A STUDY OF ENGLISH SPEAKING AND LISTENING COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS OF THIRD YEARS STUDENTS IN BUSINESS ENGLISH CLASS AT RATCHATHANI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This research discusses the English Speaking and Listening Communication Problems of Third year’s students in Business English class from Ratchathani University. The research used a quantitative method to collect the data from 31 third year’s Business English class students at Ratchathani University. This study is a research report related to the problem encounter by Third years Business students. The instrument employed in this study was a questionnaire comprised of five-point Likert scale items and checklist asking for background information, English speaking and listening communication problems consisted in two parts, which are speaking problem and listening problem and open-ended questions the suggestion for improve their speaking and listening English. The data were analyzed by SPSS and presented in descriptive statistics for percentage, mean score and standard deviation.

The results revealed that the 31 Third years Business English students have speaking problems due to limited of vocabulary, cannot speak English correctly and fluently. Moreover, the resulted revealed that unfamiliar with the accents, vocabulary, idiom and slang was one of the factors of listening problems. They agreed that difficult of grammatical made them understand the English difficult. They felt that when the speaker speaks too fast, pitch, tone of the speaker was decreased their listening comprehension. Most of the respondents agreed they lack of practice listening English skills. They suggested that the instructors need to encourage the students to develop their interest in English skills and has a chance to practice four skills in English. It hoped that this research will be useful information concerning problem of English speaking and listening problems.

Keywords: English Speaking problems, English listening problems, Communication, Communication problem, English skills.
Introduction

1. Background

English is the International language that is used worldwide. English language plays an important role in the world of business. The study of English in Thailand has been and still is an important subject for the worldwide communication. According to Crystal (1997) said that the approximately 90% of published academic article are written in English. Therefore, the students in Thailand have been required to study English. The problem of speaking and listening English for the students has persisted for over the decade. Moreover, the third year Business students at Ratchathani University are required to take English Business class consisting of Business English I, II and III. The students learn the Business content in English language and listening to English from a native lecturer. The lack of speaking and listening English affects learning Business content in English for the third year students. Moreover, when they were finished the study from the University they would be faced with the kind of work that required using English skills. Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning, which involves producing, receiving and processing information. The listening problem occurred when the speakers speak with their own accent, fast and use difficult vocabulary including the word stress, sentence stress and sound change.

For the above reasons, the researcher would like to study the English speaking and listening problems most Third year students in Business English class encountered and how they will improve Speaking and listening English skill for the open-ended question.

2. Purpose of the Study

The main objectives of this study are the following:

1. To find out the English speaking and listening communication problems encountered by Third year business students class in Ratchathani University
2. To survey how third years business students class would improve their Speaking and listening English skills.

3. Research Questions

The present study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the English speaking and listening problems most Third year business students class at Ratchathani University encountered while they communicate?
2. How third years business students improved their English listening and speaking English skills?
4. Definition of term

1. *Speaking* is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information.

2. *Listening* is not merely hearing what the other person has to say but is the active and includes components such as feeling for the other person, being at tentative, interpreting what they are saying and responding.

3. *English proficiency* refers to the ability to use English in four skills; speaking, Listening, writing and reading.

4. *Communication Skills* refers to the ability to convey information to another effectively and efficiently in English.

Literature Review

1. Theory of Communication

According to Hamilton (10th edition) gave the definition of communication in their book “Communicating for Results A Guide for Business and Professions” that communication is the process of transferring thoughts and ideas from one person to another. Communication is a process (which means that it is ongoing) and it includes the ideas of communicating our thought and ideas to others.

According to The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 6th ed. (2007) described the definition of communication that from the Latin root of communicate as communicate, which means to impart, share and make common. When people communicate, they express their ideas and feelings in a way that is understandable (common) to each of them. Therefore, communication is the process of people sharing thought, ideas, and feelings with each other in commonly understandable way.

There are three model of communication which is one-way models, circular models and a transaction model (Shannon and Weaver, 1949)

- One-way model is linear process going from person A (the person who encodes the message) and ending with the person B (the receiver who decodes, or interprets, the message) code refer to (verbal, vocal, and nonverbal symbols) and channel for example, text message or telephone (Hamilton 10th edition)
- Circular model is a circular or interaction process beginning with the sender, who communicates a message to a receiver who interprets it and sends a reply back to the sender. This model includes feedback.

