BARRIERS TO SUCCESS OF NON-THAI STUDENTS' LEARNING THAI AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

BY

PORNTIPA HARIWONGSANUPARP

A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
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LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the language barriers of non-Thai students' learning Thai as a foreign language at an international school in Thailand. The study was conducted using the survey style which involved completing four sections of a questionnaire of rating scales and three volunteers were interviewed. The data was analyzed statistically using SPSS program. The results of the four sections of the questionnaire (background information, personal barriers, instructional barriers, socio-cultural barriers) indicated that the instructional barrier had the highest means score (3.33) while the socio-cultural barriers had the lowest means (2.78). The study also showed that personal barriers affect students' attitudes towards Thai language the most (3.26). The difficulty that has the least effect on students' attitude is socio-cultural barriers (3.10). The paper concludes with suggestions on the effective methods that the learners can use to mitigate the barriers of learning Thai as a foreign language in order to increase the effectiveness of their ability.

Keywords: Difficulty, Instructional, Socio-cultural, TFL, Attitude, Barriers, Motivation.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Becoming a part of the Asean community in 2016 has attracted a large number of international students to come to study in Thailand. As a result, Thai language will play a vital role as an official language in the country. As stated by the former Thai Education Minister, Chinaworn: " Other countries that have declared English as their second official language were normally viewed as former colonies, but Thai is the only official language of Thailand" (Bangkok Post, October 20, 2010). The requirement for learning Thai language in the international school has shed a light on why it is needed. Studying Thai helps non-native students become a part of their host community, develop greater understanding and apply themselves to their host country and culture.

The ministry of Education defines the meaning of international school as "An international school is an educational institution providing an international curriculum or an international curriculum in which its curriculum has been adjusted or a self-organized curriculum which is not the Ministry of Education's. A foreign language is used as the medium of teaching and learning." Furthermore, Thai language and culture also constitutes a core subject and is mandatory at every level for all students who study in the international school; non-Thai students are required to study Thai a minimum of one period per week. As stated in the national curriculum, international schools in Thailand have provided "Thai as a foreign language" courses for non -Thai students. The purpose of the course is to allow non-Thai students to use Thai language to communicate on a daily basis, have a greater understanding of the culture of Thailand, and recognize and honor the culture which will result in a happy community. Thai language skill for international students requires training in language use. Therefore, the students should develop their speaking skill and listening skill for the purposes of communication, effective learning and application in daily life.

Despite the importance placed on Thai language learning, however, the improvement of students' Thai language capabilities have not yet met the expectation of the course due to the barriers the students faced in their Thai language learning. After 4 years of teaching, the

researcher has found that there are many barriers to attaining successful levels of Thai language ability. These barriers include the individual differences of learners, teaching methodologies and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Hybels &Weaver (1995) state that "When people from different countries interact in order to reach the goal of understanding each other, there are problems found within this group due to variations in the languages used by them." The researcher, as a Thai teacher, realizes that it is crucial for the teacher to investigate the barriers facing foreign students' in learning Thai language as it can affect students' performance in learning Thai.

Furthermore, the researcher believes that there is a need for Thai language teachers to find out what can be the significant barriers affecting the students' success in learning Thai in order to develop methods of teaching and learning Thai as a foreign language in Thailand. Besides, the finding of this study will enable the teacher to find out the solutions to help students with low Thai proficiency to gain more Thai skills.

1.2 Statement of the problems

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1.2.1 What are the barriers non-Thai students confront in learning Thai as a foreign language?

1.2.2 Do these barriers affect students' attitude towards learning Thai language?

1.2.3 From the learners' perspective, what can the learners do to overcome the barriers to learning Thai as a foreign language?

1.3. Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1.3.1 To investigate the barriers that have an impact on non-Thai students' performance in learning Thai as a foreign language.

1.3.2 To investigate the impact of language barriers on students' attitude in learning Thai language

1.3.3 To elicit students' opinion/perception on the barriers they are facing in learning Thai as a foreign language.

1.4 Definition of term

The definitions of terms of this research are as follow:

Thai as a foreign language (TFL) is the Thai program of study that the international school has provided for the non-Thai speaker for international students. It aims to develop students' listening and oral skills in daily communication, basic survival vocabulary and simple dialogues. It is a required course that non-Thai students need to study at least 1period a week (50 minutes).

Motivation in foreign language learning refers to a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language (1985 cited in Williams & Burden: 1997:116).

Attitude in foreign language refers to the reflection of a learner's beliefs and opinions towards the foreign language and culture as well as their own culture. Attitude and motivation have a close relationship in foreign language learning.

Language barriers refer to a figurative phrase used primarily to indicate the difficulties faced when people who have no language in common attempt to communicate with each other.

Foreign language acquisition can be defined as the process of learning another language after the native language or the first language has been learned. By this term, it means both the acquisition of a second language in a classroom situation, as well as in more "natural" exposure situations (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p.7).

1.5 Scope of the study

This research is conducted to examine the barriers Y7-Y9 students at one international school in Thailand are confronting in their Thai as a foreign language course. The participants of this study are 69 non-Thai students who study Thai in a foreign language course from one to three periods a week. The result of the study is based on the respondents' experience.

1.6 Significance of the study

1.6.1. The study provides useful information for teachers who teach Thai as a foreign language at international schools and other concerned personnel who work with international students. Teachers can make use of the deeper understanding of the barriers that the non-Thai students face in class in order to design the teaching strategies that encourage students, help them to overcome the difficulties and improve their language skills.

1.6.2. The finding is significant for the learners as it can address the problems of learning Thai as a foreign language so that they will be aware of the difficulties and try to find the proper way to mitigate those barriers, improve their language skill and achieve their academic success.

1.6.3. This study is significant for parents, as parents play a vital role to support children in learning Thai and provide all possible assistance children need in improving their Thai language proficiency.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teaching and learning Thai as a foreign language in international school

Thai language is the official language that represents the history, culture, way of life and the identity of the nation. It serves as a communication tool for creating mutual understanding and happy relationships among the people, who are able to conduct their affairs and pursue their livelihoods, as well as enjoy peaceful coexistence in a democratic society (BE 2008).

Priya Hiranpradit (2002:94) states that there are two main reasons that foreigners study Thai as a foreign language. The first reason is to be able to communicate with people in the community and the second reason is to work with Thai people and to gain better knowledge of speaking and understanding Thai culture.

Moreover, Sriwilai Polmanee (2008: 36-39) points out that most international students prefer learning Thai language along with Thai culture because of the growing demands of working and job advancement in Thailand.

Under the compulsory rules of the Ministry of Education, Thai language has been selected to be a core subject that has to be in the curriculum by the Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Education Standards, 2008). Therefore, both Thai schools and international schools must teach Thai language to the students.

Regarding the national curriculum, the international schools in Thailand have to provide Thai class for international students for at least 1 period a week (50 minutes). The course mostly focuses on speaking and listening. However, the researcher, as a Thai teacher, has found that there were some barriers confronted by the students who are learning Thai language. Most of the students have different backgrounds in learning Thai, for example, some students have been learning Thai for 4 to 5 years since they moved to Thailand, while some students have just moved to Thailand and do not have any background knowledge in learning Thai language. As a result, the students in the latter group struggle in learning Thai as a foreign language and they are unable to communicate

effectively in class. Therefore, this leads to the questions about the barriers which affect their Thai language learning and it is necessary to investigate the difficulties the learners face in class in order to help the learners improve their skill in Thai language effectively.

2.2. Understanding barriers to success of foreign language learning

Krashen (1982:10) states that there are at least two ways to develop competence in a foreign language. The first way is through language acquisition and the second way is through language learning. Skinner (1957), with his *"verbal behavior theory"*, states that language acquisition occurs in children by imitating a set of language sound patterns from their environment using stimuli, responses, reinforcements, and rewards. However, Hymes (1964), who is known as the proponent of communicative competences, argues that learners can acquire language through real communication in dynamic societies, which are bound with their cultural values. It cannot be learned or acquired in isolated contexts.

Different from language acquisition, foreign language learning focuses on a conscious mind. The linguistics of the language and the knowledge about the language need to be taken into account in the learning process.

Barriers to success in learning Thai as a foreign language in the international school context can be seen from many perspectives ranging from the large community societal barriers to the most specific individual problems.

