



**FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH SPEAKING
PROBLEMS OF JAPANESE AND THAI EMPLOYEES IN
A JAPANESE RECRUITMENT COMPANY IN
THAILAND**

BY

MISS NADONTREE PONGSRI

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
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ENTITLED

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THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

Since English is considered as a lingua franca, the language which is a common language among people from all over the world, many international companies promote English to be a major language for communication. Employees are required to speak English in the workplace to get connected to other employees and clients. In spite of promoting English to be the main language in the company, there are still problems and misunderstandings in English speaking between employees. Therefore, this study explored the factors which affect English speaking of the employees. This study is conducted at a Japanese recruitment company in Thailand. The quantitative and qualitative methods were employed based on questionnaires and interviews with 30 participants. The findings including intercultural communication, lack of motivation, inadequate level of English skills, and communication apprehension will help understand about the English problems in the workplace and lead to better support for employees such as proper training in the future.

Keywords: Lingua Franca, Communication, Workplace

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Miss Nadontree Pongsri

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

English is undeniably recognized as the lingua franca because it has been used widely by people from all over the world to be the main mode of communication. Moreover, English is also recognized as an important language in the world of business because it helps with the expansion into other countries. Many international companies promote English to be the main language to use between employees.

Thailand is one of the fascinating countries for people who would like to invest, expand and set up their companies. The reasons why Thailand is an interesting country for opening a business is that Thailand has beautiful nature, great food and lots of tourist attraction which can attract many people to come and invest. Therefore, we can see many international companies in Thailand which run a business of various types such as trading, service, and manufacturing.

Since the signing of Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement (JTEPA) in 2007, trade and investment between Thailand and Japan have been increased. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2016). A Japanese recruitment agency has been set up to serve the needs of many Japanese companies in Thailand. Even though the nationality of this recruitment agency is Japanese, they set English as the main language for a business communication because the numbers of Thai employees who are able to speak Japanese are still less than those who can speak English. English has been used between Japanese and Thai employees to

communicate in the office especially for speaking. The employees have to use English in giving presentation, discussion, talking to clients, and contacting the oversea branches such as Singapore, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and China. Even though the company sets standards for the screening process and requires employees to speak English almost every day, there are still some misunderstandings and complaints regarding English speaking communication between Japanese and Thai employees. As a consequence, it is very important to know the factors which affect the English speaking of the employees so that some recommendations can be offered to improve the oral communication in the workplace.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Although English has been used as a main language for speaking between Thai and Japanese employees for a long time, there are still some problems and misunderstandings. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the reasons behind those problems and misunderstandings.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate the factors affecting English speaking between Thai and Japanese employees
2. To discover the most and least significant factors affecting English speaking between Thai and Japanese employees

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the factors affecting English speaking between Japanese and Thai employees?
2. What are the most and least significant factors affecting English speaking between Thai and Japanese employees?

1.5. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The definition of terms of this study is as follows:

Intercultural Communication refers to the communication between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (lanqua, n.d.).

Language Barriers is used to describe the difficulties which happen when speaking in another language (the online dictionary, merriam-webster, n.d.).

Affective Filters refers to the negative and motivational factors affecting the language acquisition of the learners (focalskills, n.d.).

Motivation means the internal and external factors that create the desire for people to do something (businessdictionary, n.d.).

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was based on a Japanese recruitment agency in Thailand where English is used as the main language for communication between Thai and Japanese employees. The study was conducted with 30 employees including Thai and Japanese. These employees are able to speak English and have used English in their work for more than 1 year. A questionnaire were distributed to investigate the use of English speaking in their work.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors affecting English speaking between Japanese and Thai employees. Therefore, the results can be later applied to reduce the problems and create more understanding between Japanese and Thai employees when they use English for speaking in the workplace.



