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Toward deployment of public service interpreting and translation in Thailand: The Japanese case from a comparative perspective

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Abstract

One of the economic and social disparity issues caused by rapid economic growth and global mobility of immigration is how to promote the empowerment of powerless social groups and minority ethnic communities. Shedding light on the setting in Thailand, regarded as a middle-developed country, this study explored the direction of public service provision by the communicative means of interpreting and translation for foreign residents in Thailand. For that purpose, key issues were revisited in the policy framework and implementation for promoting a multicultural society through the Japanese case. A case involving non-developed-countries has been rarely discussed and is relatively unexplored in the field of public service interpreting and translation (PSIT) within the discipline of Translation Studies. The findings obtained by reviewing the relevant literature revealed two views. First, local authorities in Japan have attempted to overcome the challenges of budget constraints and securing human resources, especially due to the limited diffusion of university-trained language interpreters and translators. Secondly, PSIT in Thailand has not been deployed based on language policy because of political instability. Given the above, this study recommended sophisticated literacy surveys for migrants to plan deployment of PSIT in Thailand and education specialized for PSIT providers at the tertiary level.

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Introduction

The burgeoning demand of urban development and infrastructure based on a high average gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate has caused active moving of labor migration within the ASEAN region (OECD Development Centre, 2013, p. 2). A pivot country of this dynamic movement of labor migration may be Thailand located in a geographic center of The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The Board of Investment of Thailand (BOI) (2015) suggests that competitive investment incentives by BOI aimed at boosting foreign direct investment in Thailand have led to the establishment of a manufacturing hub, especially for the automobile production

industry. It is therefore essential that the labor force be able to underpin the industrial competitiveness of the Thai economy. Thailand relies on three neighboring countries for its labor force—Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar—because of the lack of local labor. The number of the skilled migrant workers in Thailand had reached 2,766,968 people by 2013 (Huguet, 2014, p. 2). It is time to shed light on the current situation regarding the increasing needs and omissions in welfare and social services for migrants living in Thailand.

With regard to the provision of the services, as Hale (2011, p. 333) pointed out, since the public interpreting or translation support affects the individual at a micro-level rather than at a world-wide macro level, it must be clarified just who the service beneficiary is, as a first step, in order to ensure equal access to the public service at an individual level. The estimated foreign population residing and working in Thailand in 2013 was 3,681,245 with “professional and skilled workers” making up 25 percent (Huguet, 2014, p. 2). Yet it is still not clear where

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the needs are, due to the absence of a survey in Thailand. The needs at least seem to reflect the demands of the foreign beneficiaries such as Thai foreign spouses, expatriates and their families, international students, or skilled-laborers as well as labor migrants. At the same time, it should be noted here that their communication skills differ considerably. It is possible for educated foreigners to communicate in English rather than Thai and for uneducated foreigners of low social status to communicate in Thai but only by speaking and listening (National Statistical Office, 2015, p.32). The differences in literacy competence indicate the existence of a variety of languages regularly used as a means to access public services, suggesting the need to apply translation and interpreting as the means to ensure equal access to public services.

The translation and interpreting support services under Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT) are employed in developed countries with significant immigrant populations, such as Belgium (Roels et al., 2015), Canada (Sasso & Malli, 2014), and the United States (Mikkelsen, 2014). In the EU, Riloff and Buysse (2015) offered an overview of social agent system used for PSIT, focusing on the European Network for PSIT (ENPSIT), which is committed to promoting the establishment of standards that guide the practice of PSIT and advocates the provision of professional interpreting and translation services in the PSIT setting. In Australia, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NATTI) plays a central role as an accreditation body to set and maintain standards in translation and interpreting and to approve tertiary translation and interpreting programs.

Since it is more common for migrants to move toward economically affluent regions, there is a tendency for research regarding PSIT to be based on cases in developed countries. In ASEAN countries, migrants from economically poor, developing countries have set their sights on middle-income countries such as Thailand (Asia-Pacific Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration, 2016, p. 19). According to a report by World Bank (n.d.), comparing the GNI per capita of Laos (USD 1,660), Myanmar (USD 1,270), and Cambodia (USD 1,020) with Thailand (USD 5,780) between 2011 and 2015, there are differences of from three to five times among them.

