

## Barriers in English Communication of Tourism Business Entrepreneurs in Nong Khai Province

### อุปสรรคในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษของผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจและการท่องเที่ยว จังหวัดหนองคาย

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#### Abstract

This research study the investigates barriers in English communication of tourism business entrepreneurs in Nong Khai Province. It also examines relationships between such barriers and possible factors related to English communication of the entrepreneurs. By adopting a mixed-method research design, 40 entrepreneurs from the tourism business sector around Nong Khai participated in the survey and interviews. Basic statistics, frequency, percentage, and chi-square were used to analyze the data. The results show that most common communication barriers reported by the entrepreneurs were related to insufficient knowledge of vocabulary, a lack of grammatical knowledge, and an inability to comprehend different English accents of foreigners. Number of years of working, education levels, nationalities of foreign customers, English listening skills, English speaking skills, adequacy of English communication skills in the workplace, duration of studying English in college and the adequacy of English language learning to work were found to have a significant correlation with the barriers in English communication of the tourism business entrepreneurs in Nong Khai Province.

**Keywords :** English for Communication, Tourism Business Entrepreneurs, The relationship factors and barriers in English communication of tourism business entrepreneurs.

#### บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจปัญหาและอุปสรรคในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษของผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยวในจังหวัดหนองคาย และศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างอุปสรรคและปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษของผู้ประกอบการ ในการศึกษาครั้งนี้ ผู้วิจัยใช้วิจัยแบบผสานวิธี โดยการใช้แบบสอบถามและสัมภาษณ์ผู้ประกอบการจากภาคธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยวของจังหวัดหนองคายจำนวน 40 คน และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณโดยใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนาและโคสแควร์ ร่วมกับการวิเคราะห์บทสัมภาษณ์ในด้าน

ปัญหาและอุปสรรคในการสื่อสาร ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ปัญหาและอุปสรรคในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษที่พบบ่อยคือ การที่ผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยมีความรู้ด้านคำศัพท์ไม่เพียงพอ ขาดความรู้ด้านไวยากรณ์ และขาดความสามารถในการเข้าใจสำเนียงภาษาอังกฤษของชาวต่างชาติ การศึกษาครั้งนี้ยังแสดงให้เห็นว่า อุปสรรคในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษของผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยวในจังหวัดหนองคายมีความสัมพันธ์กับปัจจัยต่างๆ ได้แก่ จำนวนปีในการทำงาน ระดับการศึกษา สัญชาติของลูกค้าชาวต่างชาติ ทักษะการฟังภาษาอังกฤษ ทักษะการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ ความสามารถในการใช้ทักษะการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษในที่ทำงาน ระยะเวลาในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ และสมรรถภาพของการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษในการทำงาน ผลการศึกษาดังกล่าวได้ชี้ให้เห็นถึงประเด็นปัญหาและแนวทางการแก้ไขปัญหาการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษ ซึ่งคาดว่าจะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อการพัฒนาอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวในบริบทที่นิ่นๆ ต่อไป

**คำสำคัญ :** ปัญหาและอุปสรรคในการสื่อสาร การสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษ ทักษะภาษาอังกฤษ ผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยว อุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยว

## 1. Introduction

The tourism industry is presently the world's largest and most varied business sector since it serves as a principal outlet for many countries in generating revenue, employment, private sector growth and infrastructure development (Chancharat, 2011). In Thailand, tourism is also one of the significant strategies for Thai industry. This can be most recently observed from the continuously strong marketing campaigns, which started from the project of 'Amazing Thailand Year', 'Thailand – IndoChina Gateway', 'Amazing Thailand' up to 'Unseen Thailand' (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2011). The importance of Thai tourism appears evidently as a role to assist Thailand to pass the critical economic crisis of Asian in 1997. Moreover, it can be seen from the aspect of the Thai government, which has given considerable support in budgeting towards tourism.

Due to the rapid expansion of the tourism industry, knowledge of the English language has become even more important and English is now accepted as the global language when people communicate around the world (Crystal, 2003). The Thai government depends upon tourism as one of the main strategies to develop the country and this idea is supported by two important hypotheses. Firstly, tourism is a source of foreign currency to stimulate the growing of the economy. Secondly, tourism is a labor industry therefore promoting tourism produces an effect of expanding income to the labor sector and reduces household poverty amongst those with low income (Ministry of Tourism & Sports, 2015).

