PERCEIVED OBSTACLES TO FLUENCY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH AMONG MA STUDENTS IN BANGKOK

BY

MS. KANOKPORN SUNTORNSRIPITAK

AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH FOR CAREERS
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2015
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ENTITLED

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AMONG MA STUDENTS IN BANGKOK**

was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in English for Careers

on July 3, 2016

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Independent Study Paper Title	PERCEIVED OBSTACLES TO FLUENCY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH AMONG MA STUDENTS IN BANGKOK
Author	Ms. Kanokporn Suntornsripitak
Degree	Master of Arts
Major Field/Faculty/University	English for Careers Language Institute Thammasat University
Independent Study Paper Advisor	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sucharat Rimkeeratikul
Academic Years	2015

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok and to find out methods they plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English. The participants were 57 second-year students at a public university pursuing the degree of Master of Arts in an international program. The pilot study was done before collecting data. Data was collected using the survey method with closed-ended questions and a 5-point Likert Scale to rate the respondents' perception levels. The data was input and analyzed by using SPSS to calculate frequency, percentage, mean scores and standard deviation. The findings indicated that the respondents' largest perceived obstacle to fluency in speaking English was vocabulary knowledge, followed by grammatical knowledge. The results also showed that the respondents chose two major methods to use to improve their fluency in speaking English 1) finding a job that allows them to use English speaking skills more, and 2) practicing English speaking with Thai and foreign friends, and watching movies in English with subtitles.
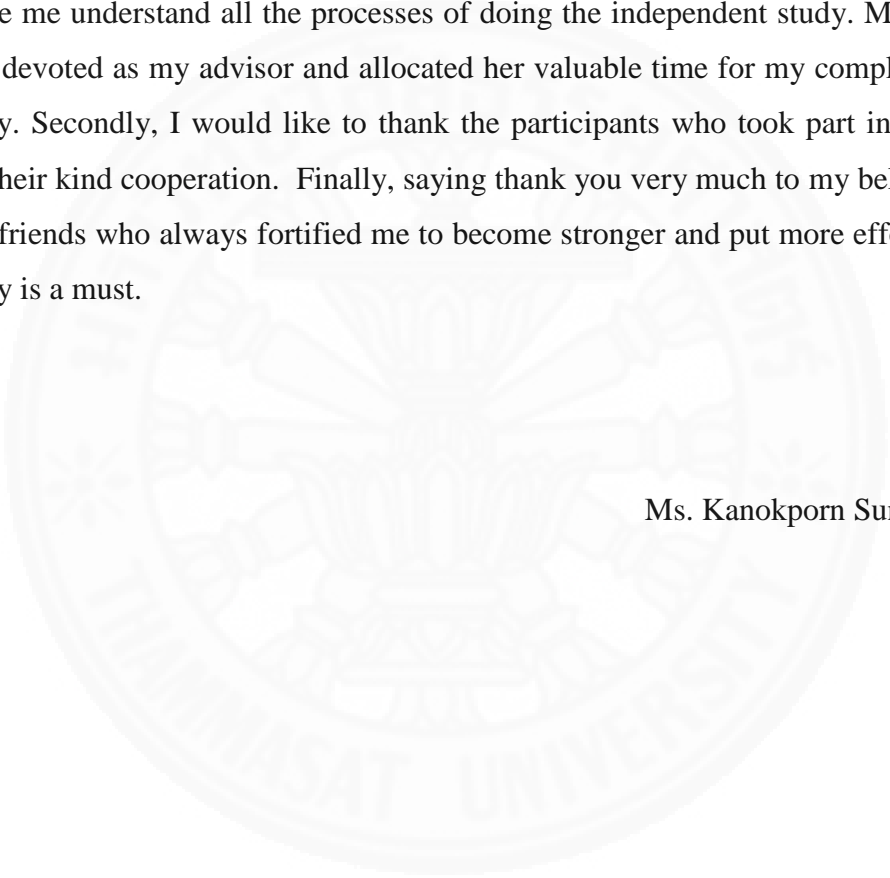
Keywords: perceived obstacles, speaking skills, fluency in speaking English

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For all the kind support from my advisor, participants, friends, and family in successfully completing my independent study, I really appreciate very much the aforesaid people.

Firstly, I would like to express my deepest thankfulness to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sucharat Rimkeeratikul, my advisor, who always gave me useful suggestions and made me understand all the processes of doing the independent study. Moreover, she was devoted as my advisor and allocated her valuable time for my completion of this study. Secondly, I would like to thank the participants who took part in my success for their kind cooperation. Finally, saying thank you very much to my beloved family and friends who always fortified me to become stronger and put more efforts into this study is a must.

Ms. Kanokporn Suntornsripitak

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is composed of the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, definition of terms, scope of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the study.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

All countries have their own languages. It is widely accepted that the English language is very important and necessary for people all over the world, as English is used as an international language for communications among themselves. According to Maps of the World's report updated on November 1, 2014, the top 10 English speaking countries in the world were ranked as a percentage of total population speaking in English in each country, consisting of the United States (95.81%), India (11.38%), The Philippines (92.58%), Nigeria (53.34%), United Kingdom (97.74%), Germany (56%), Canada (85.18%), France (36%), Australia (97.03%), and Italy (29%).

In Thailand, people use English as a second language and English has played a prominent role in various fields such as business, economics, and education. Of all four English language skills, speaking is regarded as one of the most important and requires accuracy and fluency while communicating with other people. In line with Nunan (1998), speaking is considered as the most major skill in learning a language and ability to carry out a conversation will bring about success. One of the reasons why people must learn the English language is that they want to speak English fluently in order to accomplish effective communications. As a result, they put effort into developing their speaking skills i.e. learning grammar rules and new words, practicing pronunciation, etc. However, people may face frustrations that can be perceived by them while learning to speak the English language. Those issues can obstruct learners from English speaking fluency. To deal with this problem, learners should observe and understand what obstacles will hinder them from fluency in speaking English. Simultaneously, in the area of education, students are the same as the people mentioned above -- they hope they can learn to speak English fluently in the class. As Brown (2001) has shown, students should use correct language in speaking English naturally in order to convey

the meaning and expression without taking many pauses. In order to serve students in learning English, and to build students' confidence in using English for their careers or further education, many universities have provided an appropriate English language curriculum for students and developed a variety of English courses to fulfill their four English language skills, especially in speaking.

The researcher is one of the students who have been pursuing a degree of the Master of Arts in English for Careers at a public university in Bangkok. This course has been taught in the English language by both non-native and native English-speaking teachers. In the class, the researcher has found that some students can speak English well, but some have yet to become fluent. For instance, when someone was asked a question, he or she could not respond to the teacher quickly. The researcher presumes that the student is unable to understand what the teacher said or his or her vocabulary knowledge is limited. As such, there may be problems or obstacles that block the students' English speaking fluency. Consequently, the present study is conducted to investigate the perceived obstacles to English speaking fluency among MA students and to find out what methods they plan to use to improve their English speaking fluency. The results will help students understand their problems regarding why they cannot speak English fluently and benefit teachers to seek the methods for developing the teaching curriculum so as to strengthen students to achieve fluency in speaking English.

