

# THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT APPROACH: ENABLING THE MARINE DEPARTMENT PIER STAFF IN BANGKOK TO DEVELOP ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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## Abstract

The objectives of this research and development study were to 1) Study the communication related problems of pier staff who serve foreign tourists using public passenger boats in Bangkok, 2) develop tools to improve the English communication skills of the pier staff, 3) evaluate the developed processes and tools for developing the staffs' English communication skill, 4) propose guideline on career development to the pier staff. The researcher employed mixed methods research. The research and development consisted of 5 stages: Analysis stage, Design stage, Development stage, Implementation stage, and Evaluation stage. The analysis stage employed a qualitative research method to analyze the communication related problem of the pier staff when they provide service to the foreigners. Qualitative research was also used for developing tools for improving the English communication skill of the pier staff as well as proposing a guideline for developing the career development for the pier staff. A quantitative research method was used for evaluating the developed process and tools for developing the pier staff communication skill.

The sample used to study the problem was 46 staff, the population for the implementation of the developed tools was 60 pier staff. The participants who provided information for the qualitative research part were 8 foreigners who used the pier service in the past. The tools used for the quantitative data collection were questionnaires and an English skill test. The statistics used to analyze the quantitative data generated percentage, mean and standard deviations. The tool for collecting qualitative data was an In-depth interview. The qualitative data analysis was conducted by summarizing important points.

The results of this research were that: 1) 70.50% of the pier staff needed to develop their English communication skills, 67.40% thought the use of a mini-book would help. 2) The process of improving English language skills through self-learning with a mini book and e-learning classes was also appealing. 3) The result after using the developed tools increased English skills by 60.10%. 4) Career development guidelines were: To organize English and Chinese language training courses every 6 months.

**Keywords:** career development, English communication skill of Marine department pier staff in Bangkok, Improve English in communication

HRD is a framework to help employees develop their personal and organizational skills, knowledge, and abilities. (Heathfield, 2018). HRD is a process of developing and unleashing expertise to improve individual, team, work process, and organizational system performance. HRD efforts typically take place under the additional banners of “training and development” and “organization development” as well as numerous other titles (Swanson & Holton III, 2008).

According to the manufacturer, Tom GPS navigation system, Bangkok was ranked as one of the topmost congested roads, especially during rush hour (Reuters and Bangkok Post, 2017). Therefore, conducting this research to explore the needs of the foreign traveler and the English communication skills of the Marine Department pier staff, then developing approaches and tools to help staff use English more effectively should greatly help them perform their duty more effectively. Moreover, at the same time, this research will help guide the heads of each area to properly and effectively organize activities to develop English communication skills.

### Research Objectives

1. To investigate problems in pier operation, career development, and English communication skills of the Marine Department’s permanently hired pier personnel at the Chao Phraya River public boat services in Bangkok.
2. To develop tools for English communication skill development for the Marine Department pier staff.
3. To implement the developed tools and evaluate the English communication tools.

#### 4. To propose career development for pier staff.

English is generally used for communication among people worldwide. Despite the effort of the Thai government on recognizing English literacy as a fundamental education curriculum that requires at least 10 years of exposure to the language, a large number of Thai citizens still cannot communicate in English fluently (Karimova, 2016).

There are many evolutions, changes, and complications in the current society of Information Technology (IT). Accordingly, online learning management is important. Electronic learning (E- Learning) is a new educational concept, that was developed from the advancement of online computing. Today, some of the new online learning methods are, for example, teaching and learning through websites, Computer-Assisted Instruction, Virtual Classrooms, and teaching and learning through WebQuest, an inquiry-oriented format (Zyad, 2016).

E-learning uses the internet as a communication platform for learners and teachers/lecturers through the computer system, *Learning Management Software* (LMS). Learners can learn from anywhere and at any time since there are no limitations of places and time online. Knowledge, in a form of digital content, can be transferred through computer systems, including intranet, extranet, or the internet. Learning through electronic devices can help to further develop learners' thinking skills through its two-way form of communication platform and offering of various styles of learning. It also encourages more critical thinking among the learners (Cavus, Uzunboyulu, & Ibrahim, 2006).

#### Research framework

The research and development framework was used through five stages of process: Analyze, Diagnose, Plan, Implement, and Evaluation as shown below.