Language learning problems occur when people want to achieve something; many times they will meet problems. Language barrier is a term used to indicate the difficulties confronted by people trying to communicate with other people who have no language in common. It involves other contexts; typically, different cultures, backgrounds, and it associated with the learning of a foreign language (Wikipedia, 2016).

A research on the language barriers of University of Illinois was conducted to investigate the problem of language barriers faced by 41 international students from various countries. The finding revealed that the causes of language barriers are complex; difference in accents, phrases and idioms, structures of languages, cultures, and style (N Garcia, 2006).

Akbari (2015) also conducted research on junior high school students and stated that the lack of an English speaking environment and too much focus on grammatical

teaching are the most significance language barriers to the success of language learning in Iran.

2.3. Language difficulties experienced by international students

A few studies have been conducted to explore issues related to language teaching and difficulties students face when they study a foreign language:

John & Ehow (2011) stated that the obstacles that lead to the low performance of English language learning can be different factors, for example, not enough school resources, the large class size, the quality of the teachers and the school curriculum.

Jdetawy (2011) investigate the problems that Arab EFL learners faced while learning English language. The study revealed that the learners encountered the problems in four language skills and the learners also lack motivation in class since English is not their first language. Moreover, the result also found that the learners lack language exposure as they prefer to speak Arabic in the EFL classroom rather than using English. Other barriers, such as the weakness of the school curriculum and the weakness of the input in their language teaching context were also found to affect their language acquisition.

In spite of the fact that school is one of the factors that leads to the success of the learners, there are some circumstances where the school fails to deliver effective instruction for the learners. In this connection, there are some obstacles on the path to education. Such barriers are the common things the teacher can face during instruction. However, situations may vary.

2.4. Barriers to Thai as foreign language learning

In teaching and learning Thai as a foreign language process, many variables were found to be the factors that affect the success of the students, for example, students, teachers, learning materials, curriculum, learning resources and culture, and the learning environment.

Lily Thamzil Thahir (1994) conducted a study titled “Barriers to Successful EFL Learning in Eastern Indonesian Junior High Schools.” The result reveals that Indonesian junior high school students find it difficult to learn English due to a variety of barriers,

including: large class size, limited time, inappropriate learning materials, curriculum content, discouraging learning environment, teaching competence etc.

Several researches (Wong,1985;Thongsongsee, 1998; Crowe, 1992; Songsangkaew, 2003) revealed that investigation of the students' language problems is the way to improve foreign language teaching and learning. Factors affecting language learning outcomes and learning barriers include: 1) personal problems, namely; motivation, experience, anxiety, and attitude 2) instructional factors, for example, school, curriculum, and teaching strategies, 3) socio-cultural factors including family, peers, and school community. Therefore, barriers to learning Thai as foreign language learning can be categorized into 3 main groups as follow;

2.4.1 Personal barriers

Personal barrier is the internal factors that prevent learners from learning, make it difficult for learners to go to class or make it hard for learners to concentrate and learn. In the present study, the learners have many responsibilities that must be balanced against learning needs. Therefore, they may face many barriers while participating in learning. Personal barriers to learning for students in general include lack of motivation, lack of time, lack of confidence, lack of learning experience and lack of learning strategies (Lieb,1991).

Motivation in foreign language learning

The study of motivation has been widely accepted by both teachers and learners as one of the key factors that influence the success of foreign language learning (Gardner, 1985). Motivation has a strong impact on foreign language acquisition in one way or another as it can enhance learners by better proficiency and higher achievement in the target language (Dornyei, 1994; 2001).

Gardner and Lambert (1972) also found the relationship between motivation, attitude and language learning. That is both motivation and attitude can be recognized as important barriers to the success of learners. A lack of motivation can be a crucial barrier to student's learning; it typically leads to students going through the motions of learning and not retaining information. For example, some students who lack motivation will lose

direction and lose confidence which results in poor learning experiences and this will leads to the barriers in language learning in the future. Motivation is one of the most important factors in foreign language learning, therefore teachers have to always discover new ways to teach the target language as a result of their recognition of the importance of motivation (Corria, 1999).

Attitude

Attitude is defined by Allport (cited in Gardner, 1985: 8) as "a mental and neutral state of readiness, organized through experiences, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related." Language learning is associated with motivation and attitudes inevitably, as Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) state that attitude toward the learning situation plays a vital role in language learning. This may include attitude toward the instructor, class, textbooks, etc.

Gardner (1985) suggested two variables: attitudes toward the learning situation and integrativeness as part of a learner's socio-cultural environment. Attitude towards the learning situation is how the language teacher and the foreign language studied are evaluated. Attitude and motivation play a vital role in language learning, both of them can be a positive motivation for learners. On the other hand, motivation and attitude can become barriers to successful learning if learners possess negative attitudes towards the target language and lack of motivation to learn it.

Anxiety

According to Ender and Okada (1975) and Eysenck (1979), language anxiety is the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a foreign language which the individual is not comfortable with. The anxiety can make the individual react in a nervous manner and result in miscommunication in speaking, listening, reading and writing in the foreign language. Learners who have anxiety usually make slower progress, especially in practicing the oral skills. They are less likely to take advantage of opportunities to speak, or to seek out such opportunities. More outgoing students will not worry about the inevitability of making mistakes. They will take risks, and thus will give themselves much more practice.

Experiences

Learners who have acquired general knowledge and experience are in a stronger position to develop a new language. Lack of opportunity to practice is another prominent problem to advancing in the target language. The student, for example, who has lived in many different countries and been exposed to various languages and cultures has a stronger base for learning a further language than those of the students who never leave the country. Moreover, students who first move to another country and had to learn the language of their host country will find the language is difficult compared with students who had learned the language of that country for a long period. In other words, the more experience the learners gain, the less likely they will encounter the problems.

Siriwisut (1994) and Serttikul (2005) have found out that learning experience had an impact on pronunciation ability. Language experience, in their studies, meant opportunities to use the language in daily lives. The studies indicated that learners who had less experience in pronunciation faced more language transfer difficulties than the students with good pronunciation.

2.4.2. Instructional barriers

Instructional barriers refer to all instructional factors that prevent students from actively engaging in their learning. There are a variety of obstacles that derive from instructional barriers such as school curriculum, lack of skill in teaching, lack of activities in class, limits in material and resources. These factors can be the major obstacle that prevents learners from engaging in learning.

Curriculum

Curriculum, in general usually plays a vital role in the entire process of learning in an educational system. Banathy, B. (1968) wrote the definition of curriculum in her book titled **Instructional System** as “an organized attempt to respond to such inquiries as what to teach, to whom and why; how to teach. According to this, the design development, and management of curriculum are decision-making operations requiring a structure and a strategies.” Therefore, a foreign language curriculum can be called a foreign language program or course of study. Decisions made about the program are based on assumptions regarding what should be learned (subject matter), how it should be taught (method) and

the way in which successful learning should be defined (objective, exam, grade). Many studies have found that the school curriculum can be major barriers that block the learners from learning.

Lie (2002), discovered that curriculum design and implementation are learning problems in Indonesia. These problems are ranging from the diversity of the classrooms, the need to balance the diversity and universality, and the psychosocial context of the learners. Lie suggests that there is a need to redesign the curriculum to facilitate the teachers as well as the learners.

Takahashi, Kiyoko (2014) conducted a research titled *Analysis of Thai Grammar for Developing a Textbook of Freshman Grammar Classes for Thai-major students in Japan.* The researcher interviewed the experts in teaching Thai as a foreign language regarding the curriculum and the learning content and found out that the main objective of the curriculum for the Thai program for foreigners is focused on speaking .Speaking will let the learners communicate with people in the community effectively, however grammar and syntax was not included in the school curriculum as it only is present in listening and speaking class. This issue may cause difficulties in understanding the Thai expressions because they do not have adequate knowledge of how the patterns work.

Pawapatcharaudom. (2007) conducted a survey on English language difficulties and learning strategies and the result shows that the major barriers of English language learning of Thai students derived from the writing skill which was related to the course content. Another serious problem involved writing in the time limit.