1.2   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.2.1   What are perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok?

1.2.2   What methods do they plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English?

1.3   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is as follows:

1.3.1   To investigate perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok.

1.3.2   To find out methods they plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definition of the terms of this study is as follows:

Perceived obstacles: Students' recognition and understanding of problems that block them from fluency in speaking English.

Speaking: The action of conveying information or expressing one's thoughts and feelings in spoken language.

Fluency: Speaking easily and quickly without stopping or taking a lot of pauses.

MA: The degree of Master of Arts in an international program emphasizing on English language studies at a public university in Bangkok.

Students: Second-year students pursuing the degree of Master of Arts in an international program emphasizing English language studies at a public university in Bangkok.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research is limited to studying the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok. The participants in this study were 57 second-year students. A questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used to collect data in the third and fourth week of March 2016.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study of the perceived obstacles to fluency in a language among MA students in Bangkok is important for the following reasons:

1.6.1   The findings of this study will benefit a public university and other universities to develop their English courses.

1.6.2   The results will be useful for students to know exactly why they cannot speak English fluently and how to plan to improve themselves in English speaking fluency.

1.6.3   The study will help teachers to clearly understand what perceived obstacles affect students' English speaking fluency and create or design course materials or methodology to meet students' needs.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of the perceived obstacles to fluency in a language among MA students in Bangkok is divided into five chapters as follows:

1.7.1 Chapter one includes the background of the study, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the definition of terms, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the organization of the study.

1.7.2 Chapter two deals with the literature reviews, consisting of theories of speaking in a second language, the perceived obstacles to English speaking fluency, and relevant studies.

1.7.3 Chapter three presents the research methodology, which consists of participants, research instruments, pilot study, and procedures.

1.7.4 Chapter four reports the findings of the study.

1.7.5 Chapter five provides the discussion of the findings, the conclusion, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several factors have caused students to be unable to speak English fluently although they have learned English for years. This chapter reviews the literature in three areas: (1) theories of speaking in a second language, (2) perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English, and (3) relevant studies.

2. 1   THEORIES OF SPEAKING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

2.1.1   Definition of speaking

There are many definitions of speaking. Several researchers define the meaning of speaking in various ways as follows:

Speaking is a way to convey information or express one's thoughts and feelings in a spoken language. Speaking refers to an interactive process of generating meaning that deals with producing, receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997).

Ur (1996) mentions that speaking is likely to be the most essential skill used either for business or pleasure, so people try to talk with speakers of that language. Bygate (1987) explains that interactive skills involve people making decisions about communication while keeping desired relations with others.

In Vallette's (1997) words, speaking is regarded as a social skill. As communication is considered the goal of second language acquisition, the development of correct speaking habits is a focus. Speaking not only engages one in pronunciation and intonation, but also creates one's understanding. Moreover, speaking needs correct and idiomatic use of the target language.

2.1.2   Components of speaking

Students who learn to speak English need to know and understand the key components of speaking which consist of accuracy and fluency in a language. These factors can help students improve their speaking.

Weir (1993) points out that developing speaking skills has to focus on fluency, appropriateness, accuracy and range. Fluency is defined as smoothness of doing something. A speaker is able to use communication strategies easily when he or she encounters difficulties. Appropriateness comprises politeness, right timing when responding, the use of proper language in requesting clarification and expressing disagreement. Accuracy requires both intelligibility and grammar. Range means adequate and varied vocabulary and structures.

Practicing is necessary for speaking skills, like the proverb which states that practice makes perfect. Students must practice to speak English as often as possible so that they can speak English fluently and accurately. For learning to speak English, learners are required to know some vital components, which is what aspect influences how well people speak English. According to Syakur (1987), speaking is a complicated skill dealing with at least the elements of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency.

2.1.3   Fluency in a language

One factor that obstructs students from good speaking is the lack of language fluency. Speaking fluency is one of the major components in second language learning. As a result, students need to understand it and speak fluently in order to express their speaking proficiency. Many researchers have an explanation of the meaning of fluency as follows:

Fluency is considered as similar to overall speaking proficiency. Fillmore (1979) states four ways that speakers may be fluent. They must have the ability to speak with few pauses, the ability to speak consistently using semantically dense sentences with few unnecessary words, the ability to know what to say in various contexts and unfamiliar situations, and the ability to create speech for communication. According to Cohen (1994), speakers should have fluency in the language and use vocabulary and structure in suitable situations.

For Beardsmore (1972), oral fluency needs communicative competence to formulate more than one sentence with accurate and proper pronunciation in real time. Adding details of sentence structures, choosing and inserting words or vocabulary are required as well. He states that each sentence has to be combined into connected

speech. He explains the specific criteria for oral fluency, consisting of fluency (ability to show speakers' communicative proficiency and to speak naturally and continuously), accuracy (structural and lexical), relevance, intelligibility, pronunciation, variety of structures and words.

Fluency is a way that students will be able to speak easily and flowing when compared to native speakers. They also give more explanations of fluency at four levels. They are 1) stopping, slow speech, noticeable pauses between words, use many attempts, 2) uneven speaking, some noticeable pauses between words, seems to require effort, sometimes stopping, tend to but not necessarily have slower speech rate than level three, 3) relatively smooth and easy speech but speech rate slower than native or recognizably non-native, and 4) relatively smooth, native-like speech rate (Day & Shapson, 1987).

2.2   PERCEIVED OBSTACLES TO FLUENCY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH

Perceived obstacles refer to students' recognition and understanding of problems that block them from speaking English fluently. Students who learn to speak the English language unavoidably experience the same difficulties. Regarding this, there are many barriers that have an impact on students' fluency in speaking English in the class such as the knowledge of vocabulary and the knowledge of grammar, pronunciation, listening ability, and anxiety in speaking English.

2.2.1   Knowledge of vocabulary

It is accepted that vocabulary knowledge is one of the major factors for successful communication in language and many researchers have similar definitions about vocabulary.

For Diamond and Gutlohn (2006), vocabulary is defined as the knowledge of words and their meanings. They say that if learners lack a strong vocabulary base first, they will not be able to accomplish understanding and use of language. So, learners should be able to remember words, and know their meanings.

Wilkins (1972) states that "...while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." This means that a student cannot communicate effectively because of their weakness of vocabulary knowledge.

On the contrary, lacking knowledge of grammar, he/she can communicate, even though not effectively.

Moreover, vocabulary helps students produce language. According to Hubbard et al. (1983), a student who knows a large number of word meanings can express accurate meanings as he/she wants to. Similarly, Cardenas (2001) indicates that vocabulary is used as an important tool to find out how much a student can communicate successfully.