Number of Foreign Tourists (person)

Nong Khai Province	Year					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	263,113	519,578	519,578	526,981	545,350	563,193

Source: Department of Tourism

As you can see from the figures above, the number of foreign tourists in Nong Khai province has increased each year since 2011 (Nong Khai Statistical Office, 2017). Therefore, there is a need to investigate English communication of tourism business entrepreneurs in terms of their difficulties and obstacles when communicating with foreign customers.

## 2. Research aims

This study aims to explore barriers in English communication of tourism business entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province. It also aims to analyze the relationships between factors and barriers in English communication.

## 3. Scope of the study

This study was conducted in Nong Khai province, which is located in the North-eastern part of Thailand. The study employed mixed-method design to investigate barriers in English communication of 40 entrepreneurs in the tourism industry.

### English communication in tourism business

Communication undeniably plays an important role in almost every domain of business nowadays, especially in the hospitality and tourism industry. In order to gain satisfaction of tourists and ensure the hospitality service quality, it is essential that employees working in tourism have good communication skills (Bobanovic & Grzinic, 2011). Among various communication skills, oral communication is one of the most important skills that seems to play a big part in the tourism sector. According to Zulkurnain and Kaur (2014), oral communication requires at least one speaker and one listener, covering face-to-face and long-distance interactions. However, communication misunderstandings and barriers may occur if the speakers and listeners do not share the same language and assumptions (Barna, 1985), as well as the same value while communicating (Zulkurnain & Kaur, 2014).

According to Foley (2005), English is extensively used in many areas in Thailand, including as the working language of international organizations and conferences, international banking, economic affairs and trade, tertiary education and tourism to name but a few examples. Anderson (1985) also stated that being able to communicate in English is necessary for people who work in the tourism business and related services. If business entrepreneurs are able to speak English fluently, communication and service to tourists will be effective. Furthermore, it will appear to be a good image to tourists and make them feel safe during travelling in Thailand.

### **Oral communication problems**

Among various areas of communication skills, English language skills are the top skills that employees in the tourism industry need to develop (Kuosuwan, 2016), as it has become an international medium language of communication. Despite all four micro language skills (i.e. speaking, listening, reading, and writing) being important for Thai people who are non-native English speakers (NNESs), oral communication or English-speaking skill is considered the most difficult language skill (Khamkhien, 2010). In addition, Wolvin and Coakley (1991) mentioned that listening is a crucial skill for English communication at work that determines success of employees even though it has received the least attention among all the skills.

Prior studies on speaking and listening skills have emphasized the role of pronunciation as a fundamental skill that influences accuracy and comprehension of English language communication (Munro, Derwing, & Morton, 2006). An early study also indicates that pronunciation can be one of the most difficult language skills to improve and that limited pronunciation skills affects self-confidence of NNESs (Morley, 1998). More importantly, the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) or a shared language in the global business context, particularly from varieties of English accents, also impacts comprehensibility of English speakers worldwide. Apart from phonological aspect, grammar and lexicon partly affect mutual understanding of NNESs (Jenkins, 2000). By that, Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to acquisition of a second language” (p.55).

## **4. Research methods**

### **4.1 Research design**

This study employs mixed method research design using a questionnaire to investigate barriers in English communication of business tourism entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province. Moreover, a semi-structure interview was also used to explore barriers in English

communication of business tourism entrepreneurs in greater depth. In the next stage, we used the data derived from the questionnaire to analyze the relationship between factors and barriers in English communication of all participants.

#### **4.2 Participants and sampling**

Participants included 40 business tourism entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province recruited from purposive sampling technique.

#### **4.3 Research instruments**

##### **4.3.1 The questionnaire**

The questionnaire was constructed to examine the relationship between factors and barriers in English communication of tourism business entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province based on the research objectives. It included four main parts:

- 1) General information
- 2) Problems faced by business tourism entrepreneurs in providing services and advice on tourist attractions to foreigners
- 3) English listening problems of business tourism entrepreneurs
- 4) English speaking problems of business tourism entrepreneurs

The draft questionnaire was revised and improved according to comments and suggestions provided by an expert to gain the content validity of the research instrument. It was also piloted with 30 business entrepreneurs to measure validity before editing and distributing to 40 participants. By piloting questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions, the researcher gained information on whether both questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions were easy, unclear or difficult (Marczky, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2005), the frame time needed were appropriate or not. So that, we could modify the questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions. Some alterations were made to the questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions with small changes in the wordings of some questions.