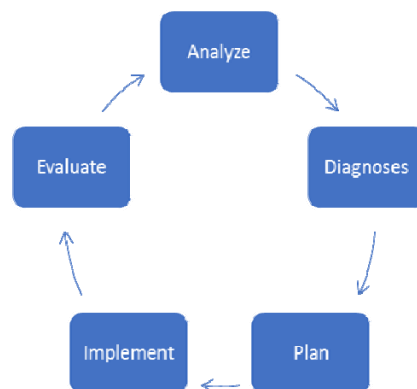


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework. (Susan A.Lynham, 2000.)

### **The economic aspects related to the study**

Thai people are heading towards a greater economic model. Currently in “Thailand 4.0”, according to Suwit’s Inorganic Kasit’s Deputy Minister of Commerce, is an economical period led under the leadership of the Prime Minister, who places great focus on developing a “stable, prosperous and sustainable” nation by creating “internal strength” driven by new ideas. The mission of driving towards the reformation of a “Sufficiency Economy” via a “civil state” is perceived as important when faced with new threats and opportunities within the 21st century. The creative industries and cultural value services such as high-tech design, Business Lifestyle Technology and Tourism Optimization Services are also perceived as needing to progress.

Many countries have imposed new economic models and alternative ways to build wealth in the 21st century, such as in the United States. A “Nation of Makers” in Britain is pushing out new product manufacturers labeled, Design of Innovation, whilst China continues with products labeled, Made in China. By 2025, India and South Korea are also expected to follow suit with their product manufacturer labels (Thairath, 2016).

Thailand’s Economy 4.0 also looks towards the necessary skills to solve issues of unemployment, including work values of analytical thinking, creativity, ability to recognize and evaluate the decision of patriotic services and, mental flexibility. Thus, allowing workers to further progress within their careers (Pisitpaiboon, 2016).

Tatayakavee, the former Secretary of Education, states that employees should be trained to use their thinking skills rather than memorize, including the ability to think critically and rationally. With many Thai people not being able to communicate effectively in English, the matter was brought to the country’s Board of Education. The aim was to create an education development plan, with emphasis on the English language for each of the Thai provinces (Pisitpaiboon, 2016).

With Thailand stepping into the 4.0 era, the country is committed to restructuring its economy towards “innovation driven economies”, where people improve the quality of High Value Services and Service Enhancement in order to meet the global changes in the future.

The organization development model

The ODPS Model shows the five phases of the organization development for the performance process when integrated and supported through leadership. (Swanson, 302)

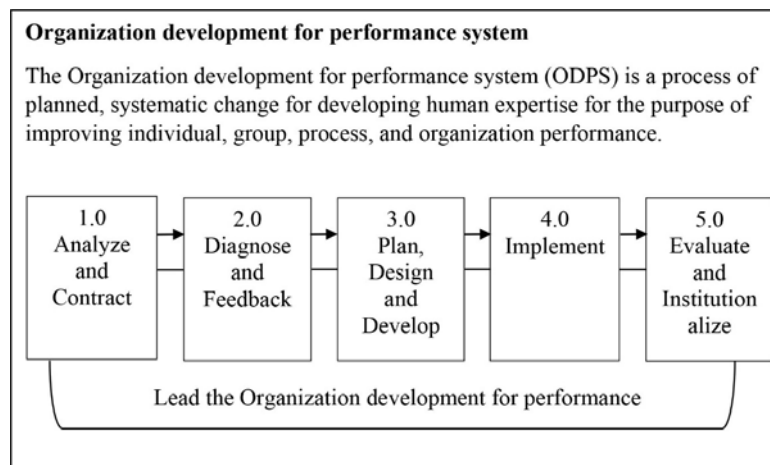


Figure 2 Organization Developments for the Performance System

Source: Susan A.Lynham, 2000.

### Significance of the Study

This study contributes solutions to the problems as follows: 1) It builds a good understanding of the problems of the Marine Department pier staff at the Chao Phraya River public boat services when communicating with foreign travelers, to identify and prioritize English training appropriately. 2) Pier staff will receive suitable, English training courses, and improvement of their English skills. They will gain greater confidence when communicating with foreign travelers. 3) Foreign travelers will be provided with good information, good services and safety. 4) The Marine Department will be able to set standards for the pier staff.