Middle-income countries in general place a higher priority on short-term economic development rather than societal maturation and diversity. Yet higher mobility of people, especially skilled workers across the AEC region, is expected more than ever. Thus, it is politically and socially essential to determine the current situation of the region's middle-income and developed countries as part of a process toward societal maturation and super-diverse societies and also to tackle the local issues for new residents in each of those countries. As Remael and Carroll (2015, p. 8) highlighted, public or community interpreting and translation will always have to be "localized" if it is to meet local needs.

This study aimed to indicate the direction for the deployment of PSIT in one of these AEC countries, namely Thailand, which represents a barely researched, middle-income country in this field. This was done by comparing it with the political background and the implementation of PSIT

in Japan as a case study involving a fully developed country. In order to achieve this objective, the present study identified the profiles of PSIT users and the various PSIT settings in Thailand, which are likely to be required by users. The reason for choosing Japan for comparison is that, like Thailand, Japan is located in Asia and has the experience of provision of PSIT as a developed country with a clearly established PSIT policy. In addition to political considerations, Japan has carried out remarkable initiatives in terms of training and educating PSIT providers at the tertiary level.

Definition and Scope

Regarding use of the term 'public service interpreting and translation' or PSIT in this study, 'community interpreting' and 'liaison interpreting' are also commonly used terms in such research (Hale, 2011). However, there is still some discussion over terminology among scholars in this field (e.g. Pöchhacker, 1999; Wadensjö, 2009). The term '(cross-) cultural interpreting' for example has been used instead of the term PSIT and in the case of the Netherlands, PSIT providers are called 'Sworn Interpreters and Translators'. These different nomenclatures used to refer to translation and interpreting services in the community are due to the services being rendered in different contexts.

The PSIT is used in the UK under the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI), which is an independent not-for-profit organization. However, accreditation to interpreting and translation in criminal proceedings, a primary function of PSIT, is regulated by the European parliament and European Council Directive 2010/64/EU (2010). The definition of PSIT, in the European context according to Corsellis (2008, pp. 4-5), covered not only interpreting, but also translation in wider settings.

"Public service interpreting and translation are, as the name implies, interpreting and translation carried out in the context of public services, where service users do not speak the majority language of the country. The term "public service" refers mainly to those services that are provided for the public by central or local government. They include legal, health, and the range of social services, such as housing, education welfare, and environmental health."

As a 'public service', PSIT mirrors the type of service provided by government, such as hospitals, schools, or the police, and as such, is not profit oriented. On the other hand, PSIT in the Australian context has been relabeled as "Community Interpreting".

"Community Interpreting [is] the overarching term for the type of interpreting that takes place within one country's own community, and between residents of that country, as opposed to Conference Interpreting, which takes place between delegates who are residents of different countries, in the context of an international conference or meeting." (Hale, 2007, p. 30).

From the above description, community interpreting is distinct from conference interpreting. This is in direct contrast to 'community interpreting' or PSIT and 'liaison interpreting' as defined by Gentile, Ozolins, and Vasilakakos (1996), which include business settings, meetings, or less formal situations in

a tourism setting in their descriptions. In other words, the concept of interpreting and translation in the community setting performed by central or local government depends on the political and social contexts of individual countries and the definitions thereby are often determined legally.

PSIT in the Thai setting has not been politically discussed enough to give rise to an original term that reflects specific features and limitations. In academia, at least one scholarly journal, *FITISPos-International Journal*, bears it in its very title. This journal is published in Spain and focuses on the fields of 'public service' including community interpreting. However, regarding the qualifications and professionalization of service providers, International Standard ISO 13611:2014 (E), *Interpreting–Guidelines for Community Interpreting* was published in 2014 with a definition of the term community interpreting highlighting good practices in the community setting. Furthermore, there are scholarly books or library references using the labels 'community interpreting' or 'community interpreting and translation'—for instance, *Community Interpreting* (Hale, 2007) and *Handbook of Translation Studies* (Hertog, 2010), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies* (Mikkelsen, 2012), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Wadensjö, 2009)—are much more common than 'PSI' or 'PSIT' from *Public Service Interpreting* (Corsellis, 2008) and *Handbook of Translation Studies* (Hale, 2011).