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To understand more about the English speaking of employees in the workplace, this chapter reviews the literature, along with a summary: (1) English speaking problems in the workplace, (2) factors affecting English problems (intercultural communication, language barriers, and affective filters), (3) the effects of English speaking problems in the workplace, and (4) relevant studies

2.1 ENGLISH SPEAKING PROBLEMS IN THE WORKPLACE

Communication skills are considered as the most important language skills in the work place. In a study of Kasim and Ali (as cited in Moslehifara and Ibrahim, 2012), the oral communication in the international companies included handling telephone conversation, engaging in work discussion, and giving oral presentation. Due to globalization, English has become the main working language. For multinational companies, almost all workflows are executed in English. Employees are then required to speak English both internally to other employees and externally to clients and other departments. The importance of English communication skills is also emphasized in the study of Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012). Their study shows that most of the participants view oral communication as highly important skills for the workplace. Even though they perceive English speaking as significantly important, they report that speaking English fluently is the major problem. Kassim and Ali (2010) reported that most of the staff have problems in speaking English in meetings, and giving oral presentations.

2.2 FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH SPEAKING PROBLEMS

English speaking problems have been caused by many factors including intercultural communication, language barriers, and affective filters. This part of the paper will provide more information about those factors.

2.2.1 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intercultural or cross-cultural refers to the differences in cultures which cause an offer or deal with comparison. (Merriam-Webster's dictionary, n.d.). When talking about how people use language, cultural factors need to be taken into account. Brown (2000, p.177) defines culture as “a context of cognitive and affective behaviour, a template for personal and social existence” and “language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language”. Different people from different parts of the world will also possess different cultural aspects and ways of thinking. As the world is now getting smaller by the technology in telecommunication and transportation, it is easier for us to communicate with other people. However, there are still some problems in the communication process due to the cultural differences. Samovar and Proter (2001) discussed that people might have misinterpretations and misunderstandings if they do not have enough backgrounds about other people’s culture (beliefs, values, customs, habits or life styles) when they talk to each other. As a result, to learn about others cultures and ways of thinking is very important to create mutual understanding in the communication process.

2.2.2 LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Language barriers refers to the factors contributing to poor language communication such as phonology and cross linguistic influence.

Phonology

Phonology is related to the sounds of language; thus, phonology is an important part of communication. People from different countries possess different phonology systems. The differences in phonology can affect the way people communicate in different languages. For instance, Japanese and Korean learners do not have *l* and *r* in their languages, therefore, they will have difficulty in pronouncing these sounds (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Similarly, in Thai language which does not have *th* sound, it also creates hardship for Thai people to pronounce *th* sound correctly and clearly.

Cross linguistic influence

Lightbown and Spada (2006) define “cross-linguistic influence” as a relationship between first and second language in which the first language can have an impact on the acquiring of the second or third language. Kongsuwannakul (2009) discussed about the researchers who used to study about cross-linguistic influence and found out that it does affect learners negatively on second language acquisition such as Spanish language speakers who have difficulty in English negation (Hakuta, 1990), Arabic, Hebrew, and Japanese language speakers who struggle with English relative clause construction (Schachter, 1983).

2.2.3 AFFECTIVE FILTERS

Krashen and Terrell (1983) included “Affective Filters” into one of his five hypotheses of second language learning. The “Affective Filters” refer to the factors that

affect the acquisition of second language and it includes motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. It is believed that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, and low anxiety tend to acquire and perform well in second language. Affective filters do affect the communicative skills of the learners. Learners with high level of anxiety will have poor performance in listening. (Elkhafaifi, 2005 as cited in Wu, 2011). In addition, McCahn, Hecht and Ribeau (1986) also mentioned that communication skills can be improved by lowering affective filters to near zero point and receiving comprehensible input. As a result, affective filters also relate closely to the communication skills of people.

Motivation

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), there are two types of motivation which are intrinsic and extrinsic. Extrinsic motivation means the motivation which comes from external factors such as the career promotion, good grade, or compliment. On the contrary, intrinsic motivation refers to the feeling of happiness when learners can successfully acquire or use languages. Learners with a high level of motivation can acquire language more easily than those who have a low level of motivation. As a consequence, in order to create a workplace to encourage employees to speak English, it is very important to create an environment which helps increase the motivation in using the language of employees.