Stewick (1972) mentions that vocabulary knowledge is one of the most important things in learning a new language. Students who succeed in learning a foreign language are required to have the ability to know the sound system for speaking clearly and understandably, use correct grammar, and adequate vocabulary.

The fundamental unit in communication is the word. Knowing the estimated 1,000 most frequently used words will satisfy three-quarters of communicative needs. Two methods to memorize new vocabulary; jotting down the new words and translating them into the mother language, and guessing the meaning from the context and using a dictionary to find out the different meanings of unfamiliar words (Hurd, Lewis, & Pleines, 2005).

2.2.2 Knowledge of grammar

Grammar is one of the key components of speaking English for language learners. Many students who lack grammar knowledge may feel reluctant to speak English with others. In other words, limited grammar forms can make a speaker less confident while speaking English. Therefore, the researchers illustrate similar ways of knowledge of grammar as follows:

Hurd et al. (2005) indicate that grammar knowledge is very important as well, because grammar is a combination of words into a larger form and a sentence. Thus, users have to mainly focus on the grammatical structure so as to convey the correct meaning of what they say because grammar has an effect on meaning.

Additionally, Kianiparsa and Vali (2010) mention that lack of grammatical structure knowledge is one the obstacles of language learners as they will be unable to understand each other when communicating in a foreign language without grammatical rules. Apart from the speaker and the listener, messages come from

words combined by using nouns and verbs, and correct grammatical structures are necessary for communication.

Students' needs to arrange a correct sentence to communicate are in line with Heaton (1978), who suggested students must have the ability to manipulate structure and discriminate appropriate grammatical forms in appropriate ones. Learners have to learn correct grammar rules for use in oral and written forms.

2.2.3 Pronunciation

Pronunciation refers to producing the sounds of speech, including utterance, stress, and intonation in response to some standard of rightness or acceptability.

Gerard (2000) mentions that pronunciation is the phonological process which enables students to generate clearer spoken language. It involves grammatical elements and principles that determine how sounds vary and patterns in a language. Pronunciation consists of phonemes and supra segmental features. A speaker who fails to pronounce accurately in a range of phonemes has difficulty to make other people understand what he or she wants to communicate.

According to Varasarin (2007), students with accurate and clear pronunciations can make it easier for people to understand what he or she wants to communicate, and pronunciation is considered as essential for language learning.

Additionally, Liu (2007) points out that if students' pronunciation is poor, others will be unable to clearly understand what they said. So mainly focusing on this linguistic aspect like pronunciation is also vital for students. Mispronunciation can become students' obstacle to speak.

2.2.4 Listening ability

Speaking is always closely related to listening, therefore for people who learn to speak the English language it is necessary to practice listening skills at the same time. Good listening will be able to help learners improve their English speaking more effectively.

Doff (1998) states that if we develop listening skills, speaking skills can be developed. To achieve successful communication, students have to understand what is said to them.

In Krashen et al.'s (1983) view, competent speaking is combined with listening. Speakers can speak fluently in a second language after they have received productive and understandable input.

Shumin (2002) indicates that when one person speaks, the other will pay attention to what the speaker said through the listening process. As a matter of fact, every speaker becomes both a listener and a speaker. A person cannot respond to the speaker if he or she does not understand what is said. Thus, this shows speaking is closely related to listening.

2.2.5 Anxiety in speaking English

Anxiety is regarded as a very negative factor in learning a second language or a foreign language, especially in learning to speak the language. That is students feel nervous, apprehensive or worry that disturbs their speaking performance either before or while practicing English speaking in class.

In the explanations of anxiety, there is a difference in meanings between general anxiety and specific anxiety. General anxiety is part of the personality of individuals who feel worried in various situations, while specific anxiety means one's anxiety which occurs only in specific circumstances, for instance language learning. Additionally, when anxiety is limited to language teaching or learning, it is categorized as specific anxiety. Broadly speaking, anxiety means individual feelings of stress, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with a stimulation of the autonomic nervous system, whereas anxiety is a major barrier to conquer when people are learning to speak another language (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) say that students with anxiety will face the problem of learning the language in class, resulting in ineffective performances. Consequently, they do not want to participate voluntarily in class because of nervousness, apprehension, and even fearfulness. With such conditions, worried students have no chance to practice the language. Thus, anxiety has become the major obstacle in developing language skills, particularly in speaking. They also tend to make more mistakes and fail to perform well in speaking skills when they are nervous. For MacIntyre (1999), language anxiety is the worry and negative emotional reaction

stimulated when learning or using a second language. The mentioned definitions appear to be widely accepted by many researchers.

2.3   RELEVANT STUDIES

There have been a number of studies investigating the obstacles students recognize when speaking a second language, particularly in the English language, and that obstruct them from fluent speaking.

Jindathai (2015) conducted the study of the main causes of Thai students' English speaking problems among engineering students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology (TNI). The 154 first- and second-year students in the first semester of the 2013 academic year were selected for this study. The research used self-complied questionnaires to collect data which was later analyzed by frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The main causes at a moderate level of the problem were management in teaching and learning English, exposure to English, and personality. Meanwhile motivation and attitudes were at a low level.

The study by Ritthira and Chiramanee (2014) explored the problems and negative factors affecting the development of English speaking and techniques to improve such skill among Thai undergraduate students affected by the opening of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. The participants of this study were 50 third-year students in five fields at Prince of Songkla University: Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Engineering and Accountancy. They used a questionnaire, speaking scores and interviews as research tools. The findings showed students were worried about speaking English and afraid to speak English. Other obstacles were insufficient vocabulary, lack of oral practice with native speakers, and avoiding English speaking courses. Most students improved English speaking by watching movies in English and listening to songs in English.

Khamprated (2012) studied the problems and causes of English listening and speaking among the third-year private vocational school students who were in the second semester of the 2011 academic year. She used a questionnaire as a research instrument and the data was analyzed afterwards by percentages, mean scores, standard deviation, and the level of problems experienced by the students. In terms of listening, the findings showed that students faced the problems of speakers' different

accents and fast speaking. Regarding speaking, their limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge made them nervous and worried about speaking English. The students reported their low ability of pronunciation and fear of making mistakes when speaking in front of the class.

In addition, Lukitasari (2008) aimed to seek the students' strategies to overcome the problems of speaking in English class. The population in this study was the first semester students of Muhammadiyah University of Malang in Indonesia. The results showed that the students faced speaking problems such as inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation and mother tongue use. In addition, he found that students did not understand the three components of speaking: vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation that made them ineffective at communication.

Akram (2013) investigated the problems affecting English speaking and sought suggestions for improving English speaking of graduate students at the Islamia University, Bahawalpur. The 400 students at the Islamia University, Bahawalpur were selected randomly. He collected data by using a questionnaire, and analyzed it by mean scores and percentage. The findings suggested that a compulsory subject and some extra classes of speaking English language may be provided. Teachers may give students the lecture in English, motivate them to be more confident in speaking, and use various teaching methods and techniques in developing students' speaking skills. However, students should speak English both inside and outside the classroom.