Nevertheless, the present study avoids using the term 'community interpreting and translation' and adopts the term 'PSIT' because the world community includes a range of diverse definitions and meanings and highlights "participants of the interaction being from the small local community" (Hale 2011). This kind of interpreting and translation in the public sector is undertaken by the local and national authorities of the host country in order to access public services. As an indicator of interpreting and translation support services administered by the public sector, PSIT is the most appropriate reference. Regarding the concept 'community interpreting', Hale herself agrees that PSI rather than community interpreting represents the overarching concept to refer to the interpreting performed in legal, medical, and social contexts (Boe, 2015; D'Hayer, 2012; Taibi, 2011).

Who are the users of PSIT or what is its target audience? It is sure to include, not only those who do not speak the local or national language of the host country, but also those who belong to minority ethnic communities, powerless social groups, or deaf communities. Taibi (2011) argues that PSIT is carried out to empower linguistically (and often politically) disempowered groups within a society. The PSIT needs of these users are usually based on the specific situational contexts of the locality in which they live. That is why it is essential to study the status of PSIT in individual countries.

Thai-related Research on PSIT

PSIT studies as a sub-discipline of translation studies have discussed issues concerning adopting various languages and cultural backgrounds in nearly developed country contexts. On the other hand, as a case study of the non-developed countries, Taibi (2014) suggests community interpreting and

translation in the Arab World, focusing on Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia as the status quo. Since these countries were investigated early in the field of PSIT, they can be regarded as "pioneering countries". The significance of identifying such pioneering countries as case studies can be seen from critical observations as to the quality of the language services and their sustainability due not to the economic scale of each country or numbers of immigrants, but rather, to individual migration policies among the countries offering PSIT (Ozolins, 2010).

In contrast to the rich discussion on PSIT in the contexts of developed countries and the rapid development of this field as a discipline, little discussion in the context of Thailand has been seen so far. A case in point is the fact that only Chulalongkorn University, which provides an opportunity to learn both interpreting and translation programs at a graduate level in Thailand, offers coursework relevant to PSIT or CIT, identified as 'community interpreting'. In other words, studies on PSIT are done by thesis or independent study at a master's level.

Taking the current situation of PSIT research related to the Thai context as a whole, this section briefly reviews PSIT research from both unpublished MA theses and independent studies referred to as 'Special Research' at Chulalongkorn University from a list of theses and special research (Chalermprakit Center for Translation and Interpretation, n.d.) and published scholarly articles from the Thai Citation Journal Index Centre (TCI) and Translation Studies Bibliography. The reviewing is done according to the map of main topics of community interpreting research suggested by Urpi (2012), which is the only available framework for mapping PSIT studies. It includes the following topics: 1. Text analysis, 2. Quality assessment, 3. Interpreting in different contexts, 4. Community interpreting and technology, 5. Community interpreting history, 6. Ethics, 7. Terminology and glossaries, 8. Community interpreters' specific competences, 9. Community interpreters' working conditions, 10. Community interpreters' training, and 11. Community interpreting professionalization.

After screening the research databases mentioned, research articles categorized into topics 2, 3, 8, and 9 were identified but others were not found in so far as they related to the Thai context. Regarding topic 2, Yamamoto (2011) raised issues on the quality of translated informative texts into English and Thai from Japanese in an administrative setting based on functionalist approaches. Marnpae (2015) also examined ways of effectively translating target texts in public services to fulfill specific communication purposes in Spain. From the titles of the research, they indeed focused on translation, but only two research articles were counted in the field of PSIT study. The others were under the subject 'interpreting', which unsurprisingly revealed that PSIT study in the Thai context is inclined toward interpreting rather than translation.

Topic 3 appears to have attracted the academic attention of Thai scholars. For instance, Sanguanphon (2012) offered valuable information related to the medical interpreting system in Japan including the current state of medical interpreter training. Research by Nishikito (2015), comparing medical interpreting services in the USA, Japan, and Thailand, clarified the structural background of each country and the

related provision of medical interpreting and the employment conditions of medical interpreters in Thailand. While medical interpreters in Japan are volunteers, registered as NPO or government staff in Thailand, they are usually full-time or part-time employees.

