

## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION OF OVERSEAS CLIENTS IN HEALTHCARE SERVICE IN CHIANG MAI

Sawettanun, Salisa

Sawettanun, Kanlayarat

Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Thailand

### Abstract

The aims of the study were to investigate the major factors of healthcare overseas clients encountering in healthcare service in term of intercultural communication and what intercultural communication skills of health care service providers should be improved in order to assist the communication between both clients and medical staff to be able to communicate effectively. The sample sampling participants were 200 health care overseas clients who have been experiencing the health care service in Chiang Mai. The research instruments were questionnaires including an interview. It was found that English proficiency development of medical staff was needed particularly English for specific careers. The most obstacle skill while communicating was listening. The staff could not understand when the clients tried to explain their symptoms. The difficulty of intercultural communication found was the request for information about the clients' illness and the service procedures that might be too complicated. Those may lead to ineffective communication.

**Keyword:** intercultural communication; overseas healthcare clients

### BACKGROUND

English has been used as a foreign language and considered to become the first foreign language chosen to be a compulsory subject in the Thai educational system for many decades (Sakarik. 1979: 8). The objective of the English courses aim at encouraging learners to be able to communicate with people from other countries, either in business, economics or policies because English has become an instrument of global communication and has been playing a significant role in various activities for example in acquiring scientific and technical knowledge, exploring global information as well as facilitating international cooperation (Liu: 2010). Klein (1990) also referred that English has become the language of international communication and is an important tool to connect countries in the world together, in terms of relationships, trade, and culture. Therefore, it can be said that English has been a key career success since English affects economic development and international communication.

Nowadays, there are a lot of international corporations operating in Thailand. One of the outstanding business is related to the center of Health Care Service that has continuously been developing in Thailand (Fernquest,2010). The hospitals found in Chiang Mai consisted of 24 public hospitals, almost 20 private hospitals and a variety of medical options. Ministry of Public Health (2005) mentioned that health care services that attract foreigners worldwide include annual medical check-ups, spa services, traditional Thai massage, long-term health care, and dental care. Yonwikai (2013) supported that the amount of foreign patients staying in Thailand for medical services has increased and it extremely enhances the income into the country. As a result, it is essential that one of the medical staff's qualifications must be English competence due to the language used there is definitely English.

It has been found that overcoming language barriers has become an increasingly difficult problem for medical staff who rely on effective communication with their patients as English is not an official language in Thailand. If the staff cannot communicate effectively, it can cause misunderstanding and lead to a wrong diagnosis. Furthermore, due to growing global mobility, migration and international teamwork intercultural communication are one of the major significances for healthcare services. Those communicative factors can assist patients to understand medical treatment clearly and reasonably accept advice from healthcare staff. Communicating with the doctors, patients, and their relatives are necessary for medical staff to not an only better understanding of patients' condition but also provide them with better care.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to study were to investigate the major factors of healthcare overseas clients encountering in healthcare service in term of intercultural communication and what intercultural communication skills of health care service providers should be improved in order to assist the communication between both clients and medical staff to be able to communicate effectively.

### **Language Barrier**

A language barrier involves the difficulties in communication between people when they do not understand each others' language; for example, the accents or dialects. The implications of words and phrases can cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Moreover, the causes of language barriers include the use of jargon and slang. The obstacles in communication happen due to different professions, specialty and technical field of a person. Other barriers in language can be grammar and spelling because they may be written differently. Confusing grammar and misspelling can lead to a huge communication barrier in written communication. Moreover, language disabilities, noise, or use of metaphors or similes are parts of language barriers.

### **Intercultural Communication**

Allwood (1985) indicated that communication is the sharing of information between people involving both verbal and non-verbal expressions (e.g., words, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, etc.). In addition, intercultural communication emphasizes on persons with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

It can be seen that English is not particularly communicated in everyday life but also plays an important role in work. Effective communication enhances people working accurately and precisely.

### **Research Statement**

The purpose of this research was to study the intercultural communication skills of health care service providers should be improved in order to assist the communication between both clients and medical staff to be able to communicate effectively in healthcare overseas clients encountering in healthcare service in terms of intercultural communication. It focused on 200 healthcare overseas clients who encounter in health care service in Chiang Mai.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the factors of healthcare overseas clients encountering in healthcare service?
2. What intercultural Communication skills of healthcare service provided should be improved in order to assist the communication between clients and medical staff?

Communication is an important component of patient care. The published literature also expresses belief in the essential role of communication. It shows that difficulties in the effective delivery of health care can arise from problems in communication between patient and provider rather than from any failure in the technical aspects of medical care and that improvement in provider-patient communication can have beneficial effects on health outcomes, Asnani (2009).

Furthermore, due to growing global mobility, migration and international teamwork, attention to intercultural communication is of major significance for healthcare. The importance of intercultural communication has been recognized since missionaries, merchants, and researchers met people from different cultures and experienced differences in communication behavior. However, intercultural communication as a research area has a short history of about 50 years and has interfaces with anthropology, sociology, psychology, and medicine. In this dissertation, intercultural communication is defined as follows: the process of interpersonal interaction between ethnic different doctors and patients.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the methodology of the research, it is the quantitative approach which contains the population of the study, the sampling, the questionnaire, data collection, and data analysis.

