



SEA-side salon speak

CND education ambassador **ANNA LEE** troubleshoots the myths, legends and ideology of South East Asian salons

For a long time, there's been varied misconceptions about SEA salons. Many of these have helped create unnecessary discrimination towards these salons and techs. Today, I'm going to answer some of the common questions many people have posed and I hope by doing so, it's possible to slowly eliminate all negativity towards the SEA nail community; as many of the issues that are often brought up can be settled with a simple explanation.

Why do SEA techs paint their whites so far down the nails towards the cuticle area?

Many times, where the white is placed is not the choice of the nail tech, but the clients themselves. Clients who visit SEA salons actually request the techs apply the white lower down towards the cuticle so it can last a few more rebalances before they need to reposition the white again. This is to save them money. Clients also think more white means the nails appear longer and although the SEA techs understand that this is not the case, they are obliged to fulfill the request because competition among the SEA salons themselves is fierce, so every business likes to keep their clients happy.

Sometimes SEA techs do the correct thing and advise against this by explaining that the white placed so far down the nail will cause the nail to look unbalanced, yet the clients think they are only trying to persuade them to come back sooner into the salon, so they can charge them again to rebalance their nails.

Why do SEA salons operate like a conveyer belt? Why do they not service the work from start to finish?

Not all SEA salons work like conveyer belts. However, for the SEA salons where work is carried out in such a way, there are several reasons. In some cases the tech is not comfortable or confident in providing the complete service. Sometimes, particular techs are excellent at certain techniques and not great in others. For example, one person can be great at applying L&P

enhancements, but very slow and not very precise in polishing. In which case, they would allocate the jobs to whoever is the best and quickest. Although non-SEA techs see this as a disadvantage, most of the clients who frequent SEA salons actually like this particular systematic way of working. It all boils down to speed and accuracy. It enables clients to leave with a perfect set of nails in the quickest possible time.

Many of the new and younger SEA generation do not agree with working in this particular way; they prefer to offer complete services from beginning to end. However, if they become very busy, it makes perfect business

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sense to them to adapt accordingly to the client's request. One of the reasons why SEA salons are so busy all the time is because they do exactly what the clients request them to do and not what they want to do themselves, effectively and efficiently.

What do SEAs really talk about when they talk in their own language in front of clients?

Most of the time, the SEA tech talks about everyday subjects such as where they are going after work, what to eat for lunch or where they bought their new dress.

Many clients have the misconception that SEA salons like to talk in their own language as it allows them to talk about the clients easily and freely. So it may come as a surprise that one of the reasons

why they speak in their native language to each other is not because they want to talk about their clients, but because not everyone speaks perfect English. Therefore the ones that do understand English well have to multi-task by listening out for other client's requests, so they're able to explain in their own language to their co-workers, in order to provide a fast and efficient service.

It's understandable that there are concerns and curiosity when two SEAs are conversing in their own language in front of non-SEAs, and of course, we can agree to a certain extent that this particular practice should not be exercised in front of clients. However, according to most SEAs, this practice is not classified as an offensive gesture in their own culture at all! I have taught many SEA classes where students talk to themselves in their own Asian language that I don't understand. But because I come from an Asian Chinese background, it never concerns me, as it's normal and common that two people from the same country would speak their own native language to each other. It's a situation that the SEAs expect and are relatively familiar with. However, it's unfortunate that the SEAs brought this cultural mentality into their salons not realising that the western culture is very different and what they are doing is causing offence.

Another thing to keep in mind is, for some SEA techs, because English is not their first language, it's harder to express and explain themselves in English. Formation and structure of sentences are different in Asian languages; as well as the fact many words do not even exist as a translation in English. So accordingly for the SEAs, it's quicker and more efficient for them to just explain in their own language. It's unlikely to be deliberate rudeness: more a cultural and practical difference. ☺

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