The Analysis of Types and Functions of Chinese Interrogative Sentences Used between Hotel Guests and Front Desk Staff in China

การวิเคราะห์ประเภทและฟังก์ชั่นของประโยคคำถามภาษาจีนที่พบในบทสนทนาระหว่างลูกค้าและพนักงานต้อนรับโรงแรมในประเทศจีน

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to 1) study the types of Chinese interrogative sentences used in conversations between hotel staff and guests, 2) study the purposes of the questions asked in conversations between hotel staff and guests and 3) adapt the results to design the content of a Chinese for hospitality course. Data for this quantitative research study were collected by recording conversations between hotel staff and guests in various situations. The conversations were then transcribed to analyze the usage frequency of different types of interrogative sentences and the

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purposes of each question. Thirty-five audio recordings of a total of 20,285-word conversations were transcribed and analyzed.

Results showed that the most common interrogative sentence demanded a true or false answer, followed by a specific question. Less frequent types of interrogative sentences were choice questions. There were 16 different purposes of the questions including seeking/ requesting information, seeking advice, giving information, seeking confirmation, requesting nonverbal action and reminding. It was recommended that the design of a Chinese for hospitality course content focus on grammar, culture and language functions and also on the different types of interrogative sentences, while the purposes of different questions should be assimilated into each unit or lesson. The instructor should also encourage students to understand the different types of interrogative sentences and the purposes of the questions.

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาประเภทรูปประโยคคำถามภาษาจีนที่ปรากฏในบทสนทนาระหว่างพนักงานโรงแรมและลูกค้า 2) ศึกษาวัตถุประสงค์ของประโยคคำถามภาษาจีนที่ปรากฏในบทสนทนาระหว่างพนักงานโรงแรม และลูกค้า และ 3) นำผลการศึกษาไปประยุกต์ในการออกแบบการเรียนการสอนวิชาภาษาจีนเพื่องานโรงแรม การวิจัยใช้วิธีการศึกษาเชิงปริมาณ เก็บข้อมูลจากการอัดเสียงการสนทนาในสถานการณ์ต่าง ๆ ระหว่างแขกกับพนักงานโรงแรม นำไฟล์เสียงที่เก็บได้มาถอดเป็นตัวหนังสือเพื่อวิเคราะห์หาความถี่ของประเภทคำถาม และความถี่ของวัตถุประสงค์การใช้คำถาม โดยทำการถอดเสียงและวิเคราะห์บันทึกเสียง 35 บทสนทนา ความยาว 20,285 คำ

ผลวิจัยพบว่า ประเภทรูปประโยคคำถามที่พบมากที่สุด คือ คำถาม ถูกผิด รองลงมา คือ คำถามชี้เฉพาะ สุดท้าย คือ คำถามแบบให้เลือก ประโยค คำถามที่ใช้มี 16 วัตถุประสงค์ ประกอบด้วย การขอข้อมูล การขอ คำแนะนำ การให้ข้อมูล การขอความเห็นชอบ การขอให้กระทำการบางอย่างที่ไม่ใช้วาจา ตอบ การเตือน เป็นต้น จากการศึกษาทำให้ทราบว่าการออกแบบ ตำราหรือ เนื้อหาวิชาภาษาจีนเพื่องานโรงแรมควรให้ความสำคัญกับไวยากรณ์ วัฒนธรรม และสมรรถนะทางภาษา โดยนำรูปแบบประโยคคำถาม และ วัตถุประสงค์ของ ประโยคคำถามสอดแทรกในการเรียนรู้แต่ละหน่วยการเรียน หรือบทเรียน และ ผู้สอนควรกระตุ้นให้ผู้เรียนมีความเข้าใจวัตถุประสงค์การถามที่สอดคล้องกับ รูปแบบของประโยคคำถาม

คำสำคัญ: ประโยคคำถาม สมรรถนะทางภาษา บทสนทนา พนักงานโรงแรม ลูกค้า

Introduction

Chinese language for tourism and hotel service is one of the most popular subjects among Thai students. As a result, many academic institutions have designed and developed hospitality Chinese-related curricula. However, textbooks and other learning materials for this subject are not appropriate for Thai native speakers. During field research for his Ph.D. dissertation, Chun (2019) discovered that most practical Chinese language study textbooks were compiled by Thai teachers in different schools with content based on personal experience. To allow students to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of the Chinese language used in the hotel service industry, some teachers used books written in English. These bilingual English-Chinese textbooks were designed for Chinese native speakers who wished to learn hospitality English and

were not suitable material for students from other counties pursuing the Mandarin language. The demand for Chinese speaking staff in the Thai hospitality industry is growing, but few certified Chinese study textbooks are available in related professional fields. Existing publications also have sketchy content and do not meet the needs of users. Writing course books by applying real conversations transcribed from dialogs between staff and guests introducing practical Chinese characters collected from hotels will greatly benefit instruction in Chinese hospitality classes.