Self-confidence

Speakers with high self-confidence seem to perform better than those who have low self-esteem. Regarding foreign languages, language learners with high self-confidence will tend to gain effective input and acquire language successfully. (Krashen, S. & Terrell, T. ,1983). Regarding MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels

(1998), self-confidence impacts incredibly on the speaking skills of a speaker since it reduces shyness and helps speaker speak fluently like a native.

Anxiety

Anxiety is another factor which affects the speaking skill of a person. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) discussed that anxiety can create negative feelings to the speakers of other language. For instance, anxiety can lead to poor speaking result since it leads to the fear of receiving negative feedback. Anxiety is able to block people from speaking since they do not have enough language comprehension. Moreover, the speakers can feel uncomfortable if they have to speak in front of the public.

2.3 THE EFFECTS OF ENGLISH SPEAKING PROBLEMS IN THE WORKPLACE

English speaking is considered the crucial skill for both daily life and for work. Therefore, poor English speaking ability can lead to many problems such as misunderstandings, and limited career opportunities.

2.3.1 MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Misunderstanding is the effect of English speaking problems. People who cannot speak English or do not have enough English proficiency in expressing about their thoughts and ideas will not be able to create the effective communication. Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, and Welch (1999) discussed that lack of language skills can cause misunderstanding and be an obstacle in strengthening relationship between employees in the company.

2.3.2 LIMITED CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

English has been used a lot in working communication such as email, presentation and meeting. Since English is the major language for business communication, people who have low English proficiency will not have as many opportunities as those who can perform well in English. Bloch (1995) explained that being able to speak English helps expand opportunities for people to access information and also perform various kinds of tasks. As a result, it increases their chance to get promoted.

2.4 RELEVANT STUDIES

Jampa and Dennis (2016) conducted a research study on the English communication problem between non-Thai and Thai co-workers. The setting is in a Lutheran Church in Mukdahan and Ubon Ratchathani. The participants are 40 Thais and 13 non-Thai co-workers. Data were collected through questionnaires and data analysis was presented in descriptive statistic. The study focused on the problems in speaking and listening skills. It was found that the most problematic English communication skill of Thai co-workers is speaking. However, when communicating in English, Thais will have problems in speaking (productive skill) and non-Thais will have problems in listening (receptive skill). Regarding communication in the workplace, Thais have difficulties in understanding accents, grammatical errors, and lack of communication skills. On the other hand, non-Thais only have problems in understanding Thai accents. Therefore, the common problem between Thai and non-Thai employees is about accent.

Verapornvanichkul (2011) studied problems in oral communication skills when dealing with English speaking clients. This study was conducted at one of big four audit firms in Bangkok, Thailand. The subjects were the employees of the firm. The sample group was 46 employees for the questionnaires and 6 employees for the interview. The research instruments were both quantitative through questionnaires and qualitative through interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed by Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS). The major findings of this study are about attitude towards English speaking at work and causes of the problems with English-speaking clients. According to causes of the problems with English speaking clients, most respondents thought that inadequate English skill is the major cause of problems in English speaking skill. The other causes are communication apprehension, insufficient motive regarding English development, and lack of cultural differences knowledge accordingly.

Ojanperä (2014) investigated the effects of using English in business communication in Japanese-based multinational corporations. This study was conducted in Tohoku University research programme during academic year 2012–2013, in Sendai, Japan. This research was based on qualitative method including three interviews and a questionnaire. Participants were selected from four Japanese-based multinational corporations. The role of English in cross-cultural business communication and the effect of using English in Japanese companies are discussed. The main findings in this research are 1.) English language skills play vital role in job promotion and the performance of employees in Japanese-based multinational corporations. However, using English also leads to misunderstanding, frustration, and barriers 2.) Effective English business communication is supported by the company'

strategy of implementing the right language policy, and providing employees with more opportunities in using English.

Liu (2015) explored the factors underlying English speaking and listening abilities of engineering students. The participants were 147 engineering students. The data were collected through survey questionnaire. The findings are about factors affecting English listening and speaking abilities of the engineering students. The findings show that geographical and parental factors have no significant influence towards students' English abilities. However, objective and subjective factors have influenced English listening and speaking abilities of the students. The objective factors were ranked from high to low: social environment, teachers, teaching resource, teaching materials, and curriculum settings. The subjective factors are ranked from high to low: learning attitude, learning motivation, learning method, and autonomous learning situation.

