

กลวิธีการสื่อสารระหว่างมัคคุเทศก์ท่องถินและนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างประเทศ : กรณีศึกษา
ในพื้นที่อำเภอหลวงน้ำทา สาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว

The Communication Strategies between Local Tour Guides and Foreign
Tourists : A Case Study in Luangnamtha District, Lao PDR

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการใช้กลวิธีการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรมระหว่างมัคคุเทศก์ท่องถินและนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างชาติ ในเขตพื้นที่อำเภอหลวงน้ำทา สาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว กระบวนการศึกษาใช้การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพและเชิงปริมาณ โดยเก็บข้อมูลจากกลุ่มประชากร จำนวน 41 คน ประกอบด้วยมัคคุเทศก์ท่องถิน 9 คน และนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติ 32 คน การวิจัยใช้การสังเกตพฤติกรรม และการบันทึกเสียงเป็นเครื่องมือในการเก็บข้อมูลเป็นระยะเวลา 9 วัน

รูปแบบการศึกษาได้ประยุกต์ใช้ทฤษฎีกลยุทธ์การสื่อสารของ Tarone (1981 : 289) และ Bialystok (1990 : 29) ประกอบด้วย 5 กลยุทธ์หลักในการสื่อสาร คือ กลยุทธ์การใช้ภาษาที่สอง (Second Language Based Communication Strategies) กลยุทธ์การใช้ภาษาแม่ (First Language Based Communication Strategies) กลยุทธ์การหลีกเลี่ยง (Avoidance Communication Strategies) กลยุทธ์การปรับข้อความ (Modification Device) และกลยุทธ์การใช้ปริภาษา (Paralinguistic Communication Strategies) และ รูปแบบการแบ่งประเภทกลวิธีการสื่อสารของ Nakathnani (2006 : 160) อีก 2 ชนิด มาใช้เพื่อวิเคราะห์ กลวิธีการสื่อสารของกลุ่มประชากรออกเป็น 2 ประเภท คือ กลวิธีประสบผลสำเร็จ (Achievement Strategies) สำหรับกลุ่มที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษมีข้อจำกัด การศึกษาพบว่า มัคคุเทศก์ท่องถินและนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างชาติใช้กลวิธีการลดรูป (Reduction Strategies) สำหรับกลุ่มที่การใช้ภาษาอังกฤษมีข้อจำกัด ผลการศึกษายังพบอีกว่า มัคคุเทศก์ท่องถินและนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างชาติเลือกใช้กลยุทธ์การปรับข้อความ (Modification Devices) มากที่สุด ทั้งนี้ กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารที่มัคคุเทศก์ท่องถินเลือกใช้มากที่สุด คือ กลยุทธ์การยืนยันความเข้าใจ (Confirmation Check)

คำสำคัญ: กลวิธีการสื่อสาร หลวงน้ำทา สาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the use of communication strategies between tour guides and foreign tourists in Luangnamtha district of Lao PDR. The qualitative and quantitative research method were employed in this study. The study recruited 41 participants including 9 tour guides and 32 tourists to participate in observation and video recording in data collection process that covered 9 days.

The study applied Tarone (1981 : 290) and Bialystok (1990 : 30) communication taxonomies for second language based communication strategies, first language based communication strategies, avoidance communication strategies, modification devices and paralinguistic communication strategies, and Nakatnani (2006 : 161) two types of communication strategies: achievement strategies (high English proficiency) and reduction strategies (low English proficiency). The results revealed 15 sub-categories of communication strategies used by tour guides and foreign tourists, 112 times used by tour guides and 80 times used by foreign tourists. Low English proficiency (tour guides) and high English proficiency (foreign tourists) preferred to use modification devices. However, tour guides tended to use pausing the most while foreign tourists favored using confirmation check.

Keywords: Communication strategies, Luangnamtha district, Lao PDR

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Today tourism is one of the most significant industrial sectors which are growing rapidly and widely in many countries around the world. This sector offers a wide range of employment opportunities. Also, the development of ecotourism leads the tourism sector to grow faster than ever and brings more income to local communities. Laos government has therefore been enthusiastic and realized the opportunities to promote tourism by utilizing cultural, historical heritage, and natural attractions (Hirotsune and Sangbouaboulom, 2010 : 1). Natural resources and minority villages enrich Luangnamtha province to become one of the selected attraction for international tourists. In 2017, the amount of tourists visited Luangnamtha reached to 371,315 visitors. The tourists were from all over the world and they use English as the medium for communication to each other. So, English seem to be the chosen language for communication in tourism. In recent years, Luangnamtha district Lao PDR has promoted as key landing spot for foreign tourists due to the fact that

