Basic Problems of Language for Communication between Civil Engineers and Construction Workers

Sumalee Phonkhunsap

Abstract—This article is to explore the basic problems of the communication raised between the civil engineers and construction workers who communicated in different language form. The data were collected by using questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Target groups are the civil engineers, who speak native Thai Central-official language and the construction workers, who speak native I-san dialect. The sample group consists of fifteen engineers and forty construction workers. They worked in Khon Kaen province, Northeastern of Thailand.

The result was indicated that problems of the communication occurred from spoken rather than written language in both groups. The civil engineers indicated that problems encountered from speech communication that they were unable to understand the I-san language talking by the worker groups. The following problems are context of communication and communicational culture, respectively.

Communicational problems faced to the construction workers are writing and speaking skills. Most problems are scribbling, illegible writing, transcribed writing in English, short note, and incomplete writing respectively. For speech problem was found that the workers are unable to understand some Thai Central-official words and the engineer’s accent as well as speaking vulgar words. Furthermore, the workers are unable to communicate the Thai Central-official language. In the conclusion, the encountered basic problems as mentioned above are affected to work efficiency. Mostly performances are incorrect and uncompleted. It caused of increasing of budgeting of the project.

Keywords—problems of the communication, communicational culture, I-san language

I. INTRODUCTION

DIFFERENT tone of voice including dialect of speakers and listener, especially English and Thai language, was the problems of communication. The Thai tone of voice was divided into four dialects by Northern, Northeastern, Southern and Eastern regions. Each dialect had a unique of the communicational culture by socializational process.

Miss Sumalee Phonkhunsap is with Department of Thai, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, Thailand. (e-mail: kookkik_kb@hotmail.com).

This paper is to show the result of basic survey from the problem of the communication of speakers whom spoke the tone of Thai language differently. The survey consisted of two sampling groups; first civil engineers communicated an official language and second construction workers talked an I-san language, which was a local dialect of Northeastern of Thailand. Both the sampling groups have worked at Khon Kaen province in the Northeastern of Thailand. The data come from the questionnaires and the interview some of the workers from the both target groups. The result of this study has analyzed in headings of communicational culture, the results, and conclusions and discussions respectively.

II. COMMUNICATIONAL CULTURE

Not only the region had a unique communicational culture, it also was with each career. Most of the civil engineers worked for big projects at Khon Kaen province, communiated the Thai official language more than the I-san language, although, some of them were able to speak the I-san language. In the contrast, most of the construction workers often talked the I-san language as a mother tongue at side work in formal and informal situations. A gap of the communication from the groups was a result of different communicational culture [1].

The Thai Central-official communicational culture of civil engineers has played an important role in many domains as national language, official language, educational language and mass media. The language was used in both formal and informal communication and inside and outside working including with written language. It was serious on politeness by communicational channel. For the I-san language, the speakers often communicated by casual style, was informal language. The differentiation of these was the problems of the communicational culture, especially for the civil engineers were unable to understand the speaking structure of the I-san culture.

III. THE RESULT

The results divided into two issues; firstly the target group and secondly the tone of language voice. The target groups were the civil engineers and the construction workers. The tones of the language voice were divided into 4 categories according to language skills as speaking, listening, reading and writing. These skills were
demonstrated in each target group. The data analyzing with background will be summarized as a result.

Background of the target groups:
Civil engineers: The sampling group comprised of fifteen persons with age ranged from 24-40 years old, spoke different dialects of each region. There were eight persons from the Central Thai, five persons from the Northern, and two from the Southern. Usually they were communicated the Central Thai dialect at the work place and in daily life. About seven people have not been worked in the I-san - the Northeastern area. The rest have been worked in various provinces of the I-san. However, all were unable to communicate the I-san dialect. Only some of them were able to understand the I-san slightly at the vocabulary level.