Mazouzi (2013) conducted a research study on factors affecting learners' oral performance. In order to gain deep information about the factors, both questionnaires and interviews were used with 28 third year pupils and 8 teachers of Nara middle school. The findings present that anxiety, lack of motivation, and a low level of self-confidence affected a learner's oral performance.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

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

3.1 SUBJECTS

The subjects in this study were 30 staff members including Thai and Japanese in a Japanese recruitment company in Thailand. Convenience sampling was conducted to solicit the opinions of survey participants. In attaining the samples, the permanent workers who have worked in this recruitment company for more than 4 months were chosen.

3.2 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

This research was conducted based on both quantitative and qualitative method. The research instruments were questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire (Appendix A) was adapted from Verapornvanichkul (2011) who conducted a research study on problems of oral communication when dealing with English speaking clients to investigate the factors affecting English speaking between Thai and Japanese employees. The questionnaires consisted of two parts including personal information and 24 questions for sources of oral communication problems. Four point Likert scale questionnaires were used to help gain information about the sources of oral communication problems. The interviews were also conducted to investigate other factors which might not be included in the questionnaires (Appendix

B). The interviewees were four staff members of which two are Thai and two are Japanese with mixed English ability.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The English version questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in March 2017. The questionnaires are in English version because the respondents are both Thai and Japanese staff members. The questionnaires were distributed in paper to make sure that all the respondents had access to the questionnaires and would be able to send back the questionnaires within one week. The semi-structured interviews were also conducted for 15 minutes with 4 staff members at the office to gain more information about the factors affecting English speaking problems.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed statistically using SPSS and the information from interviews were transcribed and grouped. There are four levels of agreement in the questionnaire:

1: Strongly disagree

2: Disagree

3: Agree

4: Strongly agree

- The demographic information and factors of English speaking problems were analyzed by the percentage and frequency count.
- The reasons for English speaking problems was calculated by using a Mean and Standard Deviation (S.D.). The interpretation of the responses was calculated by using the following formula:

$$\text{Interval} = \frac{\text{The highest score} - \text{the lowest score}}{\text{the number of interval}}$$

For this reason, the interval scale in this study was:

$$\text{Interval} = \frac{4 - 1}{4} = 0.75$$

Therefore, the range of four levels of frequency can be detailed below:

Mean scores	Level of interpretation
1.00-1.75	Very low
1.76-2.50	Low
2.51-3.25	High
3.26-4.00	Very High

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data collected from 30 answered questionnaires and 4 semi-structured interviews are reported in this chapter.

The analyses are presented in four parts as follows;

4.1 Personal Information

4.2 Causes of the Problems in English Speaking in the Office

4.3 Reasons for English Speaking Problems in the Office

4.4 Attitudes towards English Speaking Problems in the Office

4.1 PERSONAL INFORMATION

The result in this section presents the personal information of the participants including gender, nationality, age, educational background, position, and job function.

Table 4.1: Respondents' Genders

Genders	Frequency	Percentage
Male	13	43%
Female	17	57%
Total	30	100%

As shown in Table 4.1, the respondents are composed of 43% male and 57% female.

Table 4.2: Respondents' Nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
Thai	15	50%
Japanese	15	50%
Total	30	100%

In terms of nationality, 50 percent of the respondents are Thai and 50 percent are Japanese.

Table 4.3: Respondents' Age Groups

Age Groups	Frequency	Percentage
23-25	3	10%
26-28	11	36%
29-31	12	40%
32-34	2	7%
35 and above	2	7%
Total	30	100%

As shown in table 4.3, the majority of the respondents belong to the age groups of 29-31 and 26-28. The minority of the respondents equally belongs to the age group of 32-34 and 35 and above.

Table 4.4: Respondents' Educational Background

Educational Background	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	20	67%

Master's Degree	10	33%
Total	30	100%

According to Table 4.4, 67 percent of the respondents graduated with a bachelor's degree and 33 percent of them graduated with a master's degree.

