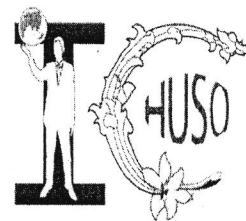
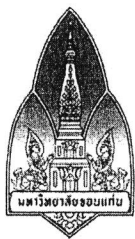


11th International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences (IC-HUSO) 2015
26-27 November, 2015 Khon Kaen, Thailand



NOTIFICATION OF PAPER ACCEPTANCE

Date: September 17, 2015

Dear Mr. KEMAL ABDELA KASO

Paper Number: ICHUSO-0052 *

Conference website: <http://hs.kku.ac.th/ichuso>

We are pleased to inform you that your paper entitled **"Factors Affect Thai Student's English Communication Skill at University Level: A case study at SakonNakhonRajabhat University"** is accepted for oral presentation in the 11th International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences (IC-HUSO) 2015 which will be held from **November 26-27, 2015 at Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen Province, Thailand**. Your paper was evaluated in a double-blind peer-reviewed. We invite you to present your full paper at the conference.

You will have 15 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for audience discussion and questions. Electronic devices such as a computer, a projector, and an overhead projector will be provided in the presentation room.

Please submit the full paper before **September 30, 2015**. Please also note that only selected full papers will be included in conference proceedings and in a CD as well as online publication on website. In the conference handbook, only abstracts will be published. The proceedings and the handbook will be distributed at the conference.

Payment for registration fee must be made no later than **September 30, 2015** and kindly send us the scanned copy of the payment proof as soon as possible at email: ichuso2015@gmail.com

We look forward to welcoming you to Khon Kaen University in November, Thailand.

Yours sincerely,

(Assoc. Prof. Kulthida Tuamsuk, Ph.D.)

Conference Chair
Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Thursday 26th November 2015

* The final letter (E=English Language or T=Thai Language) of each code refers to the language for presentation in the conference room

[illegible]

Day 27th November 2015

09.00 Welcome /Registration

10.30 Paper presentation

Room	Room 1 : LE	Room 2 : LE	Room 3 : PH/PA	Room 4 : SA	Room 5 : SD	Room 6 : WeSD	Room 7 : CL	Room 8 : CERP	Room 9 :
30	1.ICHUSO-012 2.ICHUSO-013 3.ICHUSO-154 4.ICHUSO-094 (T)	1.ICHUSO-031 2.ICHUSO-100 3.ICHUSO-121 4.ICHUSO-122 5.ICHUSO-180 (T)	1.ICHUSO-002 2.ICHUSO-079 3.ICHUSO-099 4.ICHUSO-106 5.ICHUSO-140 (T)		1.ICHUSO-040 2.ICHUSO-043 3.ICHUSO-063 4.ICHUSO-081 (T)	1.ICHUSO-168 2.ICHUSO-169 3.ICHUSO-170 4.ICHUSO-179 (T)	1.ICHUSO-014 2.ICHUSO-021 3.ICHUSO-039 4.ICHUSO-041 (T)	1.ICHUSO-164 2.ICHUSO-165 3.ICHUSO-166 4.ICHUSO-167 (T)	
45	Break								
30	1.ICHUSO-137 2.ICHUSO-138 3.ICHUSO-155 4.ICHUSO-182 (T)	1.ICHUSO-130 2.ICHUSO-131 3.ICHUSO-132 4.ICHUSO-181 (T)				1.ICHUSO-175 2.ICHUSO-176 3.ICHUSO-177 4.ICHUSO-178 (T)	1.ICHUSO-084 2.ICHUSO-085 3.ICHUSO-103 (T)		
	Lunch								

LE = Language and Literature

PH = Philosophy and Religion

CL = Culture and Language

SA = Sociology and Anthropology

SD = Social Development

PA = Public administration

MC = Media, Information and Communication

ED = Education in Humanities and Social Sciences

WeSD = Research Group on Wellbeing and Sustainable Development

CERP = Center for Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region



**FACTORS THAT AFFECT THAI STUDENTS' ENGLISH COMMUNICATION
SKILLS AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL: A CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS STUDYING
ENGLISH AT SAKON NAKHON RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY, THAILAND.**

KEMAL ABDELA KASO

**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University,
47000 Sakon Nakhon, Thailand
*Email: kemalorom@gmail.com***

**THIS RESEARCH WAS SPONSORED BY THE INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH AND
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10th International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences 2015
(IC-HUSO 2015)

At Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Title: Factors that Affect Thai Students' English Communication Skills at University Level: A case study of students studying English at Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand.