the amount foreign tourists visiting Lao PDR is getting increased each year. The increasing number of foreign tourists inevitably require more professional tour guides who are able to use English well. However, many tour guides in Luangnamtha district hold low English proficiency at different levels of competency. Low English proficiency leads to misunderstanding in communication (Khirova, 2010 : 85) and therefore requires communication strategies (CSs) for successful communication. English speakers who have limited proficiency in English try to use different types of CSs (Chuanchaisit and Prapphal, 2009 : 102). The interaction between tour guides and foreign tourists who had different knowledge about culture and language would meet communication problems (Tamba, 2017 : 56). Therefore, effective and appropriate CSs are needed in order to decrease misunderstandings and communication problems. Many scholars categorized CSs into different types. (Tamba, 2017 : 59) proposed five types of CSs, that is, avoidance or reduction strategies, achievement or compensatory strategies, stalling or time-gaining strategies, self-monitoring strategies, interaction strategies. Tarone (1981 : 293) and Bialystok (1990 : 42) developed taxonomy of communication strategies consisting of 5 CSs, that is, first language based (L1- based) communication strategies, second language based (L2-based) communication strategies, avoidance communication strategies, modification devices, paralinguistic communication strategies. Nakatani (2006 : 163) also proposed two types of communication strategies: achievement or compensatory strategies and reduction or avoidance strategies. These types of CSs were proposed for this study in order to examine the use of CSs between tour guides and foreign tourists in Luangnamtha District especially the tourism context. This study also attempted to answer which types of CSs would be the most effective CSs for low English proficiency to resolve misunderstandings and reach the communicative goals. The findings may help promote the use of communication strategies among the tour guides in Luangnamtha District and empower professionalism among these tour guides and thus uplift the tourism service standards in Luangnamtha for the benefits of the local communities.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the research was to investigate the use of communication strategies between tour guides and foreign tourists in Luangnamtha District, Lao PDR.

ຄລວິກີກາສື່ສາරະໜ່ວງມັຄຸຖາກໍທັວງຄືນແລະນັກທ່ອງເທິຍຈາວຕ່າງປະເທດ :
ກຣນີຕຶກາໃນພື້ນທີ່ອໍາເກົດຫລວງນ້າຫາ ສາຮານວັນສູປະກິບໄຕປະເຊນລາວ

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may help promote the use of communication strategies (CSs) among the tour guides in Luangnamtha District who hold low English proficiency and require variety of CSs for more effective communication with foreign tourists. The findings may also help activate the awareness in the use of communication strategies (CSs) among tour guides in Luangnamtha District in the extent that the use of communication strategies (CSs) can uplift the service standards of the tourism so that the tourism industry could be sustainably developed for the benefits of local communities in regard to revenue generation and job opportunities for now and beyond.

Scope of the Study

Luangnamtha district is one of the popular tourism sites in Luangnamtha province. Many international and local tourists choose this destination for visiting and experiencing variety of tourism activities such as trekking routes and minority villages. The tourism agencies and eco-tour service units are mainly located in this district where variety of facilities services are available for foreign tourists whereas very few foreign tourists were found in other districts. So, this district was considered appropriate target area for this study.

The tour guides were recruited from the 9 eco-tour service units located in Luangnamtha district. These eco tour agencies were selected due to their popularity among foreign tourists judging from the records of tour reservations at these agencies.

Methodology

The study employed qualitative and quantitative method to investigate the data by participatory observation on trekking and visiting villages and the use recording video while foreign tourists and Lao tour guides were engaging in the communication during trekking and visiting minority villages. The data from tour guides and foreign tourists was categorized into types of communication strategies based on Tarone (1981 : 293), Bialystok (1990 : 54), and Nakatani (2006 : 164) CSs taxonomy.

Population and Samples

There were 15 tourism agencies servicing 90 tourism sites in five districts of Luangnamtha province, that is, Luangnamtha, Sing, Phouka, Long, and Nalae. The tourism agencies were sectioned into three types which were 3 tour companies, 3 tour agencies and 9 eco-tour service units. There were 39 tour guides working for 15 tourism agencies. However, Luangnamtha district is the most popular district in Luangnamtha province. Majority of tourism sites for trekking and minority villages are located in this district. Also, many foreign tourists visited Luangnamtha. Therefore, 9 eco-tours service units in Luangnamtha District were selected for data collection. The researcher conducted the data collection 9 times so one time for each eco-tour unit. The participants were 9 tour guides from 9 eco-tour service units. The 32 foreign tourists (28 males and 13 females) were those who booked the service in these 9 eco-tour service. They allowed the researcher to participate in the observation and video recording activities while they were trekking and visiting minority villages in Luangnamtha district.