Table 4.5: Respondents' Position

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Staff	20	67%
Leader	7	23%
Manager	2	6.7%
Upper Management	1	3.3%
Total	30	100%

Regarding the positions of the respondents, the majority of them are in staff level (67 %), followed by leader level (23 %). The minority of the respondents is in upper management level (3.3 %).

Table 4.6: Respondents' Job Functions

Job Functions	Frequency	Percentage
Admin/HR	3	10%
Client Service	14	46.7%
Candidate Service	12	40%
Upper Management	1	3.3 %
Total	30	100%

As shown in Table 4.6, most of the respondents are in client service (46.7 %) followed by candidate service (40%).

4.2 REASONS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKING PROBLEMS IN THE OFFICE

What are the factors affecting English speaking between Japanese and Thai employees?

The information from Tables 4.7-4.10 provides more information on the factors affecting English speaking between Thai and Japanese employees and aims to answer the research question number 1. The answers from four point Likert scale (1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree, 4 strongly agree) give more information how respondents think about each factor.

Table 4.7: Oral Communication

No	Topic	1 SD	2 D	3 A	4 SA	Mean	S.D.	Level
1.	Lack of understanding in accurate pronunciation usually brings about misunderstanding and communication problems.	2	9	14	5	2.73	0.83	High
2.	Incorrect word stress and final sounds result in miscommunication	3	9	14	4	2.63	0.85	High
3.	Inaccurate intonations create confusions in oral communications.	3	9	17	1	2.53	0.73	High

4.	Inadequate understanding of grammar highly impedes effective communication between employees	3	17	7	3	2.33	0.80	Low
5.	Lack of knowledge about informal words used in real business communication results in communication problems	4	12	14	0	2.33	0.71	Low
6.	Unknown word meanings in conversations often contribute to problems while speaking	0	5	16	9	3.13	0.68	High
	Total Average Score					2.61	0.77	High

As shown in Table 4.7, respondents think that unknown word meanings are the main reasons for English speaking's problems in the office with the mean of 3.13. Lack of understanding in accurate pronunciation is ranked in the second place with the mean of 2.73. On the other hand, inadequate understanding of grammar and lack of knowledge about informal words used in real business communication are equally ranked lowest with the mean of 2.33.

Table 4.8: Intercultural Communication

No	Topic	1	2	3	4	Mean	S.D.	Level
		SD	D	A	SA			

7.	Insufficient understanding of cultural differences could lessen courage to speak	7	15	7	1	2.07	0.78	Low
8.	Large gaps between positions at the workplace create discomfort and block oral communication	3	11	13	3	2.53	0.82	High
9.	Different communication styles from different nationalities obstruct effective communication results	2	14	11	3	2.50	0.78	Low
10.	Lack of intention to learn cultural differences discourages English speaking with colleagues	5	16	8	1	2.17	0.75	Low
11.	Lack of ability to adapt to different cultures limits frequency of communication and information obtained from colleagues	5	3	20	2	2.63	0.76	High
12.	Different attitudes towards rules and behaviors from different cultures block smooth oral communication	3	7	18	2	2.63	0.68	High
	Total Average Score					2.42	0.76	Low

With regard to intercultural communication, lack of ability to adapt to different cultures and different attitudes towards rules and behaviors from different cultures are chosen the most by respondents to be the most problematic factors with

the mean of 2.63. Insufficient understanding of cultural differences is ranked lowest by most of the respondents with the mean of 2.07.

Table 4.9: Communication Apprehension

No	Topic	1 SD	2 D	3 A	4 SA	Mean	S.D.	Level
13.	Nervous feelings often contribute to communication in English with colleagues	1	5	16	8	3.03	0.76	High
14.	Low levels of self-esteem is one of the important factors contributing to anxiety while speaking in English	0	7	14	9	3.07	0.76	High
15.	Lack of proper practice for English speaking leads to discomfort while speaking English	1	4	13	12	3.20	0.81	High
16.	My own personal trait to avoid communication with others results in communication problems	3	12	12	3	2.50	0.82	Low
17.	Shyness is the cause of communication avoidance	4	4	15	7	2.83	0.95	High
18.	Formal English communication creates stress and communication anxiety	1	11	15	3	2.67	0.71	High
	Total Average Score					2.88	0.80	High

As can be seen in Table 4.9, lack of proper practice for English speaking which leads to discomfort in speaking is the most chosen cause of problem in English speaking with the mean of 3.20. However, the personal trait of avoiding to communicate with others is ranked last with the mean of 2.50.