Assefa (2010) studied the major factors affecting students' speaking skills both in and out of the classrooms. The 90 students and 6 teachers from the sample schools were randomly selected for this study. A questionnaire, interview, and advanced classroom observations were used to collect data. The findings indicated that students had insufficient appropriate materials such as text books, audio/video recorded cassettes and appropriate classrooms to practice speaking. Furthermore, other factors were inadequate practice of speaking, limited grammar and vocabulary knowledge, psychological obstacles, cultural background, teaching methodology, willingness and proficiency of teachers.

Bozorgian (2012) examined the relationship of listening skill with other language skills. The results of his study indicate a close correlation between listening

comprehension and language proficiency. He said that the higher the listening score, the better the speaking score.

Gan (2012) aimed to identify the English speaking problems of English as a second language. The participants were students at tertiary teacher training in Hong Kong. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data. It was found that lack of adequate opportunities to speak English in class, lack of focusing on language development in the curriculum, and a poor environment for speaking English outside the class were the students' perceived problems. According to the results of the study, the effectiveness of the knowledge and pedagogy based ESL teacher training curriculum was raised as a question. They also indicated that the language improvement element in the current teacher preparation program was needed.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is designed to address the two main research questions 1) what are the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok?, and 2) what methods do they plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English?

3.1   PATICIPANTS

The participants of this study were 57 MA second-year students in the second semester of the 2015 academic year at a public university in Bangkok.

3.2   RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The data was collected by a questionnaire to determine the perceived obstacles that impede the students' English speaking fluency, and to find out what methods they plan to improve their speaking fluency. The questionnaire is divided into three parts and formulated as closed-ended questions and a 5-point Likert scale.

Part I: Demographic information of the respondents

In the first part of this questionnaire, there were questions regarding the general information of the respondents asking about gender, age, and most current GPA (Grade Point Average).

Part II: Perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English

In the second part, the respondents were asked to specify the perceived obstacles that block their English speaking fluency such as the knowledge of grammar, knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation, listening ability, and language anxiety.

A 5-point Likert Scale is used to measure the level of perception in each question with the scoring scale as follows:

Strongly agree	=	5 points
Agree	=	4 points
Uncertain	=	3 points
Disagree	=	2 points
Strongly disagree	=	1 points

The formula below is taken to show the calculation of score range in order to interpret the mean score from each item in the questionnaire.

$$\text{Range} = \frac{\text{maximum} - \text{minimum}}{\text{Range}} = \frac{5-1}{5} = 0.8$$

Mean Range	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Very high
3.41 – 4.20	High
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate
1.81 – 2.60	Low
1.00 – 1.80	Very low

Part III: Methods students plan to use to improve fluency in speaking English

In the last part, the respondents were required to answer the closed-ended questions about methods they plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English.

3.3   PILOT STUDY

In order to test the accuracy of the questionnaire, three sets of the questionnaire were distributed to MA second-year students as a pilot study in the third and fourth week of March 2016. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire so as to identify ambiguities, uncommon terms, and statements. After

the pilot study was done, the questionnaire was revised before using it as the instrument for this study. The corrections were as follows:

1)   In the instructions of Parts I, II and III, a mark was changed from (x) to (✓), as the respondents were familiar with (✓).

2)   In Part II, item 10 was revised for better understanding. It was changed from "When speaking, you fail to observe the subject-verb agreement rule and usually end up using "do" when the subject is "he" or "she" to "When speaking, you fail to observe the subject-verb agreement rule. For example, "**He stay** at home" instead of "**He stays** at home."

3)   In Part III, some statements were revised and added in order to increase the choices for the respondents.

3.4   PROCEDURES

In this section, the following items were the process for carrying out the study.

3.4.1   Research design

The study was a survey research using closed-ended questions to investigate the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA second-year students at a public university in the second semester of the 2015 academic year.

3.4.2   Data collection

After the pilot study, questionnaires were directly distributed to each respondent at the university to complete in April 2016. The researcher waited for each respondent to finish filling out the questionnaires.

3.4.3   Data analysis

After collecting the data, it was input and analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to calculate frequency, percentage, mean scores, and standard deviation. The findings were discussed to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analysis which was designed to answer the research questions: 1) what are the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok, and 2) what methods do they plan to improve their fluency in speaking English?

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of three questions asking 57 respondents' demographic information regarding gender, age and most current GPA shown in frequency and percentage.

Table 4.1 Respondents' gender (N = 57)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	13	22.80
Female	44	77.20
Total	57	100.00

From Table 4.1, the majority of the respondents were female (*N = 44, 77.20%*) and the rest (*N = 13, 22.80%*) were male.

Table 4.2 Respondents' age (N = 57)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
21 – 25	7	12.30
26 – 30	22	38.60
31 – 35	18	31.60
Over 35	10	17.50
Total	57	100.00

Table 4.2 shows 38.60% of the respondents were aged between 26 – 30 years old, followed by 31.60% aged between 31 – 35 years old. There were 17.50% of them aged over 35 years old. Of the total, 12.3% were aged from 21 – 25 years old.

Table 4.3 Respondents' most current GPA (N = 57)

GPA	Frequency	Percentage
3.00	4	7.02
3.01 – 3.50	27	47.37
3.51 – 4.00	24	42.11
Total	55	96.50

According to Table 4.3, the largest proportion of the respondents had a GPA ranged between 3.01 – 3.50 (*N = 27, 47.37%*), followed by 3.51 – 4.00 (*N = 24, 42.11%*), and 3.00 (*N = 4, 7.02%*) with GPA ranging between 3.51 – 4.00 and 3.00, respectively. The average GPA was 3.49. However, GPA was not given by two respondents.

4.2   PERCEIVED OBSTACLES TO FLUENCY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH

The second part of the questionnaire found out perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok. The findings were displayed in the statistical data, which consisted of percentage, mean scores, and standard deviation (SD).