Onlaor (2010) described the working environment, attitudes, and roles of court interpreters in Thailand after interviewing court interpreters and users. This study was valuable in terms of revealing the conditions and environment of court interpreting services in Thailand including court interpreting systems. Onlaor's study is also recognized as a study on the topic of nine 'working conditions'. In addition, in the legal context, Sirithanachai and Rangponsumrit (2014) explored the role of interpreters for protecting victims of human trafficking in Thailand. This heuristic approach revealed local situations based on local needs and expectations and serves to foster debate on locality demands of PSIT in various settings and contexts.

With regard to topic 8, Rassiri (2008) reported that Mon-Thai and Burmese-Thai interpreters were in highest demand but there were few who were trained or qualified. It was most important for all stakeholders to pay special attention to interpreters for migrant workers in Thai communities. In another study that focused on central Bangkok, Watanabe (2012) explained how Japanese medical interpreters in international hospitals located in central Bangkok served as 'problem solvers' of miscommunication to enable patients to consider optimum medical care. Marnpae (2014) investigated the intercultural capacity of medical interpreters/translators to take into account Thai cultural aspects in a Spanish healthcare setting. In this topic area, the main focus of the above studies are the qualification and standards of translation and interpreting services in health care setting. The issue of education or training programs regarding the competences could be a promising topic to pursue.

The last topic 9 is about factors as well as situations concerning community interpreters' working conditions. O'charoen and Poonlarp (2011) highlighted that it is important to consider variation in language pairs for the translation and interpreting services in the hospitality and business sectors. Their findings are expected to contribute to offering tertiary training as a diploma program for community interpreting with various language pairs including Japanese and Chinese at Chulalongkorn University where they research. Regarding the variation in low supply and high demand languages such as Arabic, Japanese, and Mandarin Chinese, Suwanakitti (2008) also highlighted that they are an important factor influencing training and recruitment positively and negatively because of a lack of training opportunities in a non-English and Thai language pairing for the PSIT. In order to improve this situation, the shortest way is to professionalize PSIT providers by specializing education and training. This would require consideration of the need to develop human resources such as a specialist trainers, associated with topic 10, as mentioned above.

In the Thai context, PSIT research appears minimal because some remains unpublished, special research and most of the articles reviewed are not indexed on international databases or databases specific to translation studies, but

rather indexed in TCI, which is not well-known among non-Thai scholars. Considering the content and topics, some of the research focused on the local needs of PSIT and the roles of interpreters in the health care setting, especially for private hospitals targeting affluent foreign residents. However, there were few studies about PSIT from national perspectives or discussion on policies and management concerning PSIT that could be of value to policy-makers. In addition, PSIT studies in Thai seem to be driven by other factors limited to international institutions such as ILO and UN ESCAPE rather than internal factors that affect Thai citizens and migrants working in Thailand; this implies a lack of premise for a discussion on the PSIT policies and management.

In order to overcome this hurdle and initiate relevant discussion on policy in Thailand, this current research traced political and societal developments of PSIT in Japan. Moreover, previous studies have tended to focus on specific target groups and specific contexts, whereas this study aimed to profile two comparable target groups—skilled-labor workers and unskilled-labor workers—in different contexts, through the lens of a case study in Japan, which has experienced struggles in dealing with unskilled-labor workers, especially Brazilians and Peruvians of Japanese descent as flexible migrant workers (Higuchi & Tanno, 2003; Takenoshita, 2006).

Political Background and Practical Issues of PSIT in Japan

The number of foreign residents in Japan in 2015 totaled 2.54 million, which was the highest on record at that time (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Local authorities in the districts in which foreigners lived have tried to garner information related to their foreign residents in order to provide public services for them. This section introduces the current policies and their implementation in Japan, provides the political background, and describes the challenges being faced in the provision of PSIT in that country.

Political Background

Policies for foreign residents can be broadly divided into national and local levels. Policy development is not tailored for each level independently, but rather is determined by a top-down system. The top-down system provides the overall framework for policies that are defined at the national level and reflect the needs of local communities for which specific plans are developed and implemented at the local level. Furthermore, the local level can be divided further into prefectural and city levels, determined again by the top-down system and represented by the pyramid structure of administration common in Japan.