### Methodology

This research applied research paradigms of constructivism and interpretivism. And discussed research methodology which consists of the research paradigm of constructivism in order to provide the most insightful understanding of the research problem. The questionnaire consists of the gathering of participants' perspectives, data analysis, and the determination of appropriate tools to be used for the improvement of communicative English language skills. Finally, the Chapter describes the ethical protocol of the study to ensure confidentiality of the Marine Department pier staffs.

The researcher has used both qualitative and quantitative research approach for the R&D research.

## 1. Population for the quantitative research

There are 25 piers controlled by the Marine Department along the Chaopraya River, 22 of the piers have more than 10,000 passengers per year. There are 2 staff per pier, with the addition of 2 supervisors, the total of 46 staff was used as the population of this study.

The piers were as follows:

Sathorn Pier	Oriental Pier	Wat MuangKae Pier
Si Phraya Pier	Marine Dept. Pier	Rachawongse Pier
Memorial Bridge	Pier Rajinee Pier	Tha Tien Pier
Tha Chang Pier	Wang Lang (Siriraj) Pier	Thonburi Railway Pier
PhraPinklao Bridge Pier	Bang Po Pier	Rama 8 Bridge Pier
Thewes Pier	Krung Thon Bridge Pier	Wat Thepnahree Pier
Wat thepakorn Pier	Payap Pier	Irrigation Dept. Pier
KhewKhai Ka Pier	Kiak Kai Pier	Bang Po Pier
Wat Soi ThongPier		

## 2. Research Participants

Two groups of participants were selected for this study:

Group 1: Participants selected for the questionnaires and interviews.

There were 44 pier staff in Bangkok to provide service about one thousand travelers who use the boat service on a yearly basis, which includes; Sathorn Pier, Oriental Pier, Si Phraya Pier, Marine Dept. Pier, Rachawongse Pier, Memorial Bridge Pier, Tha Tien Pier, Tha Chang Pier, Wang Lang(Siriraj) Pier, Thonburi Railway Pier, PhraPinklao Bridge Pier, Bang Po Pier, Rama 8 Bridge Pier, Thewes Pier, Krung Thon Bridge Pier, Wat Thepnahree Pier, Wat Thepakorn Pier, Payap Pier, Irrigation Dept. Pier, KhewKhai Ka Pier, Kiak Kai Pier and Wat Soi Thong Pier. The addition of 2 supervisors were the population to test the developed tools to increase communication skills in English, 60 peoples provided information for the qualitative research, 8 foreigners who used the pier service in the past to study the need for language communication improvement. Tools used for quantitative data collection included a survey of problems focusing on the needs of staff.

Group 2: Sixty participants who took part in learning via the mini books and e-Learning program.

### 3. Tools used for the quantitative Research

The tools for the quantitative research were questionnaires, and a mini book. The questionnaire for pier staff was developed by the researcher. It concerned the need for English skills and the preferred way to develop their English communication. Five experts were asked to validate the questionnaire using the IOC approach. It was found that the IOC value was between 0.80 to 1.00. There were 2 parts in the questionnaire; Part 1) Participants' demographic data: years of employment, gender, age, and graduate degree. Part 2) Rating scale about the needs when communicating in English, and the preference towards the learning tools.

The Mini book was also developed by the researcher. The designed mini book (7cmX10cm, 16 pages) was comprised of 30 sets of questions which are commonly asked by foreigners when they use the boat service. The validation of the mini book was conducted by the Marine Department's Head of Area. Changes to content were edited accordingly with a trial run on a staff member who was not working at a pier along the Cho Phraya River, then edited content was added and a re-run trial with a staff member conducted.

The E-learning program was also used as the tools for developing the pier staff English proficiency. The program can be accessed via a mobile device or computer. The staff was providing with username registration. The 30 questions were also present in the e-learning where staff can listen to all answer choices more than once by touching the sentences, then choose their answer by touching the button. There is no time limit for completing the questions. The scores were presented to staff after they have finished 30 questions. The scores from the test is automatically added to the system for research and all questions and answers will be replaced every time they take the test. This was tested by 3 pier staff in the Nonthaburi province, who were not final participants.