Table 4.4 Opinions on perceived obstacles related to vocabulary knowledge

Vocabulary Knowledge	Level of Frequency					N = 57		Perception Level
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	$\overline{X}$	SD	
1. You feel that you have some problems in speaking English because of insufficient vocabulary.	29.8%	40.4%	14.0%	12.3%	3.5%	3.81	1.10	High
2. You are unable to express accurately because of your limited knowledge of colloquial language e.g. idioms, expressions or slang words.	28.1%	47.4%	10.5%	10.5%	3.5%	3.86	1.06	High
3. You forget new vocabulary and have troubles finding the right words to say in conversations.	28.1%	36.8%	17.5%	14.0%	3.5%	3.72	1.13	High
4. You are unable to find easier words to replace difficult ones when you speak.	8.8%	19.3%	29.8%	36.8%	5.3%	2.89	1.06	Moderate
5. You take too much time to think about appropriate vocabulary when you speak.	8.8%	31.6%	26.3%	22.8%	10.5%	3.05	1.15	Moderate
6. Sometimes you cannot differentiate the words with similar meaning and this confuses you when you are speaking.	8.8%	31.6%	29.8%	28.1%	11.8%	3.18	1.00	Moderate
Average						3.42	1.08	High

According to Table 4.4, the overall average mean score shows the respondents' perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English related to vocabulary knowledge was at a high level (*Mean = 3.42*). The top ranked obstacle was item 2 "You are unable to express accurately because of your limited knowledge of colloquial language e.g. idioms, expressions or slang words" (*Mean = 3.86*). The second ranked problem was item 1 "You feel that you have some problems in speaking English because of insufficient vocabulary" (*Mean = 3.81*), while the third ranking was item 3 "You forget new vocabulary and have troubles finding the right words to say in conversations" (*Mean = 3.72*). On the other hand, the respondents realized that item 4 "You are unable to find easier words to replace difficult ones when you speak" was the least problem (*Mean = 2.89*).

Table 4.5 Opinions on perceived obstacles related to grammatical knowledge

Grammatical Knowledge	Level of Frequency					N = 57		Perception Level
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	X̄	SD	
7. You cannot express your ideas, feelings correctly because you are unable to use correct verb forms with noun and pronoun or to join the word properly.	14.0%	24.6%	19.3%	35.1%	7.0%	3.04	1.21	Moderate
8. When you speak, you tend to switch unconsciously from past tense to present tense.	14.0%	33.3%	31.6%	21.1%	--	3.40	0.97	Moderate
9. You usually use wrong sentence structures, which leads to meaning changes and this makes other people misunderstand what you are saying.	7.0%	33.3%	21.1%	28.1%	10.5%	2.98	1.15	Moderate
10. When speaking, you fail to observe the subject-verb agreement rule. For example, "**He stay** at home" instead of "**He stays** at home".	17.5%	31.6%	19.3%	24.6%	7.0%	3.28	1.22	Moderate
11. You have to translate ideas from Thai language into English in your head before speaking English.	19.3%	31.6%	19.3%	17.5%	12.3%	3.28	1.30	Moderate
12. You need to think a lot about grammatical rules because you usually make mistakes when speaking.	14.0%	29.8%	24.6%	22.8%	8.8%	3.18	1.19	Moderate
Average						3.19	1.17	Moderate

Table 4.5 shows the average of the respondents' perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English related to grammatical knowledge was moderate (*Mean = 3.19*). The majority of the respondents agreed with item 8 "When you speak, you tend to switch unconsciously from past tense to present tense", which was ranked first among all items (*Mean = 3.40*). Moreover, item 10 "When speaking, you fail to observe the subject-verb agreement rule" (*Mean = 3.28*), and item 11 "You have to translate ideas from Thai language into English in your head before speaking English" (*Mean = 3.28*) came second and third. On the contrary, item 12 "You usually use wrong sentence structures, which leads to meaning changes and this makes other people misunderstand what you are saying" was the least problem (*Mean = 2.98*).

Table 4.6 Opinions on perceived obstacles related to pronunciation

Pronunciation	Level of Frequency					N = 57		Perception Level
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	$\overline{X}$	SD	
13. You are much worried about mispronunciation while speaking English.	19.3%	17.5%	22.8%	29.8%	10.5%	3.05	1.30	Moderate
14. You are unable to speak with correct pronunciation when being assigned to speak in front of the class within a limited time.	8.8%	36.8%	24.6%	22.8%	7.0%	3.18	1.10	Moderate
15. You have to speak carefully in order to focus on pronouncing certain words (especially those less common words).	7.0%	35.1%	35.1%	14.0%	8.8%	3.18	1.05	Moderate
16. You are often not understood by English native speaking instructors because of your poor pronunciation.	7.0%	28.1%	12.3%	36.8%	15.8%	2.74	1.23	Moderate
17. You cannot pronounce the final letter of a word clearly and accurately, for example ch, sh, s, es, etc. when you speak English.	7.0%	28.1%	21.1%	33.3%	10.5%	2.88	1.15	Moderate
Average						3.01	1.16	Moderate

As indicated by the data in Table 4.6, the results reveal that the majority of the respondents' perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English related to pronunciation was at a moderate level (*Mean = 3.01*). The two most identified obstacles to which the respondents agreed were item 14 "You are unable to speak with correct pronunciation when being assigned to speak in front of the class within a limited time" (*Mean = 3.18*), and item 15 "You have to speak carefully in order to focus on pronouncing certain words (especially those less common words)" (*Mean = 3.18*). The third ranked problem was item 13 "You are much worried about mispronunciation while speaking English" (*Mean = 3.05*). The least chosen item was item 16 "You are often not understood by English native speaking instructors because of your poor pronunciation" (*Mean = 2.74*).

Table 4.7 Opinions on perceived obstacles related to listening ability

Listening Ability	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	$\overline{X}$	SD	Perception Level
	Level of Frequency					**N = 57**		
18. You are unable to understand completely when an instructor (either Thai or a native speaker) speaks in a long sentence.	3.5%	17.5%	29.8%	36.8%	12.3%	2.63	1.02	Moderate
19. You do not understand fast speech, difficult accents or conversational vocabulary (idioms, expressions or slang words) of English native speaking teachers.	17.5%	31.6%	21.1%	24.6%	5.3%	3.32	1.18	Moderate
20. Different English pronunciation styles affect your understanding of messages sent.	17.5%	42.1%	19.3%	15.8%	5.3%	3.51	1.12	High
21. Your poor listening skill makes you nervous when responding to the instructor (either Thai or a native speaker).	17.5%	29.8%	19.3%	28.1%	5.3%	3.26	1.20	Moderate
22. You usually feel frustrated when you listen to any English native speaking instructor.	1.8%	12.3%	28.1%	36.8%	21.1%	2.37	1.01	Low
Average						3.02	1.10	Moderate

From Table 4.7, the results show the overall average mean score of the respondents' perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English related to listening ability was at a moderate level (*Mean = 3.02*), which was slightly higher than the perception of the barriers related to pronunciation. Item 20 "Different English pronunciation styles affect your understanding of messages sent" was rated highest (*Mean = 3.51*). In addition, item 19 "You do not understand fast speech, difficult accent or conversational vocabulary (idioms, expressions or slang words) of English native speaking teachers" ranked second (*Mean = 3.32*), followed by item 21 "Your poor listening skill makes you nervous when responding to the instructor (either Thai or a native speaker)" (*Mean = 3.26*). On the other hand, item 22 "You usually feel frustrated when you listen to any English native instructor" came out last *(Mean = 2.37)*.