Teaching and learning material should be properly designed in accordance with the social needs and national demand and the administration must try to facilitate the learning process by all means, especially the teachers. It must be ensured that the maximum utilization of even a minimum resource is well considered to be suitably implemented.

Teaching strategies

Teachers and teaching play a vital role in students' foreign language as they are the main source of the learners' satisfaction. The word "teaching" implies a number of aspects including imparting knowledge, providing relevant material and students (Felix Tetal, 2004).

Teaching strategies consists of teaching techniques, classroom activities, extra curriculum activities, classroom management and the course syllabus. The teacher is a very important factor in language learning. A good language teacher depends on two factors: his or her level of proficiency in the language, and his or her knowledge and expertise in language teaching techniques, Fun and interesting inside classroom activities are closely related to teachers' skills and techniques in handling the classroom.

Wilkin and Moore (1989) also introduced the three categories on interaction in the context of distance learning, for instance, interaction with content, interaction with instructors and interaction with students. The studies pointed out that the relationship between instructors and students are crucial. The good teaching strategies with the interaction between teachers and learners could help build the learners' motivation in class and make the lesson more interesting and fun.

Erlenawati Sawir (2005) studied the language difficulties international students' face in Australia. The study revealed that students who study English as a foreign language lacked a balanced access to the four skills of writing, listening speaking and reading, especially oral communication skill, due to the old teacher-centered teaching style focused on reading and writing, grammar usage and sentence syntax. The oral communication and the interaction between teacher and learners are totally ignored. The students lack a chance to use their English conversation during classroom.

Learning environment

Learning environment including class size, classroom situation and school atmosphere are all part of success in foreign language learning. A well-managed classroom and school will affect the success of foreign language learning. For example, Learning EFL in a small size class (with up a maximum of 20 students) will give more opportunities for individual learning than a large size class (with more than 40 students). A large class is also likely to lead to overcrowding, limiting opportunities for active learning. Brown (1994) suggests that the ideal number of students in a language-teaching classroom should be not more than 12 students.

Learning material

Learning materials also have an impact on foreign language learning outcome. If the learning materials are designed to the match the students' need, the learning process will be more effective. Harmer (1991) claimed that the teacher, as a curriculum planner, must be able to select the most suitable learning content for his or her students in order to meet the needs of them.

2.4.3 Socio-Cultural barrier

Lev Vygotsky is a pioneer in a theory of psychology that look into the significant contributions that community plays as an important role in an individual's development. This theory points out the important interaction between the development of people and the culture in the community. Lev Vygotsky also believed that family, friends and the culture were responsible for the developing of the learners' language ability. His theory also focuses on how adults and peers have an impact on individual learning and also how cultural beliefs and attitudes are the barriers to instruction and learning.

Many recent studies reveal that the most cited barriers that have a significant impact on learners were related to family, peers and culture; parents and peers especially can be the main obstacle to learning acquisition.

The role of parents

Family support pays an important role in the development of children's language skill. Gunning (2007) elaborated on this point by claiming that a student's language acquisition (regarding literacy specifically) cannot be done only at school. He reiterated that home support, especially from parents, is the most important factor that helps kids engage with the language, Moreover, some students come from a good family background and they are fortunate that their parents have the basic skill in the particular language. Therefore, those students tend to be able to communicate and have exposure in that language more than those who have no practice and have no support by the parents at home.

Kim (1992) conducted a study of students' attitudes toward learning Korean as a heritage language and found out that parental attitudes were important contributing factors to the success of the children's learning.

Choy (1993) investigated children's acquisition of Japanese and discovered that parental involvement in an elementary Japanese bilingual program plays a vital role in the children language acquisition.

Rumberger (2001) conducted a study to investigate whether the parents' involvement could lead to better student learning and the result shows that parents, who take a part in monitoring students' work, are involved with school activities and offer emotional support results in better student engagement in language learning.

Alexander et al. (2001) observed that certain parenting behaviors mitigate the negative effects of low socioeconomic circumstances. "Parents who are materially poor can and do act in ways that support their children's schooling and their children to play a role in directing their own academic development" (p. 806). Students with parents supportive of their educational activities are more likely to experience positive educational outcomes than students without supportive parents.

Asuquo, Owan, Inaia and Okon (2001) have indicated that children from good family backgrounds tend to perform and achieve better educationally than children from lower socio-economic families. According to them, higher socio-economic families are capable of providing learning material and thus a environment conducive for learning and growth. Education of the parents, particularly of mothers, has some relationship with their children's school learning ability. In contrast, children who come from a poverty background family may face difficulties in their learning material and learning support from the parents.

Culture

Language learning and cultural experience has a mutually direct relationship with language acquisition.(Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991: 14). International students may encounter the cultural barriers due to being culturally diverse in races, religions and nationalities. Cultural environmental differences give the second language learners a kind of social psychological distance (Huang, 2009).

B.F.Skinner (1904 – 1990), the behaviorist who wrote about the relationship between language and culture in his book *"Are Theories of Learning Necessary?"*(1989*)* has mentioned that learners can acquire words by associating sounds with objects, actions,

and events. Moreover, they also learn the language skill through contact, interaction and imitation of others. Moreover, the cultural barrier does not only affect a student's language learning but also his lifestyle and his attitude to the instructor of the new language.

Thongsongsee (1998) investigated linguistic and cultural difficulties encountered by Thai student graduates from American universities. The study has found that some factors such as cultural communication, learning styles and individual problems played an important role in the language acquisition of the students.

Songsangkaew (2003) investigated the language barriers faced by Thai students in real situations in America. The results show that culture, different learning styles and linguistics are the main problems that many students still face.

Several studies point out that culture could be the main obstacle that blocks the learners from engaging with the language. John Macionis and Linda Gerber define cultural shock as "the personal disorientation a person may feel when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life due to immigration or a visit to a new country, or to move between social environments''(2010 , p. 54) .

Christofi, also states that "culture shock has many different effects, time spans and degrees of severity" (2007, 54). John Macionis comments on the negative outcomes of the interference of culture in learning a foreign language saying: "many people are handicapped by its presence and do not recognize what is bothering them" (2010, p.56). Gregory Mavarides also maintains that the cultural barriers give way to feelings of frustration and "may heighten the sense of disconnection from surroundings" (2009, 28).
They believe that during the honeymoon phase of the language stages, learners will appreciate the new language, however, when time passes, the learners will start feeling frustrated and they might feel that the foreign language is offensive and strange to his or her own culture. The fascinating language then turns into the real barrier which affects their learning. This situation creates a real challenge to both the teacher and the learner. Moreover, the culture barriers can be the cause of the other problems. It can affect the behavior and psychology of the learners. It may cause symptoms difficult to overcome like insomnia, classroom drowsiness, classroom distraction and the tendency to drop out of the class.

The cultural shock may create the feeling of helplessness, irritability, anger, stress reaction, a deep sense of hostility towards language and the instructor and boredom. The

cultural barrier, in this respect, does not only affect the student's acquisition of language but even his lifestyle and his attitude to the instructor of the new language.

Exposure to language

The opportunity to interact with native speakers both within and outside of the classroom is a significant advantage. Native speakers are linguistic models and can provide appropriate feedback. Clearly, second-language learners who have no extensive access to native speakers are likely to make slower progress, particularly in the oral/aural aspects of language acquisition.

D'Anglejan (1978) states that one of the causes for failure to acquire a target language is often the lack of contact with the target language speakers available to the learners due to restricted social interaction. Brumfit (1984:152), claimed that in order to succeed in foreign language learning, learners must have a chance to practice the target language in all 4 skills in a real situation for communication purpose. In other words, to be exposed to the target language could help with the language acquisition.

2.5. Conclusion

From this review, one can notice that the foreign language learning performance is a complicated process. Many relevant studies have revealed that language barriers, as mentioned above, could be one of the factors affect the students in engaging in foreign language learning. Each barrier played a vital role in slowing down the foreign language learning performance. Therefore, this review not only provides the theoretical framework but was also guideline for the methodology and design of this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes: 1) the subjects, 2) the materials, 3) the procedures used in the collection and 4) the data analysis

The international school that the researcher focuses on is a medium sized school with students of more than 40 nationalities. Under Thai law, the study of Thai language is compulsory for non-Thai students. As a result, this international school also provided a "Thai as a foreign language course" which is for students with non-Thai nationality. Their course was separated into two courses according to their proficiency in learning Thai. The students with the high ability will study in the first group while for the students in group two it can be found that they had a low ability in learning Thai. Therefore, the researcher believes that studying the barriers to language acquisition could help to weaken the learning problems of the students and could help the teacher provide the effective classroom that is suitable to the learning lifestyle of the learners. The goal of this research is to study these 69 high school students in key stage 3 from Y7 to Y9 who enrolled in Thai as a foreign language course in the academic year 2015 with respect to the barriers that can affect their language proficiency in Thai as a foreign language course.