The tour guides and foreign tourists were categorized into two main groups, that is, high English proficiency and low English proficiency when the tour guide were considered low English proficiency due to their English short-term seminar (one month), 4 tour guides participated the seminar and another 5 tour guides were from participating assistance guides in real situation. The foreign tourists were considered high English proficiency that included 17 English native speakers, 6 international MA students, 7 people countries using English as official language (5 Singaporeans and 2 Philippines), and 2 English teachers.

Data Collection

The request letter for data collection was accepted by Department of Information, Culture and Tourism of Luangnamtha Province and 9 eco-tour service units for the participation in data collection covering 9 days. The observation and video recording of tour guides and foreign tourists engaging in the communication while they were trekking and visiting minority villages. Based on the schedule provided by the agencies, the researcher joined the trekking and visiting the villages as an observer to perform video recording the conversation between tour guides and foreign tourists for 9 days covering 9 tour guides from 9 eco-tour unit and 32 foreign tourists which was one day for each eco tour unit.

Data Analysis

The data from observation and video recording was analyzed for communication strategies occurrences based on communication strategies taxonomy proposed by Tarone (1981 : 294) and Bialystok (1990 : 70) that covered 5 thematic communication strategies: first language (L1) based communication strategies (consisting of two sub-communication strategies), second language (L2) based communication strategies (consisting of three sub-communication strategies), avoidance of communication strategies (consisting of two sub-communication strategies), paralinguistic communication strategies (consisting of two sub-communication strategies), and modification devices (consisting of ten sub-communication strategies). The data was categorized and counted for frequency of communication strategies occurrences for both tour guides and foreign tourists and then calculated in percentage ranking from high to low occurrences of each sub-communication strategies. The occurrences of communication strategies were described and discussed regarding the interaction between message senders and receivers. The occurrences were labeled and interpreted for achievement strategies (high English proficiency) and reduction strategies (low English proficiency) Nakatani (2006 : 164) for comparison purpose.

Results

The results revealed various communication strategies used by tour guides and foreign tourists in Luangnamtha district, Lao PDR as showed in the table below.

Table 1 Communication Strategies performed by tour guides and foreign tourists in tourism situation in Luangnamtha District, Lao PDR

No	Sub-communication strategies	Tour guides (N = 9)		Foreign tourists (N = 32)		Type of communication strategies
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
1	Pausing	40	35.71	10	12.50	Modification device
2	Language switching	12	10.71	5	6.25	L1- based communication strategies
3	Miming	10	8.92			Paralinguistic communication strategies
4	Circumlocution	7	6.25			L2- based communication strategies
5	Topic avoidance	6	5.35			Avoidance communication strategies
6	Comprehension check	6	5.35			Modification device
7	Message avoidance	5	4.46	3	3.75	Avoidance communication strategies
8	Eliciting	5	4.46			Modification device
9	Backchannel cues	5	4.46	6	7.50	Modification device
10	Foreignizing	4	3.57			L1- based communication strategies
11	Extending	4	3.57	4	5.00	Modification device
12	Confirmation check	3	2.67	35	43.75	Modification device
13	Self-repair	3	2.67	2	2.50	Modification device
14	Approximation	2	1.78			L1- based communication strategies
15	Clarification request	0	0.00	15	18.75	Modification device
Total		112		80		

Table 1 showed the results of 5 communication strategies consisting of 15 sub-communication strategies used by tour guides and foreign tourists in Luannamtha district, Lao PDR. These sub-communication strategies (SCSs) were avoidance, message