Table 4.10: Motivation for English speaking

No	Topic	1 SD	2 D	3 A	4 SA	Mean	S.D.	Level
19.	Career advancement and promotions are effective driving factors contributing to motivation in English speaking skills development	0	9	14	7	2.93	0.74	High
20.	Time limits together with a lot of work requirements lessen my motivation to develop English speaking skills	1	9	17	3	2.73	0.69	High
21.	Inadequate employee English level testing discourages employee motivation to develop English speaking skills	1	16	11	2	2.47	0.68	Low
22.	No specific requirement for English skills development in each position causes delay in English improvement	0	12	12	6	2.80	0.76	High
23.	Rare occasions for English speaking lower employee's encouragement to develop English speaking skills	0	7	14	9	3.10	0.71	High

24.	Availability to switch to writing and sending e-mails instead of speaking with clients lessen the motive to speak English	4	10	13	3	2.50	0.86	Low
	Total Average Score					2.75	0.74	High

As shown in Table 4.10, rare occasion for English speaking affects the motivation in speaking English the most with the mean of 3.10. On the other hand, respondents believe that inadequate employee English level testing is the lowest crucial factors affecting motivation in English speaking.

4.3 CAUSES OF THE PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH SPEAKING IN THE OFFICE

In this part, the causes of English speaking problems were analyzed regarding the most and least significant factors underlying the problems.

What are the most and least significant factors affecting English speaking between Thai and Japanese employees?

The information from Table 4.11 aims to answer research question number 2 on the most and least significant factors affecting English speaking between Thai and Japanese employees. The respondents ranked causes of English speaking's problem from 1 to 4. One refers to the most important cause and four refers to the least important cause. The questionnaires are divided in to 4 parts including Inadequate level of English skills (IL), Lack of knowledge about intercultural communication

(LK), Lack of motivation in speaking English (LM), and Communication apprehension (CA).

Table 4.11: Causes of English Speaking Problems in the Office

	1st (Most important)		2nd		3rd		4th (Least Important)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
IL	20	66.7%	5	16.7%	2	6.7%	3	10%
LK	4	13.3%	12	40%	10	33.3%	4	13.3%
LM	2	6.7%	8	26.6%	9	30%	11	36.7%
CA	4	13.3%	5	16.7%	9	30%	12	40%
Total	30	100%	30	100%	30	100%	30	100%

Regarding Table 4.11, the respondents rank “inadequate level of English skills” as the most problematic cause of the English speaking problems in the office, followed by “lack of knowledge about intercultural communication” at 40 %. “Communication apprehension” are ranked in last place at 40 % followed closely by “lack of motivation” at 36.7 %.

4.4 ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH SPEAKING PROBLEMS IN THE OFFICE

Four employees (2 Thai and 2 Japanese) participated in the semi-structured interviews to provide more insightful information about the English speaking problems in the office. Thai and Japanese employees share the same opinions towards

English speaking problems. All interviewees thought that communication apprehension is the most problematic factor affecting English speaking in the office. The reasons are because they feel nervous if they speak English and the other person cannot understand them. Moreover, they will feel more nervous when they have to speak formal English in the office such as when giving presentation or discussion in a meeting. Most of the interviewees also agree that lack of occasion in speaking English is another factor affecting English speaking of the employees.