##### **4.3.2 Interviews**

Semi-structured interview consisting of nine open-ended questions was used to further study on barriers in English communication of business tourism entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province.

#### 4.4 Data analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages divided by genders, types of business, educational levels and English language experience. Chi-square was also used to investigate the relationship between factors and barriers in English communication. Finally, qualitative data related to barriers in English communication of business tourism entrepreneurs were categorized by Nvivo 10.

### 5. Results

The results of this study are divided into three sections: general information of business tourism entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province, English communication barriers and the relationships between English communication barriers and related factors.

#### 5.1 General information of business tourism entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province

Participants in this study were 40 business tourism entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province, including those with 1-5 years of working experience ( $n = 8$ ), 6-10 years ( $n = 17$ ), 11-15 years ( $n = 5$ ), and more than 15 years ( $n = 10$ ). Their educational levels ranged from undergraduate level ( $n = 29$ ) to postgraduate level ( $n = 8$ ), while the others were not specified. Most participants also indicated that they generally communicated with up to five foreign customers per day ( $n = 34$ ). More specifically, several of these participants interacted with native speakers of English ( $n = 29$ ) more than non-native speakers of English ( $n = 11$ ). According to the survey, business tourism entrepreneurs indicated their levels of language proficiency in terms of listening and speaking skills. In relation to listening skills, most participants rated their levels of proficiency as moderate ( $n = 22$ ), followed by good ( $n = 11$ ), and poor ( $n = 7$ ). Similarly, their speaking skills were also rated as moderate ( $n = 25$ ), poor ( $n = 7$ ), good ( $n = 4$ ), and excellent ( $n = 4$ ). Genders were not included in this study; however, there were more male participants ( $n = 22$ ) than female participants ( $n = 18$ ).

#### 5.2 Barriers in English communication

##### 5.2.1 Quantitative analysis

The results of English communication barriers of business tourism entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province are divided into three parts: listening, speaking, and providing services and advice, with the interpretation of mean scores as weak (0.00-1.67), moderate (1.68-3.34), and

strong (3.35-5.00). The results of Shapiro-Wilk test of normality showed that the significant values of all measurements were less than,  $p < .05$  (the alpha level was set at .05), meaning that the data were not normally distributed.

Regarding English listening problems in Table 6.1, participants were highly concerned about speakers' pronunciation ( $M = 3.46, SD = 0.91$ ) and accents ( $M = 3.46, SD = 1.09$ ). Meanwhile, barriers relating to the limited knowledge of vocabulary ( $M = 3.18, SD = 1.05$ ) and speed rate ( $M = 3.27, SD = 1.15$ ) were considered moderate.

Table 5.1 *English Listening Problems* (N = 40)

Problems	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Limited knowledge of vocabulary	3.18	1.05	Moderate
Pronunciation	3.46	0.91	High
Accent	3.46	1.09	High
Speech rate	3.27	1.53	Moderate

In Table 6.2, the results of speaking problems were all moderate with the highest rate of the limited knowledge of grammar ( $M = 3.36, SD = 1.08$ ), followed by sentence arrangement ( $M = 3.30, SD = 0.05$ ). In addition, the limited knowledge of vocabulary and incorrect and incomprehensible pronunciation were equally rated as moderate ( $M = 3.27, SD = 0.97$ ).

Table 5.2 *English speaking problems* (N = 40)

Problems	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Limited knowledge of vocabulary	3.27	0.97	Moderate
Incorrect and incomprehensible pronunciation	3.27	0.97	Moderate
Limited knowledge of grammar	3.36	1.08	Moderate
Sentence arrangement	3.30	0.05	Moderate

Finally, the results of English communication barriers of business tourism entrepreneurs in providing services and advice were presented in Table 6.3, in that, all communication barriers were rated as moderate. The results showed that the major communication barriers were the incapability of explaining information about tourist attractions in English ( $M = 3.36, SD = 0.36$ ) and the incapability of providing services and advice due to foreigners'

understanding of speaker's English ( $M = 3.28, SD = 1.37$ ). This is followed by the incapability of communicating with foreigners in English ( $M = 3.09, SD = 1.33$ ) and the incapability of understanding what foreigners were trying to communicate ( $M = 2.82, SD = 1.31$ ).