3.1 SUBJECTS

The samples were key stage 3 students from year 7 to year 9 who enrolled in Thai as a foreign language course in the academic year 2015. The research was designed to use a mixed method type. A mixed method type is a research design that uses both quantitative and qualitative data to answer a particular question or set of questions (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p.3).

A survey study of students on barriers non-Thai students faced in learning Thai as a foreign language was conducted; the samples needed to answer the 4 sections of the questionnaire. Quantitative interviews with three students were conducted.

The interviewees have different abilities in Thai language. One of them was selected from the high ability group, one is from the average group and one of the respondents was chosen from the low proficiency group. All the students who participated

in this study were asked and signed an informed consent form prior to participating and were promised their complete anonymity.

3.2 MATERIALS

The aim of this section is to describe the materials and technique that has been used in the information gathering process.

3.2.1 Pilot study

The students' questionnaire was piloted with a group of 10 students. 4 students were chosen from the higher group, 3 students were in the moderate group and 3 students were in a low performance group regarding their grade in Thai. The researcher interviewed all the students about the barriers they faced in Thai class. The aim of the pilot study was to see the real problems that the students really faced in class in order to create the questionnaire that related most to the real situation.

3.2.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of the four sections. All of the respondents need to answer the questionnaires based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree (5)." The questionnaires have been divided into four parts as follows: Part I;: Background information, Part II: contains 11 survey questions regarding personal barriers. Part III: consist of 11 questionnaires related to the instructional barriers. Part IV contain 11 questions about socio-cultural barriers regarding the students 'family background. The respondents are required to answer the interview questions regarding the learners 'opinion towards problems in learning Thai as a foreign language. All survey questions are designed to compare which barriers affect the students' learning performance in Thai as a foreign language the most and which barriers have greater influence on the attitude of the students towards their Thai language learning process.

3.3 PROCEDURES

3.3.1 Research design

This study was conducted in order to investigate the barriers to Thai as a foreign language learning performance of key stage 3 students in Y7-Y9. The researcher used the

combination method; quantitative methods were used to collect the data. SPSS program is used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire. However, a one to one interview was also used in quantitative method to obtain the information on the perception of the learners towards the barriers in learning Thai as a foreign language.

3.3.2 Data collection

After the pilot study, the questionnaire was created as an instrument to collect the data. The population was all the key stage 3 international students from year 7 to year 9 who enrolled in Thai as a foreign language course in the academic year 2015. All the students are from a mix in ability. 80 questionnaires were distributed to the students and 69 questionnaires were collected. Prior to distributing the questionnaire to the respondents, all the students were informed that the survey study is not related to the grade of their Thai subject and it has no right and no wrong answers. This research was conducted for the specific purpose only.

After the process of data collection, the interviews were conducted with 3 volunteers regarding their opinion and perspective on barriers affecting the success of Thai foreign language learning.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

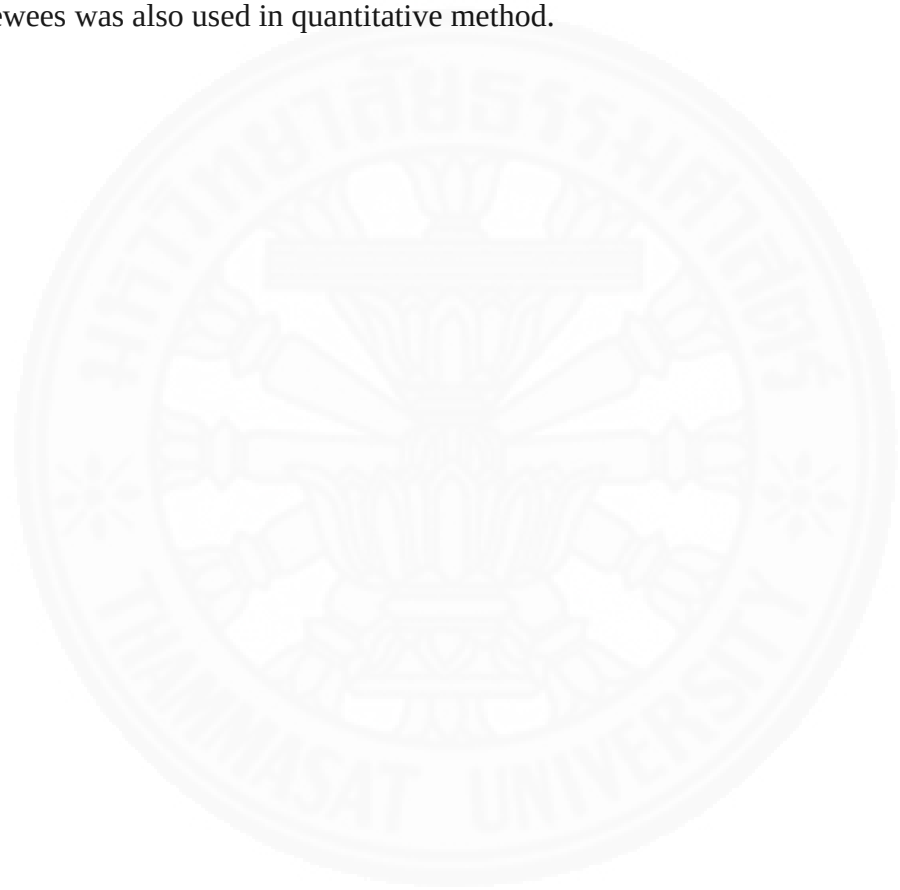
In this process, all the questionnaire responses ranging from 1 to 5 were analyzed quantitatively using the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS) program for each of the 85 respondents along with their demographic data. The descriptive analysis such as percentage, max, min, mean, mode, median and standard deviation were presented to examine the result of the research.

In addition, the average mean scores from the questionnaire Part II, III and IV were interpreted as follows:

4.20 - 5.0	The examined aspect is strongly agreed with
3.40 - 4.10	The examined aspect is agreed with
2.60 - 3.30	The examined aspect is neutral
1.80 - 2.50	The examined aspect is not agreed with
1.00 - 1.70	The examined aspect is strongly disagreed with

3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has shown the procedures of collecting data according to the research questions and objectives. The participants were all high school students from year 7 to year 9 who study Thai as a foreign language at an international school in Thailand in the academic year 2015. The pilot study was conducted prior to create the questionnaire. The qualitative method was use in the data collection process. The analysis of the finding utilized SPSS which will be presented in the next chapter. A one to one interview with 3 interviewees was also used in quantitative method.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The previous chapter described the research methodologies used to find out the barriers affecting Thai language learning. This chapter presents the overall finding based on the data collection from the questionnaires distributed to the students. There are five main sections: background information of the respondents, learner's barrier, instructional barrier, socio-cultural barrier, and the interview findings regarding their opinion on the barriers they are facing in learning Thai as a foreign language.

4.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The data in this part were obtained from the first part of the questionnaire that elicited the demographic background of the year 7 to year 9 students including gender, grade, age, language proficiency, level of preference etc. The table below represents the gender of the respondents.

Table 1 Respondents by gender

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	29	42
Female	40	58
Total	69	100

As seen in table 1, the percentage of male respondents is 42% while the percentage of female respondents is 58%. To sum up, the majority of the respondents are female.

Table 2 Respondents by age

Age	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
11	10	14.5
12	26	37.7
13	21	30.4
14	11	15.9
15	1	1.4
Total	69	100

Table 2 above, presents the age group of the participants; The majority of the respondents (37.7%) are 12 years old, followed by the age 13 (30.4%), the age 14 (15.9%), and the age 11(14.5%) . Only 1.4% of the respondents are 15 years old.