4.5 DISCUSSION

In this part, the information from the previous research studies, which have been reviewed in chapter 2, is discussed as follows:

4.5.1 FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH SPEAKING PROBLEMS IN THE OFFICE

As for the factors affecting English speaking problems, the findings from this research are the same as those of Mazouzi (2013) who stated that anxiety, lack of motivation, and low level of self-esteem have influenced the English speaking. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) discussed that anxiety can have negative influence towards speaking another language. Rubio (2007) also stated that confidence can help reduce shyness and improve English speaking ability. A low level of self-esteem can result in poor English speaking performance. As for Liu (2015), the findings of factors affecting English speaking and listening of engineering students are the same as this research. From Liu's research, it was found out that learner's motivation and attitude are ones of the factors affecting English

performance. Ryan and Deci (2000), also mentioned that a low level of motivation can be an obstacle in acquiring foreign languages.

4.5.2 MOST AND LEAST SIGNIFICANT FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH SPEAKING PROBLEMS

Referring to the findings of the study, “inadequate level of English skills” is the most problematic cause of English speaking problems in the office. The second most problematic cause is “lack of knowledge about intercultural communication” and the least problematic causes is “communication apprehension”. This findings has some similarities and difference compared to the study of Verapornvanichkul (2011). Her study about problems in oral communication when dealing with English speaking clients revealed the same information that the most problematic cause of oral communication problem is “inadequate level of English skills”. However, her research showed that the second most problematic cause is “communication apprehension” followed by “insufficient motive” and “lack of knowledge about intercultural communication

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the study, a summary of findings, discussion, and recommendations for further research are presented in this chapter.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors affecting English speaking between Thai and Japanese employees. There are two research questions 1.) What are the factors affecting English speaking between Japanese and Thai employees? 2.) What are the most and least significant factors affecting English speaking between Thai and Japanese employees?

The subjects of this study are Thai and Japanese employees from staff level to country manager level. The sample group is 30 employees for the questionnaire and 4 employees for the interviews.

This is a mixed method quantitative and qualitative research using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The paper questionnaires were distributed to participants during March 2017 to April 2017. In addition, the semi-structured interviews were conducted face to face with 4 informants for 10 minutes each in April 2017.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from this research are summarized in the section.

5.2.1 PERSONAL INFORMATION

The respondents are consisted of 15 Thai and 15 Japanese staff members. Most of the respondents are female. Most of them are in the age group of 29-31 and graduated with bachelor's degree. The majority of the respondents are in staff level taking care of clients.

5.2.2 REASONS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKING PROBLEMS IN THE OFFICE

The results from the questionnaires and interviews provide more details about reasons for English speaking problems in the office. The results show that most of the respondents believe that communication apprehension is the main reason for English speaking problems in the office. The second ranked reason is oral communication, followed by motivation, and intercultural communication.

5.2.3 CAUSES OF THE PROBLEMS

The causes of the problems are ranked from 1 (the most important) to 4 (the least important) by the respondents. Most of the respondents ranked inadequate level of English skills as the most problematic causes for English speaking problem. On the other hand, lack of motivation in speaking English and communication apprehension are the least problematic cause for English speaking problem in the respondents' point of view.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

5.3.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH SPEAKING PROBLEMS BETWEEN THAI AND JAPANESE EMPLOYEES

The results collected from Thai and Japanese participants are almost the same. The participants share the same ideas and attitudes towards factors affecting English speaking problems in the office including the most problematic factor and reasons of problems. This may be because they both are from an Asian country so the social context and background might be similar.

5.3.2 ENGLISH SPEAKING PROBLEMS

The most crucial problem for English speaking in the office is communication apprehension. Most of the respondents said that speaking English can lead to nervousness especially when they have to participate in formal discussions. This is also because they do not have sufficient occasion to use and practice English. As a result, the company should provide employees with more trainings which can help them improve their English speaking.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, there are two important issues recommended by this study for further research.

5.4.1 The number of participants in this research is 30 employees. Therefore, to gain broader and more diverse information, the next research should be conducted with a larger group of participants.

5.4.2 Since the participants agree that an inadequate level of English skills is one of the crucial factors for English speaking problems in the office, another interesting point to be examined in a further study is the effectiveness of English language training for business communication.

5.5 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The major purpose of this research was to gain in-depth information regarding factors affecting English speaking problems. Therefore, the findings of this research can help design English course trainings which are more effective and provide learners with the opportunity to practice English language for business communication. The classroom environment and teachers should also encourage students to practice speaking with confidence. Moreover, since lack of knowledge about intercultural communication is also one of the factors, teachers should provide lessons about different cultures to help students gain more understanding.