Most applied linguistic research examining communication in hotel service industry has focused on the English language. Harun (1998, as cited in Blue & Harun, 2003, pp. 73-91) collected authentic information from four-star hotels and transcribed the audio files into texts before analysis, while Harun (1998) analyzed 40 sample conversations related to the functional activities of hotel reception encounters including information requests and queries, miscellaneous requests, check-in and check-out and complaints and criticisms. The analysis of real conversations allowed the researchers to identify functions of communicative activities and the specific language used. Ting (2008) analyzed spoken discourse using material collected as original recordings from three-star hotel call centers. Twenty-five hotel telephone service encounters between one hotel front desk receptionist and twenty-five customers were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Results revealed that discourse structure, regardless of the varied communicative purposes, was generically confined to a typical sequential staging such as greeting followed by service initiation, service request, service compliance and service closure. The hotel front desk receptionist used speech functions to offer and comply, while the customers used different speech functions to accept and request.

Aspects of questioning, answering, checking, confirming, acknowledging, probing and agreeing were speech roles shared between the receptionist and the customers.

Most of the studies applying discourse analysis to explore hotel service communication mainly originated from regions outside mainland China. To study hospitality English in China, Wang and Li (2014, pp. 80-81) built a corpus by collecting real English conversations from over 300 domestic hotels. They analyzed the characteristics of the collected language recordings from five-star hotel websites with the help of a software called WordSmith. It was found that the language used on the websites for hotel publicity was quite direct, correct and purposeful. While introducing the hotels' facilities and services, the language also focused on the outstanding quality and modernity of the hotels. It was discovered that to achieve these purposes nouns were used more often than adjectives with the ratio of 6:1. However, previous studies focusing on Chinese hospitality are still limited. Zhong and Zhou (2010, pp. 116-117) recorded conversations from major hotels in Guilin City, China. They collected and analyzed the data from the aspect of the "principle of cooperation" and highlighted the importance of cooperation between guests and hotel staff, while collaborations among hotel employees should also be valued.

More detailed research in this field can assist teachers in presenting Chinese hospitality lectures through a better understanding of the Chinese language characteristics frequently used in hotel service. Authentic corpora of real conversational environments in the service sector can trigger learning interest and motivate student language progression. Students taking a Chinese hospitality course must have strong practical skills, and relevant teaching content and textbook selection should be synchronized with service conversations occurring in the real world.

Literature Review

Discourse analysis is a research method that explored the language applied in social contexts by focusing on communications among people (Stubbs, 1997). Li and Fan (2007) summarized three aspects of discourse analysis as showing human behavior in a multicultural context, exploring the relationship between discourse and society, and studying the important role of discourse in the acquisition and use of knowledge. Many linguists used discourse analysis as theoretical support to observe human behavior through communication as conversations. Conversation analysis has developed into one of the most popular subordinated theories of discourse analysis and can be used to analyze ongoing conversations. Hutchby and Wooffitt (2011) defined conversation analysis as the study of naturally occurring turn-taking in talk-in-interaction. As cited by Sujaritlak (2014, p. 33), Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) mentioned that conversation analysis includes studies of turn-taking, adjacency pairs, repair, topic and switch of topics from conversation opening and closing.

The fundamental theoretical roots for this paper involved conversation analysis focusing on the form (structure) and functions (meanings) of languages as form-function analysis (Gee, 2011). To study conversation analysis in Chinese, scholars must first learn about relevant research conducted in China. Chinese conversations include many interrogative sentences. Questioning is essential, especially for staff with specific occupations. Research about interrogative sentences in Chinese conversation involves professional fields such as question analysis in court conversations, questions and the power of speech from Chinese family daily conversations, and questions and answers in communication between doctors and patients.