Table 3 Respondents by length of learning Thai

Year of experience in learning Thai	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
0 – 3 years	30	43.8
4 – 6 years	21	30.4
7 – 9 years	15	21.6
10 –13 years	3	4.2
Total	69	100

Table 3 shows that 30% of the respondents have been studied Thai for 0 -3 years, while only 3% of the respondents have been studied Thai for 10-13 years. It indicated that most of the learners are new to Thai language.

Table 4 Respondents by grade

Grade	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Grade A	21	30.4
Grade B	24	34.8
Grade C	19	27.5
Grade D	5	7.2
Total	69	100.0

Table 4 represents the students' learning outcome in Thai subject in the academic year 2015; 34.8% of the respondents have obtained grade B, followed by grade A (30.4%), grade C (27.5%), and only 7.2% of the respondents obtained grade D.

Table 5 the respondents self-rating on their Thai language proficiency

Proficiency	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Excellent	11	15.9
Good	33	47.8
Fair	15	21.7
Improve	10	14.5
Total	69	100.0

The proficiency of respondents' Thai language skill is shown in Table 5. The results indicate that the majority of respondents rate their proficiency in Thai language skill as good. However, there were 14.5% of the respondents who need to improve their Thai language skill.

Table 6 Level of the importance of Thai language learning

Importance of Thai language	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Very important	3	4.3
Important	40	58.1
Not important	21	30.4
Not at all	5	7.2
Total	69	100

Table 6 represents the level of importance in learning Thai as a foreign language. As can be seen, the majority of respondents rate Thai language learning as important and five respondents considered it as not important at all.

Table 7 The situation of using Thai language

Situation	Shopping	Asking	Buy	Chat	Study	Talk	Listening	Traveling
Frequency	44	36	36	11	17	3	9	15
Percentage	63.8	52.2	52.2	15.9	24.6	4.3	13	21.7
Mean	0.64	0.52	0.52	0.16	0.25	0.04	0.13	0.22

Table 7 shows the situations in which the respondents use Thai language to communicate in daily life. The results shows that the communicative function that the subjects use Thai language to communicate with the most is shopping (63.8%), followed by asking and buying (52.2%) The activity that has a slighter percentage is using Thai language in talking with family (4.3%).

Table 8 The frequency of using Thai language in daily life

Level of using Thai language	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Everyday	21	30.4
Once a week	21	30.4
Once a month	4	5.8
Never	8	11.6
Others	15	21.7
Total	69	100

Table 8 indicate that most of the subjects use Thai language everyday and once a week (30.4%) while 11.6% of the respondents never use Thai language to communicate in daily life.

Table 9 Degree of students' preference towards Thai subject

Level of preference towards Thai language	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Dislike Thai subject	3	4.3
Moderate	22	31.8
Like Thai subject	37	53.6
Like Thai subject very much	7	10.1
Total	69	100

From table 9, half of the respondents reported to prefer to study Thai language, whereas the majority of respondents do not like to study Thai language with a minimum percentage (4.3%).

4.2 BARRIERS TO SUCCESS OF THAI LANGUAGE LEARNING

The second part of the questionnaire identifies the information about barriers to success of Thai language learning in Thai class and is divided into three factors including personal barriers, instructional barriers and socio-cultural barriers. To answer the questions the respondents need to rate their perception towards barriers in Thai class based on the level of agreement. The results were analyzed as a means score based on the following rank;

For questions which elicited the problems and difficulties		For questions which elicited benefits and opportunities	
4.20 - 5.0	Strongly disagree	4.20 - 5.0	Strongly agree
3.40 - 4.10	Disagree	3.40 - 4.10	Agree
2.60 - 3.30	Neutral	2.60 - 3.30	Neutral
1.80 - 2.50	Agree	1.80 - 2.50	Disagree
1.00 - 1.70	Strongly agree	1.00 - 1.70	Strongly disagree

4.2.1. Personal barrier

This section examines the perception and attitude of the learners towards personal barriers. The data obtained from the questionnaires was analyzed by the means score and the standard deviation. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 10 Personal barriers

Statement	Means	SD	Level
1. Thai language is fun and interesting. (+)	3.36	0.85	Neutral
2. I feel nervous and anxious when I speak Thai. (-)	3.26	1.12	Neutral
3. I don't pay much attention in learning Thai because I can speak English with other people. (-)	3.14	1.07	Neutral
4. I learn Thai because I want to communicate with people in my host country. (+)	3.30	1.25	Neutral
5. It's unnecessary to learn Thai because I can use English to communicate with others. (-)	3.41	1.16	Disagree
6. I think learning Thai is useful in my everyday life. (+)	3.45	1.06	Agree
7. I will not need Thai in the future. (-)	2.83	1.22	Neutral
8. I study Thai because I plan to stay and live here. (+)	2.51	1.33	Neutral
9. I like to listen to and watch Thai movies. (+)	1.94	1.11	Disagree
10. I do not have enough Thai language practice. (-)	3.01	1.15	Neutral
11. I think my learning habits can affect the attitude in learning Thai. (-)	3.26	0.98	Neutral
Interpretation = Neutral	3.04	0.58	Neutral

Table 10 represents the mean score and the standard deviation of the students' response under the personal barriers factors. The results revealed that most of the students considered personal barriers as neutral. The respondents disagree that it's unnecessary to learn Thai because they can speak English as can be seen from item 5. Moreover, the mean score for "I think learning Thai is useful in my everyday life" is the highest (M=3.45).This represents that the respondents perceived Thai language as an important language in their daily life. On the other hand, the mean score for "I like to listen to and watch Thai movies."

is the lowest (M=1.94), which represents that most of the respondents do not prefer the activities that are related to Thai language.

4.2.2 Instructional barrier

This section presents the result of the learners' perceptions towards the instructional barriers. The result is shown in the table below.

Table 11 Instructional barriers

Statement	Means	SD	Level
1. My teacher and school always encourage me to learn Thai. (+)	3.84	0.91	Agree
2. The Thai language learning trip that the school provided can help me practice my language with local people. (+)	3.57	1.07	Agree
3. Teaching methodologies used in class cannot motivate me to learn. (-)	3.17	0.83	Neutral
4. The topic learned in class can be used in everyday life. (+)	3.77	0.84	Agree
5. The teaching methods in class can motivate me to learn Thai. (+)	3.22	0.90	Neutral
6. The school should provide more time to learn Thai. (-)	2.87	1.04	Neutral
7. My learning materials are not good enough. (-)	3.33	1.03	Neutral
8. I find that my ability in Thai has not improved after I have learned Thai in school for many years. (-)	3.38	1.30	Neutral
9. My instructor always speaks Thai and provides the students with feedback. (+)	3.45	0.85	Agree
10. The school should involve Thai reading and writing skills in the curriculum. (+)	2.90	1.31	Neutral
11. I think the instruction in the school affects my attitudes towards Thai subject. (-)	3.23	0.94	Neutral
Interpretation = Neutral	3.33	0.51	Neutral

According to table 11, the results indicated that students' response in instructional barriers domain are neutral with a mean of 3.33. The students' response agrees on items 1, 2, 4, and 9, which represents that teachers and the course content is appropriate. In other words, teachers, course content and school activities do not act as the respondents' barrier. Meanwhile, item 6, "The school should provide more time to learn Thai." has the lowest mean score which indicates that the period of time in Thai class is the least problematic area. The respondents neutrally responded on items 3,5,6,7,8,10, and 11.

4.2.3 Socio-cultural barrier

This section presents the learners' experience and attitude towards socio-cultural barriers. The result is shown in the following table.

