

ปัญหาการสื่อสารและความจำเป็นในการอบรมของพนักงานต้อนรับประจำคลินิกฟัน

English Communication Problems and Needs of Front Desk Staff at Silom Dental Building and Thonglor Dental Building Clinic

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การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษาปัญหาในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างพนักงานต้อนรับและ บริการ และคนไข้ชาวต่างชาติ ศึกษาวิธีการแก้ปัญหาในการสื่อสารและศึกษาความต้องการในการฝึกอบรมเพื่อ พัฒนาทักษะในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ กลุ่มตัวอย่างในการทำวิจัยประกอบด้วยพนักงานต้อนรับและบริการที่ลิ้มเค้นดัล บิวคิงคลินิกและทองหล่อเค้นดัลบิวคิงคลินิก เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยคือแบบสอบถามและแบบสัมภาษณ์กับพนักงาน ด้อนรับและบริการ จำนวน 15 คน ผลการวิจัยจากการใช้เครื่องมือทางสถิติพบว่า ทักษะในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษของ พนักงานต้อนรับและบริการอยู่ในระดับดี ทักษะการฟังเป็นปัญหาในระดับปานกลางในขณะที่ทักษะการพูดเป็นปัญหาใน ระดับน้อยที่สุด วิธีการแก้ปัญหาในการสื่อสารคือขอความช่วยเหลือจากเพื่อนร่วมงาน ใช้วิธีจ่นะภาษา พยายามสื่อสารกับ คนไข้จนเข้าใจความต้องการของคนไข้ และขอให้คนไข้อธิบายความของคำศัพท์ที่ไม่เข้าใจ พนักงานต้อนรับและบริการ ต้องการฝึกอบรมภาษาอังกฤษที่มุ่งเน้นด้านทักษะการสื่อสาร (การพูดและการฟัง) เป็นเวลา 30 ชั่วโมง ด้วยการใช้ทั้ง ภาษาไทยและภาษาอังกฤษในการฝึกอบรมโดย ผู้ฝึกอบรมทั้งชาวไทยและเจ้าของภาษา

คำสำคัญ: การสำรวจ การสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษ ความต้องการ พนักงานต้อนรับและบริการ

Abstract

The aims of this study were to examine English communication problems between front desk staff and patients, to examine solutions to communication problems, and to analyze English training needs to improve English communication skills. The subjects were 15 front desk staffs who worked at the Silom and Thonglor Dental Clinics in Bangkok. The instruments used in this study were questionnaires and interviews. The data collected were processed, using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). The results of this English communication skills study indicated that the front desk staff had good levels of listening and speaking skills. Listening skill was a moderate problem, while

speaking skill showed very little problems. Asking colleagues, using non-verbal language, trying to talk with patients, and asking the patients to explain the meaning of words were techniques used to solve the problems when communicating with international patients. Front desk employees needed to have a 30-hour English training course with a focus on communication skills. They also wanted the class activities to be conducted in both English and Thai by both Thai and native English speakers.

Keywords: *English communication, needs, front desk staff*

1. Introduction

In business communication, English is an important language used by speakers to convey ideas related to work. Many businesses use English as a communication tool such as: the tourism, airline and hotel industries. In the field of dentistry, many international travelers choose to have their dental work done in Thailand.

Working within the dental business can be a career for people who graduate with a degree in English or who can communicate well in English. Good communication skills are vital because in the field of dentistry because misunderstandings could result in costly errors.

Silom and Thonglor Dental Clinics are boutique dental clinics that provide dental care services including: Operative Dentistry, Implants, Endodontics, Periodontics, Dental Surgery, Orthodontics, Occlusions, Paedodontics, and Psrosthodontics all under the management of The Bangkok Dental Hospital. An experienced team of Dentists and support staff offers a high standard of dental care treatment.

The number of patients attending the clinics has been increasing annually. The majority of clients are international visitors.