Construction workers: The workers were forty and worked in the same construction site. They communicated the I-san dialect as the mother tongue. Among them who spoke the Central Thai, twenty-nine persons were able to talk fairly, eight persons spoke at moderate level, and three persons were able to communicate very well. In writing, there were sixteen persons able to do it well and the others were unable to do it. It was indicated that they were illiterate.

Target groups
According to the sampling and the target groups answered to the basic problem of the communication in this study. The results are summarized into 2 groups. There were;

A. Civil Engineers
It was indicated that speaking and writing were the problems of the communication. So, the language skills summarized below.

Speaking and listening skills:
The civil engineers encountered with five main basic problems of the communication in speaking and listening skills with the construction workers. They were,  
1) Unable to speak the I-san dialect,  
2) Unable to understand the I-san dialect talked by the construction workers,  
3) Unable to understand some I-san vocabularies,  
4) The construction workers were unable speak the Central Thai, and  
5) The Central Thai tone of voice of the construction workers was unclear.

Reading and writing skills:
Four main basic problems of the communication in writing skill were affected to the civil engineers. There were,  
1) Unable to understand the writing of the construction foreman,  
2) The construction workers were illiterate, so some of them were unable to read and write the official Thai language,  
3) Writing error of the technical term by the construction workers, and  
4) Unable to read the construction workers’ handwriting

These four skills problems above were the civil engineers’ perspective to use the language of the construction workers. Most of the civil engineers indicated that defect of the language skills of the construction workers were the problem in working. All skills are linked to each other. So if a problem occurred in any skill, it would expand to other communication skills. In addition, the civil engineers did not understand the communicational culture of the I-san both language and context. Furthermore, the result of the study found that the problems of the communication arise from the construction workers itself and another one. The summaries are as follows.

B. Construction workers
The result was indicated that speaking, reading and writing were the problems of the communication. So, the language skills are summarized as follows.

Speaking and listening skills:
The construction workers encountered with five main basic problems in skills of speaking and listening. There were;
1) Unable to understand the engineer’s accent,  
2) Unable to understand the vulgar words spoken by the civil engineer,  
3) Unable to understand the official language clearly,  
4) Unable to understand some constructional terminology described by the civil engineers, and  
5) Some of them could not communicate the Central Thai language.

Reading and writing skills:
The construction workers encountered with four main basic problems in skills of reading and writing. There were;
1) Unreadable the scribbling and illegible writing of the civil engineers,  
2) Unreadable and unable to understand the technical term writing as English,  
3) Unable to understand key word writing and incompletely content, and  
4) Most of the workers were illiterate. It was effected in reading and writing the official language.

In addition, the in-depth interviews indicated that most of the construction workers were not complete the primary education. Only some of them were able to communicate the official language very well. Therefore, they believed that communicational problems caused from their illiteracy.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS
This study is a pilot project discloses the basic problems of the language communication between the civil
engineers and the construction workers, who communicated the tone of voice of the Thai language differently. It is generally known that the most construction workers in Thailand come from the Northeastern region where they speak the I-san dialect of Thai, as a mother tongue. Otherwise, the civil engineers communicate the Thai official language as a mother tongue. In addition, the study found that the construction workers have an educational gap level. It causes of their communication at all skills. These differences are the problems of communication in their working place.

In the civil engineers’ perspective, it was indicated that the basic problems of communication caused by the language skills of the construction workers. Partly, the construction workers indicated that the basic problems of the communication were caused from their illegible together with the civil engineers’ communication.

The finding shows that mainly basic problem of the language was occurred in four skills; speaking, listening, reading and writing. The most problems of civil engineers are the speaking and listening which they were unable to speak and understand the I-san language. Furthermore, the result of the study found that important basic problems are reading and writing language.

Finally, both the civil engineers and the construction workers have the same attitude that these basic problems above encounter in many areas such as delay, budget, relationships, unity including an attitude toward co-workers. Some of them suggested that the civil engineers should have an awareness of language and the I-san’s culture before working in the Northeastern region. However, communicational process consists of two elements-senders and receivers. If the problems of communication were appeared. It should be solved at both sides [2].

REFERENCES