### 4. Data Collection

The data collection of this research comprised of two main parts: Part 1) Quantitative data collection: the researcher administered the first research survey questionnaires; the results were then used to develop the approach and tools to improve English skills. The ODPS model was used to develop the English training tool, implement the training tools and evaluate the results on career development. Part 2) Evaluating the results of the implementation of the developed tools to improve English communication skills. The Mini

book and e- learning lessons were used by the piers during their work hours and at home for a period of three months. Before they used the Mini-books and e-learning lessons, they were asked to take a pretest. After the three-month period, they again were asked to take a post test on English communication ability.

## 5. The Statistics

In this study, the statistical method used to evaluate the results included frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation (SD), *t*-test and test paired with Dunnett's T3 detail.

1) Percentages can be calculated from the following equation:

$$P = \frac{x}{n} \times 100 \text{ Percentage}$$

**P** is Percentage

**x** is Number of respondents

**n** is Number of all respondents

2) The average  $\mu$ , can be calculated as:

$\mu$  is Average

$\Sigma$  is A summary of all data

$X_i$  is the individual data

**n** is all information

3) Standard deviation (SD)

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(X - \bar{X})^2}{(n-1)}}$$

$X$  is Each of

$\bar{X}$  is mean of the sample

$n$  is number of samples



### Research results.

The results of the research were that: 1) Staff at the piers needed to develop their English skills at 70.50%. The convenience of using the small booklets was at 67.40 percent. 2) The process of improving English language ability during work hours and out of hours via the mini book and learning through e-learning was one way to achieve the objectives. A sample of the Mini book is shown below,



Figure 3 Mini Book, Front Cover

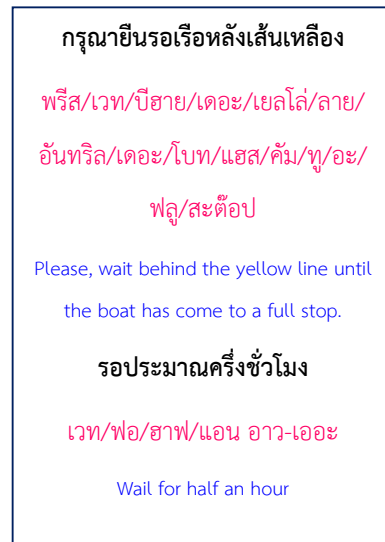


Figure 4 Mini Book, Page 5

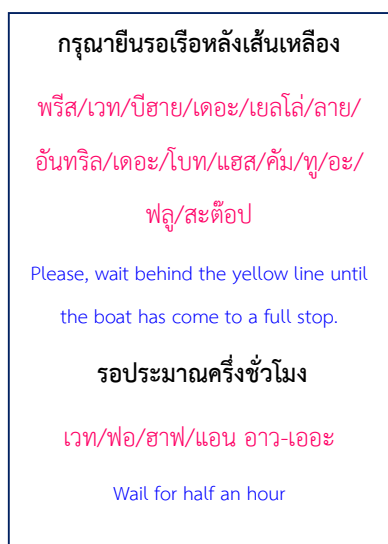


Figure 5 Mini Book, Page 7



Figure 6 Mini Book, Page 13

The e-learning

The pictures below illustrate the e-learning program:

Figure 7 Registration Form

Figure 8 Username Login

Figure 9 Test Questions

Figure 10 Final score

3. The result of using these tools was that they can improve the ability to use the English language by 60.10%.

**Table 1** The pier staffs' English communication scores after learning from the mini book.

Pre-test	1 <sup>st</sup> Score	2 <sup>nd</sup> Score	3 <sup>rd</sup> Score	Post test	Improve %
38.78	71.00	86.66	93.22	98.83	60.10

After they were given their mini book, they were encouraged to conduct self-study. They could refer to the mini book many times while they completed the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> exercises. They should finish all 3 exercises within 45 days. The post test score recorded mean was 28 from 30.

**Table 2** Scores after the pier staff were given the mini book and completed the e-Learning programs

Topic	Mean	SD
1 <sup>st</sup> exercise	21.3	1.13
2 <sup>nd</sup> exercise	26.0	0.27
3 <sup>rd</sup> exercises	28.0	0.26

4. Career development guidelines for pier staff includes having English language training, such as every 6 months and should have other language training which includes Chinese.

