

# **EXPLORING THE DIFFICULTIES OF ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL WORKPLACE: A CASE STUDY OF THAI AIRLINE RAMP STAFF BASED IN BANGKOK**

Nattayanee JUNNONT<sup>1</sup> and Wannana SOONTORNNARUERANGSEE<sup>2</sup>

1 Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University, Thailand; nattayanee.j@ku.th

2 Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University, Thailand; wannana.s@ku.th

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## **ABSTRACT**

The main objective of this study was to explore the problematic English used situations and the difficulties in English language communication as perceived by Thai ramp staff at Don Mueang International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand. The researchers would like to know their problems in English language communication skills when dealing with English at work. The instruments were pre-interview, questionnaire, and post-interview. The participants consisted of 67 ramp staff from several companies of Don Mueang International Airport. The pre-interview was firstly conducted to gain information about their English working environment. Then, the questionnaire questions were created by using the information gained from the pre-interview. After receiving the results from the questionnaire, the post-interview was conducted to gain in-depth opinions. The data were analyzed and shown in the form of descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation, and level of agreement. The findings revealed that the respondents mostly use English at work every day. Regarding the problems of English oral communication at the workplace, the respondents had a high level of agreement in overall problems of English usage in the workplace. English background knowledge and the negative attitudes were the main results which were mentioned by the ramp staff. The inability to use the correct grammar including terms and pronunciation was mentioned. In addition, they mentioned being insulted, avoiding communication and nervousness. The results could be used as valuable data for the company, related department, and ramp staff who want to develop English language capabilities to enhance the effectiveness of communication at the workplace.

**Keywords:** English Oral Communication, International Workplace, Ramp Staff, English Language, English Difficulty

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## INTRODUCTION

The English language is universally used in the international workplace as it is acknowledged to be the dominant business language in the international workforce (Talerungsri, 2019). Many international industries have agreed to use English as a language policy, the language that organizations adopted as a corporate language. The example of international industries are computers, tourism, hotels and airlines as the nature of the business is to globally communicate with the customers and/or the colleagues.

One of the examples of international industries is airline business. Aviation industry, the multinational business, gathers people from overseas to collaborate in one company. That is the reason to formulate the main language to communicate among workers. In addition, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which establishes regulations for aviation safety, security, operating practices and procedures covering the technical field of aviation, mentioned that ‘the heart of aviation business is safety’ (Accuris, n.d.); thus, to avoid a misunderstanding when communicating among world-wide staff, English is assigned to be used as the main language. ICAO also set up the disciplines of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for the aviation field.

English that is used in the aviation field has many specific characteristics such as phraseologies, abbreviations, and technical terms. Not only the pilots, air traffic controllers, and cabin crew, but also ground staff, engineers, technicians, and ramp staff use the aviation English (Vincent, 2015). To make it clear about the specific characteristics of aviation English, the researchers provide the readers some examples below.

### **Phraseology.**

‘How do you read me?’; it means ‘What is the readability of my transmission?’

### **Abbreviation.**

‘DFAK’ means daily first aid kit.

### **Technical Term.**

‘galley’ means the kitchen on the aircraft.

At the airport, there are many areas which are divided according to the functions of the airport use, such as departure hall, arrival hall, check-in area, boarding gate, airline offices among others. The different areas of the airport also differentiate the English language use in specific areas. For example, the English use in the area of the check-in counter is mostly related to check-in baggage, passport, boarding pass, boarding time and boarding gate information.

Moreover, there is another area in the airport called airport ramp or airport apron, located outside the terminal. This is the place where a lot of activities are chaotically conducted. Airport ramp is the location where the aircraft are parked, loaded and unloaded the baggage, provided the food and beverages, refueled, embarked and disembarked the crew members and passengers (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2011).

Staff who work in the airport ramp shall use the specific English which is related to ramp area vehicles, equipment, aircraft stairs, aircraft services, catering, and technical terms about the aircraft operations.

