

PROMBLEMS IN USING ENGLISH SPEAKING FOR COMMUNICATION OF THE VENDORS AT LUANG PRABANG NIGHT MARKET LAO PDR

Oudalon Bounthavong^{1*}, Vatthana Phuangsavath²

Vatsana Sisavat³, Khanthaly Mixaykone⁴

(Received: 7 Nov. 2023; Revised: 13 Dec. 2023; Accepted: 31 Dec. 2023)

Abstract

The objective of this research was to investigate problems of using English for communication among the vendors at Luang Prabang night market, Lao PDR. The researcher used the questionnaire to collect data from the participants, with a total of 224 people (Vendor Statistics, 2022). However, the sample size was 150. There were 90 females and 60 males. The sample group was chosen by using the convenience sampling technique. The research findings indicated that participants encountered problems related to listening comprehension as the main problem with the highest mean score ($M = 3.88$) and standard deviation ($SD = 0.82$), followed by grammar usage ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.88$), pronunciation ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.72$), vocabulary ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.76$), lack of self-confidence ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.77$), and problems related to fluency ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.95$). However, based on the mean score, it was clearly shown that they did not understand English language intonation, were afraid of making mistakes, and had problems with grammar usage. Thus, they were limited in utilizing vocabulary due to low memories and

1-4 Lecturer at the Head of Foreign Language Department, Souphanouvong University, Laos

* Corresponding author E-mail : oudalon_b@hotmail.com

misunderstandings of new vocabulary. Similarly, they faced problems with a lack of self-confidence and pronunciation because most of them did not practice speaking and listening activities.

In conclusion, most of the problems encountered by the vendors in using English speaking skills for communication were related to listening comprehension, which was the main problem, followed by grammar usage, vocabulary, a lack of self-confidence, fluency, and pronunciation.

Keywords: vendors, problems, English-speaking communication

Rational and Background of the study

English is one of the most important in the world. It is an international language. English is used as a second language in many countries in the world for communication. There are various important things in the English language such as: traveling, education, correspondence, the Internet business etc. People can communicate with each other more and more. Speaking seems to be the most important skill 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). To work in Lao, people use the English language to teach and learn from school to university, and the main purpose of learning English is to speak with tourists. When foreigners visit Laos, they always begin their conversations in English. For the vendors at the Luang Prabang night market, English is needed to communicate to tourists. However, Speaking English is difficult for the vendors.

Speaking skills are an important aspect to acquire when learning a second or foreign language and the success of learning the language is measured by the ability of learners to speak the language learned. However,

most people learning a language have the goal of being able to speak so that they can communicate. Speaking is one of the four crucial English abilities. Every person needs to communicate with others through speaking. Speaking plays an important role in making a social interaction with other people to gain information. Thus, it is necessary for every person to have good speaking skills Juhana, (2012). Most students often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their speaking proficiency. Speaking is a productive skill which uses combinations of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and even accent. Therefore, when people speak English well and very often, they may think that they have improved another ability which involves speaking. Considering that this problem may be more important because if the people rarely speak English, their speaking skills may not be improved a lot (Chaney, 1998). Speaking skill is very complicated and many people have problems using speaking skills, such as grammar, phrases, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Therefore, people are supposed to speak correctly and effectively to communicate well with others. Any communication gap leads to misunderstandings and issues.

Oral communication is necessary to use in daily activities. It is generally done in face-to-face interaction and communication. Through speaking, people can express their thoughts and communicate with others. According to Richard, (2008:19) asserts that the mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many language learners. It can be concluded that the function of speaking is to enable students to communicate in real communication situations. In addition, according to Chaney and Burke (1998:13), speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols in a variety of contexts. From the

definitions, it means that speaking should improve the communicative skills of students because only in that way the students can express themselves.

Based on observation, this is a very common problem among the vendors at the night market who are selling handicrafts to foreigners, but they do not speak English well. Even though it is difficult for many vendors to speak for many reasons, such as lack of vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation. However, speaking is an important skill for communication. For example, when tourists do not understand the cost, the vendor may use a calculator for help or write a number on the paper and then point it out to the tourist. They just use English to communicate and use their hands to explain so tourists understand what they want. The aim of this study was to investigate the problem of English-speaking vendors at Luang Prabang night market.

Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the problem of using English speaking for communication at Luang Prabang night market, Lao PDR. However, regarding the vendors who are selling handicrafts at the Luang Prabang night market, there are some problems in using English speaking skills for communication. The problems seem to be more about general communicative competence and confidence in speaking. Based on the studies related to problems in using English speaking for communication, the main problems can be classified as (a) listening comprehension, (b) grammar, (c) vocabulary, (d) lack of self-confidence, (e) fluency, and (f) pronunciation.

Purposes of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the problem of using English speaking for communication of the vendor at Luang Prabang night market, Lao PDR.

Research question

What is the problem of using English for communication of the vendor at Luang Prabang Night Market, Lao PDR?