Policies on foreign residents were introduced from the latter half of the 1980s and had been developed focusing on the concept of international exchange in order to respond to globalization. For that reason, the central government and local authorities placed emphasis on how to adapt to intercultural contact. Then, about 20 years later in 2006, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications began to pay attention to intercultural communication support and launched a new policy on multiculturalism with the key concept being

‘multicultural society in local community’. The local authorities examined ways of communication support specifically for foreign residents and then considered a plan as a “proposal for the ‘multicultural symbiosis’ promotion program” which foresaw domains of PSIT in various sectors such as healthcare, administration, and education; this was officially regarded as the beginning of PSIT in Japan. The communication support in the “proposal for the ‘multicultural symbiosis’ promotion program” is classified into three categories—primary language education for migrants, learning Japanese for daily life, and PSIT service provision. This support anticipated not only interpreting and translation, but also language acquisition, as a complementary vehicle to access social services.

As Ozolins (2010, p. 198) pointed out, since Japan has placed “heavy emphasis on NGOs supplying interpreters, usually from small organizations assisting refugees, migrants or foreigners”, PSIT there tends to be volunteer-based support activities which social agents such as NGOs/NPOs have initiated through collaborations with local authorities. For instance, according to Sanguanphon (2012), the Center for Multicultural Society, Kyoto based in Kyoto—an international and traditional city—has provided a multilingual medical guidebook for foreign residents financially supported by Kyoto prefecture including interpreting and translation services for medical purposes. NPOs of the Multi-language Information Center of Kanagawa based in Yokohama have also introduced translation and interpreting services as a public service supported by the local authority. Since the social agents have to run their service, depending on funds from the local authorities, the rewards for PSIT providers are still relatively low because of the voluntary-based or ad hoc nature of their operation.

To ensure security both financially and socially, higher education institutions such as Tokyo University of Foreign Studies offered training programs specialized in PSIT between 2011 and 2015, enabling 46 interpreters and 43 coordinators to become certificated (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2012). In addition, since 2011 Osaka University has provided legal interpreting and translation as part of its Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies program for students at the graduate level (Osaka University, n.d.).

The year 2012 was a major turning point for immigration policies. The Alien Registration Act governing the immigration of foreigners was abolished and the Basic Resident Register Law for Japanese was amended. In line with this determination, foreign residents were subject to the Basic Resident Register Law and were positioned as residents, the same as Japanese, in local authorities instead of the Immigration Bureau. This political orientation that deems foreign residents as quasi-citizens can be further seen from statistics on immigration control. According to the statistics on the number of registered foreign residents (Ministry of Justice, 2016), the number of permanent residents and long-term residents increased from 116 million people in 2009, to over 120 million people in 2015. This increase in the number of foreign residents in Japan has become a driving factor leading to intercultural communication support systems being made available in the various life settings.

Practical Issues and Beyond

In 2016, 10 years had passed since PSIT was provided in Japan and issues of financial and human resources have been raised. Financially, since funding related to the provision of PSIT has been mainly provided by local authorities, there are differences between the quality and quantity of PSIT services among individual authorities according to individual financial statements. In addition, there seems to be a shortage of human resources to deal with multilingual communication, especially interpreters and translators of minor languages, making it difficult to determinate how many languages local authorities should cover.

There is a lack of consensus on making a linguistic profile map for PSIT provision, leading to an imbalance in supply and demand for PSIT. In other words, the pivotal languages for interpreters and translators in the PSIT context are English and Chinese, which does not adequately respond to demand for a variety of language pairs specific to the PSIT setting. No authorized standard or qualification for interpreting and translation exists, which raises complex issues as to employability.

One way that local authorities have sought to overcome such resource problems is by the use of machine translation systems of which there are two types. One type aims to accomplish multi-lingualization of the PSIT by means of a statistics-based machine translation program such as Google Translate or Microsoft Translator, which can be applied between ASEAN languages. The other applies a corpus-based machine translation program in cooperation with a professional supplier. For instance, the corpus-based machine translation system, “My site translation”, offered by one of the well-known suppliers (Kodensha) has been employed in 20 municipalities (87%) in Tokyo. To enable more sustainable language support, local authorities have utilized this machine to increase the efficiency of multi-lingual information.