Many types of questions are applicable in diverse contexts. In conversational communication, different types of interrogative sentences have distinct communicative purposes and functions. Therefore, differentiating the types of questions and understanding the characteristics of the chosen answers are effective procedures to master conversational communication. In Chinese, there are three types of interrogative sentences including specific questions, choice questions and *yes* or *no* questions, which can also be divided into affixed questions, repeated questions and tag questions (Zhang, 1994). These are detailed as follows:

1) Shao (2007) described a specific question as one in which the pronoun conveys the interrogative information and becomes the key, hoping that the other party will provide an answer about the questioned objects. 2) Choice questions normally put forward two or more opinions and hope that the listener will choose one as an answer. The conjunction mostly used in these questions is "是……还是" (this one...or). 3) The *yes* or *no* question asks the respondent to give a positive or negative answer to objects stated in the question. The structure is the same as a narrative sentence. Using a rising tone or an interrogative final particle turns a narrative sentence into an interrogative sentence. 4) An affixed question is a brief question attached to a narration or an imperative sentence. Affixed questions are often applied when the questioner wishes the other party to confirm or agree on one thing. When attached to an imperative sentence, they mostly ask for the other party's opinion. 5) Tag questions are similar to *yes* or *no* questions and require the respondent to give a positive or negative answer. The feature of a tag question is the use of tag phrases like "did or did not", "have or have not", and "remember or not". Shao (2007) clarified the features and standards by distinguishing interrogative sentences from other types and sorting questions into different categories.

However, practically, the use of interrogative sentences is more complicated. For example, the structure of an interrogative sentence has the characteristics of a question but is often simply used to make a request instead of making an inquiry, while some interrogative questions do not expect an answer. Factors such as job type, social status and working area also influence the necessity for speaking and communication. Therefore, grammar and structure as well as the theory of speech acts are important when analyzing interrogative sentences. The speech act theory proposed by Austin (1962) interprets linguistic communication from the angle of behavior. Sentences can be grouped into four categories as statements, questions, commands and exclamations. The same speech act can be expressed in different types of sentences. The speech act of interrogative sentences is more complicated. It can implement the direct act of "question" and also indirect acts such as making statements and imperatives and expressing exclamations. Therefore, one speech act could also conduct compound speech acts (Tan, 2007). In terms of contextual functions, Martel (1989, as cited in Tan, 2007, p. 38-39), classified interrogative sentences into 18 categories.

Previous studies and lectures have suggested that the most effective method for language application is to analyze communication techniques. Discourse analysis methodology involves observing human behavior through real life conversations in their social context, attempting to identify the relationship between participants and language structures. Scrutinizing the interrogative sentences within conversations between hotel staff and guests with conversation analysis methodology will allow scholars to identify special features of different types of questions and analyze their functions and

meanings from a linguistic aspect. These analytical methods can promote more practical and effective revision of hospitality Chinese textbooks.

Objectives

1. To determine the types of questions commonly asked in Chinese between guests and hotel front desk staff

2. To determine the functions of each type of interrogative sentence

3. To offer suggestions to improve textbook contents for Chinese hospitality teaching

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method research design as a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect and analyze data using the specific procedures demonstrated below:

First, previous literature about hotel service that applied the conversation analysis (CA) theory was examined.

Second, data were collected as conversations between hotel reception staff and foreigners who studied in China and were able to communicate in Mandarin.

Authentic corpora recorded in Chinese budget hotels were collected and transcribed. Budget hotel chains comprise the majority of the Chinese accommodation market. Field trips during this study used mobile phones and digital devices to record real conversations. Most recordings were made without the knowledge of the hotel staff. The conversations recorded were in the form of participatory surveys, whereby the recorder

acted as a visitor or a check-in guest at the hotel. Other recordings were made during the booking or check-in process. The audio file transcription procedure followed Zhang (2007) by transliterating symbols as a primary reference.

For all conversations, female staff were coded "S", male staff "NS", female guests "G" and male guests "NG". For multiple conversations, numerical order was added as "S1", "NS1", "G1" and "NG1". During the transcriptions, sentence segmentation was determined by pauses in the original conversations.

Findings

1. Results

In total, 35 conversational audio files were transcribed comprising 1,452 linguistic terms, 20,285 words and 472 questions as 293 (62 %) from hotel staff, with guests asking the remaining 179 (38 %) questions (Table 1).