Nowadays many people are looking to give themselves a “smile makeover”. So the growth of dental business is increasing rapidly. Not only Thai patients who seeking the dental care in Thailand but also foreigner patients. Moreover the numbers of foreigner patients are increasing sharply. Most of dental clinic in Thailand need staffs who can communicate with English proficiency. Silom Dental Building Clinic and Thonglor Dental Building Clinic are high standard dental clinic were providing dental care together with patients’ satisfaction. There are many technical terms in dental business. The communication problems are effect on the profitability and success of clinic.

2. Objectives

This study aims to examine English communication problems between front desk staff and patients, to examine

solutions to communication problems, and to analyze English training needs with a view to improving communication skills.

3. Materials and Method

The subjects were 15 people employed at the front desk at Silom and Thonglor Dental Clinics. The main research instrument was a questionnaire, which was composed of open and closed questions. The interview consisted of eight questions; the front desk employees expressed their opinions with regard to communication problems, solutions to communication problems, and general information about English training courses

Data Analysis

A combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis was employed to measure the need for English communication skills at the Silom and Thonglor Dental Clinics. Essentially, quantitative analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were employed to annotate information. The oral interview questions were discussed and analyzed to support the results of the questionnaire. Answers from the open-ended questions were delivered in quantitative and qualitative data, which will be used as evidence to support the research results.

4. Results and Discussion

Personal Data

Most of the front desk employees were female at the Silom and Thonglor Dental Clinics with the majority aged between 23-24 years. Most of the front desk staff had been working at Silom and Thonglor Dental Clinics for between 1-5 years. All of the front desk staff graduated with a Bachelor Degree from the English department.

The front desk staff English communication skills background in terms of listening and speaking ability was at good level. Some of the front desk staff had the ability to communicate in Japanese.

Communication problem with foreign patients

The level of cause of problem when communicate with foreign patients in term of listening with regards some unknown vocabulary and some unknown technical term were extensive problem.

The result showed that using English as second language, comprehending some unknown vocabulary, comprehending the technical terms, lack of cross-culture knowledge, and unsure about own English structure knowledge were moderate problem in term of speaking.

Solutions to communication problems

The front desk staff hardly ever solved communication problems by showing brochures and information from the clinic's websites to patients. They thought that most of the patients would already have information from the website because patients had produced brochures and asked for information from the

staff. This research found that they sometimes asked colleagues to help them and used nonverbal language such as body language to solve communication problems.

The findings indicated that the front desk staff usually solved communication problems by trying to talk with the patients until they understood what patients required. This was also the case when they communicated with international patients on the telephone and they could not understand what the patients wanted. From the results, it was found that employees never hung up the phone when they could not understand what the patient said. Politeness is important for the hospitality industry. Polite service helps build good relationships between the front desk staff and the patients.

The front desk staffs sometime asked the patients to write down that word or technical term on the paper and then found the meaning from dictionary.

Needs for an English training course

The front desk employees need to have a 30-hour English training course. They would prefer the training to be in both English and Thai with native English speakers as instructors. The number of trainees in the English course should be limited to between 1-9 students.

The front desk staff would like the English training course to focus mainly on listening and speaking skills. In terms of listening skills, daily

conversation, pronunciation, listening to sentences, listening to paragraphs, listening to stories, and technical terms should be topics presented on the English training course. In terms of speaking skills, the front desk employees have a very strong need to practice daily conversation, question answering techniques and giving dental information to international patients.

They thought that most of the patients would already have information from the website because patients had produced brochures and asked for information from the staff. This research found that they sometimes asked colleagues to help them and used nonverbal language such as body language to solve communication problems. Hanna and Wilson (1998) noted that the process where the communicator transmits and interprets verbal and nonverbal messages is called communication.

5. Discussion

Some of the front desk staff (33.33%) had an ability to communicate in Japanese. This was because some Japanese patients could not communicate in English. Therefore, the clinics need front desk staff who can communicate in both English and Japanese. Moreover, these three languages can be found on the clinics website (www.silomdental.com): Thai, English, and Japanese.

