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## **Development of a Self-Access Package to Enhance Communicative English Listening and Speaking Skills of Eco-tourism Entrepreneurs**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purposes of this research were to investigate eco-tourism entrepreneurs' conditions and expectations of their communicative English skills, to develop the self-access package to enhance communicative English listening and speaking skills of eco-tourism entrepreneurs, and to study satisfaction of eco-tourism entrepreneurs towards the self-access package. The sample population of this study was 26 eco-tourism entrepreneurs, a group of carts and tourism, setting in front of Mon Jam scenic point, Moo 7, Nong Hoi village, Mae Ram subdistrict, Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai province. Methodologies used in this research were interviews, observations and focus group discussions. According to the investigation of their conditions and expectations, it was found that all of them would like to improve their communicative English skills by using the self-access package to enhance communicative English listening and speaking skills of eco-tourism entrepreneurs. After using the self-access package to develop communicative English listening and speaking skills consisting of a manual and recorded sound in USB flashdrive, their satisfactions were evaluated. The finding indicated that the satisfaction of eco-tourism entrepreneurs towards the self-access package were at a high level.

*Keywords:* self-access package, communicative English listening and speaking skills, eco-tourism entrepreneurs

### **Introduction**

#### **Backgrounds and Importance**

Nowadays, "English" is still one of most significant language for worldwide communication, especially the communication in well-known tourist attractions in Thailand. It is an essential tool leading to efficient services for all related parties. However, there are continually some problems for eco-tourism entrepreneurs according to their communicative English skills. This affects their services, both proactive and reactive, that are stepping forward to be international. Moreover, these entrepreneurs need to be developed their communicative English skills in order to build up their confidence for the effective communication, especially in real situations.

Nong Hoi village, Mae Ram subdistrict, Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai, Thailand is situated in national reserved forest area. This area is most high mountains, about 1,200 metres above sea level, with its average annual temperature of 20 degree Celsius. Populations in the village are local northern Thai and other ethnic groups such as Hmong, Lisu and Chinese Yunnan. Most of them are agriculturists and they can earn some extra income from tourism because this area is one of the most famous natural tourist routes, Mae Rim-Samoeng-Hang

Dong. There are also various tourist attractions like the Nong Hoi Royal Project Development Center, Mon Long scenic point, Mon Jam scenic point, strawberry fields, vineyards as well as many kinds of accommodations such as resorts, homestays and camping areas. Because of these, Nong Hoi village becomes more popular rapidly among, both Thai and foreign, tourists visiting these beautiful tourist attractions. The people in this village have gathered to be groups which are a group of carts and tourism, a group of housewives and a group of accommodations. Each group has their own duties – a group of carts and tourism provides wooden carts riding and guiding the tourist visiting the tourist attractions around the area; a group of housewives produces and sells souvenirs and agricultural products and a group of accommodations copes with various kinds of accommodations for the tourists.

Nevertheless, these groups' major significant problem is communication with the foreign tourists, especially English speaking tourists, because these entrepreneurs cannot communicate with these tourists. This is also a main obstacle of other professionals, for example employees in some private sectors (Papimon Chartphahon, 2006) and tricycle drivers (Warangkana Poomjeen, 2001). English speaking and listening skills are a barrier between these people and their foreign customers. For this reason, basically, it is vital to develop a self-access package, which is easy to understand and use, for these entrepreneurs in order to enhance their communicative English skills and promote Thailand's tourism. For Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Brown (2007) stated that it is a way to teach language which focuses on communication in the real situation and student-centered approach. There are also 4 characteristics of CLT, which are: 1) teaching goals that are focusing on communicative skills, not on grammar or language contents; 2) learners can use language by its functions and meaning through language techniques without focusing on language structure; 3) fluency and accuracy are not main aspects, however, fluency sometimes becomes more significant than the accuracy in the communication; and 4) at last, in communicative language learning, the learners have to competently and creatively use the language, in unfamiliar contexts. Consequently, in order to enhance communicative English skills, the learners are emphasized to communicate with English competently in their daily life, rather than the accuracy of grammar and language structure. Furthermore, Gore (2002) noted an idea on learner autonomy (LA) in learning second language (L2) that the learners have to be ready for learning outside the language classroom and the learners have to be realized their capabilities to learn and practices the language accurately by themselves. Thus, the autonomy learners have to perceive their own needs of learning the second language. They also have to learn new vocabulary, plan and choose learning materials which are suitable by themselves as well as comprehend their advancement of learning the language, levels of their competency and complete their achievement by themselves. This learning approach could lead of lifelong learning and the competency of the communicative English skills that could be adapted with the various contexts.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is aimed to develop a self-access package to enhance communicative English listening and speaking skills of eco-tourism entrepreneurs. The purposes of this research are:

1. to investigate eco-tourism entrepreneurs' conditions and expectations of their communicative English skills.
2. to develop the self-access package to enhance the eco-tourism entrepreneurs' communicative English listening and speaking skills.
3. to study the eco-tourism entrepreneurs' satisfaction towards the self-access package.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology is Research and Development of a self-access package of listening and speaking English conducted in Nong Hoi village, Mae Ram subdistrict, Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai, Thailand. The participants of the research were composed of 26 members of a group of carts and tourism, who are all Hmong and have to interact with the foreign tourist and have the highest level of needs in order to improve their communicative English skills, according to a survey and a primarily interview with a leader of the village and leaders of the groups. There are two phases of the research process. In phase one, the researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data in order to explore the current situations and expectation of the eco-tourism entrepreneurs' communicative English skills. In phase two, the self-access package was developed and applied to their real professional situation.

In phase one, the research instruments used to collect the data were interviewing questionnaires. The interviewing questionnaires were adapted because it could obtain more in-depth facts on the respondents' own attitudes, knowledge, expectations and needs and it was better for some of them who was illiteracy of Thai language. The questionnaires were composed of five parts: the eco-tourism entrepreneurs' personal data and educational background, their English communication with foreign tourists, their self evaluation of their English listening and speaking skills and 17 topics they required to communicate with the foreign tourists. In the meantime, there were 10 interviewing questionnaires provided to foreign tourists as stakeholders. The questionnaires for the foreign tourists were divided into three parts, including their general information and their opinions towards the eco-tourism entrepreneurs' communicative English skills. Also, the data were gathered using in-depth interview, both formal and informal with structured interview; participatory observation, emphasizing the entrepreneurs' behaviours, contents and interaction with the foreign tourists; focus group discussion, to find out their difficulties when communicated with the foreign tourists, to instruct how to use the self-access package, and to acquire their suggestions after using the self-access package; survey research, through the interviewing questionnaires; and documentary research. The quantitative data gathered from 26 members of a group of carts and tourism and 10 foreign tourists responses to the questionnaires were then analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS) 19.0 software program for descriptive statistics.

In phase two, when the findings from the phase one were disclosed, the researcher developed the self-access package to enhance communicative English listening and speaking skills of the eco-tourism entrepreneurs. According to Kevin Kruse's ADDIE Model (2001), to develop the self-access package, the entrepreneurs should initially be analyzed and assessed their needs, routine and current knowledge. Then, the contents and media for the self-access package are designed referring to the analysis and assessment. After the self-access package was developed, it was distributed to a sample group to try out and gather feedbacks. Next, the self-access package was improved following the sample groups' suggestion. The improved self-access package was applied by the eco-tourism entrepreneurs. Lastly, interviewing questionnaires were provided to gather their satisfaction towards the self-access package.