Table 1
Interrogative Sentences Used in Conversation Between Front Desk Staff and Hotel Guests

Questions between hotel staff and guests					
Turn	Interrogative sentence	Staff		Guest	
		Interrogative sentence	Percent	Interrogative sentence	Percent
1452	472	293	62	179	38

Seven scenarios were involved during the collection and investigation of the 35 conversations These included inquiry, booking, check-in procedures, phone calls, check-out procedures and assisting guests.

2. Questions Asked in Conversations

Markers or symbols to distinguish types of interrogative sentences in Chinese usually comprise five types as follows: 1) modal particles"吗 (ma)" at the end-of-sentence, 2) predicate structure of "V/A 不 V/A" (did or did not), 3) interrogative words (phrases), like "what or how", 4) conjunctions, like "still" and 5) intonation or tones. However, this paper categorized the recorded questions into three types following Zhang (1994) as specific indicated questions, alternative questions and yes or no questions. The yes or no question was further subcategorized into "affirmative-negative questions (A not A questions)". Results showed that among the 472 interrogative sentences, affirmative-negative questions were the most common at 364 or 77%, followed by specific interrogative sentences at 94 or 20%. The twelve selective questions only accounted for 3% of the total. The use of words "贵姓 (your name)" occurred twice among all the collected conversations when staff asked guests their names. Thus, this was counted in the category of "others".

The verbal function of questioning in the Chinese language system is usually realized through interrogative tones. The questioning tone is expressed by a change of the syntactic form or by using interrogative particles and intonations. Discourses between hotel staff and guests are institutional communications and differ from general conversations. The collected data showed that the use rate of the interrogative tone was very high at 87% or 315 times in total. Results also indicated that the interrogative particles listed in Table 2 were all from yes or no questions including "吧 (ba) 、吗(ma)、啊(a)、啦(la)、哦(ou)、呀(ya)、哈(ha)". Intonation was also used to convey different interrogative information.

Table 2

Modals Applied in Staff-Guest Conversations at Hotel Front Desks

Particles	Interrogative particles								
	吧 ba	吗 ma	啊 a	啦 la	哦 o	呀 ya	哈 ha	Tone	A-not-A question
Frequency	150	148	11	1	3	1	1	39	10
%	41	40.3	3	0.3	0.8	0.3	0.3	11	3

Special words are used to distinguish interrogative sentences, while interrogative pronouns contain the inquired information as a specific question. Specific questions expect an answer relating to that referenced by the interrogative pronoun (Shao, 2007). The basic sentence pattern of a specific question is "Intonation + interrogative pronoun + modal particle". A specific question uses interrogative pronouns as breakthrough points to obtain information about people, events, time, place, methods and reasons. Specific questions have exploratory purposes as an effective way to ask for unknown information (Luo, 2015). This paper recorded 94 specific interrogative sentences, accounting for 20% of all the questions asked. Pronouns used in specific questions included "什么（what）","哪（where）","几（how many）","多少（how many）","怎么（how）" and "谁（who）", while the abbreviated format of specific questions included "NP+呢（ne）" and "VP+呢（ne）

Table 3

Interrogative Pronouns Used in Staff-Guest Conversations at Hotel Front Desks

Fre-quency	Interrogative pronoun								
	什么 what	哪 where	几 how many	多少 how many	怎么 how	呢 NP+	呢 VP+	谁 who	
	30	16	23	13	3	5	3	1	94
%	32	17	25	14	3	5	3	1	

3. Interrogative Sentences Collected between Dialogists at Hotel Front Desks

The speech act theory, first proposed by Austin (1962), regards language as a kind of act. Searle (2001, as cited in Tan, 2007) supported this theory and stated that whenever people speak they are actually performing various types of speech acts, ruled by the language components in their words. The smallest unit of conversational communication is not a sentence but a speech act.

Therefore, the communication process actually constitutes one speech act unit after another. Each speech act unit reflects the speaker's specific intentions. Every sentence contains a specific speech act in an exact context. Conversely, every speech act must be carried out through a certain type of sentence.

Subcategories of interrogative sentences include inquiry, examination, interrogation, follow- up questions and cross- examination. The functions and properties of these subtypes are similar and they are not discussed individually in this research.