Almost none of the front desk staff (93.33%) had studied an English course while working. This was because they thought that their English communication skills were good enough for their jobs. In addition, most of the front desk staff did not have time to study extra English courses

outside the clinic. The reason is that they worked 10 hours per day, and they worked at least 2 days per week overtime. Only 6.67% of the front desk staff studied English courses outside the clinic because they wanted to communicate in English fluently.

Front desk staff listening problems were found to be at a moderate level (2.87). Moreover, there was very little problem with speaking because the employees had opportunities to speak with patients. They have a responsibility to provide dental information to patients. Thus, there is a need for the front desk staff to be provided with a training course that would improve their listening skills.

The levels of causes of problems when communicating with international patients in terms of listening concerning unknown vocabulary and unknown technical terms showed extensive problems. This may indicate that lack of vocabulary knowledge or technical terms is a cause of communication problems between the front desk staff and international patients.

The front desk staff had a moderate level problem in terms of listening to British, Indian, Japanese, Russian, and Vietnamese accents. The front desk employees require to be taught accent recognition techniques. The English training course should put emphasis on accent training, especially with problematic accents.

The results of the interview about listening causes and problems showed that most of the front desk staff could not understand and respond to international

patients because they were unaware of technical terms. They lacked some dental knowledge so they did not understand what the patients meant.

Using English as second language, comprehending unknown vocabulary, comprehending technical terms, lack of cross-cultural knowledge, and uncertainty about English structure knowledge were moderate problems in terms of speaking.

When dealing with different cultures, Littlejohn (1987) stated that if you are speaking English to audiences that do not use English as their first language, you should speak slowly and avoid idioms. Roebuck (1998: 9-10) commented that communicators must be aware of and sensitive to culture difference, use appropriate language, value individual and culture difference, and correctly interpret non-verbal communication to be successful in business dealings.

The interviews regarding speaking causes and problems showed that the majority of the front desk staff could understand, however they were unable to respond to international patients because they could not use technical terms. They could not explain some dental information because they did not know what to say.

The front desk staff usually solved communication problems by trying to talk to patients in person until they understood what patients said and when they could not understand what the patient wanted when communicating on the telephone. High Beam Research, LLC. (2010) suggested the following tips on being a good listener: listening for the main idea, giving one's full

attention and trying to concentrate on the speaker's words. From the results, it was found that employees never hung up the phone when they could not understand what the patient said. Politeness is important for the hospitality industry. Polite service helps build good relationships between the front desk staff and the patients.

When the front desk staff could not answer questions, they sometimes asked colleagues for help. In addition, getting the patient to ask the dentist was a good way for patients to solve problems. Furthermore, they sometimes asked the patients to find dental information from the clinic's website. This was because descriptions of the dental process and dental fees can be found on the website.

If front desk staff could not understand the meaning of vocabulary or technical terms when they communicated with international patients, they sometimes asked the patients to write down the vocabulary or technical terms on paper and then looked up the meaning in a dictionary. They thought that this was a good way to avoid misunderstanding or wrong interpretation. Musical English Lessons International, England (2010) stated that in order to speak English more fluently you must decide which vocabulary is most useful. Then practice it until you are word perfect.

Results of the interviews regarding solutions to communication problems during telephone calls at the clinic revealed that trying to talk with the patients

until staff understood what patients wanted was the main way of solving communication problems.

The results of the needs required for an English training course show that the front desk employees require having a 30 hour English training course. They would prefer the training to be in English and Thai with native English speakers as instructors. The number of trainees on the English course should be limited to between 1-9 students. Smaller groups will give the front desk staff more chance to practice and interact with their instructors.

The front desk employees need to improve both listening and speaking. Daily conversation, pronunciation, listening to sentences, listening to paragraphs, listening to stories, and technical terms should be the focus of an English training course in terms of listening skills.

In terms of speaking skills, the front desk employees have a very strong need to practice: daily conversation, question and answering techniques and giving dental information to international patients.

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