- Transaction models are simultaneous, transactional process between senders and receiver. It is simultaneous because the person sends message and receive a message at the same time.

Hamilton (10th edition) the book “communicating for result” explained stimulus and the motivation that these two things must happen before the sender wants to send a message that is stimulating, the sender must be stimulated – an internal and external stimulus triggers a thought, which in turn triggers the desire to communicate. The second requirement for sending a message is motivation. For example, in the meeting room if one person wants to share his opinion he thinks that he will get promotion in a higher position so this is the motivation for him to share his opinion.

2. Intercultural Communication

According to Jens Allwood (1985) explained that intercultural communication is the communication between people from different backgrounds and cultures. She also explains that it is not culture that communicates but people (possibility social institution) with different cultural background that do. The term “culture” refers to all characteristics common to a particular group of people that are learned and not given by the nature

According to Sukanya (2011) said that intercultural communication occurs when people from one culture communicate with the people from different cultures. Intercultural communication involves interaction between whose cultures perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter communication events.

Intercultural Communication involves face-to-face communication between people from different cultures or different nations. The different of culture and language we use can cause the communication problems or miscommunication such as the lack of grammar or the word we selected. Therefore we need to identify what is the communication problem and then we need to understand the different of culture in order to help us get more effective communication and reduce the communication problems.

Individualistic and Collectivistic Cultures

Western culture like the United States tends to be a individualistic culture because the individual and individual rights are valued more than group identity or group right. Asian
cultures like Japan tends to be collectivistic culture because they put more value on group membership, group obligations and group goals than individual (Hamilton 10th edition)

**High and Low Context Cultures**

The dimension that enriches us to understand the difference of culture we will deal with the high and low context culture. In low-context cultures message are clearly spelled out, they are direct and explicit (Hamilton 10th edition) it is the responsibility of the listener to interpret the message they are encoding. The clues that help us to understand the message is facial expression of the speakers. The high-context culture is when the speaker speaks the word it tends to be brief, indirect and implicit. Therefore it is very important for the speaker who wants to get benefit from communication or to make their communication more effectively is to understand the difference of culture which is high and low context cultures.

3. Communication Problem

Definition of Communication problem is the difficulties of the sender communicating with the receiver and trying to explain their needs and wants.

All types of conflicts can cause the communication problems. Communication occurs between two people, the speaker and the listener. When the listener is trying to decode the message in a different way than the speaker trying to send or decodes the message in the wrong way without concentrate on the speaker propose but interpret the message base on their experience or frame of reference this will cause the communication problem.

Different language and different vocabulary or grammar will cause the communication problems. Furthermore, the syntax pattern can cause the communication problems. The researcher wants to find out what are the English communication problems of Third year business students class. If the researcher fines the result, this can be generalized to other research in the future.

4. Relevant Research

Sukanya Nimnuch (2011) studied English communication problems influencing Thai people who take English courses at Language Institution. The result showed that the respondents have listening problems because of the unfamiliarity with the accent and pronunciation. Even though the respondent knows the vocabulary and grammar, the conversations are difficult since the language varies in terms of tone, pitch, and speed. The researcher suggests to solve this problem that speaker should speak slowly and clearly. This can help the listener to gain more understanding in the conversation. The second problem
was the speaking problem because of the lack grammatical knowledge and the limitation of vocabulary. The researcher suggested that for solving this problem they should pay attention to grammar and reading in varied content in order to gain more vocabulary.

Sukanya Nimnuch (2011) showed their conclusion that the inability to use grammar for communicating was the major problem for Thai people. This could cause the misunderstanding in all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Suradej Anandapong (2011) studied English listening problems and listening proficiency of business students at Bangkok University. The respondents were 30 fourth year business students at Bangkok University. The result shown slang and idioms are the main listening problems. They cannot understand the meaning of slang and idioms. This can be referred that there might be gaps between the Eastern and Western culture. Moreover, unfamiliar words, difficult grammatical structures, unfamiliar situations and unorganized text are the factors which affected the respondents’ listening ability. The researcher said that if the speaker speaks fast it can decrease the ability of listeners. In order to solving the problems the researcher suggests that the listener should listen to the movies or music. This can help the listeners familiar with accent and vocabulary and help them to understand the story easily.