Interrogative sentences contain simple and direct speech acts of " question" , and can also be widely used to

implement compound and indirect speech acts. An interrogative sentence may convey both single and plural numbers of indirect speech acts. Indirect speech acts or behavior through the language of interrogative sentences can be observed in situations of instruction, determination, entertainment, blocking, rebuttal or defense, blaming, urging, reminding and exclaiming.

The concept of functions of questions must be explained before demonstrating the research findings. A question can be considered as a request for information. A questioner seeks information that he or she does not yet understand. Li and Fan (2007) suggested that questions can be divided into four categories as the function of seeking information, the function of advertising entertainment programs, the function of checking and confirming information and the function of applied linguistics. To collect and analyze the function of interrogative sentences in a comprehensive and profound way, we filtered the questions into 16 relevant functional types following Fareh and Maher (2008, pp. 144-164). Statistical results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Frequency and Percentage of Functions
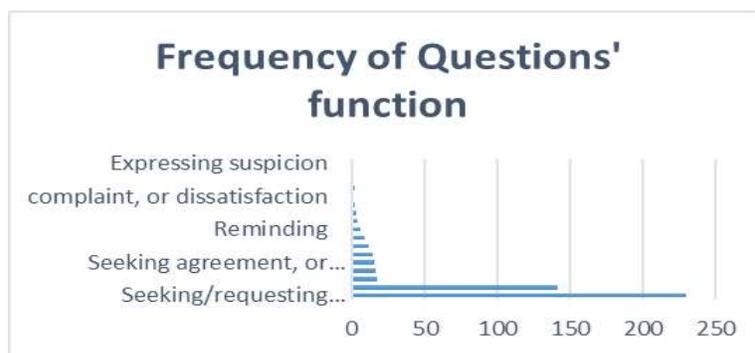
Analysis of the conversation recordings shows that the most frequent function of interrogative sentences was seeking/requesting information as commonly assumed, while seeking confirmation

was the second most frequent function, representing 30%. In the context of hospitality, questions regarding accommodation information are mostly asked by hotel staff and answered by guests to ensure that the reservation, check-in and check-out processes are completed without misunderstandings. However, in the context of hotel booking services, guests are the party that asks most of the questions, as they seek more information about the hotel.

Discussion

This research aimed to understand the use of language between hotel receptionists and guests by analyzing real conversations. Findings can be used as a reference to improve the quality of textbooks and other teaching materials related to Chinese hospitality courses. Three objectives were determined before conducting this research, and the findings discussed below relate to each objective.

The first research objective was to determine the types of questions commonly asked during conversations between Chinese guests and hotel front desk staff.

Students should be aware of the most frequently asked questions at the hotel reception desk and how these interrogative sentences can be sorted into different types. By understanding the different categories, the students will be able to discern the various features and characteristics of the questions and correctly apply answers under real circumstances. Recordings of real conversations showed that the hotel staff provided services to guests and fulfilled their requests by asking questions. Questions asked by the guests accounted for 62% of all the collected conversations. The interrogative sentence forms

a vital part of conversational communication in the hospitality industry and a Teaching Chinese for Hotel Service course should include relevant lectures on this topic.

The statistic above illustrates that the affirmative-negative or 'Yes or No' question was the most commonly asked at 77%, followed by specific interrogative sentences accounting for 20% and selective questions at 3%. The research findings were derived from the analysis of real language characteristics. This information can only be collected by staff working in the hotels. A professional Chinese language teacher has no opportunity to experience the real operational processes in the hospitality industry and may overlook key points of the Chinese language when selecting teaching content. Therefore, providing real-life content allows students to directly experience the actual contexts of asking questions in the hotel service industry.

The key points of interrogative sentences for Chinese hospitality are summarized below.

The textbook or teaching content should first introduce affirmative-negative or 'Yes or No' questions to help students to understand that this kind of question normally includes interrogative particles. Except for the frequently used "吧 ba", "吗 ma" and "啊 a" in real conversations, the staff also often use "啦 la", "呀 ya", "哈 ha" and "哦 oh" to ask questions. Intonation is also important when asking a question. This requires students to master raising the tone of their voice and distinguishing tones of different questions. By doing this they will understand the tones and choose the correct tone when facing similar situations in real workplaces.