On the other hand, partly due to limited expansion of language combinations, the Japanese intra-translation program, called ‘Plain Japanese’, is used for migrants and is similar to the ‘Plain English’ approach, featuring simple sentence structures and adding kana (Japanese phonetic syllable characters) to Chinese characters. This intra-translation approach may help overcome the shortage of human resources.

The expansion of PSIT by machine translation relies on technological advance and innovative ICT services. At one time, dialogue interpreting relied on the availability of interpreters and there were concerns about the high telephone call costs. Today, however, almost everyone can use remote video interpreting services through useful applications such as LINE and SKYPE to communicate with each other anywhere, reducing cost concerns and the need for special telephones. For interpreters, it is no longer always necessary to be on-site to offer support. Ozolins (2011) explained that the advent of mobile phones has been less than the impact of changing the economics of the fixed-line telephone. As good practice, fixed-line telephone services provided by the private sector are available to multi-language call centers such as Telecomedia, BRICKS, and LanguageOne. This suggests that it is no longer

necessary for local authorities to rely on human resources in their local communities from which to recruit multi-lingual interpreters. This progress can be seen as an opportunity to expand various multi-lingual services quantitatively.

This section has outlined PSIT policies in Japan over recent decades, and the challenges associated with the implementation of policies, including dealing with financial and human resource issues. Compared to 2006, the policy itself remains unchanged, but the approaches to PSIT have changed. Previously, PSIT was essentially volunteer-based through NGOs/NPOs and was provided from the host country. Many local authorities have since undertaken an approach oriented toward collaboration and cooperation with the private sector to commit to expanding sustainable PSIT in line with ICT innovations.

Profiling Prospect Migrant Clients of PSIT in Thailand

This section discusses the profiles of the main target groups focusing on low-skilled and high-skilled migrant workers, especially Japanese workers in the case of PSIT in Thailand.

Low-skilled migrant workers from the three neighboring countries of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar are generally engaged in physical labor such as at construction sites or in restaurants where high Thai language proficiency is not required. Since they intended to come to Thailand for such work purposes, even if they had opportunities to learn Thai either before or after having lived in Thailand, it would be difficult to improve their communication skills.

By contrast, there are no such communication problems for the migrant children since they learn Thai almost from birth, in an educational setting, as they study Thai at school the same as Thai children. This means that PSIT options are not required specifically for the children. However, when the Thai teacher has to talk with the child's parents, who do not speak Thai, there are issues such as who mediates between the teacher and the parents as the interpreter and with respect to announcements from school that are written in Thai, who is available to translate? Bilingual children themselves may facilitate the communication as an ad hoc interpreter or translator, but PSIT still plays an important role in terms of children's rights as set out in Convention on the Rights of the Child by Thailand in 1992 (UNICEF Thailand, n.d.).

When it comes to health care, it is essential to focus on cases within the scope of social security, such as social insurance services. As Chantavanich and Vungsiriphisal (2013) and Wongkongdech, Srisaenpang and Tungsawat (2015) have shown, a number of hospitals have hired Burmese medical interpreters in provinces bordering that neighboring country. However all administrative advice and documents are, in principle, written only in Thai.

The skilled-migrant workers, such as Japanese expatriates and their families, try to maintain a lifestyle similar to that in their own country. They do this by forming their own communities in specific localities. In daily life, they usually shop in supermarkets that specialize in overseas food products like the Fuji supermarket for the Japanese, regarded as the oldest Japanese supermarket in Thailand. Since Japanese traditionally

cook Japanese food and eat it at home, they need to buy their Japanese food there. They also choose to live in serviced apartments and condominiums specially operated for foreigners by Japanese real estate agencies where the use of Japanese or English is more common.