### **Research Results**

#### **The Eco-tourism Entrepreneurs' Conditions and Expectations of their Communicative English Skills**

Since 2010, Mon Jam scenic point has become more and more well-known among Thai and foreign tourists. A head of village and leaders of the village also set tourism committee due to it was seen that Nong Hoi village was very suitable, in terms of its

geography, history, culture, natural and human resources, to support this area to be a new natural tourist attraction of Chiang Mai. The committee managed and provided other services for the tourists such as tourist information center, sightseeing, camping at Mon Long scenic point, and other facilities. One of the most popular activities for the tourists was traditional cart riding. This was a traditional laboursaving vehicle for Hmong households. It was used to carry agricultural products from the mountain to their houses. Nowadays, it became a famous activity the tourists wanted to try as they visited Mon Jam scenic point. Because of a flow of the foreign tourist to Mon Jam, the eco-tourism entrepreneurs in this area, especially, the member of a group of carts and tourism had to interact with these tourists daily. It was found that their communicative English skills were the great obstacle for their professional, therefore, developing their communicative English skills were needed.

### **Problems of the Eco-tourism Entrepreneurs' Communicative English Skills**

The analysis of the data revealed that most of the member had insufficient communicative English skills (listening and speaking), that was 88.5%, while 11.5% of them had sufficient communicative English skills. Regarding their English learning background, 65.4% of the member had never learnt English, as 30.8% had learnt English for 1-2 years and 3.8% had learnt English for more than 5 years. The majority of the entrepreneurs (84.6%) had poor English listening skill and most of them (92.3%) had poor English speaking skill. Difficulties of their English listening and speaking skills were they were not familiar with the foreign tourists' accent, they could not catch what the tourists talked, they did not have any knowledge about language structure in various situations, they did not know English specific terms and they could not pronounce correctly. Regarding to 10 foreign respondents as their clients, in the foreigners' view, the eco-tourism entrepreneurs' listening and speaking skills were the most apparent obstacles for interaction between the tourists and the entrepreneurs (90% and 80% respectively). Grammatical, lexical and cultural issues were also the main problems (90%, 90% and 70% respectively).

### **Expected Advantages of the Self-access Package**

Realized the advantages of the self-access package, the entrepreneurs expected to gain benefits from the self-access package as follows:

- 1) it was a solution of their communicative English skills problems;
- 2) it made them be more confident to interact with the foreign tourists effectively;
- 3) their service would be more reliable because they could provide more details of their service to the tourists; and
- 4) the tourist attractions and the activities would be promoted among other foreign tourists.

### **A Self-Access Package to Enhance Communicative English Listening and Speaking Skills of Eco-tourism Entrepreneurs**

A self-access package to enhance communicative English listening and speaking skills of eco-tourism entrepreneurs included a handbook containing illustrations, useful vocabulary, and common English expressions often used in communicating with the foreign tourists and recorded sample conversation in various situations. It was divided into 5 units: Unit 1 Greeting, Introduction, Giving Direction, and Offering Helps; Unit 2 Requesting, Thanking and Apologizing; Unit 3 Asking and Giving Information; Unit 4 Specifying Rules, Regulations and Warnings; and Unit 5 Answering about Prices and Negotiating about Prices.

### The Eco-tourism Entrepreneurs' Satisfaction towards the Self-access Package

After 1 month implementation of the self-access package, it was evaluated by the entrepreneurs to find out their satisfaction towards the self-access package via questionnaires and interview. They were composed of six parts: contents, language use, language practicing activities, sound, design and utilization. The results were revealed that, in overall, the respondents were satisfied towards the self-access package at a high level in all six aspects.

### Conclusion and Suggestion

From the study, the development of the self-access package to enhance communicative English listening and speaking skills of eco-tourism entrepreneurs was based on the individual factors, abilities, needs and contexts aimed to apply in their real professional situations. This also relied on a participatory procedure of all stakeholders of the eco-tourism in this area who were the eco-tourism entrepreneurs, the foreign tourists and leaders of the village. They were parts of designing, developing and improving this self-access package. Even though, this self-access package was efficiently implemented among this group of entrepreneurs, there are many autonomy approaches and pedagogies that can be applied to help other groups of entrepreneurs and professional to develop their communicative English skills. However, The further study can be conducted in other careers with varied geographical areas, contexts and learning environment to develop their English proficiency.

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