The next section teaches students about the interrogative questions used mainly to inquire about specific information. Guests apply interrogative pronouns to clearly

address the information they need to know. The abbreviated specific interrogative sentence is also introduced in the same chapter. Research results showed two structures including "NP+呢 (ne)" and "VP+呢 (ne)" that are usually used by hotel guests when inquiring about room types and prices. For example," What if we do not want breakfast?", implies that the guest wants to know how much the room is per night without breakfast. In another example, one staff member asks " Where is the other one?", meaning "where is the other guest who needs to register at the front desk".

Therefore, teachers should explain these aspects in detail to ensure that students understand the characteristics and the complete meaning of the abbreviated forms of specific questions.

The second research objective was to determine the functions of each type of interrogative sentence.

The process of sorting the questions into different categories is followed by understanding their functions. Fareh and Maher (2008, pp. 144- 164) claimed that interrogative sentences have different discourse functions. Questions can be divided into typical and non- typical functions as direct and indirect functions of a speech act. A direct function of an utterance is indicated by the literal meaning of its grammar and vocabulary (Fareh & Maher, 2008, pp. 146- 164) . By understanding interrogative sentence functions, students will be able to use the Chinese language to ask the correct and proper questions in given hotel service contexts. Questions are used as inquiries and also to express demands and provide instructions. Most importantly, questions indicate the appropriateness and decency of the language or the courtesy of speakers. In the Chinese hotel service scenario, the function "seeking/requesting

information" occupied 49% as almost half of the collected data. To provide professional hotel service, staff generally seek or request certain information from guests. Questions are inevitable in these kinds of occasions. The following transcribed recordings are good examples.

NS：你好，有预订吗？ (Hi, do you have a reservation?)
NG:有，有，给。(Yes, here you are.)
NS：您在哪个网站订的呀？(Which website you used for this booking?)
NG：艺龙。(Yi Long.)
NS：艺龙是吧？ (Yi Long, right?)
NG：对。(Correct.)
NS：您的手机是---? (And your phone number is___?)
NG：幺三幺二幺七。 (One-three-one-two-one-seven.)

To recognize the source of this booking, hotel staff asked about the booking channel and mobile phone number of the guest. Then, they checked online to confirm the information. The importance of questions is obvious and students must have sufficient knowledge of different questions and be able to use them correctly to obtain the desired information.

After acknowledging the guest's details, the hotel receptionists need to reconfirm the information. This is achieved by repeating the information plus interrogative particles " 吧 (ba)" or "吗 (ma)?". In some situations, the staff also resort to interrogative sentences by simply adding the particle "吗 (ma)" at the end. The example below demonstrates one of these situations.

NS：您预订姓名可以告诉我一下。

（Please tell me the reservation name.）

NG：呃---春丽娟。 （Hmm---Chun Lijuan.）

NS：春丽娟是吗？ （Chun Lijuan, right?）

NG：对(Yes.)

This following conversation shows the purpose of reconfirmation by using particle "吧(ba)" and a rising tone.

NG：可以寄存行李吗？ （Could we deposit our baggage here?）

S：欸，好。行李寄存一下是吧？ （Oh, okay, luggage deposit, right?）

NG：对。(Right.)

S：好咧！ .... 是过一会儿来取吗？

（No problem, will you take it later?）

NG：是的，大概一点半。 （Yes, about 1:30pm）

S：一点半是吧？ （1:30 pm, right?）

NG： 对。(Yes.)

S： 一件哦？ （One bag?）

NG：两件。(Two)

S： 两件？ （Two?）

NG：嗯，两件。. ...... （Yes, two bags......）

Seeking and confirming information were the main functions of interrogative sentences during the recorded hotel check- ins. The duty of hotel front desk staff is to check information and confirm whether the booking records of guests are correct. Students who understand the purpose of the questions are more likely to communicate with guests smoothly and display higher efficiency in the future.

Here, 17 interrogative sentences were identified that showed the functions of seeking advice in the recorded conversations, accounting for 4% of the total. They were used when the guests were unclear about some details and required further guidance or assistance from the desk staff, such as the dialog below:

NG：问一下如果...................问就是如果我我要自己办卡那 个会员卡的话用那个 APP 的那个下载是要用手机下载 APP 是吧？那要交多少钱呢？ (May I know if.... that is, if I need to apply the membership card, it need me to download the app and proceed there, is it?)