There are several workers from many departments who work in the area of the airport ramp. All of them have their specific tasks to do with the flight departure, arrival, and other operations. For example, the engineers and technicians are responsible for checking the aircraft safety systems, in-flight serviced agents are in charge of flight catering, cleaners will clean the aircraft once the passengers already disembarked, and ramp staff are mainly responsible for marshaling, baggage loading, aircraft refueling, and other under-wing servicing (Betterteam, n.d.; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2011).

According to ramp staff duties, although they do not directly deal with the passengers, their English skills are still required for routine work as the airline business is one of the international workplaces and ICAO assigned English to be used as a main language. They frequently use

English to complete the flight reports, communicate with pilots and foreign staff, attend meetings, study from English operational manuals, and deal with machines/devices whose programs are in English.

The focus of this study is the characteristics of Thai airline ramp staff, as follows. Firstly, the staff were not required to submit the English proficiency when applying for the job while the real working environment is surrounded by English-used activities. Secondly, as Vincent (2015) indicated, the ICAO, International Civil Aviation Organization, assigned English to be used in the aviation field as to avoid misunderstanding particularly with the safety-related matters. And lastly, Thai ramp staff, who participated in this study and use English as a foreign language (Somjai & Soontornwipast, 2020), are frequently associated with the staff from other countries who speak English as a second language. For example, crewmembers operate the flights from Singapore to Bangkok, or inspection team members come from Malaysia to audit the ground operations at Bangkok base.

The English communication of airline ramp staff can be divided into written and oral communication. In this study, the researchers focus on only English oral communicative situations. For written communication, if there is an opportunity, the researchers would like to explore it in the future.

The researchers would like to investigate their routine working situations in which they have to deal with oral form communication in English. The English difficulties and communication problems will be carefully observed and recorded for the maximum benefit of the participants. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there are several studies of English and communication skills for other airline professions but the study of the ramp staff in Thailand has not much been reviewed. Therefore, it is worth exploring the uses of oral English communication in the international workplace of Thai Airline Ramp staff.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **International Workplace Communication**

International workplace is a concept that a company which consists of different national workers carries on business in the home base country (headquarter) and other countries as its subsidiaries. Workers have to deal with multinational colleagues in various communicative situations. In order to reach the company goal, several skills of communication are used to achieve the target of company such as the interpersonal skills and language skills (Kullabs, n.d.; Rajprasit & Hemchua, 2015; "QS Study", n.d.)

Since a company can have several bases in different countries, the communication among bases regularly occurs, which can be daily, weekly, and monthly. Hiranburana (2017) discusses that writing skill is required for international workplace settings. It is used for sending emails and sending messages. Rajprasit and Hemchua (2015) mention that the oral communication or speaking skill is required in several working contexts such as teamwork and overseas meetings. Airline business is one of the international workplaces as it gathers young and old staff from many places in the world to work together in the same company. In their daily working life, ramp staff whose duties are most related to ramp areas, actually always communicate with other foreign colleagues in many working situations.

### **English in the International Workplace**

#### **English for International Communication,**

At this moment, English has become the most outstanding means of communication (Ghomari, 2015). Thus, the communication skills in English are the fundamental role in workplace situations (Moslehifara & Ibrahim, 2012) and by having good skills in communication, it can be the way of success in the future career path (Mehta & Mehta, 2019).

Ramp staff who always work as a team and coordinate with other co-workers such as pilots, cabin crew, engineers and overseas colleagues, should have knowledge about the

appropriateness of language use and the culture awareness of other team members, especially when they work in the international working environment. This is because a good understanding of communication can build and maintain the interpersonal relationships and the social interaction of the workplace (Cheng, Lam, & Kong, 2019).

### **English Policy in the Workplace**

Nowadays, many businesses which operate cross-border are greatly increasing and that is the reason why the working environment is becoming multilingual. Thus, English is introduced to be used as a corporate language (Ahmad, 2017). In the airline fields, especially the airline which has many subsidiary countries, English is the main language for all staff of all hubs to use when communicating with one another as well as subsidiaries (Vincent, 2015).