Mr. KEMAL ABDELA KASO

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University,
47000 Sakon Nakhon, Thailand
Email: kemalorom@gmail.com

Abstract

English now stands at the very centre of the global language system. It has become the *lingua franca* par excellence and continues to entrench this dominance in a self-reinforcing process. It has become the central language of communication in business, politics, administration, science and academia, as well as being its dominant language of globalised advertising and popular culture at national, regional and global levels. Recognizing the importance of English, many countries, especially non-native speaking countries such as Thailand, are striving to improve English proficiency level of their citizens. However, the studies, English proficiency Index, and other reports reveal that the English communication skills of Thai university students, and Thai students in general is low when considering the years expended by the students studying English.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the English communication challenges faced Thai university students, and the factors affecting their communication performance. The participants of the study were one hundred English major students and ten English teachers in the faculties of Education, and Humanities and Social Sciences at Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University (SNRU). The research instruments used in this study were survey questionnaires and class observation.

The findings indicated that:

1. Student factors: lack of self-motivation, lack of confidence, shyness, lack of desire to practice and apply English in their daily life, and using Thai language in and outside classroom were personal factors affect students' speaking skill.
2. Teacher factors: the results also showed that the teachers lacked an adequate use of communicative language teaching techniques. And the teachers don't motivate and encourage the students to practice and apply English in their daily lives. Moreover, Thai teachers often use Thai language in and outside classroom as it is their mother-tongue.
3. Environmental factors: include lack of up to date learning and teaching materials, the size of the classes, and a limited listening and speaking exercises for speaking skills in the curricula, and examinations in general do not involve an oral language test.

Thus, it is suggested that: firstly, the students have to be motivated and encouraged to use English language, and limit using Thai in English Language classes. Secondly, include speaking exam in the curricula, and develop the participatory and interactive English teaching strategies.

Thirdly, update learning and teaching materials. Fourthly, establishing English club or societies and English Medias such as TV or radio where the students may practice their communication. Fifthly, limit the Students' number in listening and speaking classes. Finally, introduce capacity building through English trainings, workshops or seminars for both students and teachers.

This study aims to help students, teachers, researchers and policy makers to improve Thai students' English communication performance. And it will encourage a more attention on oral proficiency of Thai university students.

Keywords: affect; communication; factors; motivation; skill; Thailand.

1. Introduction

English is found on every continent. It has major speech communities in over seventy countries. It is the language of the internet. It is language of air-traffic control, of international travel, and of international business. It is the language of science (English project, 2013). In the age of globalization, therefore, English plays a very important role in communication; that is to say, English is used as an international language across the world.

The role of English in development programs has come about, in part, because of the rise of English as a 'global' language. The current global status of English is the result of interplay of social, economic, political and historical factors that have had wide ranging implications for societies around the world (Crystal, 2003). One of the primary consequences of English's global spread is that it now operates as the pre-eminent medium of international communication in the modern world. It is the *lingua franca* of many transnational political and economic associations, while also operating as a medium of global communication in domains such as science, technology, business and academia. Because of this, English language ability viewed by many-both at the level of governments and individuals as a fundamental element in the skill set required for full participation in the 21 century society. It is often seen as a resource that can contribute to the personal, social and economic development in a range of diverse contexts- as a medium that can provide access to education. It offers the ability to influence the global economic and political trends, yet at the same time it has led to social inequalities and injustices for individuals and groups around the world who do not have the ability to speak English. Not being able to communicate in English can exclude from many levels of social participations.