After the pier staff received the mini book and completed the e-learning programs. Most of them felt happy and brave enough to communicate with foreigners.



Figure 11 E-learning programs

The effectiveness of the developed approach and the career path of the pier staff.

From this study, results showed that pier staff can significantly improve their English communication skills. Pier staff now had more courage and could effectively communicate with foreign travelers. Not only would this enable the staff to work in a more efficient and happy manner, but also creates a good image for the Marine Department.

From the pier staff who gained higher results, indicated they were happier and more confident when they conversed with foreign travelers. With the development of better pier staff communication skills in English, they could also further their career path in the tourism industry or training new staff from a higher job position.

All the Marine Department pier staff practiced during work in order to gain experience.

#### Conclusion of the research results

1) Problems with English communication by the Marine Department pier staff at the Chao Phraya River public boat service in Bangkok may arise when communicating verbally in English. Their poor English communication skills stems from their lack of certainty of sentence structure when communicating with foreign travelers. Moreover, they are worried about their inaccurate pronunciation of certain English words. Thus, leading to a lack of confidence when communicating with foreign travelers.

2) The career development approach to improve the English communication skill of the Marine Department pier staff at the Chao Phraya River public boat services in Bangkok are: (1) Develop a mini book with the most commonly used English sentences that are needed when communicating with foreign travelers, and (2) design an e-Learning tool for self-learning.

3) The level of effectiveness of the tools used to improve the communicative English language skill of the Marine Department pier staff at Cha Phraya River public boat services in Bangkok when conversing with foreign travelers was at a satisfactory level. They showed greater confidence when communicating with foreign travelers. All pier staff participating in the study submitted a pre-test score before they were given the mini book. Once they've received their mini book, all staff also studied independently through self-study. They could refer to the mini book at any time when completing their first, second and third exercises. They were given 45 days to complete the three exercises. Research

results shown that most staff had an improved score, when compared to their initial score from the first exercise.

4) Mini Book: The mini book was designed to be convenient and easy to use for the staffs' future use. Following the use of the mini book, they were more confident when conversing with foreign travelers.

## Discussion

The problems in pier operation, career development and level of English communication skills of the Marine Department permanently hired personals at the Chao Phraya River public boat services in Bangkok is staffs' Inability to Communicate Effectively in English: This is solely due to the lack of English communication skills of each individual Thai staffs. Following a discussion with staff, who participated in the e-Learning program, many would like to see the program focus on more English listening and speaking training (i.e. daily conversational use, pronunciations). The results are consistent with the findings of Kanlaya (2007) revealed that most TPOs were not satisfied with their poor English listening and speaking skills due to their lack of specific vocabulary while on duty. This dissatisfaction also extended to their knowledge of English when attempting to understand various accents of native English speakers. Besides, the speed of speaking affected their ability to listen and to speak during communication with foreigners.

Most agreed that the English training session should be arranged every six months, for three consecutive days. Each training activity should be conducted in English and only combined with Thai when necessary. If possible, most pier staff would prefer to study with instructors who are native speakers of English, with class size of 7-12 trainees per class. The Marine Department should publish and distribute the mini book to all pier staff. The results are consistent with the findings of Srichitra revealed, the developing guide line, the English oral communication as well as social and cultural training courses for English speaking countries should be provided to improve the potential of front office staff and organizations for offering sustainable services in the future and to prepare the readiness for ASEAN Community in the year 2015. (2014). Bunpa's additional English courses should be provided to the staff. The staff with lower education background should be provided for more opportunity in getting a higher level of education. (2011)

**Recommendations**

Further research should investigate what specific knowledge and skills were gained through the staffs' experiential learning development, the incorporation of technology in experiential learning to maximize staffs' learning and engagement in online experiential learning environments. Develop more approaches using experiential learning with e-Learning in other languages in order to develop skills, critical thinking and reflection necessary for when the Marine Department undergoes real world evaluation and problem-solving scenarios. This is highly relevant to their career development and life within the dynamic period of Thailand 4.0. In addition, compare the effects of experiential learning from face-to-face activities and mix-method training courses.

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