### **English Language Communicative Competence (ELCC)**

In the study of Rajaprasit and Hemchua (2015) and Singh (2021), they stated that oral and written competencies of English are required by workers who work in the international workplace. For ramp staff, they shall need the skill of oral communication when involved with presentation, formal/informal individual and group discussion, negotiation, socialization among colleagues, video conference, and persuasion. Another skill that they should have is written communication, which is often engaged in translation work, project reports, emails, meeting minutes, formal business letters, and presentation slides. Moreover, controlling the formal and functional properties of language, such as the ability to communicate and understand meaning correctly, smoothly, and appropriately depending on the situation, is critical for effective communication.

To achieve the effectiveness of communication, employees should have these four criteria of English language communicative competence (ELCC): grammar, sociolinguistics, discourse, and strategic competence. First, grammatical competence is to have well-formed language skills. Second, sociolinguistic competence is the appropriateness of the language use. Third, discourse competence is the ability to arrange linguistic devices in a text for meaningful communication. Last, strategic competence is the ability to solve communication problems. (Canale & Swain, 1980, as cited in Singh, 2021).

### **English for Airlines**

Airline industry is one of the international workplaces as its nature of the business is not only to provide transportation inside the country, but also carry passengers and cargo to and from the international routes. The working environment of the airline business needs to contact the staff from overseas or the staff from other airlines. Definitely, English is one of the main languages that is used among staff. Even though some staff may not directly use English with the passengers or customers, they will have to use English language for their working responsibilities. For instance, they have to deal with machines, devices, correspondence, emails, flight documents, meeting in the other overseas hubs (Rajprasit & Hemchua, 2015) as the airlines is one of the international workplaces.

In the international workplace such as airline business, English is used as a language policy. It is because in 1951, the ICAO, International Civil Aviation Organization, stated that all international flights should universally operate in English. English that is used in the aviation field is not only for the communication between the pilots and the control tower officers, but also used among workers whose duties are related to the aviation industry such as cabin crew, ground staff, and engineers (Vincent, 2015).

Referring to Hamzah and Fei (2018), their study is related to the use of English between pilots and air traffic controllers. They found that the English miscommunication between them was caused by a lack of understanding, non-understanding or misinterpretation of messages in communication. The two main factors are procedural deviations and problematic instructions or requests. The study suggested the conclusion to solve the problems: that is, they should

adhere to the standard of phraseology and avoid using the code-switching words when having flight communication.

An aviation duty related study is the study of the cabin crew by Xiaoqin and Wenzhong (2016), who found that the English language that is used by the cabin crew who are the participants seems like the General English. Then, it may cause the users to probably use general skills of listening, speaking, and reading, and provide the cabin service without the proper use of English.

The study of English for the specific purpose of being a ground staff at the airport (Cutting, 2012) explored across the four trades which are security guards, ground handlers, catering staff and bus drivers. The purpose of the study was to write realistic dialogues which can be a model for training new joiners with the features of effective service encounters, such as clarity, in formativeness and politeness.

### **English as a Foreign Language (EFL)**

Thailand is a country that uses English as a foreign language. The staff who are Thai and work in the aviation field may confront the difficulties when using English at work. Referring to the study of Somjai and Soontornwipast (2020), they mentioned that the main problem of Thai employees, EFL employees, is vocabulary such as technical terms and cross-field English vocabulary. This is because non-native English-speaking countries whose English study programs are English as a Foreign Language (EFL) such as Thailand, have a little use of vocabulary in real-life, which is limited to most students.

Thai airline staff, including Thai ramp staff, who are based in Don Mueang International Airport use English for communication in some kinds of situations such as face-to-face speaking, virtual conference, written documents, equipment, and machines. Thai staff, who use English as a foreign language (EFL), are required to use English very well as it can help the company grow effectively (Hiranburana, 2017) and also help the staff reach the communicative goals.

In 2019, Don Mueang International Airport carried 700-800 flights per day for both international and domestic flights. The most frequent international routes to and from Don Mueang International Airport are Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Myanmar, Japan, Korea, Taipei, Vietnam and China. Thus, the staff who work at this airport require English for their routine work.

