites Hotel, which showed that most of respondents were highly satisfied with the expression of sincerity through their friendly and polite manners.

In terms of using appropriate business terms and expressions, the findings for this statement show that most of respondents were highly satisfied with this factor. This can be compared with the study of Napat Runnakit (2007), study of customers' satisfaction with the English language communication skill (listening-speaking) of the front desk staff at the Windsor Suites Hotel, with the findings showing that most of respondents were highly satisfied with using appropriate technical terms.

In terms of reacting appropriately to customers' complaints, the findings for this statement show that most of the respondents were highly satisfied. This result is similar to the study of Napat Runnakit (2007), study of customers' satisfaction with the English language communication skill (listening-speaking) of the front desk staff at the Windsor Suites Hotel, who found that customers were highly satisfied with this factor. Moreover, the finding of this statement was similar to the study of Saranthinee Mongkolrat and Sathirakorn Pongpanich (2009) on foreign patient customers' satisfaction with private hospital, with regard to quality of service. The finding revealed that "Excellent" was at the highest rank in overall performance in this study.

In terms of using appropriate gestures to show that they understood customers' needs and never asked a question in an aggressive manner, the findings show that most of respondents were highly satisfied. Moreover, these results are similar to both Napat Runnakit

(2007), study of customers' satisfaction with the English language communication skill (listening-speaking) of the front desk staff at the Windsor Suites Hotel; in term of using appropriate gestures and asking appropriate questions, and Waraporn Jitjenkam (2011), study of foreign customers' satisfaction towards the Bank of Ayudhaya PCL staff's English oral communication ability, in term of responding to customers request well, with the findings of them showing that most of respondents were highly satisfied and always responded to customer requests well.

Regarding this statement, the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel provided service with a smile, with the finding of this study showing that most of respondents were at the highest satisfaction level. This indicates that most of respondents were pleased with the Thai smile while they were working. Moreover, the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel were consistently courteous to customers and could understand customers very well when they used slang words, indicating that most respondents were highly satisfied with their abilities.

In conclusion, the overall findings show that most foreign guest were highly satisfied with the English skills and cross-cultural communication of the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel. The findings support the concept of customers' satisfaction micro models explained by Erevelles and Leavitt (1992) and the theory of customers' satisfaction explained by the Times 100 Business Case Studies (2012), online business studies and business English resource from England. Erevelles and Leavitt (1992) explained that emotion, pleasure and feeling affect moods during the consumption experience. The Times 100 Business Case Studies (2012) pointed out that good products and services, good customer service and good after-sales services can increase the level of customers' satisfaction. Moreover, the results of this study are similar to the study of Waraporn Jitjenkam (2011), study of foreign customers' satisfaction towards the Bank of Ayudhya PCL staff's English oral communication ability, found that most of the respondents were highly satisfied with BAY staff's English oral communication. However, the study of Napat Runnakit (2007), study of customers' satisfaction with the English language communication skill (listening-speaking) of the front desk

staff at the Windsor Suites Hotel, is not similar to this study because the level of customers' satisfaction was at a moderate level.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

1. Foreign Guests had a high level of satisfaction with the English skills of the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel

2. Foreign Guests had the highest satisfaction with the English skills of the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel in term of being attentive to customers.

3. The Foreign Guests had a high level of satisfaction with the cross-cultural communication ability of the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel

4 With regard to the statement that the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel spoke English with a friendly and polite manner, the foreign guests showed the highest level of satisfaction.

5 With regard to statement that the front office at Novotel Bangkok Bangna Hotel provided service with a smile, the foreign guests showed the highest level of satisfaction.

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ผู้เขียน

Sarinrat Sertpunya *

Tanuya Petsong

Prasit Nakpathumswat

Curriculum Instructor of Doctor of Philosophy Program in English Language Studies, Liberal Arts Faculty.
North Bangkok University