NS：你看，您办什么卡？ (Please take a look. What kind of card you want to apply)?

The second example is shown below.

NG：那钱是什么时候给的呀? (When I need to pay for it?)

NS：钱你是在网上订的时候就给了。 (You already paid online during the booking procedure.)

NG：嗯，我我只付了最低那个三百 (Yeah, I only paid the minimum one which is about 300 yuan.)

NS：哦对，你就付了三百六十九。 (Oh right, you only paid three hundred and sixty-nine)

NS2：明天再过来交就行。 (You could come to pay tomorrow.)

In this conversation, the guest wanted to know when to pay the remaining room fee. As well as asking for information, questions can also provide the required details. However, in the collected conversations, this function only occupied 3%, mainly indicated through yes or no questions, as seen in the example below.

S：一个订单是两天的。 (One booking is for 2 days.)

NG：对。…… (Yes. ....)

S： 帮您看一下。啊，对，十二还有一个。 (Let me check for you. Oh, right, there is another one on 12th)

NG：对吧---？ (Is it correct...?)

S：十号十二号在一个....... (The one on 10th and 12th is on......)

NG：然后八号到十号对吧？ (And 8th to 10th, right?)

During this conversation, the guest informs the staff about the booking date through questions, gives information that the staff do not know and asks for their confirmation.

In some scenarios, both guests and staff may ask questions seeking agreement or approval, especially when they have special requirements. The following dialog shows one scene where guests hope to gain approval from the staff.

NG：唉，我有照片了。 (Hi, I got a photo.)

NS：呃，照片不行，我得复印出来。(Hmm, the photo is not allowed here, we need a copy.)

NG：呃---是吗？早上您说让家里人发传真是吧？不是发。 (Oh, is it? This morning you mentioned that you will let your family fax it over, right? Not sending......)

NS：传真是发那个单子，直接发那个单子。我们需要复印出来，跟那个 …… (The faxed file is a bill. Please send that bill directly. I need to copy it with another one. .)

NG：可以补吗？就是明天或者后天。 (Could I send it later? By tomorrow or the after tomorrow.)

NS：呃，不行。因为明天 (Well, cannot. Because tomorrow......)

NG：因为我们还在这里四天呢。 (Because we will still
　　 be here for four days.)

NS：不是，您主要您过来入住公安局就会查，您懂吗？
　　 (It's not like that. As long as you checked in, the
　　 police will come to inspect. Do you understand that?)

This dialog took place when guests presented incorrect documents for the check-in procedure. The hotel receptionist was unable to find the date of entry at the airport. The guest said that this information could be supplied in the next two days. She said "Could I send it later?" to ask for approval from the hotel desk staff. They replied, "Do you understand that?", hoping that the guest could cooperate.

The conversations detailed above show the functions of questions in real life. Fareh and Maher (2008, pp. 144-164) suggested that authentic materials should be included in new Chinese hospitality textbooks to help second language learners comprehend real situations where these questions and answers are applicable. Chinese teaching contents generally focus on grammar, culture and function of the language. These authentic and suitable conversations retrieved from real communications between hotel staff and guests should not be neglected as good examples.

The third research objective was to summarize these findings and offer suggestions to improve textbooks for Chinese hospitality teaching.

Foreign hotel staff use Mandarin to discourse with native speaking guests. Their duties require procuring copious information from guests such as names on the booking reservation date, booking channels, payment methods, special

requirements, room types and arrival time. Questions are asked relating to all these situations. To maximize communication efficacy, Chinese hospitality students need to understand the different types of interrogative sentences and their functions relating to everyday hotel service requirements. All these facets will offer helpful educational advice for both instructors and students in hotel service Chinese-related courses.

To put the advice into practice, the course textbook should list interrogative sentences as key learning points in different situations. Some students may be more language experienced than others. Chinese for hospitality course teachers should explain the three previously mentioned categories of interrogative sentences. The students should be encouraged to ask questions and practice using all the different types of questions among themselves to address each purpose correctly. The main goal is to ensure that the students understand the importance of questions in daily hotel operations. This will help students to overcome their worries and fears about asking guests for essential information.