The clear implication is that learning English is a means of increasing one's social, economic, political and cultural capital. This is particularly the case in Asia, where there the major intra-Asian institutions-the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the recently approved Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), use English as an official language. Accordingly, the members of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are investing to improve the English proficiency of their citizens.

Recognizing the national, regional and international importance of English language, Thailand has been investing heavily in promoting the English language proficiency of its citizens. The Thai government has embarked on an ambitious nationwide program in 2012 to teach English at least once a week in all state school students. The year 2012 was designated the "English

Speaking Year". This initiative was intended to ease Thailand's entry into the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, when Southeast Asia becomes one economic zone and a universal language is required for communication and business. The project commenced in 2012 focused on speaking English rather than written, with teachers providing training through media modules and partnerships with foreign institutions, including English-language schools

Despite the efforts of government and other stakeholders, many sources reveal that Thai students' English communication skills is low relative to the budget spent and time expended in promoting English. According to Bangkok Post (2012), Thai students' English-language skills rank below those of youngsters in at least three other member countries of ASEAN. The Office of the Education Council (ONEC), which revealed the results of the survey, stated that the level of English proficiency of Thai youth is below par in contrast to many other countries. Moreover, the recent university admission exams reports (NIETS) show that Thai students scored an average of 28.43 percent in English. And the English Proficiency Index (EPI 2014) report also revealed that the English proficiency level of Thais is still far from satisfactory, and exhibits a very low level of English proficiency. Likewise, the SNRU graduate and undergraduate students also have been experiencing the low level of English proficiency. Therefore, it is important for the stakeholders to co-operate and assist the students to overcome the English communication challenges at all levels.

There has been no specific research conducted at this university in this regard. This study aims to identify the factors that affect English proficiency in general and communication skills of Thai university students in particular, and provide the possible solutions to address this problem. The data collected during this study has been analyzed with a view to formulating recommendations to raise English proficiency level of SNRU students and Thai students in general.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the English communication problems of the Thai University students and the factors affecting their communication performance.

Literature review

Speaking appears to be the most important skills of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) because people who know a language are usually referred to as speakers of that language (Ur, 1996). The major goal of all English language teaching should be to give learners the ability to use English effectively and accurately in communication (Davies and Pearse, 1998). However, not all language learners, after many years of English studying can communicate fluently and accurately because they do not have mastered all the nuances of this language. Many studies in the literature shed light on the factors that have impact on the English learning in particular, and communication skills. Hashemi (2011), identifies that the students' weakness in English language learning are often due to the differences in social contexts, cultural and environments. For example, in the environments where the first and second or foreign languages learning take place such as Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and others.

John andEhow(2011) suggested that the problem of learning English language is derived from many different factors in different environments including school resources, class size, quality teachers, and the school attendance level of students. Moreover, Murray andChristison(2010), have reported that many students think English is only a school subject and they do not see it as significant for their prospective employment in what is the world of multinational or national companies where English is *lingua franca*.

Previous Studies

Some earlier studies have identified factors affecting students' relating to this study will be reviewed. These studies were carried out to identify the factors affecting students' speaking performance and students' speaking difficulties.

Macintyre, Clément, et al. (1998), studied the effects of self-confidence on oral performance. The results of their study showed that the learners' willingness to communicate was determined partly by the level of confidence. Park and Lee (2005) also explored the relationships between L2 learners' anxiety, self-confidence and oral performance. They reached the conclusion that self-confidence has significant impact on L2 learners' oral performance. They stated that if the learners were more confident, they would have better oral performance. Tanveer (2007) also investigated the factors that cause language anxiety for twenty language learners in learning speaking skills and the influence of anxiety on communication in the target language and his result was similar to what Park and Lee figure out. The findings suggested that students' feeling of stress, anxiety or nervousness may impede their language learning and performance abilities. He cites that "the higher the anxiety, the lower the performance".