### **Difficulties of English Communication**

Difficulties of English communication can refer to two main definitions. The first one is cognitive definition: difficulties are the abilities of the users, mostly occurring to non-native speakers, who struggle in using English for communication (Ibrahim, 2015).

The other definition is operational definition: in this study, difficulties of English communication refer to the difficulties of oral English communicative situations that Thai airline ramp staff encounter in routine working. For example, ramp staff may have an opportunity to misunderstand when communicating to pilots, cabin crew, and passengers in tarmac area when the conversation contains a long sentence. It is because of a lack of knowledge about specific vocabulary and replying to customers when they ask for information or directions.

In this research study, only oral communication was the focus.

### **Ramp Staff**

#### **Thai Airline Ramp Staff**

Ramp staff are the employees working with the large team members in the airport ramp area. Their responsibilities are 1) handling for loading and unloading the passenger checked baggage and aircraft cargo 2) providing under-wing services and ground support equipment to aircraft i.e., lavatory and potable water servicing, and aircraft stair 3) guiding planes to and from their gates, aircraft wheel chocking, and push-back 4) delivering passenger baggage to the conveyor

system, and 5) reporting equipment malfunctions (Betterteam, n.d.; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2011).

According to their responsibilities, ramp staff position requires many qualifications such as male, high school or diploma or higher graduated, military exemption, ability to drive with license, and ability to work shift, but not requires the English proficiency when applying for the job (Thaitechnics, 2018).

Although the ramp staff duties are not directly related to the passengers, their needs to use English are still important. They frequently work with colleagues from overseas bases, communicate with crewmembers from several nationalities from abroad, attend meetings, and cooperate in the international inspection.

### **Related Studies**

There are many research studies that have looked into English communication used by Thai workers who worked in the international workplace. Chanphram (2020) studied the needs of English used by the operational workers in the industrial estate in Chonburi province, Thailand. Due to the high volume of business and investment from overseas investors, the well-working cooperation between foreigners and Thais is very essential. Thus, to achieve the business goal, the English language plays a crucial role as a common language to communicate inside the organization.

Rajprasit and Hemchua (2015) researched on the English communication of the computer engineers who work in Bangkok province, Thailand. As computer engineers require not only technical skills, but also communicative skills in many contexts that the engineers need to communicate with native and non-native English speakers such as clients, contractors or suppliers, and colleagues, supervisors. A set of English communicative skills which includes work-related discussions, informal and social conversation, persuasion and negotiation are important (Rajprasit & Hemchua, 2015).

The related studies have agreed that most Thai workers still need to improve their English skills while working in the international workplace. Chanphram (2020) stated that the reading skill of the operational workers in the industrial estate in Chonburi province is most required by the workers as they frequently read the emails, product features and machine description. Meanwhile, Rajprasit and Hemchua (2015) mentioned that the oral communication skills are most needed by the computer engineers in Bangkok as they meet multi-national people when working. In addition, the computer engineers consider that using perfect English is not a priority, but comprehensibility is more important to achieve the communicative goals.

To achieve the effectiveness of English communication, Singh (2021) and Oysara (2021) referred to English language communicative competence (ELCC) which is the relationship and interaction between the rules of grammar use and the rules of language use (Canale & Swain, 1980, as cited in Singh, 2021 and Oysara, 2021). In other words, the speaker shall have knowledge of English words or sentences and use it to communicate to the appropriate function.

Employees should have these four criteria of English language communicative competence: grammar, sociolinguistics, discourse, and strategic competence. First, grammatical competence is to have well-formed language skills. Second, sociolinguistic competence is the appropriateness of the language use. Third, discourse competence is the ability to arrange linguistic devices in a text for meaningful communication. Lastly, strategic competence is the ability to solve communication problems (Canale & Swain, 1980, as cited in Singh, 2021).

**Table 1** Criteria of English Language Communicative Competence

The following table shows the criteria of English language communicative competence and the definitions.

