

## **K-Romya, P. Edith Cowan University, Australia. Deficiency of Communication in English a Major Hindrance for Tourist Police in Thailand**

Pat K-Romya

School of Education  
Edith Cowan University, Australia  
E-mail: pkheowru@ecu.edu.au

### **ABSTRACT:**

This paper describes a qualitative and quantitative study that sought to investigate the problems Tourist Police officers encounter whilst communicating with foreign tourists in English language in their work. Foreign tourists' perceptions of Tourist Police officers' English language competency were explored. Moreover, the language learning strategies that Tourist Police officers usually use were examined, and the administrators and Tourist Police officers' requirements for a suitable training program were identified. The findings are discussed and analysed. The outcomes from this study will be considered in the review and development of the professional development programme for Tourist Police.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism plays a major service sector role in Thailand, and it has potential to continue growing every year which contributes to the country extensive economic growth. Thailand, as a tourist destination, has become more popular worldwide since the "Visit Thailand Year" campaign was launched in 1987. The successful promotion created a 23.59% increase in foreign tourists in that year (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2002) and the numbers of visitors has continued to increase. After the Tsunami disaster in December 2004, Thailand has speedily recovered from a slump in the tourist industry and has gradually regained the confidence of the tourists with an increase in arrivals. According to The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2005), 13.38 million foreign tourists travelled to Thailand in 2005 and another 15.12 million were targeted in 2006 which would make a huge estimated income of over five hundred thousand million baht to the country (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2006). The government has an ultimate goal to make Thailand the tourist centre of Asia, and by the year 2008 approximately twenty million tourists are estimated to visit (Tourist Police Division, 2005). Many tourists are either native English speakers or speakers of English as a second language. The Royal Thai Police has a Tourist Police Division, whose officers assist tourists in various ways, and English is a dominant means of communication in this role. The status of English as the language for trade and communication has gained more importance in the Thai tourism industry (Vatcharasakunee, 2000). Enhancing effective communication between Tourist Police officers and foreign tourists is, therefore, a worthwhile goal because that quality of communication may result in increased satisfaction on the part of the tourists. Increased tourist satisfaction is likely to result in more tourist arrival and longer visits by tourists, that is, a stronger tourism industry.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Tourist Police Division (TPD) was initially established and named "Tourist Security Support and Help Centre (TSSHC)" in 1976 and at that time TPD was under the jurisdiction of The Police Department. The Police Department later (1998) became the Royal Thai Police (Tourist Police Division, 2005). The TSSHC was responsible for receiving complaints from tourists, protecting and maintaining security for tourists in the community and tourist locations in Bangkok Metropolis. Since the rapid growth of the tourist industry, numbers of tourists, tourist attractions and relevant businesses all over the country, it was found that the TSSHC was unable to fully carry out their mission. Accordingly, the TSSHC, was transformed into The Tourist Police Headquarters in 1982, and then The Tourist Police Division (TPD) in 1991 (Tourist Police Division, 2005). The powers and