



**FACTORS AFFECTING THE ENGLISH SPEAKING
ABILITY OF THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

BY

MISS THUNYALUCK SANTIWATTHANASIRI

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2018
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INDEPENDENT STUDY PAPER

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ENTITLED

FACTORS AFFECTING THE ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY OF THAI
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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

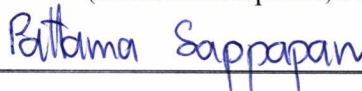
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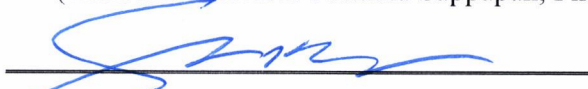
(Alisa Ratanapruks, Ph.D.)

Member and Advisor



(Assistant Professor Pattama Sappapan, Ph.D.)

Director



(Associate Professor Supong Tangkiengsirisin, Ph.D.)

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Author	Miss Thunyaluck Santiwatthanasiri
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated problems that hinder Thai EFL students to speak English and the contributing factors that support students' speaking skills. The participants were 60 non-English major students who enrolled in the English for Communication class in 2018 at a private university. The data were collected using a 22-item questionnaire related to the problems and supporting factors of English speaking. The questionnaires were distributed to the students and collected back within one day. The results of the analyses revealed that most students found it difficult to speak English because they were afraid of making mistakes and they felt anxious while speaking. However, the most significant factors that support English speaking skills found were the teachers' support and frequent exposure to an English environment. The findings can be a valuable resource with pedagogical implications for teachers to develop proper English teaching methods and help students overcome their difficulties in oral performance in order to communicate effectively in their real lives.

Keywords: Communication Strategies, Speaking Skills, EFL Teaching and Learning, Speaking Anxiety

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Miss Thunyaluck Santiwatthanasiri

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Statement of Problems	1
1.3 Objectives of the Study	2
1.4 Research Questions	3
1.5 Scope of the Study	3
1.6 Definition of Terms	3
1.7 Significance of the Study	3
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	5
2.1 English Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand	5
2.1.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	5
2.1.2 Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)	5
2.1.3 Content-based Instruction (CBI)	6
2.2 Problems that Hinder Speaking Abilities	6
2.2.1 Fear of Making Mistakes and Speaking Anxiety	7
2.2.2 Fear of Negative Evaluation	7
2.2.3 Communication Apprehension (CA)	7
2.2.4 Limited Exposure to the English Language	8

2.2.5 Lack of Topical Knowledge	8
2.2.6 Uneven Participation	8
2.2.7 L1 Interference	8
2.2.8 Linguistically-Related Constraints	9
2.3 Factors that Help Improve Speaking Skills	9
2.3.1 In-Class Factors	9
2.3.2 Out-of-Class Factors	10
2.4 Related Previous Studies	10
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	13
3.1 Participants	13
3.2 Research Instruments	13
3.3 Procedures	14
3.3.1 Research Design	14
3.3.2 Data Collection	14
3.4 Data Analysis	15
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS	16
4.1 Personal Information	16
4.2 Problems that Hinder Students' English Speaking Ability	17
4.3 Factors that Help Improve Students' English Speaking Ability	18
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	20
5.1 Summary of the Study	20
5.2 Summary of the Findings	20
5.2.1 Personal Information	20
5.2.2 Problems that Hinder Students' English Speaking Ability	21
5.2.3 Factors that Help Improve Students' English Speaking Skills	21

5.3 Discussions	21
5.3.1 Problems that Hinder Students' Speaking Ability	21
5.3.2 Factors Supporting Speaking Skills	23
5.4 Conclusions	24
5.5 Recommendations for Further Study and Limitations	25
REFERENCES	27
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A: Questionnaire (English Version)	31
APPENDIX B: Questionnaire (Thai Version)	35
BIOGRAPHY	39

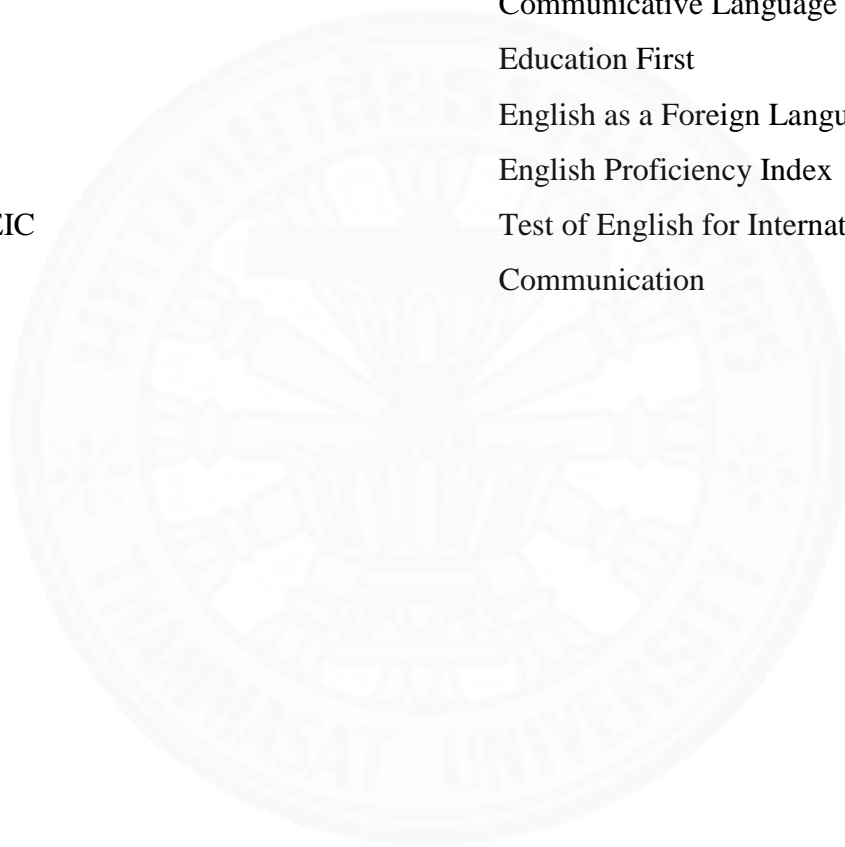
LIST OF TABLES

Tables	Page
4.1 Frequency and Percentage of the Respondents' Personal Information	16
4.2 Factors that Hinder Students' English-Speaking Ability	17
4.3 In-Class Factors	19
4.4 Out-of-Class Factors	19



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Symbols/Abbreviations	Terms
CALL	Computer Assisted Language Learning
CBI	Content-based instruction
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EF	Education First
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EPI	English Proficiency Index
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

English has been accepted as an international language used throughout the world for different purposes. At present, English communication has become the international connection between people and organizations. Thailand and many other countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have invested considerable resources in English as English is considered the language of development.