<b>Competence</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
Grammar	Technical terms, grammar, spelling (Write the reports, notification, and email)
Strategies	Difficult to achieve conversation fluently (Accent and correct pronunciation)
Sociolinguistics	Politeness, cultural references (Word choices, idiom, background knowledge)
Discourse	Comprehensive communication (Communication between people or equipment, devices, and manuals)

The criteria of ELCC are related to four skills of English: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Canale & Swain, 1980). Speaking and listening occurs in the presentation, formal/informal individual and group discussion, negotiation, socialization among colleagues, video conference, and persuasion. Reading and writing skills are often engaged in translation work, project reports, emails, meeting minutes, formal business letters, and presentation slides. Moreover, controlling the formal and functional properties of language, such as the ability to communicate and understand meaning correctly, smoothly, and appropriately depending on the situation, is critical for effective communication.

Moreover, a previous researcher who had looked into the difficulties of English, Ibrahim (2015), mentioned that the causes of English communicative difficulties can be grammatical problems, lack of word choices, and problems of sentence structures.

**Grammatical problems:** users may have difficulties with verb forms that depend on tenses and subjects of sentences, also known as subject verb agreement. The sentence example is ‘Boats sails across the river everyday’ whose subject verb agreement is incorrect.

**Problems of word choice:** users may have limitations of vocabulary such as the appropriateness and the variety of words. The example is ‘Our town is more cleaner from other towns’, the word ‘more’ and ‘cleaner’ are redundant, and the appropriateness of using the comparative degree in this sentence is using it with ‘than’ not ‘from’.

**Problems with sentence structures:** users may have problems using run-on sentences, incorrect word arrangement, or fragmented sentences. The example sentence ‘Although my people are poor but they are generous’ is incorrect. The use of subordinating clause and the main clause is incorrect by using the conjunction ‘but’ together with ‘although’.

In summary, due to the rise of international organizations where English is used as the corporate language, the staff of all departments shall be able to reach the communicative goals (Ahmad & Widén, 2015; Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2014). As the ramp staff are a part of international airline business, the exploration of the difficulties when ramp staff communicate in English is worthwhile. In addition, the expected outcomes might be able to fulfill their English skills and their tasks.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method approach which could be divided into three phases of the process. The first phase was the qualitative approach that was to conduct the pre-interview with Thai ramp staff. This process was intently conducted for 1) investigating English oral communicative situations that Thai ramp staff find difficult to deal with and 2) investigating the difficulties of English that ramp staff encountered when working.

Afterwards, the framework of English difficulties which was mentioned by Ibrahim (2015) was adapted with the obtained pre-interviewed data as a database for creating the questionnaire.

The population of ramp staff at Don Mueang International Airport is approximately 400 people. The 6 ramp staff were purposively selected from three different ranks according to ramp staff positions: two ramp team leaders, two ramp agents, and two ramp GSE (ground service equipment). The reason for collecting situations from the different ranks of the staff was that the researchers would like to cover the working situations from all levels of the staff.

After receiving all the English oral situations used by ramp staff, the most frequent ten situations were selected to design the questions in the first part of the questionnaire which was used in the second phase of the study. The validation process was conducted before applying the ten frequently used English oral communicative situations in the questionnaire. The selected ten situations were validated by two ramp staff and one expert of the English language. This was to ensure the correct understanding.

The second phase was the quantitative approach with the questionnaire. There were four parts in this questionnaire. Part one was the general demographic of the participants. Part two was the ten frequently used English oral situations. Part three was the difficulties of English oral communication. And, part four was the blank space for the ramp staff to leave additional comments. The validation of this process was conducted by one ramp department manager, two experts of ramp staff, and two experts of the English language. After the validation, the pilot experiment of the questionnaire was done by the same two experts of ramp staff who were responsible for the validation process. Then, the questionnaire was sent to 67 ramp staff randomly.