### **Research Approach**

The study was used quantitative data collection and was explored by a questionnaire to collect the data and gather deeper information from the interview. This method was advantageous for studies the major factors of healthcare overseas clients encountering in healthcare service in terms of intercultural communication and intercultural communication skills of healthcare service providers that should be improved in order to assist the communication between both clients and medical staff.

## Research Participants

In this research, the participants were containing 200 healthcare oversea clients who have been experiencing the healthcare service in Chiang Mai.

## Data Analysis

The data was excerpted from 200 questionnaires. The first part of the questionnaire was analyzed by frequency and percentage. The second and third part was analyzed by using a Likert scale.

## FINDINGS

The previous chapter described the methodology of this research. This chapter presents the findings of the survey conducted among 200 healthcare oversea clients. The data from questionnaires and interviews are used to find out the major factors of healthcare overseas clients encountering in healthcare service and what intercultural communication skills of healthcare service providers should be improved in order to assist the communication between both clients and medical staff.

The results of the research show that English proficiency development of medical staff was needed particularly English for specific careers. The most obstacle skill while communicating was listening. The staff could not understand when the clients tried to explain their symptoms. Moreover, too many technical terms also lead to misunderstanding. The difficulty of intercultural communication found was the request for information about the clients' illness and the service procedures that might be too complicated. Those may lead to ineffective communication.

## REFERENCES

- Chalauisaeng, B. (2017). *Enhancing Oral Communication Skills of Thai Medical Residents Focusing on English Rhythm via Simulations*. Retrieved from <https://papers.iafor.org/submission36615/>
- Chapman, K.B. (2009). Improving Communication among Nurses, Patients, and Physicians. *American Journal of Nursing*, 109(11), 21-25.
- Chetsadanuwat, K. (2018). *Needs of English Skills of Thai Nurses Working in International*
- Garcés, C. (2014). *Health, Communication and Multicultural Communities: Topics on Intercultural Communication for Healthcare Professionals*. Newcastle uponTyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishers.
- Giscalone, J. (2014). *The Implications of the Affordable Care Act for the Medical Tourism Industry*. (Unpublished independent studies). The Clute Institute International Academic Conference, Orlando, Florida, USA.

- Hiroshima University, Japan). Retrieved from  
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7960/f25d7a13611a659f8a2a60fca4c10e774425.pdf>
- Hospitalist Management Advisor. (2007). *Understand and overcome language, cultural barriers*. Retrieved from <http://www.hcpro.com/HOM-76522-3615/Understand-and-overcome-language-cultural-barriers.html>
- Jacobs, E., & Sheparad, D., & Suaya, J., & Stone, E. (2004). Overcoming Language Barriers in Health Care: Costs and Benefits of Interpreter Services, *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(5), 866-869.
- Karuthan. A. (2015). *The English Language Needs of Nurses in Medical Tourism in Malaysia* (Master's thesis, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1d37/042aa0562a614b32101887470dc11e31bdef.pdf>
- Klagsbrun, J. (2012). *Listening and Focusing: Holistic Health Care Tools for Nurses*. Retrieved from <http://www.focusing.org/klagsbrun.html>
- Medlin, L. (2009). *English for specific purposes (ESP): Nursing in the U.S. hospital* (Unpublished master's thesis). California State University, Chico.
- National Center for Biotechnology Information. (2010). *Influence of Language Barriers on Outcomes of Hospital Care for General Medicine Inpatients*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20533573>
- National Center for Biotechnology Information. (2017). *Intercultural Communication in Healthcare*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5457791/>
- National Center for Biotechnology Information. (2015). *overcoming language barriers in healthcare: A protocol for investigating safe and effective communication when patients or clinicians use a second language*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26357948>
- Paternotte, E. (2016). *Intercultural communication between doctors and patients; a multi-perspective exploration*. Amsterdam, Netherland: Optima Rotterdam Publishers.
- Poisson, T. (2009). *Finding Solutions to Language Barriers between Nurses and Their Clients* (Master's thesis, Rhode Island College School of Nursing, USA.) Retrieved from [https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/honors\\_projects/33](https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/honors_projects/33)
- Setiawati, B. (2016). *Need Analysis for Identifying ESP Materials for Medical Record Students in Apikes Citra Medica Surakarta* (Apikes Citra Medica University, Surakarta, Indonesia). Retrieved from <http://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/KLS/article/view/2479>
- Simply psychology. *Likert Scale Definition, Examples and Analysis*. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/likert-scale.html>



2019 ANPOR-APCA Annual Conference  
"Power of Public Opinion and Multicultural Communication toward Global Transformation"  
CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

- Sukserm, T., & Suwannabubpha, S., & Kulto, S. (2018). *English language needs of medical personnel in the hospital of Kalasin Province*. (Doctoral Dissertation) Kalasin University.
- Sursattayawong, O. (2006). *A survey of English speaking problems of nurses at Rajavithi Hospital*. Unpublished Master's Project. Srinakharinwirot University.
- Totman, Susan M. (2003). *Cultural Difference*. Retrieved from <http://www.selfgrworth.com/articiles/Totman1.html>.
- Witchaiyutphong, K. (2011). *English barriers for Thai employees working in an international setting, a study at the Thomson Reuters company in Thailand*. (Unpublished master's thesis). English for Careers, Language Institute, Thammasat University.
- Yomyao, A. (2018). The Essential English Skills Using Problem for Professional Nurses Working in the Medium and the Large Hospitals in Chiang Rai Province. *APHEIT Journals*, 23(2), 56-66.