Table 5.3 English Communication Barriers in Providing Services and Advice (N = 40)

Communication Barriers	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Incability of understanding what foreigners were trying to communicate	2.82	1.31	Moderate
Incability of explaining information about tourist attractions in English	3.36	0.36	Moderate
Incability of communicating with foreigners in English	3.09	1.33	Moderate
Incability of providing services and advice due to foreigners' understanding of speaker's English	3.28	1.37	Moderate

### 5.2.2 Qualitative analysis

In this study, semi-structured interviews were also incorporated to elicit data related to barriers in English communication of the entrepreneurs in greater depth. The interviews were used to explore if the entrepreneurs had any difficulties in English communication and to uncover barriers that the entrepreneurs faced when communicating in English with their foreign customers. Factors related to communication barriers, problems that the entrepreneurs think have bothered their customers the most when communicating in English, as well as necessary English communication skills that the entrepreneurs think they should have were also investigated.

#### English communication barriers

According to the data, majority of the entrepreneurs have experienced difficulties when communicating with their foreign customers in English. Most common communication barriers reported by the entrepreneurs were found to be related to three issues: insufficient knowledge of vocabulary, a lack of grammatical knowledge and an inability to comprehend different English accents of the foreigners.

The findings have shown that limited knowledge of vocabulary was one of the most common barriers that the entrepreneurs faced when communicating in English with their customers. Most of the entrepreneurs revealed that their inadequate knowledge of vocabulary

prevented them from understanding what the foreign customers tried to communicate, as in, “*I only understand a little when the customers used technical words or jargon*” (Entrepreneur A). The data also suggested that a lack of grammatical knowledge was another barrier that frequently obstructed English communication of the entrepreneurs, as an entrepreneur B supported, “*I lack English grammatical knowledge*”. Another important barrier that was mentioned by most entrepreneurs is related to the incapability to comprehend different accents of their foreign customers. One of the entrepreneurs revealed that, “*unique accents of the foreigners make it hard for me to understand what they wanted to say*” (Entrepreneur C).

When asked to share opinions about factors that could be related to the barriers they faced, majority of the entrepreneurs stated that their lack of knowledge and skills in English communication, a lack of confidence, and a lack of opportunity to use English regularly were the main causes of such barriers. For example, an entrepreneur D stated that, “*I do not have a background in communication, so I do not have expertise in English language like vocabulary, grammar and so on. That has lessened my confidence to communicate in English. Like when I meet the foreigners, I feel nervous and don't want to speak English*”. Entrepreneur E also pointed out that, “*because I rarely communicate in English, I am not confident to speak English. I am afraid I would make mistakes*”. Another entrepreneur also supported that, “*my understanding of English is still not good enough. It is also my fear to speak with the foreigners*” (Entrepreneur F).

With regard to communication problems that the entrepreneurs think have bothered their foreign customers the most, it was found to be related to having to repeat the same thing several times because the staff do not understand the language. Additionally, the findings have also suggested that necessary skills in English communication that entrepreneurs think they should have included skills in explaining clearly, speaking with confidence, using appropriate grammar, and pronouncing words correctly. The following example excerpts captured the opinions of business tourism entrepreneurs on the above issue:

“*the most important aspect is being able to speak and explain clearly to make the tourists understand. We do not need to use difficult terms, but only simple words with appropriate grammar that could make the tourists understand*” (Entrepreneur G).

“*speaking with confidence and pronouncing words correctly are the keys. They are essential when we deliver messages to the receivers*” (Entrepreneur H).

### 6.3 The relationships between English communication barriers and related factors

According to the results of the research, as shown in table 6.4 below, years of working experience was correlated to English communication barriers of business tourism entrepreneurs with statistical significance. Business tourism entrepreneurs who have 10 years of working face fewer problems in English communication with foreign customers. In contrast, those with 2-3 years of working experience, encounter difficulties in English communication with foreigners.