The third phase was the qualitative approach, a post-interview. The results of the second phase were gathered and used as an individual interview question. After analyzing the results of the questionnaire of the second phase, the individual interviewed questions were created and sent to one English language expert and two ramp staff for validation before conducting the interviews with other six ramp staff.

The objective of the individual interview was to use the open-ended questions to draw out the opinions of the 6 ramp staff about difficulties that they felt while using oral English that was used in working situations.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the study are divided into five main parts.

### Part 1: Basic personal information

The results showed that all the ramp staff who participated in this study were male ramp staff and the highest age range was 31-40 years old, followed by 21-30 years old, 41-50 years old, and over 50 years old. The educational background results between vocational education and bachelor's degree were almost equal whereas there was no participant holding a master's degree. This study gained the highest number of ramp agent positions (64 staff), two ramp team leaders, and 1 ramp ground service equipment (GSE).

### Part 2: Situations in the workplace that require English language.

67 ramp staff responded to the questionnaires and gave the scores to ten situations which required English language during their work. The results are shown in the table below.

**Table 2** The number of ten situations that were related to English use

<b>Situations</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Level</b>
1) Communicating with pilots in long sentences.	3.34	1.23	Moderate
2) Attending a training and encountering new technical terms.	3.44	1.09	Moderate
3) Foreign passengers asked for directions or help.	3.50	1.09	Moderate
4) Communicating with foreign colleagues (not understand and not able to reply).	3.56	1.07	High
5) Communicating with foreign colleagues (understand but not able to reply).	3.76	0.98	High
6) My supervisor spoke new terms.	3.22	1.24	Moderate
7) Not confident in my accent. (Able to speak words but not able to pronounce them correctly, shyness)	3.62	1.05	High
8) Dealing with foreign airline staff.	3.74	1.11	High
9) Requesting for the company benefits.	3.70	1.12	High
10) Communicating with foreign staff who inspected my work.	3.47	1.17	Moderate

The results show that five out of ten situations fall onto the high level of agreement, another five falls onto the moderate level. Only the high level of agreement situations would be the questions for the post-interview. The list of situations interpreted as the high level of agreement are:

- 1) Situation number 5: 'I had a problem when communicating in English with foreign colleagues because I could understand them but could not reply to what they said.'
- 2) Situation number 8: 'I had a problem when dealing with English with other airline staff whose agents are foreigners.'
- 3) Situation number 9: I had a problem when requesting the company benefits but the content and details were presented in English.
- 4) Situation number 7: I had trouble speaking English as I am not confident in my accent. (Able to speak words but not able to pronounce them correctly)
- 5) Situation number 4: I had a problem when communicating in English with foreign colleagues because I could not understand them and could not reply to what they said.

### **Part 3: Problems in the use of English**

**Table 3** Questions regarding problems in the use of English

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Level</b>
1) Grammatical problem (subject verb agreement) (Verb forms are changed according to tenses or the subject of the sentence)	3.65	1.13	High
2) Vocabulary/Technical Terms problems (Knowledge of technical terms, appropriate words).	3.55	1.11	High
3) Sentence structure problems (Understanding of complex sentences)	3.71	1.09	High
4) Accent and pronunciation problems	3.59	1.12	High
5) Attitude towards English communication (Feeling afraid, embarrassed, not confident)	3.71	1.05	High
6) Attitude towards English communication (continued) (Feeling concerned about the correct grammar)	3.61	1.02	High

The findings shown above pointed out that all problems fell onto the high degree of agreement. Most of the ramp staff who participated in the study agreed that they have difficulties understanding the long sentences and confidence to communicate. The correction of grammar

and the concern about using wrong English also fell onto the high levels of agreement. Accent and technical terms were one of the difficulties they confronted.

#### **Part 4: Other comments**

There were three main suggestions that ramp staff provided for improving their English skills. Firstly, they mentioned that they needed to have opportunities to study English. Secondly, they suggested that there should be English courses for staff, to be voluntarily enrolled, for enhancing their skills. Thirdly, the exchange working in other countries was suggested.