avoidance, pausing, eliciting, miming, circumlocution, backchannel cues, confirmation check, foreignizing, self-repair, language switching, comprehension check, approximation, clarification request, and extending strategies. The total occurrences were 112 times used by tour guides and 80 times by foreign tourists. The most frequent communication strategies used by tour guides was modification device and there were seven sub-communication strategies of modification device: pausing strategies (35.71%), comprehension check (5.35%), eliciting and backchannel cues (4.46%), extending (3.57%), confirmation check and self-repair (2.67%). The modification device was also used by foreign tourists in different sub-communication strategies: confirmation check (43.75%), clarification request (18.75%), pausing (12.50%), backchannel cues (7.50%), extending (5%), and self-repair (2.50%). The modification device was considered the highest preferred strategies by both groups. The second communication strategies was L1-based communication strategies. Three sub-communication strategies used by tour guides were language switching strategies (10.71%), foreinizing (3.57%), and approximation (1.78%); however, foreign tourists used language switching (6.25%). The third communication strategies was paralinguistic and found only one sub-communication strategy: miming (8.92%) used by tour guides, but foreign tourists didn't used any sub-communication strategies in the paralinguistic. The fourth communication strategies was L2-based communication strategy and the sub-communication strategy was circumlocution (6.25%). The last communication strategies was avoidance communication strategy. The tour guides used two sub-communication strategies under this category: topic avoidance (5.35%), message avoidance (4.46%) while foreign tourists used message avoidance (3.75%).

Table 2 Communication strategies between low English proficiency and high English proficiency

CSs	Low English Proficiency		High English Proficiency	
	Frequency	Percentage%	Frequency	Percentage%
	N = 9		N = 32	
Modification device	66	34.38	72	37.50
L1- based communication strategy	18	9.38	5	2.60
Avoidance communication strategy	11	5.73	3	1.56
Paralinguistic communication strategy	10	5.21		
L2- based communication strategy	7	3.65		
	112		80	
Total			192	

Table 2 showed communication strategies used by low English proficiency (tour guides) and high English proficiency (foreign tourists). Modification device was used the most by both low English proficiency and high English proficiency. The high English proficiency (foreign tourists) used modification device 72 times while low English proficiency (tour guides) used this strategy 66 times. The second occurrence of communication strategy was L1- based communication strategy. The low English proficiency used this strategy 18 times while the high English proficiency used only 5 times. The third occurrence was avoidance communication strategy. The low English proficiency used this strategy 11 times while the high English proficiency used only 3 times. The others fourth and fifth occurrences used by low English proficiency were paralinguistic communication strategy 10 time and L2- based communication strategy 7 times whereas the high English proficiency did not show the use of both paralinguistic communication strategy and L2- based communication strategy.

Discussion

Basically, the occurrences of communication strategies of tour guides and foreign tourists were not too different, and according to the data analysis of communication strategies, 15 sub-strategies were found used 112 times by tour guides and 80 times by foreign tourists. The most frequent communication strategies was modification device. The tour guides used modification device the most and they used pausing 40 times (35.71%) which indicated limitation of their second language knowledge, and they needed time to think. This could also be explained that “time-gaining strategies used fillers to keep the communication channel open and maintain discourse in times of difficulty” (Dornyei and Cohen, 2002 : 78). The pausing filler used mostly by tour guides were “er...er” said at least two times. The low ability of second language speakers used this strategies frequently due to the limitation of L2 knowledge and less language learning (Chuanchaisit and Prapphal, 2009 : 107). The occurrence identified as low English proficiency was elaborated as the “lower language abilities employed more communication strategies” (Fulcher, 2003 : 42; Wannarak, 2003 : 18). Nevertheless, modification was also the communication strategies used by foreign tourists; however, sub-communication strategies were different. Confirmation check was used 35 times (43.75%) by foreign tourists. This meant that the low English proficiency and high English proficiency were engaged in the interaction in tourism situations. The situation were explained by the low English proficiency and the listeners which were high English proficiency took control of the conversation by asking the questions about what they would like to know. However, the high English proficiency were uncertain about the clarity of the utterances produced by the conversation partners (the low English proficiency) so confirmation check was used and sought out the opportunities to interact and maintain the conversation because of high English proficiency possessed more English resources and word banks (Chuanchaisit and Phapphal, 2009 : 33). The details occurrences could be observed in Table 1. The confirmation check used by tour guides only 3 times (2.67%) which meant that the tour guides wanted to get clarification when they did not understand (Chuanchaisit and Phapphal, 2009 : 103). Normally, it was used by high English proficiency when they wanted to check the information whether or not they heard things correctly by repeating the words or phrases. This reconfirmation check can be explained as “help-seeking strategies such as asking for repetition or confirmation” (Chuanchaisit and Phapphal, 2009 : 102). David (2011 : 5) also explained that “understanding of a speaker’s utterances and it is a characteristic of speakers use the expression such as “Right? Okay?”