The official language of Thailand is Thai. Therefore, most Thai students rarely use other languages on a daily basis. Thai students have limited opportunity to speak English in their everyday life although English is a compulsory foreign subject required to study in schools. The English proficiency of Thai students is significantly low compared to those of Southeast Asian countries. As reported by the national survey of the Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index, the results showed that among 16 countries in Asia, Thailand ranked 14th and the 62nd out of 70 countries worldwide with a ranking of “very low proficiency” (Education First EPI, 2015.) These statistical figures were based on 910,000 people from 70 countries who took English tests in 2014.

Evidence of inefficiency can also be found through scores on standardized tests such as the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) examination’s scores worldwide in 2015. The result showed that among 46 countries, Thailand ranked 40th (TOEIC, 2016).

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

English is a compulsory foreign subject that Thai students must learn starting from the elementary level. Generally, most Thai students study English for almost ten years before they get into the university. Surprisingly, the majority of them still cannot speak English efficiently in their real lives although they have been studying English for over a decade. Speaking skill is considered a vital part of second language acquisition. However, most Thai students find it troublesome to speak English partly

because the classroom instruction is mainly in Thai. Also, most teachers who teach English are not native speakers. So, teachers are prone to use unnatural language in the class and this results in a breakdown of genuine interaction (Aksornkul, 1980).

The primary target of English teaching is to develop students' ability to speak in English efficiently (Davies & Pearse, 2000). Nonetheless, most students still cannot communicate effectively after many years of studying English because they lack the necessary knowledge. It is sad that Thai students spend over a decade studying English since primary school, but their English proficiency results still do not meet the required standard. Therefore, motivating students to speak English is a challenging task, and it is a matter of necessity for Thai EFL students in Thailand.

According to personal communication with a lecturer of English for Communication (one of the mandatory subjects that all the first-year students have to study in order to complete a bachelor's degree at a private university), the researcher found that students from the Department of Chinese, and Social and Environmental Development were not good at speaking English. The lecturer of the course said that students could go through exams easily, but they could not use English to communicate. After the researcher had personal communication with the lecturer of this subject, the researcher found a limitation that these university students in the rural area had limited access to English compared to those from the city.

In this regard, teachers should take into account the factors that influence students' speaking ability to help students overcome those problems. However, until now, no research has been conducted on these issues at this university.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major purposes of this study are as follows:

- 1.3.1 To identify the problems that affect the students' speaking ability
- 1.3.2 To discover the factors that help improve their speaking skills

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to answer the following question:

1.4.1 What are problems that hinder the students' speaking ability?

1.4.2 What factors can help improve their speaking skills?

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was based on Thai EFL students' speaking performance. This study was developed at a private university in a rural area located in the northeastern region of Thailand. The respondents were 60 students who studied English for Communication. Regarding personal communication with the lecturer of the course, these students could not speak English effectively. So, questionnaires were distributed in order to investigate the underlying problems and to discover the factors that would enhance their speaking skills. The study was based on the factors affecting Thai EFL students' ability to speak English. The sample consisted of non-English major students who studied English for Communication in 2018. These 60 students were first-year students in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science at a private university.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definitions of the terms in this study are as follows:

Factor in this study is used to refer to both factors that hinder students' speaking ability and factors that help improve student's speaking ability.

EFL students refers to the first-year non-English major students who were enrolled in English for Communication at a private university.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

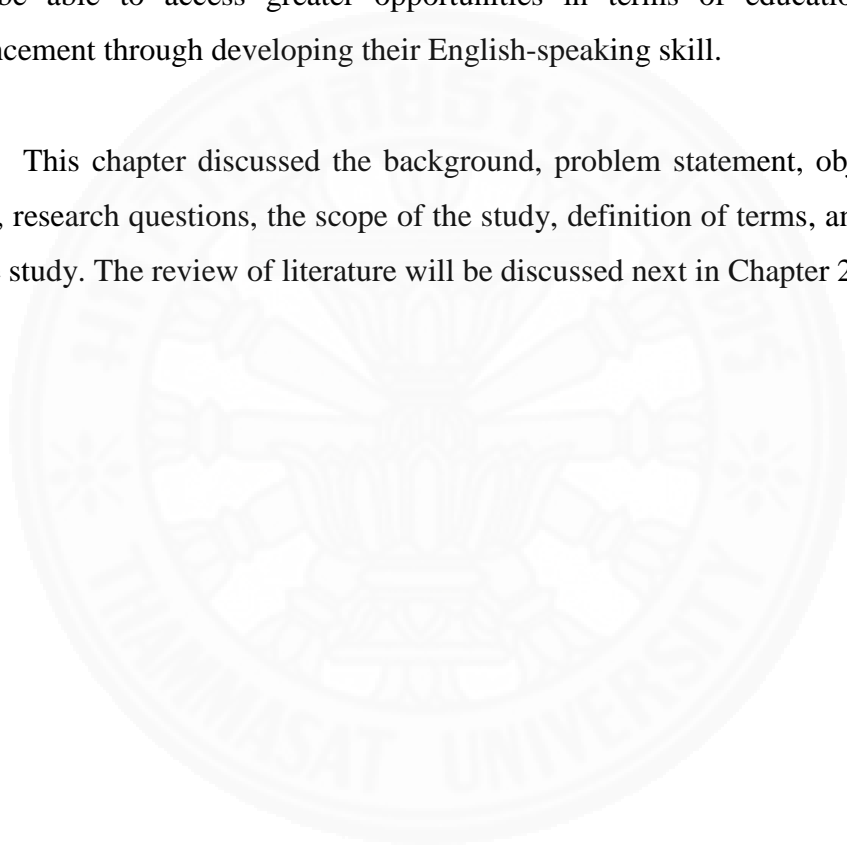
Questionnaires were distributed to investigate the problems that hinder their English-speaking ability, and the factors that will improve their English speaking ability. Therefore, the results can be later applied to provide better solutions for students in order to overcome their difficulties in oral performance and communicate effectively in real life.

This study may be useful for the following groups of people:

For Thai language teachers: they may select teaching methods that are appropriate for the students' need, and they can also adopt language assessment and course evaluations which focus more on communication. Moreover, teachers will be able to provide language learners with appropriate learning facilities and media, including learning context.

For Thai EFL students: they can enhance their communication achievement and will be able to access greater opportunities in terms of education and career advancement through developing their English-speaking skill.

This chapter discussed the background, problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, the scope of the study, definition of terms, and significance of the study. The review of literature will be discussed next in Chapter 2.



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in four main areas: (1) English language teaching and learning in Thailand; (2) problems that hinder speaking abilities; (3) factors that help improve speaking skills; and (4) related previous studies.