Table 12 Socio-cultural barriers

Statement	Means	SD	Level
1. I study Thai hard because my parents are very supportive of me.(+)	3.01	1.06	Neutral
2. I do not get used to Thai people and culture.(-)	3.26	0.94	Neutral
3. My parents try to speak Thai to me and teach me the new Thai words.(+)	2.17	1.27	Disagree
4. I feel uncomfortable when I have to talk with Thai native speakers(-)	2.71	1.18	Disagree
5. I always learn new words and sentences from my Thai friends.(+)	3.01	1.24	Neutral
6. My parents pay attention to my learning Thai language subject.(+)	2.93	1.16	Neutral
7. My peers' behavior in class can distract me from my Thai language learning (-)	2.45	1.03	Agree
8. I always talk to Thai native speakers to develop my Thai language skill whenever I have a chance. (+)	2.59	1.14	Neutral

9. I find it hard to adapt myself to the Thai community. (-)	2.71	1.01	Neutral
10. I rarely use Thai language to communicate with local people.(-)	3.07	1.28	Neutral
11. I think that my family, peers and community can affect my positive attitudes towards Thai subject.(-)	3.10	1.01	Neutral
12. I am usually quiet when I have to talk to people who can't speak English.(-)	2.43	1.02	Disagree
Interpretation = Neutral	2.78	0.40	Neutral

Table 12 illustrates the socio-cultural background barriers that affect students' Thai language learning. The results show that the students' response is moderate with a mean score of (2.78). The results indicate that the majority of respondents neutrally think that they do not get used to Thai people and culture, which can be seen in item 2 with the mean score (3.26). However, item 3 "My parents try to speak Thai to me and teach me the new Thai words" was recognized as disagree which indicates that the respondents' family did not provide enough support in their children' Thai language learning at home.

Table 13 Survey results of personal barriers, instructional barriers, and socio-cultural barriers

Barriers	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Personal	69	3.04	0.58	Neutral
Instructional	69	3.33	0.51	Neutral
Socio-cultural	69	2.78	0.40	Neutral

As shown in table 13, it can be concluded that most of the participants considered instructional as the most influential barrier to success in their Thai language learning (3.33), followed by personal barriers (3.04) and socio-cultural barriers (2.78). This can indicate that they recognized these obstacles as neutral in the same rage of mean score between 2.6 - 3.3.

4.3 Barriers that affect students' attitude in Thai language learning

Table 14 Barriers that affect students' attitude in Thai language learning

Type of barriers	Personal barriers	Instructional barriers	Socio-Cultural barriers
N	69	69	69
Means	3.26	3.23	3.10
Level	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral

Table 14 indicates that the students' attitude towards personal barriers and instructional barriers in Thai language learning was close to equal although the average mean score of the personal barriers is slightly higher than instructional barriers at 0.03. Socio-cultural, however, is the least problematic barrier that affects students' attitude in learning Thai (3.10).

4.4 THE RESULT FROM THE INTERVIEWS

The objective of the interview is to find information pertaining to experience related to the topic of barriers in learning Thai. The data were drawn from the interviews with 3 students (2 females and 1 male). The interviewees were between 13 and 14 years old. All of them enrolled in a Thai as a foreign language course in the academic year 2015. Each interview lasted for about 15 minutes. It took place in the interviewees' classroom. All interviews were conducted in English. Three of the respondents were interviewed in order to gain more in depth information regarding their perspective towards barriers to success of Thai language learning. **Table 1** summarizes the profiles of the interviewees.

Table 1: A profile of the interviewees

Pseudonym	**Gender**	**Age**	**Nationality**	**Thai Grade obtained**
K.B.	Female	14	Indian	A
N.S	Female	13	Japanese	B
S.H.	Male	14	British	C

The researcher started the interviews with general questions in order to develop a rapport with the interviewees, their points of view were asked on some core issues. All interviews were audio-recorded. Thai language barriers issues including attitude of the interviewees towards the Thai language course were clearly explained before the interview.

4.4.1 The most challenging obstacle to Thai language learning

In terms of the most influence barriers, all of the respondents reported that the greatest obstacle to Thai language learning was the learning environment which is a part of instructional barriers. For example, the distraction from peers and the noise in class. N.S., a student in Thai as a foreign language course, described this in great detail:

"The most obstacles in Thai language is other students, also people around you and social impact. As I am sitting at the back, I can't hear what the teacher says when the other students are talking over," N.S. said. N.S. also clarified that it is hard to focus or listen to the teacher and this leads to misunderstanding of the teacher's explanation.

S.H., a student in a low ability group, also shared a similar perspective.

"The barriers have to be from the class if there are noisy or not. The noisy class can block us from learning. Therefore, the teacher should create a learning environment to motivate the students' learning Thai."

Writing skill was also mentioned by the interviewees as the most problematic problem in Thai language learning.

K.B., who is Indian and was born in Thailand but cannot write Thai, shared her point of view that the writing skill is too hard for her as she never learned the Thai alphabet so when she go outside and see the words that are written in Thai, she does not recognize them.

K.B. said "Even though I was born in Thailand and my family also teaches me Thai but no one teaches me how to write Thai. I think my major problem is writing. It's because I never wrote Thai, I know how to read Thai but in Thai, there are different sounds. It's like for tor-ta-harn (ท), there are 2 sounds so it's kind of confusing if you never learn how to write Thai before."

S.H., a 14 years old British student who came to Thailand when he was 9 years old also shared a point of view as the following:

"When I am writing the words, I don't know the definition of those words. Writing is the hardest skill and it's hard to remember so that sometimes I keep forgetting them."

However, most of the respondents also suggested that besides listening and speaking skill, teachers should include writing skill in Thai courses in order to make them familiar with Thai words and Thai writing.

Moreover, one of the interviewees agreed that learning materials can be important barriers. "We have only the booklet and worksheets in each unit, we don't have the Thai booklet or any other learning materials," said S.H.

4.4.2 The key factors causing positive or negative attitude towards Thai language learning

This is the question that attracted all the informants to give detailed answers. The informants talked about what causes their positive and negative attitudes towards the Thai language.

In reference to the students' attitude towards learning and using Thai language, most of the students mentioned that the importance of Thai language learning and the usefulness of Thai language was regarded as motivation and created a positive attitude towards Thai language learning. Most of the respondents agreed that they have motivation in learning Thai for communication purposes. For example, they think that Thai language can help them live and communicate with other people in the host community. Other informants pointed out that the need to communicate in Thai language creates a positive attitude towards Thai language.

K.B. said, "Personally, I think Thai language is pretty cool, I love the language and culture. I live in Thailand and it's like you need Thai when you go out so it just makes me feel that I should learn Thai more so I can communicate with Thai people in many places like hospitals, companies, and restaurants. Moreover, it's useful in their future if I want to live and work in Thailand."

Along with the positive attitude that most interviewees express, there were some students who had less positive attitude towards Thai language learning as they mentioned that Thai language is not important to learn since they can speak English and that they might not need Thai in the future.

S.H pointed out that “It’s hard to concentrate in Thai because it’s foreign and it’s less important to you and you don’t know why you are learning it. You don’t need it outside class as long as you can use English to communicate with others. In the future, I won’t need Thai language anyway because I will move back to my country.”

Moreover, differences in background knowledge of the language can be the factor that distracts learners from the language as some students have less background knowledge while some students know more than what the teacher teaches.

S.H. mentioned that “Because the other people have been learning Thai a lot longer than I have and it’s hard to keep up with them when they know a lot more than I do. Moreover, I don’t use Thai quite often, I only use Thai when I go back home by BTS.”

“I have learned Thai since I was year 1 in the school while other students have less schema of Thai language than me so I feel like getting bored of the topic that I’ve already known. The teacher should challenge students more,” N.S. said

4.4.3 Effective way to help improve Thai language.

First of all, the interviewees had the common idea that the reason why their Thai is weak is because they did not get the chance to use Thai language quite often as they can speak English. All of the respondents think that getting themselves exposed to language and practicing speaking Thai with the native speaker can help them improve their Thai language. Moreover, they also suggested that they should spend more time learning Thai and some students also suggested a longer period of learning the Thai subject.

“To improve, I obviously have to use the language more often so probably say when I go out to buy stuffs I can speak Thai and try to use my Thai intense,” said K.B

“The effective way that could help me to improve Thai language is giving more time to Thai so maybe we could extend a period of Thai so that we have more time to practice learning the language more and also we should try to practice the language with the native speaker,” said N.S

“I think we need to practice the language more often, getting ourselves exposed to the language as much as possible and talk with your Thai-native friends” said S.H.

The overall finding of the study will be summarized and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, a summary of the study and its findings will be presented, followed by discussions and recommendations for further study.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Objective

The study aimed to investigate the barriers that non-Thai students confront in learning Thai as a foreign language and whether these barriers affect the students' attitude towards Thai foreign language learning. In addition, this study also asked the learners' perspective in order to minimize the barriers to learning Thai as a foreign language.