Table 4.8 Opinions on perceived obstacles related to speaking anxiety

Speaking Anxiety	Level of Frequency					N = 57		Perception Level
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	$\overline{\text{X}}$	SD	
23. You are afraid of speaking English with the native instructor in the class because of your communication anxiety.	12.3%	12.3%	10.5%	40.4%	24.6%	2.47	1.32	Low
24. You feel nervous any time when speaking English in front of the class.	19.3%	12.3%	14.0%	45.6%	8.8%	2.88	1.31	Moderate
25. You feel shy to respond to the instructor (either Thai or a native speaker) because you are afraid that if you speak incorrectly, your friends will laugh at you.	7.0%	24.6%	14.0%	33.3%	21.1%	2.63	1.26	Moderate
26. You are fearful of making mistakes and losing face when speaking English.	10.5%	29.8%	15.8%	26.3%	17.5%	2.89	1.30	Moderate
27. You do not dare to participate in English classes because you are afraid of using English.	3.5%	17.5%	14.0%	29.8%	35.1%	2.25	1.21	Low
Average						2.62	1.28	Low

Table 4.8 shows a low mean score of *Mean = 2.62*. Most of the respondents perceived that item 26 "You are fearful of making mistakes and losing face when speaking English" was the biggest problem (*Mean = 2.89*) among all items related to speaking anxiety. The next ranked item, whose mean score was slightly lower than that of item 26 was item 24 "You feel nervous any time when speaking English in front of the class" (*Mean = 2.88*). Item 25 "You feel shy to respond to the instructor (either Thai or a native speaker) because you are afraid that if you speak incorrectly, your friends will laugh at you" (*Mean = 2.63*) was the third ranked problem. Also, item 27 "You do not dare to participate in English classes because you are afraid of using English" was the least problem (*Mean = 2.25*).

RQ 1: What are the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok?

According to the results above, the five perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English of the respondents were ranked in order from the highest to the lowest level: 1) Vocabulary knowledge, 2) Grammatical knowledge, 3) Listening ability, 4) Pronunciation, and 5) Speaking anxiety.

4.3 METHODS STUDENTS PLAN TO USE TO IMPROVE FLUENCY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH

In the last part of this questionnaire, the respondents were asked to complete a closed-ended question "What two major methods do you plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English?" The answers were analyzed into frequency and percentage. The results are shown below:

Table 4.9 Opinions on methods students plan to use to improve fluency in speaking English

Methods	Frequency	Percentage
1. Learning English from the Internet	7	12.30
2. Practicing English speaking with Thai and foreign friends	13	22.80
3. Watching movies in English with subtitles	13	22.80
4. Watching movies in English without subtitles	9	15.80
5. Watching TV programs in English with subtitles	4	7.00
6. Watching TV programs in English without subtitles	6	10.50
7. Listening to music in English	8	14.00
8. Listening to news in English from radio programs and other media	12	21.10
9. Practicing English speaking on your own	5	8.80
10. Taking English speaking courses in Thailand	7	12.30
11. Taking English courses abroad	8	14.00
12. Becoming an English teacher	1	1.80
13. Becoming an English Tutor	0	0.00
14. Finding a job that allows you to use English speaking skills more	20	35.10
15. Others (Please specify) - Speaking English with foreigners	1	1.80
Total	57	100.00

As shown in Table 4.9, the majority of the respondents chose as the first major method to improve their English speaking fluency item 14 "Finding a job that allows you to use English speaking skills more" ($N = 20, 35.10\%$). The second and third ranked methods were item 2 "Practicing English speaking with Thai and foreign friend" ($N = 13, 22.8\%$), and item 3 "Watching movies in English with subtitles" ($N = 13, 22.80\%$). Item 8 "Listening to news in English from radio programs and other media was ranked fourth ($N = 12, 21.10\%$) among all items. On the other hand, the respondents did not choose item 13 "Becoming an English tutor" ($N = 0, 0\%$) for improving their English speaking fluency.

RQ 2: What methods do they plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English?

The two major methods the students plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English were

1) Finding a job that allows you to use English speaking skills ($N = 20, 35.10\%$).

2) Practicing English speaking with Thai and foreign friends ($N = 13, 22.8\%$), and watching movies in English with subtitles ($N = 13, 22.8\%$).

In summary, this chapter reported the results of the study about the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok. Discussion, conclusion and recommendations will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chapter presents (1) summary of the study, (2) summary of the findings, (3) discussion, (4) conclusion, and (5) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This section summarizes objectives, participants, research instruments, and procedures of the study as follows:

5.1.1 Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this study were to investigate the perceived obstacles that the students face which block them from fluency in speaking English. In addition, the study aimed to find out the methods they plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English.

5.1.2 Participants, research instruments, pilot study and procedures

5.1.2.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 57 MA second-year students at a public university in Bangkok. This group was selected as the participants in evaluating their perception of the obstacles to fluency in speaking English because the majority of the students have nearly completed all required and elective courses of a 2-year master's degree international program and most of them have used English at work.

5.1.2.2 Research instruments

The research instruments used in this study was a questionnaire which was divided into three parts. The first part consisted of the demographic information of the respondents: gender, age, and most current GPA (Grade Point Average). The second part required the respondents to rate the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English. The last part found out what methods the students plan to use to improve their English speaking fluency.

5.1.2.3 Pilot study and procedures

The set of questionnaires was piloted to three MA second-year students before distribution to 59 MA second-year students. After 57 questionnaires were returned, the collected data was input and analyzed by SPSS in order to gain percentage, mean scores, and standard deviations.

5.2   SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results from this study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1   Demographic information of the respondents

There were 57 respondents who participated in this study. The findings showed that most of the respondents were female (*N = 44, 77.20%*), aged mostly between 26 – 30 years old (*N = 22, 38.60%*), with a GPA of 3.01-3.50 (*N = 27, 47.37%*).

5.2.2   Perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English

The results of the study revealed the respondents' perceived obstacles which inhibit them from fluency in speaking English ranked in order from the highest to the lowest levels as follows:

5.2.2.1 Obstacle ranked No.1: Vocabulary knowledge

The results showed the respondents' perceived obstacles related to vocabulary knowledge was at a high level (*Mean = 3.42*) and ranked highest among all five barriers. Most of them agreed that item 2 "You are unable to express accurately because of your limited knowledge of colloquial language i.e. idioms, expressions or slang words" was the biggest problem. On the other hand, item 4 "You are unable to find easier words to replace difficult ones when you speak" was the least problem.

5.2.2.2 Obstacle ranked No.2: Grammatical knowledge

According to the study, the respondents' perceived obstacles related to grammatical knowledge was at a moderate level (*Mean = 3.19*) and ranked second among all five barriers. The highest ranked obstacle was item 8 "When you speak, you tend to switch unconsciously from past tense to present tense", whereas item 9

"You usually use wrong sentence structures, which leads to meaning changes and this makes other people misunderstand what you are saying" came out last.