Lukitasari (2008) conducted a study focusing on students' strategies in overcoming speaking problems in speaking classes. The population of her study was first semester students at Muhammadiyah University in Malang, Indonesia. The results of her study suggest that in speaking classes, the students faced some speaking problems including inhibition, "nothing to say", low or uneven participation, and mother tongue use. The findings of the study also reveal that the students' speaking performance was not good because they did not master the three elements of speaking namely vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Some studies are also conducted in relation to the factors affect Thai students' speaking skill. Kakar (n.d), has stated that, first, Thai students are not eager to learn English at primary school until higher schools. Second, they think English is less important than other subjects. Finally, they mostly avoid interaction with foreign languages even though electronic or paper media.

Chamkhien(2010) also stated some reasons why Thai students speaking skill limited. These are: First, for Thai students, English speaking or oral communication in English is deemed to be difficult since English is not their native language. Second, most of Thai learners need their English to sound as native-like as possible which is a prestige norm of spoken English even though English is not widely used in the region of south East Asia, creating a great diversity of English e.g., Malaysian English, Singaporean English, etc. This scenario seems to limit their choice of their exposure to English. Next, since English in Thailand is a foreign language, the exposure of English to authentic language input of learners of English in Thailand is limited. Lastly, another dimension which should be taken into account lies into English pronunciation of

Thai teachers of English. These serious problems are exclusively important, leading to a large volume of studies focusing on speaking ability of Thai learners. Moreover, Juhana(2012), explained that fear of mistakes, anxious, shyness, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation are the psychological factors that affect the students communication skills.

2. Methodology of the Study

Participants

The target population of this study was one hundred English Major Students and ten English teachers at the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at SNRU.

Instruments

For the purpose of collecting data required for this study, survey questionnaires and class observation were employed. Two separate questionnaires were prepared for students and teachers. Each questionnaire was consisting of 15 close-ended questions, and 4 open-ended questions were included in the teachers' questionnaire. The questionnaires were try out and piloted before finalization.

Data Collection

The teachers and students were given questionnaires which were completed in the presence of the data collectors. The data were collected in same from all participating students and teachers. The data were tabulated in percentages. There was also class observation concluded in randomly selected English classes in faculties of Education, and Humanities and Social Sciences. All recommendations and conclusions were based on the analyzed data.

3. Result of the study

The findings were:

A. From the Student's Questionnaires

All students agreed that competency the in English communication is very necessary. And more than 90% of the students reported that they are willing to speak English. However, majority of them think that English is a difficult language, and they lack confidence to speak English. These facts have impact on their social interactions at national and international levels.

More than 60% of the students responded that they do not have guided oral practices inside and outside classrooms, speaking tests or exams, and the opportunities to speak with other English speakers. Moreover, more than half(55%) of the students agreed that the university support them to practice their English speaking. However, most of them stated that the university does not have enough English communication environments. They also stated that English teaching materials are not as such supportive to improve their English communication skills.

Moreover, the students have reported that the teachers mostly use Thai language while teaching English, and disagreed with the statement that the teachers use English as a medium of instruction for teaching. There is also low motivation towards speaking and practicing English from the teachers.

From the Teacher Questionnaires

All teachers agreed that competency in English communication is very necessary. However, the teachers stated that the students are not willing, and confident to communicate in English. And they do not use and practice English in their real lives.

About 75% of teachers stated that they use both English and Thai language in English classes. It means that the teachers assisted their instruction bilingually. More than half of the teachers reported that they teach English through interactive techniques. Moreover, the teachers communicate with their students inside or outside classroom in English. And they use different materials for the enhancement of speaking skill of the students. However, more than 90% of them stated that they do not have oral exams or tests, but they have only assignment presentation. More than half of teachers (51%) stated that the English teaching materials are good enough to improve the students' English communication ability contrary to the 60% of students' report. But all teachers also agreed that the university doesn't have enough English communication environments.

The open-ended questions and their respective results were the following.