Subject

The subject of the study were 69 key stage 3 students from year 7 to year 9 who study Thai as a foreign language in the academic year 2015 at one of the international schools in Thailand at least 1 period per week. There were two types of instruments, a five point scale questionnaire which consisted of 4 parts and a one to one interview. The procedures were carried out with 80 questionnaires which were distributed to the respondents, and a total of 69 replies were received. After the data collection, the obtained data was analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 to investigate the means, percentage, and frequency of the three barriers related to Thai language learning. After the questionnaire was distributed, an interview was conducted with 3 interviewees who were currently enrolled in Thai subject to seek additional information.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The data presented are discussed in 2 sections: the result from the questionnaires and the interview results.

5.2.1 The results from the questionnaire

5.2.1.1 Personal information of the respondents

Based on the first part of the questionnaire, the respondents consisted of 69 students who were 11 to 15 years old. Most of the respondents are female. The majority of the participants have studied Thai for 1-2 years and 34.8% of the respondents have obtained grade B.

Regarding Thai language proficiency, More than 60% of the students claimed that Thai language is important, whereas 30.4% of the students pointed out that Thai language is not important. The situation that the respondents use Thai language to communicate in daily life the most is shopping. Some students use Thai language to communicate for transportation.

Most of the subjects use Thai language everyday followed by once a week. The majority rate their preference regarding Thai language above the moderate level while 36.1% of the respondents rate their preference regarding Thai language lower than moderate.

According to the respondents' background information, it can be seen that the respondents' opinion towards Thai language is neutral. In spite of the fact that the majority of the respondents view Thai language as important, with the percentage at 60%, however, to some respondents, Thai language is not important. This is probably because Thai language is not their first language and that they do not use the language in their daily life. They only use it in Thai class because it is mandatory to learn so this might lead to the personal barriers because the learners lack motivation in the language, which corresponds with the study of Jdetawy (2011), who found that learners are lacking motivation in class since the target language is not their first language.

5.2.1.2. Barriers affecting non-Thai students' performance in learning Thai

In accordance to the first objective of the study aiming to investigate the barriers to success of non-Thai students in learning Thai as a foreign language, the majority of the respondents revealed that the major barriers that they commonly encounter in their Thai language learning is instructional barrier which is related to teacher, curriculum, and the course content. Personal barriers such as motivation, attitude and experience also act as a second influential factor that had an impact on the subjects, followed by socio-cultural barrier which has a slight effect on the students' Thai language learning.

This result corresponds to the study of Lily Thamzil Thahir (1994), as presented in "Barriers to success EFL learning in eastern Indonesian junior high school." The result of the study revealed that the barriers that the Indonesian EFL students faced under unfavorable learning and teaching circumstances are the curriculum content, discouraging learning environment, teaching strategies, students' lack of motivation and disruptive behavior. Furthermore, Noopong's (2002) study similarly revealed that most of the instructional problems concerning teachers, curricula and textbooks, and student assessment were at a moderate level. Moreover, the result is also parallel to John & Ehow (2011), who remark on difficulties in English language encountered by learners including the quality of the teachers, the school curriculum, and the large class size which was considered an instructional barrier. However, the current result is inconsistent with the study of English teaching problems in Thailand conducted by Sripathum Noom-ura (2013). Sripathum Noom-ura's study claimed that learners' problems were seen at a high level while problems involving teachers, curriculum and textbooks, assessment and other factors contributing to success teaching problems were rated at a moderate level.

According to the results of socio-cultural background factors, the majority of the respondents disagreed with the question in item 3, "My parents try to speak Thai to me and teach me the new Thai words" which indicates that the learners' parents did not provide enough support with their Thai language learning. This is probably because their parents have limited knowledge about Thai as they do not speak Thai so they could not assist in their child's learning. The outcome was also consistent with the study of Rumberger (2001) who claimed that parents' involvement could lead to improvement in a student's language learning.

Moreover, the result also presents the highest mean score in item2 "I do not get used to Thai people and culture" which indicates that Thai culture influence

Another factor related to socio-cultural barrier is the distraction from peers in class, as the participants responded agreed to item 7 "My peers' behavior in class can distract me from my Thai language learning." This corresponds with the finding of Lily Thamzil Thahir (1994), who found that the noise in the large class can cause barriers in listening to the teachers 'explanation.

5.2.1.3 Barriers affecting students' attitude in Thai language learning

Research question two asks which barriers affect students' attitude towards learning Thai language? According to the questionnaire results, the majority of the respondents neutrally think that both personal barriers and instructional barriers had an impact on learners' attitude towards Thai language learning. Both of the two barriers had close to equal mean scores (personal barriers = 3.26; instructional barrier = 3.23). Socio-cultural, however, is the least problematic barrier that affect students' attitude in learning Thai (3.10).

The results from this study show that both learners and instruction had an impact on students' attitude towards the target language in a moderate level. This is similar to many research studies regarding the relationship between learners and attitudes eg. Gardner and MacIntyre G (1993) and Sripathum Noom-ura (2013). Sripathum Noom-ura's (2013) study found that learners themselves are the problematic factors affecting their attitude in their language learning which can block the success of teaching and learning. The studies revealed that the highest problems include students don't have enough practice and students have insufficient knowledge and language skills; these problems derived from the learners themselves. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) also proposed that students' motivation to learn language and attitude towards the community play a vital role in students' attitude and language learning situation.

5.2.2 The results from the interviews

According to the interview results in Chapter 4, it could be seen that the most important barriers that affected students' success in Thai as a foreign language is an instructional barrier, which was the classroom environment. First of all, most of the interviewees strongly agreed that peers distraction and the learning environment in class are the main problems in their learning. The majority of respondents mentioned that noise caused by peers at the back led to lack of clarity in the teachers' explanations. This is also parallel to the study of Lily Thamzil Thahir (1994), who found that the Indonesian students were unable to concentrate on teachers' explanations due to the overcrowding and noise in large classes.

Moreover, the finding revealed that there are other influential problems in language related to writing skill. Most of the interviewees agreed that the writing problem is also

their major barrier as they don't know how to write Thai and it is difficult to remember the words with the letters that they don't recognize. This could be one of the instructional barriers as writing is not included in the Thai language course content. The learners do not have sufficient knowledge about the Thai alphabet and the words written in Thai as the teacher did not teach them. This result also relates to the study of Pawapatcharaudom. (2007) who discovered that the major barriers of English language learning of Thai students derived from the writing skill related to the course content in the school curriculum.

Based on the questionnaire and the interview results, it can be seen that the results from the questionnaire are inconsistent with the interview. According to the questionnaire results, the socio-cultural barriers were seen as the least problematic. However, the interviewees considered the socio-cultural barriers from peers as the most problematic in their Thai language learning. This is probably because the crowded class with a lot of learners makes it hard for the learners to concentrate. Large classes also lead to the teaching problems as the teachers cannot implement a variety of teaching approaches to the students who have different abilities. Regarding this issue, Brown (1994) limits the number of students for communicates language teaching to 12 students for better effectiveness in teaching.

In reference to the students' positive and negative attitude, the results from the interviews revealed that the factor that causes the positive attitude is the importance of Thai language. In particular, some informants mentioned that their desire to communicate with Thai people and their preference towards Thai language are the motivation in learning Thai which can causes the positive attitude towards the language. This result also supports many researchers (e.g. Dodds, 1994; Williams and Burden, 1999). Whitley and Frieze indicated that learning and teaching are the main factors to successful foreign language learning. However, motivation and attitude towards learners play a vital role greater than the role of the teachers. In other words, the teacher alone cannot lead to success in foreign language learning without the students' motivation.