2.1 English Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand

Nunan (1999) stated that English is accepted globally as a channel of communication. For many decades, English has been playing a dominant role for all people around the world in various aspects. English is essential for the development of all countries in terms of education, innovation, technology, politics and economy. Regarding interaction, Thai people use English language in many fields such as trade, tourism including academic and career advancement. Thus, exploring the aspect of English teaching and learning is needed.

Regarding teaching approaches which promote students' speaking skill and help them to achieve communicative competence, there are various methods for teaching such approaches. Some teaching theories will be introduced as following:

2.1.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

According to CLT theory, language learning should focus on communicative competence, not merely learning a set of rules. The main focus of CLT is for students to gain the knowledge and necessary skills to obtain communicative competence. Second language teachers have been encouraged to employ Communicative Language Teaching in their classrooms because CLT emphasizes the communication of meaning rather than extensive practice of grammatical forms (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

2.1.2 Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Computer-assisted language learning is a teaching practice that integrates computers and technology in various subject areas of language learning. Teachers can adopt CALL to provide students with authentic learning input. Through authentic

learning tasks such as information gap, problem-solving, games, and animated graphics, students will interact actively in authentic contexts. As a result, students' confidence, interest, and motivation will be developed (Skinner & Austin, 1999).

2.1.3 Content-Based Instruction (CBI)

Krashen (1983) argued for a principle in the development of CBI in second language contexts that language acquisition is best achieved through extensive exposure to comprehensible second language input.

The typical English language teaching practice in the Thai context, according to Saengboon (2004), is that Thai teachers for many decades have primarily adopted the Grammar-Translation Method which focuses on grammar rules and the Audio-lingual Method which is based on rote memorization. Consequently, speaking was not focused equally like other skills. For many years, most Thai teachers have taught speaking by asking students to repeat sentences and memorize textbook dialogues. Thus, students learned to speak by focusing on grammatical structures rather than real speaking practice.

2.2 Problems that Hinder Speaking Abilities

As mentioned earlier, speaking has been acknowledged as a very essential skill for Thai EFL students for many reasons. Even though speaking competence is very important, the teaching of English-speaking in Thailand has still not received as much attention as warranted. In terms of teaching approaches, Foley (2005) pointed out that most teachers are still attached to the use of audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods in a typical language class in Thailand. Most second language classes are taught by Thai teachers who emphasize grammar and vocabulary in all lessons. He also pointed out that the factors which cause limited success of English teaching are the grammar-translation method, inappropriate learning materials, and faulty testing and evaluation practices.

The adoption of this teaching approach leads to the result that students do not get enough opportunities to speak English to each other, much less with native speakers. Several factors that impede students' speaking abilities are discussed next.

2.2.1 Fear of Making Mistakes and Speaking Anxiety

There are several factors that impede the students' ability to speak English effectively. One of the greatest reasons is the students' fear, their anxiety, to make errors while speaking. "Anxiety is a psychological state. It is commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object" (Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 1971 cited in Scovel, 1991: 18).

Anxiety is a significant factor which affects the speaking ability of a person. This was supported by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) who reasoned that anxiety could cause negative feelings to the speakers of other languages. For instance, anxiety can lead to poor speaking performance since it resulted from the fear of receiving negative feedback. Moreover, it can block people from speaking as the speakers may feel worried if they have to speak in front of many people.

There are several related studies regarding anxiety. For example, Phillips (1992) demonstrated that anxiety greatly affects speaking. When students feel very anxious, they get poor results on oral assessments. The results of the study suggested that anxiety could have an immense effect on students' proficiency and belief toward language learning.

2.2.2 Fear of Negative Evaluation

Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) reported that students with anxiety tend to compare their speaking skills negatively with their peers. Therefore, these students did not like to take part in speaking activities because they felt that their classmates would assess them negatively if they made any speaking mistakes.

2.2.3 Communication Apprehension (CA)

One topic that has been discussed extensively in the field of oral communication is the fear to communicate. Horwitz et al. (1986) defined CA as "a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people". Regarding the consequences of communication apprehension, McCroskey (1977, as cited in Apaibanditkul, 2006) found that the common responses that people have towards the fear to communicate were communication disruption, communication avoidance, and communication withdrawal.

2.2.4 Limited Exposure to the English Language

Thai students have limited opportunity to use English. They have a few hours to study English per week. On the whole, they have approximately ninety hours per year for English classes. As claimed by Archibald et al. (2006, p. 3), “learning a second language for 95 hours per year for six years will not lead to functional bilingualism and fluency in the second language.”

In addition, the limited use of English in daily situations result in shyness and stress when needing to speak. These limitations to speak English, it is argued, would not lead to any progress in students’ oral proficiency.

2.2.5 Lack of Topical Knowledge

Some studies have shown that students lack ideas about what to say and are not motivated to speak English. For example, a study from Rivers (1968) revealed that students had nothing to express perhaps because they did not have knowledge or information on that topic. In addition, when teachers choose topics that are not close to their interests or one about which they know so little, students feel difficultly in responding as they have limited topical knowledge, vocabulary choices, and grammar use (Baker & Westrup, 2003).

2.2.6 Uneven Participation

According to Leong and Ahmadi (2017), another problem which was found to hinder students’ speaking ability is the uneven or low participation in the speaking class. For example, in a group activity, each student might have limited time to speak during a speaking task because all of them had to take turns to speak. Therefore, it is highly possible that some students might dominate other students. The shy, more introverted students may get to speak very little or not at all.

2.2.7 L1 Interference

Harmer (1991) explained why students prefer to use their first language. First, when the students have to discuss a topic that is difficult to talk about, they use their first language to respond instead because it is easier for them. Second, if students are not encouraged to speak only the target language in the language class, students tend to

automatically talk to each other in their first language. Lastly, when teachers use the first language, students imitate as they might think it is acceptable.

2.2.8 Linguistically-Related Constraints

Linguistic problems have also been proven to be main factors that impede EFL students to speak. A study by Derwing and Rossiter (2002) revealed that mispronunciation could greatly affect students, as it could cause communication breakdowns because of their mispronunciation and suprasegmental features that are used incorrectly.

In conclusion, there are several problems that have been found to hinder speaking abilities. The researcher will later explore and develop the questionnaire based on the problems mentioned above.

2.3 Factors that Help Improve Speaking Skills

In order to develop proficient speakers of English, it is necessary to investigate skills and strategies that proved to help improve speaking proficiency. These aspects will be examined based on the literature that the researcher has reviewed so that teachers can assist students in promoting their speaking abilities. The researcher divided these factors into two main categories which are “in-class factors” and “out-of-class factors”, discussed below.