1. Do you think Thai culture can be the factor that affects Thai students' English communication skills? If yes, how? The teachers agreed that with this statement and stated that because of Thai culture the students are shy and afraid to speak out, ask and answer questions. They also fear of mistakes, and prefer to be quiet.
2. Do you think environment has impact on the students' English communication skills? If yes, please list the possible environmental factors. The teachers stated that direct access to foreign teachers is very limited, absence of English social Medias such as TV or radio stations in SNRU. Moreover, they reported that university public announcements are only in Thai language.
3. Do you think economic background of the students affect their English communication skills? If yes, How? Please, explain. It was reported that economic background has less effect on Thai students' English communication skills.
4. Please list any other factors that affect Thai student's English communication skills. Teachers reported the following are also the factors that affect students' English communication skills. These were: the size of classroom, teaching and learning materials, not enough foreigners to speak with, peer pressure, and absence of motivation from both teachers and students.

Observation results

Class observations were carried out to see how students and teachers really performed and what problems they had in speaking classes. The findings were:

- 1) The students were not given enough time to prepare for a speaking task before the task was performed and to perform their task.
- 2) When the students were asked to work in groups, not all of them were eager to contribute their opinions in English. Some of them participated actively but the others spoke very little or not at all.
- 3) They tended to use Thai language when they discussed in groups.
- 4) While the students were making performances, the other students in class did not listen attentively. They even chatted with the people next to them when their classmates were speaking.
- 5) The students looked very nervous when they spoke in front of the class. Sometimes, they did not know what to say and kept silent.
- 6) There was low class participation i.e., the participatory techniques of teaching were not really promoted by the teachers, and the students were highly dependent on the teachers.
- 7) There was large number of students in English classroom in which the teachers may not reach all students, and assist them practice effectively. Thus, the role of the teachers was limited to facilitate the communication process.
- 8) The English teachers do not have enough teaching and learning materials i.e., audio, visual clippings, communicative games like role play based on the English speaking lessons.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study intended to investigate the English communication problems of the Thai University students and the factors affecting their communication performance. The questionnaires and class observation were used as the data collection instruments of this study to identify the possible factors that affect the students' English communication skills. The participants were 100 English major students, and 10 English teachers in the faculties of Education, and Humanities and Social Sciences, SNRU. The data were collected and analysed carefully.

The results showed that there were several of determinant factors that contributed to the poor English oral communication skills of Thai students. Those factors drive from many components including the personal, institutional and environmental issues. These results were in the same line with those of the studies discussed in the literature review of this paper.

Therefore, according to the findings, first, there were personal factors such as the lack of self-motivation, confidence, and desire to practice and apply English in their daily lives.

Second, the result also showed that there were some teacher factors. These are: 1) lack adequate use of communicative teaching techniques. 2) The teachers don't motivate and encourage the students to practice and apply English in their daily life. 3) Moreover, Thai teachers often use Thai language in and outside classroom, they do not prepare speaking exam (speaking is not part of the exam), and lack English language teaching experience. Therefore, the teachers need to improve their teaching techniques to assist the students improve their English communication skills.

The last but not least, environmental based factors such as lack of up to date learning and teaching materials, the size of the class, absence of speaking curriculum that contains enough exercises for speaking skills, and absence of English communication center factors that negatively affect the students' English communication skill.

In nutshell, this study has shed some insights into the factors that affect Thai students' English communication skill at university level, and the possible factors were identified. The findings showed three main factors (students, teachers and environmental) that negatively affected the students' English communication skill.

Thus, it is suggested that: firstly, the students have to be motivated and encouraged to use English language, and limit using Thai in English Language classes. Secondly, include speaking exam in the curricula, and develop the participatory and interactive English teaching strategies. Thirdly, update learning and teaching materials. Fourthly, establishing English club or societies and English Medias such as TV or radio where the students may practice their communication. Fifthly, limit the Students' number in listening and speaking classes. Finally, introduce capacity building through English trainings, workshops or seminars for both students and teachers.

This study aims to help students, teachers, researchers and policy makers to improve Thai students' English communication performance. And it will encourage a more attention on oral proficiency of Thai university students.

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