5.2.2.3 Obstacle ranked No.3: Listening ability

With regards to the respondents' perceived obstacles related to listening ability, the results showed a moderate mean score (*Mean = 3.02*), while this problem was ranked third among all five barriers. However, it was found that most of the respondents agreed that item 20 "Different English pronunciation style affects your understanding of messages sent" was the top ranked obstacle. Whereas, they thought that item 22 "You usually feel frustrated when you listen to any native English speaking instructor" was the least problem.

5.2.2.4 Obstacle ranked No.4: Pronunciation

In terms of the respondents' perceived obstacles related to pronunciation, the results show a moderate mean score (*Mean = 3.01*). This problem was ranked fourth among all five barriers, which was very close to the third ranked obstacle regarding listening ability. Most of the respondents perceived that item 14 "You are unable to speak with correct pronunciation in front of the class within a limited time", and that item 15 "You have to speak carefully in order to focus on pronouncing certain words (especially those less common words)" were the two biggest problems. Also, they realized that item 16 "You are often not understood by English native speaking instructors because of your poor pronunciation" was the least problem.

5.2.2.5 Obstacle ranked No.5: Speaking anxiety

The results showed that the respondents' perceived obstacles related to speaking anxiety was at a low level (*Mean = 2.62*) and ranked fifth among all five barriers. This meant speaking anxiety was the least problem of the respondents. However, the biggest problem was item 26 "You are fearful of making mistakes and losing face when speaking English". On the other hand, item 27 "You do not dare to participate in English class because you are afraid of using English" was the least problem.

In summary, RQ 1: What are the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA students in Bangkok?

The obstacles perceived by the respondents ranked in order from highest to lowest levels were

1) Vocabulary knowledge (*Mean = 3.42*)

2) Grammatical knowledge (*Mean = 3.19*)

3) Listening ability (*Mean = 3.02*)

4) Pronunciation (*Mean = 3.01*)

5) Speaking anxiety (*Mean = 2.62*)

5.2.3   Methods students plan to use to improve fluency in speaking English

In order to improve the respondents' fluency in speaking English, they planned to use the following two major methods. First, "Finding a job that allows you to use English speaking skills" was chosen the most. "Practicing English speaking with Thai and foreign friends, and "Watching movies in English with subtitles" ranked second and third, respectively. Some of them were interested in "Listening to news in English from radio programs and other media", which was ranked fourth. However, the respondents ignored the method of "Becoming an English tutor" to develop their speaking skills.

In summary, RQ 2: What methods do they plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English?

The two major methods the students plan to use to improve their fluency in speaking English were

1) Finding a job that allows you to use English speaking skills (*N = 20, 35.10%*).

2) Practicing English speaking with Thai and foreign friends *(N = 13, 22.8%)*, and watching movies in English with subtitles (*N = 13, 22.8%*).

5.3 DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of this study in relation to previous studies concerning the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English.

5.3.1 Perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English

From the findings of the study, the following perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English were discussed from highest to lowest levels.

5.3.1.1 Obstacle ranked No.1: Vocabulary knowledge

Most of the respondents perceived that limited vocabulary knowledge can hinder them from fluency in speaking English. Vocabulary knowledge has become the biggest problem among all five barriers. Even if the respondents have learned the English language for many years, the problem of insufficient vocabulary is still found. This showed that knowledge of vocabulary is the major factor for successful communication. The findings support the study of Hubbard et al. (1983), stating that a student who knows a large number of word meanings can express the exact meanings he/she wants. To lessen the problem of inadequate vocabulary, teachers should design a vocabulary course and seek vocabulary learning strategies in order to improve students' vocabulary knowledge, whereas students should focus more on finding ways to learn words, for example, reading a lot of texts or other materials to help stretch their knowledge of vocabulary.

5.3.1.2 Obstacle ranked No.2: Grammatical knowledge

The findings showed that grammatical knowledge was considered as the second worst problem perceived by most of the respondents. Inadequate grammar knowledge can also obstruct students' speaking fluency. The problem is that when speaking English, they are concerned about sentence structures which block them from speaking effectively. The results are consistent with Kianiparsa and Vali (2010), who said that lack of grammatical structure knowledge is one of the obstacles of language learners, and using nouns, verbs, and correct grammatical structure are required for communication. In order to develop fluency in speaking English, learners who need good grammar knowledge should review and practice grammatical lessons regularly. On the teacher's side, he or she should find interesting grammar instruction strategies to stimulate students to learn English effectively.

5.3.1.3 Obstacle ranked No.3: Listening ability

The problem of listening ability was the third ranked obstacle to fluency in speaking English. However, they agreed that "Different English pronunciation styles affect their understanding of messages sent" was the biggest problem. The findings are in line with the study of Khamprated (2012), which investigated the problems and causes of English listening and speaking among Thai students. Her results found that students faced the problems of speakers' different accent and fast speaking. As listening closely relates to speaking, learners should practice listening skills a lot to improve listening ability which will help strengthen their oral fluency. Simultaneously, a teacher should provide listening practice to students in the English class and test their listening skills regularly.

5.3.1.4 Obstacle ranked No.4: Pronunciation

The respondents recognized that pronunciation was the fourth ranked barrier to fluency in speaking English. This was assumed that they were not much worried about pronunciation. This data supports the findings of Liu (2007), who indicates that students with poor pronunciation cannot make other people understand what they said. Thus, pronunciation is also important for students, while mispronunciation can become their barrier to communicating. To get rid of this problem, listening practicing is very important and necessary to a language learner because listening will help them develop listening ability and be familiar with different accents of speakers. However, in order to pronounce accurately and make other people understand clearly, a teacher, especially a native English instructor, will play an important role to teach students pronunciation.

5.3.1.5 Obstacle ranked No.5: Speaking anxiety

According to the results of the study, speaking anxiety was the least problem perceived by most of the respondents. Although most of them disagreed that speaking anxiety was their obstacle in fluency in speaking English, there were two biggest problems related to speaking anxiety 1) fear of making mistakes and losing face when speaking English, and 2) nervousness any time when speaking English in front of the class. This data is in line with MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), who say that students with anxiety tend to make more mistakes and fail to speak well when they are nervous. Therefore, speaking anxiety is considered as a barrier to obstruct

students' fluency in speaking English. Learners can practice speaking as much as possible to reduce fear of speaking and make them more confident when they have to communicate with others. Meanwhile, a teacher will be the most important one in the class, for example the teacher should create a good atmosphere in learning English so that all students feel free to participate in all activities during the class.

5.3.2 Methods students plan to use to improve fluency in speaking English

The results of the study showed that the two major methods chosen by most of the respondents to improve their fluency in speaking English were "Finding a job that allows you to use English speaking skills more," followed by "Practicing English speaking with Thai and foreign friends," and "Watching movies in English with subtitles." The fourth ranked method was "listening to news in English from radio programs and other media." Ritthira and Chiramanee (2014) conducted the study of the problems and negative factors affecting the development of English speaking and techniques to improve speaking skills. Their findings showed that most students improved English speaking by watching movies in English and listening to songs in English.