#### **Part 5: Ramp staff's opinions toward the English difficulties**

This part is the third phase of the method. Ramp staff gave more opinions that they can understand the conversations from foreigners but do not know how to reply properly, so they avoid speaking as they are afraid of being insulted. The official forms of vocabulary are one of their difficulties that they confront when working. Some of them mentioned the shyness of speaking and the correctness of using English. Some of the participants understand the meaning of the infinitive form of verbs, but they would not feel familiar if the verb forms are changed. The participants also sought improvement of their English skills as it helps them achieve the progress in their career path. The confidence of speaking in public is recommended by them. Having an opportunity to work abroad is one of their priorities.

### **DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

The results revealed that ramp staff can understand simple questions and conversations from foreign colleagues and other foreign airline staff. But, most of the ramp staff were not confident to reply as they were afraid to use English incorrectly. To speak out, the ramp staff gave opinions that it was difficult for them because they were obstructed by the lack of confidence to speak and the inability to use correct grammar. It means that the ramp staff had the acceptable level of listening skills as they were able to understand what they heard from foreign colleagues, but to reply in English, they preferred avoiding conversations.

This is because in many EFL countries, people may practice their listening skills by watching movies with soundtracks, international news, TV shows, or listening to English songs which are easily accessible through Internet channels. On the other hand, to practice English-speaking skills is rare as the daily environment is not English speaking; there are a few opportunities for them to use English on a daily basis. The results supported the Verapornvanichkul's (2011) study which showed that EFL countries have fewer opportunities to speak English.

Another interesting result was related to accent and pronunciation. This problem was related to the attitude in the way that the ramp staff were afraid to speak English. The results from the individual interviews showed that they were afraid of wrong speaking and were not confident to speak out and give opinions when being in public conversations or meetings.

As mentioned by Rajprasit and Hemchua (2015), it is not only language skills, but also the interpersonal skills of employees that are important to achieve a company's goals. All employees shall communicate to one another and share their opinions in all aspects of work related, so that the pending working issues can be solved properly.

The result also revealed the problems with grammatical correction, vocabulary and technical terms, and understanding of complex sentences. The results supported the study of Somjai and Soontornwipast (2020), Singh (2021) and Oysara (2021), indicating that most people who live in countries that use English as a foreign language tend to have a scarce opportunity to use English in real life, and that could lead to the lack of knowledge about general English and English for specific purposes in some particular work settings.

In terms of accents, the accent differences from foreigners were not deemed a serious problem. The ramp staff were able to familiarize themselves with a variety of accents by working experiences they have.

In terms of pronunciation, the researchers found that most of the ramp staff did not know the importance of word pronunciation, which can differentiate meanings of words, and thus it might cause a misunderstanding to the working operation. Raising the importance of word pronunciation to ramp staff therefore is recommended for effective communication.

In terms of attitude, the ramp staff would avoid having conversations with foreign pilots, cabin crew, and overseas colleagues. It might be because they lacked knowledge about specific English terms in working and were concerned about the correctness of speaking English in person and public. However, the attitude of communication among the ramp staff and other foreign staff still has a language barrier, and that probably impedes relationships between colleagues and slows down their success at work.

Some of the ramp staff gave additional comments on the progress of their career paths: if they want to prosper in their career, English communication, by both written and oral means, is strongly required. This supports Moslehifara and Ibrahim (2012), who advocated that English skills are the fundamental role in the international workplace situations.

The results showed that the majority of the ramp staff used English every day at work. It is because English is the official standardized language in the aviation field, as stated by ICAO (Vincent, 2015). Referring to the character of airline business, most of the airline staff frequently communicate to overseas passengers, foreign colleagues, and especially the staff inside the organization. This statement supported the study of Ljajić and Pirsli (2020), saying that conveyance of information inside a company always occurs inside the organization. The airline ramp staff who participated in this study revealed that they have to use English in their routine work and confront the difficulties of communication on a usual basis.

The conclusion of the study can be described in three main types of oral communicative issues. The first one is accent and pronunciation. The second is limitation of English background knowledge. The last one is attitude toward communication in English.

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