2.3.1 In-Class Factors

In an English communication class, teachers should provide various strategies that could enhance students’ speaking skills. There are several solutions and strategies that should be put into practice. For example, Anne Lazaraton offers a variety of exercises to be used in classrooms to enhance students’ interaction, such as rhymes, simulations dialogues, role plays, and debates (Lazaraton, 2001).

Tutyandari (2005) emphasized the importance of the teacher as a counsellor who provides support for students’ need for language learning. She also suggested that teachers should give students activities in small groups as it could enhance their self-confidence and lessen the anxiety that they might have.

2.3.2 Out-of-Class Factors

In order to improve their speaking ability, EFL students need to develop certain skills and features. In this regard, several skills need to be promoted. For example, listening skill is considered a crucial element that is needed to develop together with speaking skill in order to enhance students' speaking abilities. Boonkit (2010) found that if students listened to materials in English regularly, such as news, music, including watching movies, and other multimedia resources, their speaking skills would be enhanced. Likewise, EFL students should seek opportunities to practice listening along with speaking skills by practicing those previously mentioned strategies. There are also interactive online resources available for EFL students to practice listening, writing, reading, and speaking English at home such as the "BBC Learning English" website, the Duolingo website, and mobile apps, etc.

In addition, EFL students should seek opportunities to speak English more with the native speakers. As well, regular exposure to listening and speaking activities in daily life would enhance confidence in speaking (Songsiri, 2007 cited in Boonkit, 2010).

2.4 Related Previous Studies

Previous studies regarding factors that influence speaking skills are presented in this part. These studies were undertaken in order to highlight the factors supporting students' speaking performance or hinder their speaking ability.

Apart from the aforementioned strategies, Patil (2008) asserted that teachers should build up students' confidence to diminish fear to make errors and to make them feel at ease when they speak English. Not only creating a friendly environment and maintaining a good relationship with EFL students, teachers should encourage students to use English either in or outside the classrooms.

In addition, the learning environment also plays a crucial role in the second language classroom context. Several noteworthy studies have suggested that a contributing factor to students' learning development is the quality of the classroom environment (Martin-Dunlop & Fraser, 2007).

Park and Lee (2005) investigated the link between students' anxiety, self-confidence, and speaking performance using questionnaires with 132 Korean college

students who were enrolled in English conversation classes in 2004. The findings revealed that if students felt very confident, they would do better in speaking tasks. So, anxiety and self-confidence had significant effects on students' communicative competence.

Hamad (2013) also investigated the causes of student's low proficiency in English communication. The study was conducted with 150 female students who studied at a Saudi Arabian college for girls in 2015. Apart from questionnaires to collect data from the students, the researcher also interviewed 10 female instructors based on the questionnaire information. The findings revealed that the factors that caused speaking difficulties were extreme use of the first language, fear of making mistakes, insufficient opportunities to speak both in-class and in daily life, and inefficient teaching techniques of instructors.

Along the same lines, Dil (2009) investigated communication problems that Turkish EFL students faced in English language classrooms from 2007 to 2008. The study was carried out at Adiyaman University using a 66-item survey as the instrument. The participants were 139 first-year, non-English major undergraduate students. The findings revealed that the two biggest problematic factors for students were anxiety and reluctance to communicate during the speaking class which resulted from the fear to get evaluated negatively if they made mistakes, especially in front of their peers.

Jindathai (2015) carried out a study using a self-compiled questionnaire to investigate problematic factors in speaking abilities of 154 first-year and second-year students of engineering at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology (TNI). The findings revealed that the major problems that hinder students' speaking ability were limited opportunity to speak English, management in teaching, and being worried about making mistakes while speaking.

Khamkhien (2010) investigated the speaking problems in English teaching in the Thai context. He revealed some insightful information by observing learning, teaching, and assessing speaking performance in the Thai context. He concluded with some suggestions that teachers could support the students' English speaking performance by making them practice phrases or everyday expressions. Moreover, students should find opportunities to communicate in daily life as this would increase their knowledge of linguistic features such as lexical items, phonetics, pragmatics, etc.

Khamprated (2012) investigated speaking problems that Thai students encountered when they speak English. The participants were students studying in the second semester at a private vocational school in Bangkok in 2011. 356 copies of questionnaires were collected and analyzed. The findings indicated that students had trouble understanding speakers who speak too fast with a strong accent. Moreover, students felt that they could not comprehend jokes due to cultural differences. Students also felt worried and nervous to speak English because they had limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, they were worried that if they made any mistakes while speaking, people would laugh at them.

Srisang (2014) also conducted a study to find the problems that Thai English-major students at a university faced when speaking English. The findings showed that students always converse in their mother-tongue with their peers in class, so this caused limited opportunity to speak English. Moreover, they knew how the sentences should be structured, but still could not communicate in English. Another factor that caused speaking difficulties was anxiety as the findings showed that it hindered students' ability to speak English and made them feel less confident when speaking.

The findings of these studies are connected with the students' language learning process, especially speaking skills. These problems are generally about anxiety-provoking activities, no motivation to speak English, and insufficient exposure to English. These are highly cited factors that hinder students' speaking ability. Similarly, these difficulties that make students unable to speak English are the same chronic problems that Thai students have encountered for many generations. Thus, the researcher sees the need to explore factors that affect their oral competence in order to help students to speak English efficiently.

This chapter reviewed the literature in four main areas: English language teaching in Thailand, problems that hinder speaking abilities, factors that help improve speaking skills, and other related previous studies. The research methodology will be discussed next in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes: (1) the participants, (2) the materials, (3) the procedures of the research design and data collection, and (4) the data analysis.

3.1 PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were 60 first-year, non-English major students who were enrolled in an English for Communication class in 2018. The participants were from the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science at a private university in Thailand. According to personal communication with the lecturer of the course, these students were not good at speaking English and were unable to use English for communication. Convenience sampling was employed to elicit the opinions of the participants.

3.2 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In order to collect data relevant to the research questions, the researcher used a questionnaire as the research instrument. A 22-item questionnaire (APPENDIX A) was developed to examine the factors affecting English speaking ability of the students. All statements in Parts 2 and 3 were developed based on the reviewed literature in chapter 2, divided into two main categories. Firstly, all statements in Part 2 were developed regarding factors that hinder English speaking ability. These factors consisted of speaking anxiety and fear of making mistakes, fear of being assessed negatively, teaching approach, communication apprehension, lack of topical knowledge, motivation, limited exposure to the English language, L1 interference, uneven participation, and finally, linguistically-related constraints. Secondly, all statements in Part 3 were factors that help improve students' English speaking skills. These factors consisted of: teacher's support and the learning environment, speaking class activities, teacher's encouragement, listening strategies, and exposure to English speaking practices.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts as follows:

Part 1: The demographic data of respondents: gender, age, and duration that respondents have been learning English in formal education;

Part 2: Problems that hinder students' English speaking ability; and

Part 3: Factors that help improve students' English speaking skills.