Do you understand? is to check a partner's understanding". Similarly, Chunlan (2008 : 18) also said repetition of the partner's statement was to check the understanding. The other sub-communication strategies used by foreign tourists in modification device was clarification request 18 times (18.75%); however, the tour guides did not show the use of clarification request. The questions were asked only by foreign tourists for repeating or explaining something again to make sure the listeners got the correct information and comprehended the message clearly. They used what do you mean? again, please, pardon?. Chunlan (2008 : 28) maintained that "clarification requests are requests for clarification of anything in preceding utterances" were used by high English proficiency in search for understanding by asking for clarification. In addition, foreign tourists also preferred to use pausing 12.50%. However, the pausing used by tourists did not mean they were hesitated or lack of vocabulary but they were waiting for interaction from the tour guides to make sure that the tour guides understood the correct information.

The second occurrence frequency of communication strategies was L1-based communication strategies used by tour guides were language switching strategies 18 times (10.71%). Chunlan (2008 : 18) described this phenomenon as "a use of a word or a phrase from the first language" or "code-switching : using the word or pronunciation from L1 while speaking in second language" (Oweis, 2013 : 254) when speaker didn't know the word in second language. The low English proficiency used alternative expression instead of specific vocabulary because they lack of L2 language knowledge (Fulcher, 2003 : 40). In contrast, L1-based communication strategies were only 5 times (6.25%) used by foreign tourists for the fact that foreign tourists possessed high English proficiency and were able to choose appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas (Chuanchaisit and Prapphal, 2009 : 00). Another frequently used by tour guides was miming and gesture and verbal output in paralinguistic communication strategies (8.92%) because the tour guides wanted to hint the meaning which was important for comprehending the conversation (Chuanchaisit and prapphal, 2009 : 12).

The third occurrence of communication strategy was avoidance communication strategy. The conversation initiators were started by tour guides while listeners were tourists. However, the tour guides used topic avoidance 6 times (5.35%) and message avoidance 5 times (4.46%). This meant that when tour guides were explaining the situation, there were some interruptions from the tourists asking the questions, so the tour guides tried to avoid answering the questions and leaving the message and topic unanswered as they lacked of vocabularies. Thipakorn (2009 : 48) asserted that the speakers having difficulties to convey

the meaning English words and having linguistic limitation could be identified as low English proficiency. Moreover, when they lacked of content resources, they also tended to avoid the topic and left out some content elements. Nevertheless, message avoidance was used by foreign tourists 3 times (1.56%) because, perhaps, they showed no interest on that particular topic, but foreign tourists tried to maintain the conversation by changing the questions and spent less time to leave conversation silence (Qingquan et al, 2008 : 39).

The fourth and fifth communication strategies were paralinguistic communication strategy miming 10 times (8.92%) and L2-based communication strategy circumlocution 7 times (6.25%) used by tour guides. The low English proficiency used miming because they need to empower their verbal communication delivery and conveying the meaning more clearly. Thipakorn (2009 : 54) stated that low English proficiency used mime with words to show clear picture of the ideas to the listeners. Circumlocution also employed by tour guides. Circumlocution was used to illustrate and describe for better understanding of the content for listeners. When the speaker used circumlocution, they tried to cope with their lexical problems (Thipakorn, 2009 : 60), but foreign tourists did not use this strategies because they were not responsible for explaining the situation.

According to the data analysis, the communication strategies used by low English proficiency (tour guides) and high English proficiency (foreign tourists) preferred the similar modification device, but they used these devices differently at the sub-strategies level. The tour guides paused for thinking and using pause-filler, while foreign tourists used confirmation check to check understanding of the tour guides. The high English proficiency used confirmation check but the low English proficiency used pausing for time gaining to think. In addition, another different aspect was that the tour guides tended to use paralinguistic (miming), L2-based communication strategies (circumlocution) and L1-based communication strategies (foreignizing) whereas high English proficiency did not show the use of these strategies.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Application

Communication strategies is available for use in many contexts. Especially, low English proficiency should use pausing for thinking and good English proficiency should use confirmation check to check understanding, teacher and students should apply in classroom context in order to maintain consistency of the conversation in classroom speaking tasks.

Recommendations for Further Studies

The further research should be conducted on full time tour guide and part time tour guide in order to help improve the differences of both target groups, and collecting the data should have at least two people together because the tour guides and foreign tourists always move, it is quite difficult to catch up and foreign tourists should be separately between English native speaker and non-native speakers in order to see the differences of both.

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