**Methodology**

**Respondents**

The study was conducted at Ratchathani University in 2016. 31 third year business students were the subject in this study. The questionnaires were distributed to these subject and collected on the same day.

**Research Instrument**

The research instrument in the study was a questionnaire which was designed to the purpose of the study. The questionnaire consists of 3 parts;

- **Part I**: General background information about the respondents. For example, gender, education, age,

- **Part II**: The respondent’s English speaking communication problems encountered by Third year business students at Ratchathani University.

- **Part III**: The respondent’s English listening communication problems encountered by Third year business students at Ratchathani University.
The five point Likert scale was used in this questionnaire which the following criteria:

5 = Always
4 = Often
3 = Sometimes
2 = Rarely
1 = Never

Part IV: The last part was designed regarding open-ended questions about how third year business students improve listening and speaking English skills.

Procedure

1. The questionnaire was created in English and translated into the Thai language. Ten respondents were randomly selected from Ratchathani University. They were given the background of the study and requested to read the questionnaire, then gave the comments on the content and wording, and suggestions on the items that should be added or excluded.

2. The questionnaire was distributed to third year business student’s class.

3. The questionnaire was collected for the data analysis procedure.

Findings

1. Speaking Problems

Table 1. Respondents’ speaking problem
As you can see in Table 1, on the whole English speaking problems of the respondents was rate at 2.66, which was viewed as a moderate level of English speaking problems. The ranking for English speaking problems is as follows: I cannot speak some vocabulary (mean score = 3.55), I cannot speak English correctly (mean score = 3.35), I use simple sentences (mean score = 2.81) and equal with speak English in Thai accent. I use body language when I speak with foreigners equal with when I have to speak English I have to think in Thai first and translate into English (mean score = 2.39), while the lowest was I speak English fluency (mean score = 1.94).

### 3.1 Listening Problems

Table 2. Respondents’ listening problem
Based on table 2, the overall result revealed that listening problems of the respondents was rated at a moderate level of listening problems (mean score = 2.94). The respondents ranked unfamiliar with the accent the highest (mean score = 3.35), followed by unfamiliar with the vocabulary, idioms and slang (mean score = 3.32), difficult grammatical (mean score = 3.29), difficult to understand when the speaker speaks to fast equal to difficult the pitch, tone of speaker (mean score = 3.26) and the lack of listening practice skills (mean score = 2.94).

### Conclusion

According to the study, most of the respondents were female (70%). Most of them were 20 years old. It can be easily seen on the results that most of the respondents communicate with the foreigners 1-2 times a day. It was a bit of surprise that most of them had never taken TOEIC test before, never taken English course and never studied abroad.

Problems of English Speaking
Most of the respondent agreed that they cannot speak some vocabulary and cannot speak English correctly. They also pointed out that they used simple sentences when they speak English, they thought in Thai first and translate in to English. Moreover, they agreed that they cannot speak English fluently. This related to the study Sukanya Nimnuch (2011) studied English communication problems influencing Thai people to take English courses at Language Institutions, the lack grammatical knowledge and the limitation of vocabulary was the significant point of English speaking problems.

Problems of English Listening

According to the study, the respondents also pointed out that unfamiliar with the accents, vocabulary, idiom and slang was one of the factors of listening problems. They agreed that difficulty understand grammar made them understanding English difficult. Moreover, they felt that when the speaker speaks too fast, pitch, tone of the speaker decreased their listening comprehension. Most of the respondents agreed they lack practice about listening English skills. This related to the study Suradej Anandapong (2011) studied English listening problems and listening proficiency of business students at Bangkok University. The result showed slang and idioms are the main listening problems.

Suggestion of third year’s business students at Ratchathani University for improving speaking and listening English skills were;

1. The instructors need to encourage the students to develop their interest in English skills.

2. Students are encouraged to practice English skills; both speaking and listening every day and has a chance to speak and listen more with the native speakers.

Recommendation for Further Research

1. Further studies should be extended to cover the students with other majors to identify their English speaking and listening problems and to gain more various answers and respects.

2. The future research should include interviews in order to elicit more in-depth information from the respondents concerning their English speaking and listening problem.
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