Table 6.4 The relationships between years of working experiences and communication barriers in providing services and advice

Problems	Pearson Chi-Square	df	Interpretation
Incapability of understanding what foreigners were trying to communicate	43.17***	9	correlated
Incapability of explaining information about tourist attractions in English	33.55***	9	correlated
Incapability of communicating with foreigners in English	29.92***	12	correlated
Incapability of providing services and advice due to foreigners' understanding of speaker's English	26.12***	12	correlated

Source: Calculated

Note: \*\*\* There was statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 99%.

\*\* There was a statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 95%

\* There was a statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 90%

As illustrated in table 6.5, the undergraduate level is the highest level of education of business tourism entrepreneurs was correlated with the barriers in English communication of business tourism entrepreneurs with statistical significance. This may be due to the fact that most business tourism entrepreneurs have graduated with a bachelor's degree but their English skills are at a moderate level. They do not have an opportunity to provide services and advise foreign customers. Most business operators can communicate in English at a moderate level, resulting in problems in communicating English with foreign clients. They tend to lose their customers through miscommunication.

Table 6.5 The relationship between the highest educational level of business tourism entrepreneurs and English speaking problems

Problems	Pearson Chi-Square	df	Interpretation
Limited knowledge of vocabulary	15.00***	3	correlated
Incorrect and incomprehensible pronunciation	15.00***	3	correlated
Limited knowledge of grammar sentence arrangement	15.93***	4	correlated

Source: Calculated

Note: \*\*\* There was statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 99%.

\*\* There was a statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 95%

\* There was a statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 90%

The divergence accent of foreign customers was correlated with the difficulty of using English for communication of business tourism entrepreneurs with statistically significance. The English language accent of customers such as Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, and French are difficult to understand, resulting in misunderstanding for communication between clients and tourism business operators.

Level of English listening skill of tourism business entrepreneurs was significantly correlated with English communication problems of business tourism entrepreneurs. They have a high level of listening problems because business tourism entrepreneurs cannot understand what the customers need. This mainly caused communication barriers; therefore, business tourism entrepreneurs cannot sell their tour program.

Levels of English speaking skill of foreign customers was significantly correlated with the problems of using English in the communication of business tourism entrepreneurs. When customers cannot tell the full details, the business tourism entrepreneurs must talk to their clients' wives who are Thai speakers, which may be caused misunderstanding. This makes the customer refuse to buy the tour because of the delayed process. The company lost their revenues due to communication problems.

As illustrated in table 6.6, the adequacy of English communication skills in the workplace was considerably correlated with the communication barriers of tourism business operators. Business tourism entrepreneurs are sufficient in their ability to communicate in English at a moderate level. Staff does not have enough communication skill because the lack of confidence in speaking English. Moreover, they cannot understand the needs of their customers which results in a disadvantage for the company because of the lack of English communication skills.

Table 6.6 The relationship between the adequacy of English communication skills and communication barriers in providing services and advice

Problems	Pearson Chi-Square	df	Interpretation
Incapability of understanding what foreigners were trying to communicate	33.00***	9	correlated
Incapability of explaining information about tourist attractions in English	20.03***	3	correlated
Incapability of communicating with foreigners in English	16.14***	4	correlated
Incapability of providing services and advice due to foreigners' understanding of speaker's English	23.27***	4	correlated

Source: Calculated

Note: \*\*\* There was statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 99%.

\*\* There was a statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 95%

\* There was a statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 90%

As displayed in table 6.7, the duration of the study in English at the bachelor degree level was significantly correlated with the problems of using English for communication of business tourism entrepreneurs. Most of business tourism entrepreneurs hold a bachelor's degree. They do not have adequate time for learning English. Business tourism entrepreneurs do not graduate in the field of tourism and rarely use English in their workplace resulting in a lack of confidence in communicating English with foreign clients.

Table 6.7 The relationships between the duration of studying English while studying in the undergraduate level and English listening problems

Problems	Pearson Chi-Square	df	Interpretation
Limited knowledge of vocabulary	10.12	8	correlated
Pronunciation.	14.25**	6	correlated
Accent	19.12**	8	correlated
Speech rate	24.75***	6	correlated

Source: Calculated

Note: \*\*\* There was statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 99%.