Students should not recite sentences by rote without understanding their proper usage contexts. Basic knowledge of the various forms of Chinese interrogative sentences will allow the students to quickly adapt to ask the correct questions in fast-changing scenarios. A solid comprehension of the functions of different interrogative sentences will also assist future hotel staff to gain a better understanding of what the guests may say or require.

This paper also collected and analyzed questions and conversations by considering aspects of Chinese culture, and combined the findings with the latest Chinese news and changing tourism policies.

Language is an important aspect of culture. Through analyzing conversations between Chinese guests and hotel staff, we learned how Chinese culture impacted communication and social manners and also reflected the current situation in China. For instance, foreign visitors to China are only permitted to stay in hotels that are registered as qualified to accommodate overseas guests. The check-in policy for foreign tourists can be complicated. Passport and visa information must be registered on the hotel system and be available for Chinese police to inspect. The current domestic situation in China would be difficult to assess without our detailed conversation analysis that provided information about special characteristics of Chinese hotels for both foreign tourists and students. Under certain contexts, students will have a better understanding of how budget chain hotels operate in China. For example, many hotels in China list unusual rooms, such as big bedrooms with no windows that are rare in Thailand. Students will assimilate this information efficaciously through analyzing the conversations. All this information should be included in Hospitality Chinese teaching designs or as teaching material supplements as a practical learning method to understand Chinese culture.

An awareness of the domestic situation in China and Chinese customs and culture would assist Thai hotel staff to serve Chinese tourists as the largest national group. During the last decade, China has become a huge market for promoting Thai tourism. Statistics collected by the Economic Bureau of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand showed that in 2019 over 4 million Chinese tourists traveled to Thailand, generating 200 billion baht of foreign exchange income. Therefore, welcoming guests from China by speaking fluent and proper Chinese and understanding their habits and culture are essential

skills to improve hotel service efficiency. Results from a survey of Chinese tourists to Thailand (Chinese International Travel Monitor: CITM) conducted by Hotels.com™ found that Chinese tourists chose Thailand as the number one travel destination. However, they mentioned five aspects that they considered the Thai hospitality industry should improve. These included the provision of sufficient Mandarin-speaking hotel staff, restaurant waiters and tour guides with good speaking skills to supplement their hotel stay enjoyment. The Thai hospitality industry should respond to these requests and increase hotel staff requirements in Chinese language proficiency to improve communication efficiency with Chinese tourists.

Conclusion

This research examined real conversations from the front desks of budget hotels in Mainland China. The results were used to provide suggestions on textbook contents and curriculum design of Chinese language courses relevant to the hospitality industry in Thailand. The main focus was placed on interrogative sentences during conversations between hotel staff and guests. Using the theory of conversation analysis, this study examined the form and function of the questions asked.

In total, 35 conversations between hotel staff and guests were recorded and transcribed into text files as 20,285 words containing 1,452 linguistic terms, with 62% of the questions asked by hotel staff. Discourse analysis determined that affirmative-negative questions were most commonly asked between Chinese speaking hotel staff and guests, accounting for 77% of the total.

Affirmative-negative questions are used to check or confirm information, and these comprise the majority of communicative situations in hotel service operations. For example, the staff used yes or no questions for information confirmation during the check-in processes. These sentences usually have modal particles like "吧 (ba) " and "吗 (ma)" to end the question. Guests used yes or no questions mainly to repeat the answers or information provided by the other speakers.

Affirmation-negative or yes or no questions are also useful when seeking or requesting information, with a similar function as a specific interrogative sentence. In the hotel context, the information required mainly concerns the identity of guests or instructions relating to hotel accommodation. These are vital details that require special attention from students. Besides seeking confirmation and requiring information, other functions of questions involve seeking advice, providing information, seeking agreement or approval, requesting non-verbal action, making an offer and asking for permission. Future hotel workers would benefit by knowing more about the type and function of commonly used questions in hospitality Chinese.

Due to the insufficiency of manpower, resources and time, the number of hotels, hotel types and authentic recordings collected in this paper were limited. Future studies should expand the number and types of hotels chosen for recordings. The duration of recording and real hotel scenarios involved should also be increased accordingly. Using a comprehensive database of audio files concerning real hotel conversations, future relevant studies will be able to analyze and draw

conclusions that are more representative and universal. Future research should also explore the diverse vocabularies used in hotel service feedback to compare them with word lists in the hospitality Chinese teaching syllabus.

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