In Parts 2 and 3, a Likert scale was used as an indicator of level of agreement as follows:

Scale	Meaning
5	Very High
4	High
3	Moderate/Undecided
2	Low
1	Very Low

3.3 PROCEDURES

This section describes the procedures in collecting the data.

3.3.1 Research Design

The questionnaires were distributed to the target group by convenience sampling method. The researcher developed two versions of the questionnaire in order to minimize problems of misinterpretation. The first version was written in English, while the second was a Thai version. The Thai version was distributed to the students. The questionnaire was piloted with five students from another major who shared some characteristics with the participants. After piloting, some parts of the questionnaire were revised in the areas of vocabulary choices and grammar. The final version of the questionnaire was adopted based on the feedback of the pilot study and was prepared to be used as the instrument.

3.3.2 Data Collection

The Thai-version questionnaires (Appendix B) were given to the respondents in March 2018. Sixty students were required to respond to the prepared questionnaires. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, the researcher visited the class and explained in detail the objective and the way the participants were expected to do the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed in paper to make sure that all the respondents had

access to the questionnaires and would be able to submit the questionnaires the same day.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analyzed statistically using SPSS. There are five levels of agreement in the questionnaires. The demographic data of respondents were analyzed by percentage and frequency count.

The factors of English speaking problems and the factors that help students improve their speaking skills were calculated by a Mean and Standard Deviation (S.D.). The interpretation of the responses was calculated by using the following formula:

Range	Level of Agreement
4.51 – 5.00	very high
3.51 – 4.50	high
2.51 – 3.50	moderate/undecided
1.51 – 2.50	low
1.00 – 1.50	very low

This chapter discussed the details of the research methodology in four main areas: participants, research instruments, procedures (research design and data collection), and the analysis of data. The result of the study will be discussed next in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The data collected from the answered questionnaires are reported in this chapter. The results are presented in three parts as follows: Section 4.1, personal information of the respondents; Section 4.2, problems that hinder students' English speaking ability; and Section 4.3, factors that help improve students' English speaking ability.

4.1 PERSONAL INFORMATION

The result in this section presents the demographic data of respondents including gender, age, and duration that respondents had been learning English in formal education.

Table 4.1

Frequency and Percentage of the Respondents' Personal Information

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	35	58.33
Female	25	41.66
Age	Frequency	%
Under 18	0	0
18-22	60	100
Years that respondents had been learning English	Frequency	%
0-1	2	3.33
2-4	3	5
5-7	10	16.66
>7	45	75

Educational Background	Frequency	%
English Major	0	0
Non-English Majors	60	100

Among the 60 respondents shown in Table 4.1, the majority were male (35 respondents, 58.33%), and 25 respondents were female (41.66%). All of them belong to the age groups of 18-22 (100%). 75% of the respondents had learned English in formal education for more than 7 years. Moreover, all of them were non-English major students.

4.2 PROBLEMS THAT HINDER STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY

The information in Table 4.2 provides answers to research question 1 on the problematic factors hindering students' English-speaking ability. The answers from the Likert scale (5 very high, 4 high, 3 moderate/undecided, 2 low, 1 very low) reveal the details on how respondents think about each factor.

Table 4.2

Factors that Hinder Students' English-Speaking Ability

No.	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Level
1	I feel anxious when I have to speak English.	4.01	0.82	High
2	I feel shy to speak a foreign language.	3.66	1.02	High
3	English teaching in my class is mainly explaining and practicing grammar rules.	3.83	0.68	High
4	My teacher often corrects my errors in the class when I communicate in English.	3.86	0.76	High
5	I am worried about making mistakes when I speak English.	4.06	0.74	High
6	I am afraid of being criticized or losing face.	3.7	0.98	High
7	I cannot think of anything to say.	4.00	0.68	High
8	I have no motivation to speak English.	3.61	0.83	High

9	I speak English very little or not at all in my real life.	3.75	1.04	High
10	I do not know how to pronounce some words, phrases, and sentences correctly.	3.83	0.81	High
11	My English class is overcrowded, so I do not have sufficient time to practice speaking.	2.88	0.75	Undecided
12	The language used in the English class by my teacher is mostly Thai.	3.55	0.90	High
Total Average Score		3.73	0.83	High

As shown in Table 4.2, respondents rated “fear of making mistakes” as the most problematic factor in English speaking with a mean of 4.06. “Feeling anxious when required to speak English” was chosen by respondents as the second most problematic factor with a mean of 4.01. While “I cannot think of anything to say” ranked the third most chosen by respondents with a mean of 4.00. On the other hand, “overcrowded English classrooms” was ranked lowest with a mean of 2.88.

4.3 FACTORS THAT HELP IMPROVE STUDENTS’ ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY

In this part, the supporting factors that support students’ speaking ability were analyzed regarding the most significant factors underlying the speaking skills.

The information from Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 aim to answer the research question number 2 regarding what factors help improve students’ speaking skills. The questionnaires were divided into six questions regarding “in-class” and “out-of-class” factors that support speaking skills. These factors are: teachers’ support, frequent exposure to English resources through a variety of English media, speaking activities, finding opportunities to speak in daily life, teacher’s encouragement, and frequent practice of English speaking outside the classroom.

The researcher divided the factors that help support students’ speaking skills into two main categories which are “in-class factors” and “out-of-class factors”. The findings are as follows:

Table 4.3: *In-Class Factors*

No.	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Level
13	I like my teacher to create an environment that encourages us to use English in the classroom.	4.06	0.62	High
14	I enjoy doing activities in the class e.g. dialogues, role plays, debates, and simulations.	3.63	0.85	High
15	I feel good with teacher's encouragement through phrases like "You can do this" and "You have the potential and the ability".	3.96	0.81	High
Total Average Score		3.88	0.76	High

The "in-class factors" which can help improve students' speaking ability were at a high level with a mean of 3.88 which was higher than that of "out-of-class factors".

Table 4.4: *Out-of-Class Factors*

No.	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Level
16	I believe that listening to music, watching movies, and listening to the news in English can help improve my listening and speaking skills.	4.01	0.78	High
17	I always practice speaking English outside the classroom.	3.10	0.86	Undecided
18	I always seek opportunities to speak English with foreigners.	2.86	0.95	Undecided
Total Average Score		3.32	0.86	Undecided

The mean score of "out-of-class factors" was 3.32 which was at an undecided level.

This chapter discussed the three main areas: personal information of the respondents, problems that hinder students' speaking ability, and factors that help improve students' English speaking ability. Discussions, conclusions, and recommendations will be discussed next in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the problems that affect the students' speaking ability and to discover the factors that support their speaking skills. There were two research questions: 1) What are the problems that hinder the students' speaking ability?; and 2) What are the factors that help improve their speaking skills?