\*\* There was a statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 95%

\* There was a statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 90%

As shown in table 6.8, the adequacy of English language learning for work was correlated with the problems of using English in the communication of business tourism entrepreneurs with statistical significance. Most entrepreneurs do not have time to study English at work because they are busy with the tour management. The business tourism entrepreneurs in Nong Khai mainly provide the services to Thai and Laos tourists; therefore, they do not pay attention to the development of their English.

Table 6.8 The relationship between the adequacy of English language learning and communication barriers in providing services and advice

Problems	Pearson Chi-Square	df	Interpretation
Incapability of understanding what foreigners were trying to communicate	11.39**	3	correlated
Incapability of explaining information about tourist attractions in English	10.31**	3	correlated
Incapability of communicating with foreigners in English	17.44***	4	correlated
Incapability of providing services and advice due to foreigners' understanding of speaker's English	16.79***	4	correlated

Source: Calculated

Note: \*\*\* There was statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 99%.

\*\* There was a statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 95%

\* There was a statistical significant difference at the confidence level of 90%

## 6. Discussion of the findings

The research findings showed that the majority of tourism business entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province have experienced difficulties when communicating with their foreign customers in English. In short, the discussion of this study can be presented in two main sections: barriers in English communication and related communication factors of tourism business entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province.

Barriers in oral communication in English reported by tourism business entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province can be discussed in three main issues: phonology, syntax, and lexicon. Similar to the study by Munro et al. (2006), the finding suggested that phonological factors are the main sources of oral communication problems that effects comprehension of English language communication. Most entrepreneurs revealed that their obstacles in English communication were related to the incapability to comprehend different accents of their foreign customers. That means, in term of listening, the ability to understand various English accents is crucial for oral communication in English. This is also in line with the study by Jenkins (2009) on the notion of English as lingua franca in oral communication of NNESs, particularly on the impact of accents in international communication. Regarding speaking, as mentioned in the study by Khamkien (2010), participants agreed that it is more difficult and more important for them to master compared to reading and writing. They also added they frequently made mistakes or misunderstood other speakers due to the limited knowledge and proficiency of English pronunciation. Therefore, the exposure of different English accents may help Thai entrepreneurs in Nong Khai communicate with their foreign customers more effectively.

Secondly, as mentioned earlier by Schmitt (2000), the vocabulary knowledge also impacts the ability to communicate in a second language. According to the interview, participants mentioned their difficulties on vocabulary and claimed that they sometimes did not understand technical terms or jargon spoken by their customers. Besides, the limited knowledge of terminology sometimes results in miscommunication between the participants and their customers. Therefore, the results of this study imply that the wide range of tourism vocabulary and terminology could enhance participants' ability to communicate with their foreign customers.

The entrepreneurs in Nong Khai were uncomfortable to communicate with their foreign customers in English as they worried about their grammatical errors. Participants also asserted that they felt bothered when communicating with foreign customers due to frequent grammatical mistakes. In this regard, Ur (1996) suggested that proper grammatical knowledge has a positive influence on confidence in English communication. Finally, the related factors in English communication, such as years of working experience and educational level, are correlated with barriers in oral communication.

## 7. Implications and conclusion

According to the research findings of this current investigation, there are several practical ways that can be used to help business tourism entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province to communicate in English efficiently. Firstly, this current study can be used as the core resource in terms of communication barriers among business tourism entrepreneurs in Nong Khai as it was conducted in the local site and was in the present situation. According to the results discussed above, the stakeholders in tourism business in Nong Khai are able to get to the right point in order to improve English communication skills in their organisation. Need analysis should be conducted in each tourism business as this study pointed out that different participants require different language features in order to communicate with their foreign customers. In terms of academic and pedagogic recommendations, this study also suggests educational institutes to develop more practical English lessons by emphasizing an exposure of English varieties, vocabulary related to English for specific purposes (e.g. tourism, business, and trading), and by increasing the students' opportunities to use English both inside and outside the classrooms. This could help prepare future employees to use English more proficiently at their workplace.

According to the results and the discussion of this current study, it is suggested that the forthcoming research studies should focus on the following key items--barriers in English communication and related communication factors of tourism business entrepreneurs in Nong Khai province. This research study was conducted only at one province which may result in a narrower notion or limited insightful knowledge due to the small number of the participants and the specificity of the research context. Therefore, the approaching research studies should be conducted in several provinces which are associated with tourism rather than only in Nong Khai. So that, the findings can be reliably generalised to all tourism businesses in the country.

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