Most expatriates with medical insurance would normally choose international private hospitals such as Bumrungrad International Hospital and Samitivej Hospital (Nishikito, 2015, pp. 76–77). Needless to say, the international hospitals offer multi-language interpreting and translation services, and some of them have separate reception services, according to languages such as Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Arabic. In addition, these private hospitals have websites customized for Japanese (see the relevant website for each of the above-mentioned hospitals). The sons and daughters of expatriates usually go to international or private schools with lessons in English rather than to local school teaching which is given in Thai because it is assumed that eventually they will return to their own country, and in the case of the Japanese, there is also the choice of a Thai Japanese Association School with Japanese teachers teaching in Japanese from kindergarten to junior high school level.

A comparison of the characteristics of low-skilled migrants with skilled migrants in professional positions, suggests that the need for PSIT for skilled workers is minimal as such services are an integral part of their employment package. The kind of language service delivered can be positioned as a part of service management strategies. This point was supported by the findings that the language services have become the most efficient means of promoting and improving hospitality management for foreign residents in the private hospitals.

For low-skilled migrants, however, the orientation of Thai government-led expansion of PSIT is still unclear because of political instability in Thailand. PSIT has already been positioned as one of six language policies under the Language for Economic Development principle in the framework of the National Language Policy of Thailand (NLP) drafted by the Royal Institute of Thailand, which features a multi-pronged policy. Despite the fact that the NLP previously was approved by then-PM Abhisit Vejjajiva in 2010 and then-PM Yingluck Shinawatra in 2011, it has yet to be announced even now, as it is required to be approved by the incumbent Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha again. Although this political instability causes a delay in decision-making regarding the NLP, the Royal Institute of Thailand struggles to continue developing the draft for NLP through projects for strategic implementation plans, whose budget for the 2015 fiscal year was subsidized by the current government.

Since no language policy based on consensus for PSIT in Thailand is in place (Draper & Nilaiyaka, 2015), there is minimal correspondence for migrant workers in accordance with the needs of particular communities. For instance, the Ministry of Labor launched a translation service in Lao, Burmese, and Khmer on the website of the Department of Labor Protection and Welfare (2016), and an interpreting service in English for migrant workers in order to provide equal access to legal protection and benefits from public service (Ministry of Labor, 2014). Further, it should be noted

here that the Department of Labor Protection and Welfare (2016) signed a memorandum of understanding with Mae Fah Luang University, Chiang Rai, Thailand on cooperation to provide interpreting services through social media for migrant workers. Higher education institutions offering translation programs in Thailand should start to consider a coursework related to PSIT to produce PSIT providers to address social needs and responsibilities.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The present study aimed to highlight the direction for the development of PSIT in Thailand by reviewing the political contexts and illustrating the practical development of PSIT in Japan. In order to do this, the present study identified the characteristics of migrants as clients for PSIT in Thailand.

Local authorities in Japan have taken advantage of cooperation with not only NGO/NPOs, but also the private sector. They have attempted to overcome the challenges of budget constraints and securing human resources, especially university-trained interpreters and translators of minor languages. Consequently, PSIT in Japan has broadened the deployment of the services by using of a hospitality-based approach. On the other hand, PSIT in Thailand has been deployed in the form of a mixed hospitality-based approach and a community-based approach and the service subjects of these two approaches have been mainly divided into skilled migrant and low-skilled migrant workers, respectively.

However, with the launch of the AEC, since the mobility of ASEAN citizens is increasing, it is time for Thailand to assume its responsibilities as a host country. In order to continue to be an attractive country for migrants of various backgrounds, who contribute by bringing innovation into Thai society, it is essential to develop PSIT as a key solution from the point of view of ensuring an adequate and able labor force and sustainable economic growth, helping to escape the middle-income trap. At the same time, improving the quality of life of migrants opens the way to extend consumption associated with language support services for low-skilled migrants in the future. In line with this, higher education institutions in Thailand will need to tackle the issue of a lack of qualified and trained PSIT providers, especially translators and interpreters. At the same time, Thailand researchers in the field of PSIT need to investigate sophisticated literacy surveys for migrants to plan to deploy PSIT, according to the needs and demands of migrants, and in cooperation with the more aggressive private sector including utilizing ICT. More creative and effective solutions to the issues related to migrants in Thailand can be produced from a rich communication between dedicated citizens in Thai society through the effective provision of PSIT.

Conflict of Interest

There is no Conflict of Interest.

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