To develop oral fluency in the future, the students chose other methods other than the two major ones, which was dependent on which each student preferred. However, no one selected to be a tutor because they might think that teaching the English language requires proficiency in all four skills, especially speaking. After doing the second part of questionnaires, they recognized that they have faced all five obstacles which can obstruct them from speaking fluently.

5.4   CONCLUSION

From discussions of the study, the following conclusions can be made.

5.4.1   In terms of the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English, it was found that limited vocabulary knowledge was the biggest problem among all five barriers. In order to solve this problem, students should pay more attention to practice vocabulary skills, while teachers can design vocabulary courses to strengthen students' vocabulary knowledge. The second ranked obstacle was inadequate grammatical

knowledge. Most of the respondents were not much concerned about the problem of listening ability and pronunciation, followed by speaking anxiety, which was the least problem.

      5.4.2   To improve students' fluency in speaking English, two major methods selected by most of the respondents were "Finding a job that allows them to use English speaking skills more," followed by "Practicing English speaking with Thai and foreign friends," and "Watching movies in English with subtitles."

5.5   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

      The following recommendations are made for future research based on the findings and conclusions of this study.

      5.5.1   The participants of this study were only 57 MA second-year students in the 2015 academic year. For further study, other groups of students should be included to make the number of respondents larger because they may have different kinds of obstacles. Also, the findings will be useful for teachers to design the English curriculum and improve materials for students.

      5.5.2   An open-ended question or an individual interview should be added as research tools to obtain in-depth information from the respondents. This is because some respondents may not pay attention to the closed-ended questions and not give all answers truthfully. In addition, this study was analyzed by only descriptive statistics that might not be sophisticated enough. For further study, inferential statistics should be adopted in order to achieve better results.

      5.5.3   This study investigated only the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English. Apart from all five barriers from the results of the study, there will be other factors to impede the speaking fluency of the students. This research is just the preliminary study to help readers recognize the obstacles that can block the students from English speaking fluency. Further studies should focus on other aspects such as teaching vocabulary, which is the biggest obstacle found in this study, in order to expand the students' vocabulary knowledge. In addition, the study of teaching strategies for grammar, listening, pronunciation, and speaking fluency should also be conducted after the teachers have understood the students' problems from this study.

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APPENDIX

PERCEIVED OBSTACLES TO FLUENCY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH AMONG MA STUDENTS IN BANGKOK

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the perceived obstacles to fluency in speaking English among MA second-year students in the second semester of the 2015 academic year at a public university in Bangkok. Your response will be kept confidential and will be used for academic purpose only. Please answer all questions truthfully and do not worry that your responses are different from others because there is no right or wrong answer.

Part 1: Demographic Information

Instructions: Please check (√) the statement that most reflects your feeling and/or opinion

    1. Gender:

       ( ) 1. Male   ( ) 2. Female

    2. Age:

       ( ) 1. 20 – 25   ( ) 2. 26 – 30   ( ) 3. 31 – 35   ( ) 4. Over 35

    3. What is your most current GPA? (Please specify) …..…………………

Part 2: Perceived Obstacles to Fluency in Speaking English

Instructions: Please check (√) the statement that most reflects your feeling and/or opinion using the scale below.

Strongly agree	=	5 points
Agree	=	4 points
Uncertain	=	3 points
Disagree	=	2 points
Strongly disagree	=	1 points

Perceived Obstacles to Fluency in Speaking English	Rated Scale				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. You feel that you have some problems in speaking English because of insufficient vocabulary.					
2. You are unable to express accurately because of your limited knowledge of colloquial language i.e. idioms, expressions or slang words.					
3. You forget new vocabulary and have troubles finding the right words to say in conversations.					
4. You are unable to find easier words to replace difficult ones when you speak.					
5. You take too much time to think about appropriate vocabulary when you speak.					
6. Sometimes you cannot differentiate the words with similar meaning and this confuses you when you are speaking.					
7. You cannot express your ideas, feelings correctly because you are unable to use correct verb forms with noun and pronoun or to join the word properly.					
8. When you speak, you tend to switch unconsciously from past tense to present tense.					
9. You usually use wrong sentence structures, which leads to meaning changes and this makes other people misunderstand what you are saying.					
10. When speaking, you fail to observe the subject-verb agreement rule. For example, "**He stay** at home" instead of "**He stays** at home".					
11. You have to translate ideas from Thai language into English in your head before speaking English.					
12. You need to think a lot about grammatical rules because you usually make mistakes when speaking.					
13. You are much worried about mispronunciation while speaking English.					

14. You are unable to speak with correct pronunciation when being assigned to speak in front of the class within a limited time.					
15. You have to speak carefully in order to focus on pronouncing certain words (especially those less common words).					
16. You are often not understood by English native speaking instructors because of your poor pronunciation.					
17. You cannot pronounce the final letter of a word clearly and accurately, for example ch, sh, s, es, etc. when you speak English.					
18. You are unable to understand completely when an instructor (either Thai or a native speaker) speaks in a long sentence.					
19. You do not understand fast speech, difficult accent or conversational vocabulary (idioms, expressions or slang words) of English native speaking teachers.					
20. Different English pronunciation styles affect your understanding messages sent.					
21. Your poor listening skill makes you nervous when responding to the instructor (either Thai or a native speaker).					
22. You usually feel frustrated when you listen to any English native instructor.					
23. You are afraid of speaking English with the native instructor in the class because of your communication anxiety.					
24. You feel nervous any time when speaking English in front of the class.					
25. You feel shy to respond to the instructor (either Thai or a native speaker) because you are afraid that if you speak incorrectly, your friends will laugh at you.					
26. You are fear of making mistakes and losing face when speaking English.					
27. You do not dare to participate in English classes because you are afraid of using English.					

Part 3: Methods Students Plan to Use to Improve Fluency in Speaking English

Instructions: Please check (√) the statement that most reflects your feeling and/or opinion below.

What are **two major methods** that you plan to use to improve your English speaking fluency?

( ) 1.   Learning English from the Internet

( ) 2.   Practicing English speaking with Thai and foreign friends

( ) 3.   Watching movies in English with subtitles

( ) 4.   Watching movies in English without subtitles

( ) 5.   Watching TV programs in English with subtitles

( ) 6.   Watching TV programs in English without subtitles

( ) 7.   Listening to music in English

( ) 8.   Listening to news in English from radio programs and other media

( ) 9.   Practicing English speaking on your own

( ) 10. Taking English speaking courses in Thailand

( ) 11. Taking English courses abroad

( ) 12. Becoming an English teacher

( ) 13. Becoming an English tutor

( ) 14. Finding a job that allows you to use English speaking skills more

( ) 15. Others (Please specify) …………………………………..……

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation.

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BIOGRAPHY

Name   Ms. Kanokporn Suntornsripitak

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