The subjects of this study were 60 university students, all of whom were students enrolled in an English for Communication class in 2018. These 60 students were first-year, non-English major students in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science at a private university in Thailand.

The paper questionnaires were distributed to participants in March 2018 and administered on the same day to all the participants by their teacher and the present researcher. The total administration of each questionnaire took between 10 and 15 minutes. Responses were scored from 5 to 1 on a Likert scale.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from this research are summarized in this section.

5.2.1 Personal Information

The respondents consisted of 60 Thai EFL university students. All of them were in the age group of 18-22 and studied in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science at a private university. All of them were non-English major students.

5.2.2 Problems that Hinder Students' English Speaking Ability

To summarize the findings, the “fear of making mistakes” was the greatest factor that hindered students to speak with a mean value of 4.06. “Feeling anxious when having to speak English” ranked as the second most problematic factor with a mean of 4.01. While “unable to think of anything to say” ranked as the third most chosen answer by the respondents with a mean of 4.00.

However, respondents ranked “overcrowded English classroom” as the least contributing factor that hindered their ability to speak English with the lowest mean of 2.88.

5.2.3 Factors that Help Improve Students' English Speaking Skills

Regarding “in-class factors”, the respondents ranked “teachers’ support” as the greatest contributing factor that helped to improve their speaking skills with a mean of 4.06. Most respondents would like to have an environment that encourages them to use English in the classroom. Similarly, the respondents ranked “frequent exposure to English language through a variety of English media,” which was one of the “out-of-class factors” as the second ranked factor with a mean of 4.01. While “teacher’s encouragement” ranked the third most significant “in-class factor” that was chosen by the respondents with a mean of 3.96.

However, the respondents ranked “seeking opportunities to speak English with foreigners” as the least supporting factor with the lowest mean of 2.86.

5.3 DISCUSSIONS

In this part, the findings of this study are discussed based on the relevant ideas from the previous research studies reviewed in Chapter 2.

5.3.1 Problems that Hinder Students' Speaking Ability

The first research question was: what are problems that hinder the students’ speaking ability? From the data analysis, fear of making mistakes and speaking anxiety were selected as the most problematic factors. The findings of this study are aligned with several reviewed studies in chapter 2 by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986),

Phillips (1992), Gregersen and Horwitz (2002), Park and Lee (2005), Hamad (2013), Jindathai (2015), Khamprated (2012), and Srisang (2014). For example, a study from Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) revealed that anxiety can create negative feelings to the speakers of other languages, and it can also lead to poor speaking performance. A study from Phillips (1992) also reported that if students were very confident, they would do better on oral tests. A study from Park and Lee (2005) also supported the study of Phillips (1992) as it revealed that students' anxiety level had a negative correlation to their scores on oral performance. Khamprated (2012) demonstrated that students displayed a fear that people would laugh at them if they spoke incorrectly. Srisang (2014) reported that anxiety could cause speaking difficulties as it made students feel less confident when speaking.

Apart from the fear to speak incorrectly and anxiety, unable to think of anything to say also hinders students' oral competence which was greatly in line with Rivers (1968) who revealed that students who have nothing to say might be because they do not have knowledge or information on a particular topic. This idea also was supported by a study of Baker and Westrup (2003) who believed that in the speaking class, if the teacher chose a topic which was not close to the students' interests or one about which they know very little, students would feel that it was difficult to respond as they had limited topical knowledge, vocabulary choices, and grammar use. In this regard, teachers should choose topics based on the students' interests in order to encourage students to talk more easily in the target language. Moreover, Derwing and Rossiter (2002) showed that linguistic problems are also main factors that impede student's speaking skills. It was found that communication breakdowns resulted from their mispronunciation and inaccuracy of suprasegmental features. Khamprated (2012) also showed that limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary made students feel worried and nervous when speaking. In this regard, students need more input of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge used in English conversation. Moreover, they need to learn more about the correct pronunciation of words, phrases, and sentences so that they will not be afraid to speak English incorrectly.

5.3.2 Factors Supporting Speaking Skills

The respondents ranked “teachers’ support” and “Frequent exposure to English language through a variety of English media” and “teacher’s encouragement” as the top three contributing factors that help improve their oral competence. These findings are evidently in line with many reviewed studies in Chapter 2.

Firstly, the findings revealed that teachers’ support is the key factor that can help students improve their speaking abilities. In this respect, teachers truly play an important role as an influencer for students’ willingness to study. This finding was in line with a study of Tutyandari (2005) which emphasized the importance of the teacher as a counsellor who provides support for students’ need during language learning.

Most respondents also would like to have a supportive atmosphere in the classroom. Hence, regarding the classroom implication, teachers should create a friendly and fun atmosphere and offer to help students when needed. This would help them overcome shyness and inhibition to speak English. Patil (2008) suggested that teachers should promote students’ confidence to eliminate their fear and inhibition to speak. Not only creating a friendly environment and maintaining a good relationship with EFL students, teachers should also encourage students to speak more both in and outside the classrooms.

Secondly, the finding obtained from the questionnaires indicated that most students agreed with the idea of having frequent exposure to English instructional materials as it was a significant factor that helped them to improve their speaking performance. This finding highlighted the fact that a variety of instructional materials can attract students’ interest and willingness to learn English more. This aspect is in agreement with Lazaraton (2001) who suggested that students practice various techniques, such as rhymes, role plays, dialogues, and movie scenes so as to aid them in speaking English in various situations. Moreover, Boonkit (2010) discovered that if students listened to materials in English regularly, such as news, music, including watching movies, and other multimedia resources, their speaking skills would be enhanced.

Therefore, the researcher would suggest that students should be prompted to practice English in the classroom more often by setting up some activities for students to do the speaking tasks productively. For example, using films or videos in English as

instructional materials. The more exposure to English, the better the speaking skills can develop.

Thirdly, as the finding revealed that a teacher's encouragement is also a crucial factor, teachers should build up students' confidence to diminish the fear of making errors and to make them feel at ease when they speak English. This finding was supported by a study from Patil (2008) who asserted that building up learner's confidence to eliminate fear of making mistakes was a priority that the teacher should consider in order to make students feel comfortable with their language use. Teachers should create a friendly environment and maintain a good relationship with students as well.

However, it was surprising that the respondents rated "frequent practice of English speaking outside the classroom" and "seeking opportunities to speak English with foreigners" as the least factors they think can support their oral competence. As mentioned earlier, several studies pointed in the direction that these two factors highly contributed to the progress in English speaking skills.