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire in English

(Adapted from Parima Verapornvanichkul, “A Survey of Problems in Oral Communication Skills When Dealing with English Speaking Clients”)

This questionnaire is a part of a survey for the Independent Study, **Factors Affecting English Speaking of Japanese and Thai Employees: A Study in A Japanese Recruitment Company in Thailand**, in order to understand problems in oral communications in the workplace

It is divided into two parts as follows:

Part I: Personal information

Part II: Sources of the problems in oral communication

The data collected from the survey will be kept confidential and be used only for academic purposes. Thank you for your cooperation.

Part I: Personal information

Please mark (/) in the brackets or fill in the information.

1. Gender

Male Female

2. Nationality

Thai Japanese

3. Age

23-25 26-28 29-31 32-34 35 and above

4. Educational Background

Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Doctoral Degree

5. Position

Staff Supervisor/Leader

Manager Country Manager

6. Job Functions

Admin/HR Clients Service

Candidate Service Upper Management

Part II: Causes of the problems in English speaking in the office

1. In your opinion, what is the most important barrier for English speaking in the workplace (Please rank from the most important (1) to the least important (4))

Inadequate level of English skills such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation

Lack of knowledge about intercultural communication and cultural differences

Insufficient motive for English speaking at the workplace

Fear to communicate with people who come from different cultures and speak different languages

Please mark (/) in the bracket that corresponds to your answer and is relevant to your opinion.

1: Strongly disagree

2: Disagree

3: Agree

4: Strongly agree

No	Topic	1	2	3	4
	<u>Oral communication skills</u>				
1.	Lack of understanding in accurate pronunciation usually brings about misunderstanding and communication problems.				
2.	Incorrect word stress and final sounds result in miscommunication				
3.	Inaccurate intonations create confusions in oral communications.				
4.	Inadequate understanding of grammar highly impedes effective communication between employees				
5.	Lack of knowledge about informal words used in real business communication results in communication problems				
6.	Unknown word meanings in conversations often contribute to problems while speaking				
	<u>Intercultural communication</u>				
7.	Insufficient understanding of cultural differences could lessen courage to speak				
8.	Large gaps between positions at the workplace create discomfort and block oral communication				
9.	Different communication styles from different nationalities				

	obstruct effective communication results				
10.	Lack of intention to learn cultural differences discourages English speaking with colleagues				
11.	Lack of ability to adapt to different cultures limits frequency of communication and information obtained from colleagues				
12.	Different attitudes towards rules and behaviors from different cultures block smooth oral communication				
	<u>Communication apprehension</u>				
13.	Nervous feelings often contribute to communication in English with colleagues				
14.	Low levels of self-esteem is one of the important factors contributing to anxiety while speaking in English				
15.	Lack of proper practice for English speaking leads to discomfort while speaking English				
16.	My own personal trait to avoid communication with others results in communication problems				
17.	Shyness is the cause of communication avoidance				
18.	Formal English communication creates stress and communication anxiety				
	<u>Motivation for English speaking</u>				
19.	Career advancement and promotions are effective driving factors contributing to motivation in English speaking skills				

	development				
20.	Time limits together with a lot of work requirements lessen my motivation to develop English speaking skills				
21.	Inadequate employee English level testing discourages employee motivation to develop English speaking skills				
22.	No specific requirement for English skills development in each position causes delay in English improvement				
23.	Rare occasions for English speaking lowers employee's encouragement to develop English speaking skills				
24.	Availability to switch to writing and sending e-mails instead of speaking with clients lessen the motive to speak English				

Thank you so much

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. Please can you introduce yourself briefly? (name, educational background)
2. How do you use English in your current job?
3. Do you use English mainly for speaking or writing?
4. Please can you rank these factors from 1-4 (1=most significant/4=least significant)? Note: The factors are communication apprehension, knowledge about intercultural communication, lack of motivation, and oral communication ability)
5. Please can you explain the reasons for you ranking of each factor?
5. What do you think are other factors affecting English speaking problems?

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