Regarding the factors that cause negative attitude, students' lack of motivation in the target language is the major barrier, as (S.H), one of the interviewees, mentioned that "Thai language is not important and that I will not need Thai in the future as I plan to move back to my country." It is obvious that students were unmotivated because they did not see

the importance for learning the language. This also supports the small project research of Lily Thamzil Thahir (1994) who found that most of the students studied English only because they have to study it. The students were not interested in studying English as they felt it was difficult, which leads to the negative attitude that blocks their learning.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) stated that among important others, the role of teacher is the important factor that influences students' motivation in learning a foreign language. The interviewees mentioned that the teaching methods used by the teachers did not motivate them enough. Moreover, the teachers used Thai with some English words while they are teaching because they thought that students are not familiar with the meaning of the sentences. As a result, the students were not used to the Thai words and they make a slow progression. This perhaps could be one of the reasons the survey results point out that the students think they did not make progress in learning Thai even though they have been learning Thai for many years.

Apart from lack of motivation, the interviewees also mentioned problems involving the differences in background knowledge in that the curriculum was not designed to differentiate students with different abilities. The interviewees pointed out that the high ability students did not have a fair opportunity to learn much. On the other hand, the weak students feel lost because other students were better than they were so they felt they could not catch up with their peers which leads to the lack of motivation in learning.

5.2.3 Overcoming the barriers

Regarding research question 3: From the learners' perspective, what can the learners do to overcome the barriers to learning Thai as a foreign language? The interviewees have agreed that environment is seen as an effective motivator to learn Thai language. If the environment where learners spend most of their time is conducive to Thai learning, it could encourage them to learn. According to the interviews, most of the interviewees mentioned that they did not have any opportunity to practice Thai language as they live in an English speaking community so they think that getting themselves exposed to the native speakers could help them learn the language more. This corresponded to d'Anglejan (1978), who states that one of the causes for failure of language acquisition is usually the lack of access to native speakers due to restricted social interaction. This is also

similar to Brumfit's (1984:152) theory which claimed that exposure to the target language could help the learners with the language acquisition

5.3 CONCLUSION

This study has revealed the barriers to non-Thai students' performance in learning Thai as a foreign language in an international school as perceived by key stage 3 students from year 7 to year 9.The findings confirm the theoretical point that personal barriers, instructional barriers and socio-cultural barriers are the important barriers to foreign language performance. The conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above

The students believe that they find it difficult to learn Thai as a foreign language because they have to learn under unpleasant circumstances, unfavorable instructional methods and in an unsupportive environment. The major barriers that they are confronting can be categorized into three components; instructional barrier is a component that plays an important role in their language learning, followed by personal barrier and socio-cultural barrier. Moreover, the study also points out that personal barrier is the primary resource that affects their attitude in Thai language learning while instructional barriers also had an impact on students' attitude. However, socio-cultural barriers had the least influence on students' attitude in learning Thai as a foreign language.

The findings imply prompt action is needed in facilitating cooperation and collaboration among learners, teachers, curriculum developers and parents to mitigate the barriers to success of non-Thai students learning Thai as a foreign language.

5.4 RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the recommendations of the study are as follows:

5.4.1 The study showed that personal barriers, instructional barriers and socio-cultural barriers are the main barriers to students' language learning. Therefore, the schools, teachers, parents, and the government should cooperate to support international students in Thai language usage improvement.

5.4.2 Qualified teachers are the main requirement to improve the quality of teaching and learning Thai as a foreign language as the teachers should be able to teach the students with different abilities and design the lessons focused on the individual learners with different abilities and find the teaching strategies to motivate the students.

5.4.3 Reading and writing should be included as a part of the course content in order to help the students understand the language in all 4 skills.

5.4.4. As the researcher is a teacher of the respondents, the respondents might have responded in moderate levels leading to deviations in the results. The learners might not express their real opinions towards the questionnaire. Therefore, students from different international schools should be examined in further study.

5.4.5 The current study presents only the learners' perspectives on barriers to their foreign language learning. Therefore, the teachers' perspective on barriers to success in foreign language teaching should be investigated in a further study.

5.4.6 This study only presents the barriers to Thai language which might not have implications to other languages. Further studies should examine more theoretical frameworks that can be apply to another context.

5.4.7 A follow-up study should also be carried out to evaluate any proposed Thai as a foreign language course in terms of the content and appropriateness in order to determine whether the course is best suited for the learners' needs.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Barriers affect non-Thai students' performance in learning Thai as a foreign language at the International School in Thailand

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This questionnaire is a part of research paper as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts, Language institute Thammasat University. This questionnaire aims to gather information about the barriers affect non-Thai students' performance in learning Thai as a foreign language at the International School in academic year of 2015. Your response will be strictly kept confidential and will be used for the research purpose only.

The questionnaire includes four parts:
Part I : General information
Part II : Learner's barrier or personal barriers
Part III: Instructional barriers
Part IV : Socio-Cultural barriers

Your cooperation in completing questionnaire is highly appreciated

Part I: Background information

Instructions: Please read the following statements, fill the answer or mark X to the answer that most reflects your experience, feelings and opinion.

1. Gender:

a. Male b. Female

2. How old are you?

_____

3. What is your nationality?

_____

4. How long have you been study Thai as a foreign language?

_____ years

5. What is your grade in Thai subject?

a. A b. B c. C d. D

6. How do you rate your overall proficiency in Thai compare with other students in current class?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Need to improve

7. How important is it for you to learning Thai?

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Not so important
- ☐ Not important at all

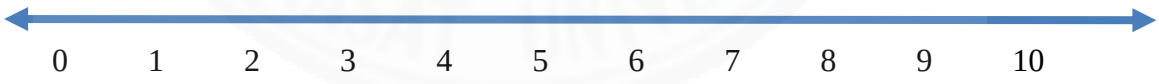
8. In which communicative functions and situations do you use Thai?

- ☐ shopping
- ☐ asking for information
- ☐ buying food
- ☐ chatting with Thai friends
- ☐ studying in class (all courses)
- ☐ talking to your family members
- ☐ listening to news/ TV program in Thailand
- ☐ Others (specify): _____

9. How often do you use Thai language to communicate in your daily life?

- ☐ Everyday
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Others (specify): _____

10. How much do you like leaning Thai? (from the scale of 0 – 10 ; o = the least ,10 = the most)



APPENDIX B

Part II: Learner's barrier

Please tick (✓) in the box for the answer that you think is most suitable. (5 = strongly agree , 4 = agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 1 = strongly disagree)

Statement	Strongly agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1
1. Thai language is fun and interesting.					
2. I feel nervous and anxious when I speak Thai.					
3. I don't pay much attention in learning Thai because I can speak English with other people.					
4. I learn Thai because I want to communicate with people in my host country.					
5. It's unnecessary to learn Thai because I can use English to communicate with others.					
6. I think learning Thai is useful in my everyday life.					
7. I will not need Thai in the future.					
8. I study Thai because I plan to stay and live here.					
9. I like to listening and watching Thai movies.					
10. I do not have enough Thai language practice.					
11. I think my learning habits can affect the attitude in learning Thai.					

Part III: **Instructional barriers**

Statement	Strongly agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1
1. My teacher and school always encourage me to learn Thai.					
2. I want to have a Thai language learning trip in order to practice my language with local people.					
3. Teaching Methodologies used in class cannot motivate me to learn.					
4. The topic learned in class can be used in everyday life.					
5. The teaching methods in class can motivate me to learn Thai.					
6. The school should provide more time to learn Thai.					
7. My learning materials are not good enough.					
8. I find that my ability in Thai has not improved after I have learned Thai in school for many years.					
9. My instructor always speaks Thai and provides the students with feedback.					
10. The school should involve Thai reading and writing skills in the curriculum.					
11. I think the instruction in the school affects my attitudes towards Thai subject.					

Part IV: Socio-Cultural barriers

Statement	Strongly agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1
1. I study Thai hard because my parents are very supportive of me.					
2. I do not get used to Thai people and culture.					
3. My parents try to speak Thai to me and teach me the new Thai words.					
4. I feel uncomfortable when I have to talk with Thai native speakers.					
5. I always learn new words and sentences from my Thai friends.					
6. My parents pay attention to my learning Thai language subject.					
7. My peers' behavior in class can distract me from my Thai language learning.					
8. I always talk to Thai native speakers to develop my Thai language skill whenever I have a chance.					
9. I find it hard to adapt myself to the Thai community.					
10. I rarely use Thai language to					

communicate with local people.					
11. I think that my family, peers and community can affect my positive attitudes towards Thai subject.					
12. I usually quiet when I have to talk to people who can't speak English.					

BIOGRAPHY

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