From the researcher's point of view, young people today have broad access to a variety of media. For instance, movies, TV series, music videos, and a wide range of streaming services such as Netflix, Sky TV, Amazon, HBO, etc. Therefore, students should be encouraged to expose themselves to these media and make use of these 21st century technologies to boost their language learning skills. If students constantly watch these kinds of entertainment in English, their communicative competence would be improved. Moreover, teachers can create authentic English-speaking environments and cultivate the learning habit by letting and encouraging them to practice English by themselves not only in the classroom but also out of the class. For example, setting up a volunteer interpreter project to give students chances to help respond to the tourists' needs at renowned temples, etc. This kind of interaction should be emphasized as it might inspire more progress in communicative competence.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the problems that affect students' ability to speak English and to find factors that help them improve their speaking skills.

The findings obtained from the questionnaires revealed that most respondents shared the same thought and attitudes towards problematic factors that hinder their speaking ability and also factors that help support their speaking skills.

With regard to the problematic factors, the most highly rated factors are the fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and having nothing to say. Also, anxiety greatly affects oral competence as students cannot speak English when they are worried about speaking incorrectly. Similarly, all students encountered the same problem when speaking English. Most respondents agreed that they were afraid to say something incorrectly or that they would make grammatical mistakes when speaking.

For supporting factors, the most significant factor that helps to improve students' speaking skills is the teachers' support. Most respondents agreed that substantial support from teachers will definitely help students overcome those difficulties in oral performance. Teachers may increase students' exposure to English by encouraging them to engage in activities outside the classroom at their own time. By accumulating these practices, the researcher believes that it will help students to speak more fluently and confidently to the extent that they applied what they have learnt both in and outside the classroom to the real conversation in their real life.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND LIMITATIONS

There are some issues that need to be addressed for further research.

5.5.1 For future research: further research should be conducted with more variety of sample groups. For example, sample groups should be non-English and English-major students, students from rural areas and from cities, etc. in order to gain broader and more diverse information. The expected results might be different from research conducted with only one sample group since it might be too limited to draw general conclusions.

5.5.2 The set of questions used in the questionnaire is too fixed. Use of open-ended questions or an interview are suggested for future research as it can enhance the qualitative value of the study.

5.5.3 With regards to the pedagogical implications: Teachers may consider adopting a CLT approach to teach students English speaking. In addition, teachers may

employ a wide selection of in-class activities which focus on communicative tasks such as dialogues, role plays, debates, impromptu speech activities and simulations.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH VERSION)

This survey questionnaire is a part of research in TE 790 course (Independent Study) which developed by a student in English Language Teaching Master program at the Language Institute, Thammasat University.

The survey questionnaire is designed for an investigation into “Factors Affecting English Speaking Ability of Thai EFL students at a private university”. Your contribution in completing the following questions is greatly appreciated.

The questionnaire consists of 3 parts:

Part I: Personal information of the students

Part II: Problems that hinder students’ English speaking abilities

Part III: Factors that help improve students’ English speaking skills

Please mark (✓) in the box beside the option you choose.

Part I: Personal Information

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. Age

Under 18

18- 22

3. How long have you been learning English in the formal education?

Less than 1 year

2- 4 years

5- 7 years

More than 7 years

4. What major you are currently studying in?

.....

Part II: Problems that Hinder English Speaking Ability of Thai Students at A private university

Instruction: Please mark (✓) in the blank to indicate your opinion towards the following statements. You can choose only one point per statement.

- 5 = very high
 4 = high
 3 = undecided/moderate
 2 = low
 1 = very low

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
1. I feel anxious when I have to speak English.					
2. My teacher often corrects my errors in the class when I communicate in English.					
3. English teaching in my class is mainly explaining and practicing grammar rules.					
4. I feel shy to speak a foreign language.					
5. I am worried about making mistakes when I speak English.					
6. I am afraid of being criticized or losing face.					
7. I cannot think of anything to say.					
8. I have no motivation to speak English.					

9. I speak English very little or not at all in my real life.					
10. The language used in the English class by my teacher is mostly Thai.					
11. My English class is overcrowded, so I do not have sufficient time to practice speaking.					
12. I do not know how to pronounce some words, phrases, and sentences correctly.					

Part III: Factors that Help Improve Students' English Speaking Skills

In-class factors

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
13. I like my teacher to create an atmosphere that encourages us to use English in the classroom.					
14. I enjoy doing activities in the class e.g. dialogues, role plays, debates, and simulations.					
15. I feel good with teacher's encouragement through phrases like "You can do this" and "You have the potential and the ability".					

Out-of-class factors

<i>Factors that help improve EFL students' English speaking skills</i>	5	4	3	2	1
16. I believe that listening to music, watching movies, and listening to the news in English can help improve my listening and speaking skills.					
17. I always practice speaking English outside the classroom.					

18. I always seek opportunities to speak English with foreigners.					
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APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE (THAI VERSION)

แบบสำรวจปัญหาที่เป็นอุปสรรคต่อการพูดภาษาอังกฤษและปัจจัยที่ช่วยพัฒนา
ความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา

แบบสอบถามนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการทำสารนิพนธ์ (Independent Study) รายวิชา TE 790 ซึ่งจัดทำ
ขึ้นโดยนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาโท สาขาการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ สถาบันภาษาแห่ง มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์

สารนิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อการสำรวจปัจจัยที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อความสามารถในการพูด
ภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยนครพนมที่ศึกษาภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

แบบสำรวจนี้ประกอบด้วย 3 ส่วนดังนี้

ส่วนที่ 1 ข้อมูลทั่วไปของนักศึกษา

ส่วนที่ 2 ปัญหาที่เป็นอุปสรรคต่อการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา

ส่วนที่ 3 ปัจจัยที่ช่วยพัฒนาความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา

ผู้วิจัยใคร่ขอความร่วมมือนักศึกษาในการร่วมตอบแบบสอบถามอย่างครบถ้วนทุกข้อ ข้อมูลที่ท่าน
ตอบจะเก็บเป็นความลับเพื่อวัตถุประสงค์ทางการศึกษาเท่านั้น

คำชี้แจง: โปรดทำเครื่องหมาย (✓) ลงในช่องที่กำหนด

ส่วนที่ 1 : ข้อมูลทั่วไปของนักศึกษา

1. เพศ

ชาย

หญิง

2. อายุ

ต่ำกว่า 18 ปี

อายุระหว่าง 18-22 ปี

3. ระยะเวลาที่คุณเรียนภาษาอังกฤษตามหลักสูตรการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐานตั้งแต่เริ่มแรกจนถึงปัจจุบัน

น้อยกว่า 1 ปี

2-4 ปี

5-7 ปี

มากกว่า 7 ปี

4. คุณกำลังศึกษาอยู่ใน คณะ

เอก

ส่วนที่ 2 : ปัญหาที่เป็นอุปสรรคต่อการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา

คำชี้แจง: โปรดทำเครื่องหมาย(✓)ในช่องคะแนนที่ท่านเลือกเพื่อแสดงความคิดเห็นต่อข้อความเหล่านี้ โดยท่านสามารถเลือกตอบได้ 1 หน่วยคะแนนต่อ 1 ข้อความ

5 = เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง

4 = เห็นด้วย

3 = ไม่แน่ใจ

2 = ไม่เห็นด้วย

1 = ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง

ปัญหาที่เป็นอุปสรรคต่อการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา	5	4	3	2	1
1.ข้าพเจ้ารู้สึกกังวลเมื่อต้องพูดภาษาอังกฤษ					
2.ข้าพเจ้ารู้สึกอายที่จะพูดภาษาอังกฤษ					
3.การเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในชั้นเรียนส่วนใหญ่เป็นการอธิบายและการฝึกหลักไวยากรณ์					
4.อาจารย์ผู้สอนมักจะแก้ไขข้อผิดพลาดของข้าพเจ้าในชั้นเรียนเมื่อข้าพเจ้าพูดภาษาอังกฤษไม่ถูกต้อง					

5.ข้าพเจ้ากลัวว่าจะพูดภาษาอังกฤษผิด					
6.ข้าพเจ้ากลัวว่าจะถูกวิพากษ์วิจารณ์หรือทำให้เสียหน้า					
7.ข้าพเจ้านึกเรื่องที่จะพูดไม่ออก					
8.ข้าพเจ้าไม่มีแรงจูงใจในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ					
9.ข้าพเจ้าแทบไม่ได้พูดภาษาอังกฤษเลย หรือ ไม่ได้พูดเลยในชีวิตจริง					
10.ข้าพเจ้าไม่ทราบการออกเสียงคำบางคำ บางวลีหรือประโยคให้เป็นภาษาอังกฤษที่ถูกต้องได้					
11.ชั้นเรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษของข้าพเจ้านั้นมีผู้เรียนมากเกินไป ข้าพเจ้าจึงไม่มีเวลามากพอที่จะฝึกพูดภาษาอังกฤษ					
12.ภาษาที่ใช้ในชั้นเรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษโดยอาจารย์ผู้สอนของ ข้าพเจ้านั้นส่วนใหญ่เป็นภาษาไทย					

ส่วนที่ 3 : ปัจจัยที่ช่วยพัฒนาความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา

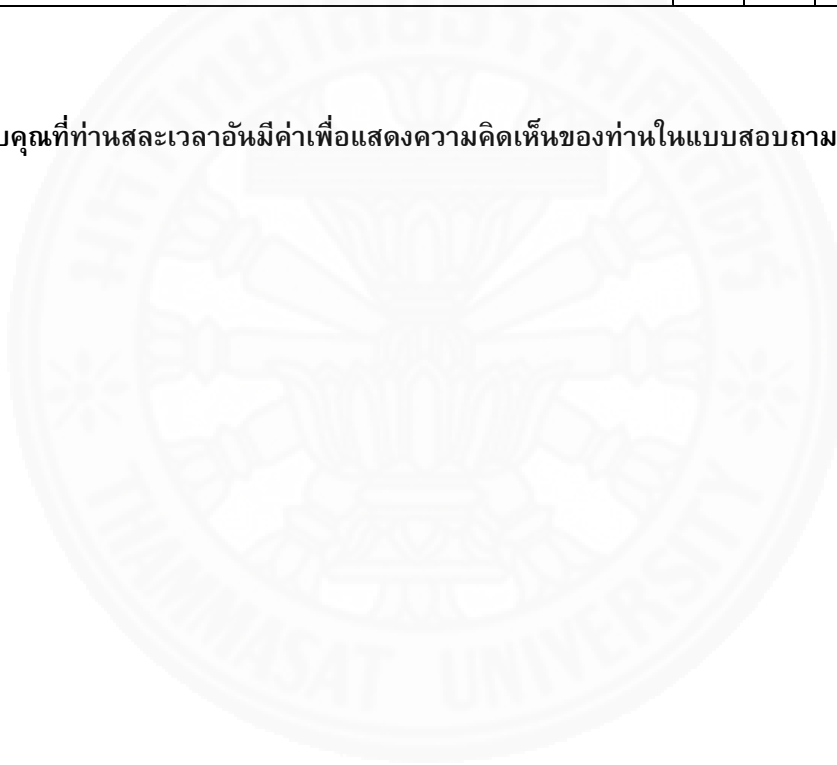
ปัจจัยในห้องเรียน

ปัจจัยที่ช่วยพัฒนาความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของ นักศึกษา	5	4	3	2	1
13.ข้าพเจ้าชอบให้อาจารย์ผู้สอนสร้างบรรยากาศที่ส่งเสริมให้เกิดการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในชั้นเรียน					
14. ข้าพเจ้าชื่นชอบการทำกิจกรรมเหล่านี้ในชั้นเรียนวิชา ภาษาอังกฤษ เช่น การสนทนา กิจกรรมบทบาทสมมติ การโต้วาที และการสร้างสถานการณ์จำลอง					
15. ข้าพเจ้ารู้สึกดีเมื่อได้ยินคำพูดให้กำลังใจจากผู้สอน					

ปัจจัยนอกห้องเรียน

ปัจจัยที่ช่วยพัฒนาความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของ นักศึกษา	5	4	3	2	1
16. ข้าพเจ้าเชื่อว่าการฟังเพลง การชมภาพยนตร์ และ การรับฟังข่าว ที่เป็นภาษาอังกฤษจะช่วยพัฒนาทักษะการฟังและการพูด ภาษาอังกฤษของข้าพเจ้าได้					
17. ข้าพเจ้ามักจะฝึกพูดภาษาอังกฤษนอกชั้นเรียนอยู่เสมอ					
18. ข้าพเจ้ามักจะหาโอกาสสนทนากับชาวต่างชาติอยู่เสมอ					

ขอขอบคุณที่ท่านสละเวลาอันมีค่าเพื่อแสดงความคิดเห็นของท่านในแบบสอบถามนี้ 😊



BIOGRAPHY

Name	Miss Thunyaluck Santiwatthanasiri
Date of Birth	September 28 th , 1987
Educational Attainment	2011: Bachelor of Arts Majoring in English, Silapakorn University
Work Position	Senior Officer Singha Estate Public Company Limited
Work Experiences	February 2016 – September 2018: Flight Attendant Bangkok Jets (AC Aviation Co., ltd.) February 2014 – January 2016: Flight Attendant Singapore Airlines June 2012 – January 2014: Account Executive Happening Magazine May 2011 – May 2012: Project Coordinator Crystal Design Center