Scope of the study

1. Population

The population was 244 vendors at Luang Prabang Night Market Lao PDR.

2. Content

There are 150 questionnaires with 33 items and the researchers spent a week to get the information for this study. In the questionnaire, there are two parts:

Part one is about the vendors' personal information and part two is about problems in using English speaking for communication.

Methodology

1. Population

The population of this study is the vendors at Luang Prabang night market, Lao PDR with total number of 244 people. Vendor Statistics, (2022). However, the number of samples was 150 vendors, 60 males and 90 females. The researcher chose a sample group by using a convenience sampling technique (Morgan: 1970).

2. Research Instrument

The questionnaire was utilized as a crucial instrument in this research study as a tool to obtain pertinent data from the participants. The questionnaire was also used to find the vendor problems in speaking. The questionnaire was decided and developed in order to gather information and

based on the theme of the problem in using English speaking skills for communication. On the other hand, some of the questions were partly adapted from a variety of sources (Fatimah Jehrasae, 2012 & Alvin Nadzirotunnuha, 2017). Therefore, the researcher first understood the current study and theories, then decided the questionnaire based on the theme and theories. The questionnaire was typed in Lao language because it will make participants understand easily to answer and then the questionnaire was translated into English language. The questionnaire utilized in this study consisted of 33 items which were divided into two parts; the first part was utilized to identify the personal information and second was to investigate the problem of using English speaking skills for communication with foreigners of the vendor at LuangPrabang night market, Lao PDR.

The questionnaire was rated using the scale method that used a five-point Likert scale of agreement in terms of their problem in using English speaking skills for communication with assigned values of **Strongly agree** (5), **Agree** (4), **Undecided** (3), **Disagree** (2), **Strongly disagree** (1).

Data Collection

The researcher conducted this stage step by step as follows: First of all, the researcher obtained a permission letter from the Dean of the Faculty of Languages at Souphanouvong University. Second, the researcher gives the letter to the head of Pa Kharm village and gives the questionnaire to the vendors at Luang Prabang night market to collect information. Third, the researcher typed questionnaires into Lao and English. Fourth, the researcher brought it to the advisor to check. Fifth, the researcher brought the questionnaire to the vendors and explained clearly how to respond to the questionnaire. The vendor spent 15 minutes to complete answers, and finally

the researcher recollected all the questionnaires from the vendors to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

The data collecting, the researcher employed the Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) to analyses of statistic to get frequencies, percentage, mean and standard deviation of problem in using English speaking for communication to foreigners of the vendor at Luang Prabang night market, Lao PDR.

Result of the Study

1. Results of problems of using English speaking skills for communication

Table 1: Lack of self-confidence.

No	Items	N	Mea	S.D
			n	
1	Less confidence when speaking English.	150	3.91	0.94
2	Stressful and embarrassed when speaking English.	150	3.58	1.05
3	Lack of confidence when I am communicating in English because no preparation.	150	3.77	1.05
4	Unconfident in my knowledge and abilities are factors to communicate.	150	3.75	1.14

5	Concerning others laughing with an accent when speaking English.	150	3.55	1.24
---	--	-----	------	------

Average	150	3.71	0.77
---------	-----	------	------

It can be seen from the data in Table 1, the participants showed Less of confidence when speaking English ($M=3.91$) with standard deviation ($SD=0.94$). Similarly, the result illustrated that they lacked confidence when they communicated in English because of no preparation ($M=3.77$, $SD=1.05$). Significantly, they approved that most of them were not confident in their knowledge and abilities that was a factor to communicate ($M=3.75$, $SD=1.14$). In addition, we can see that they were stressed and embarrassed when speaking English ($M=3.58$, $SD=1.05$), in the same way they were concerned about others laughing with accent when speaking English ($M=3.55$, $SD=1.24$). However, the overall mean score for problem which related to the lack of self-confidence was ($M=3.71$) with standard deviation ($SD=0.77$).

Table 2: Problem related to Pronunciation.

No	Items	N	Mea	S.D
		n		
1	I produce word stress misplacements.	150	3.87	0.89
2	Error with pronunciation in the end of the word when communicating.	150	3.81	0.90
3	Not being able to produce an English accurate sound.	150	3.83	1.03
4	Do not pronounce certain consonant the end of the word when communicating.	150	3.66	1.05
5	Confused with words that have the same pronunciation.	150	3.75	1.04
Average		150	3.78	0.72

The results as shown in Table 2 demonstrated that most of them were not sure that they produced word stress misplacements ($M= 3.87$) with standard deviation ($SD= 0.89$). Similarly, they also proved that they were not able to produce an English accurate sound ($M= 3.83$, $SD=1.03$). However, some of them still illustrated that they had errors with pronunciation in the end of the word when communicating ($M= 3.81$, $SD=0.90$), frequently criticize of making mistakes and confuse with the word that have same pronunciation as it showed in the table above ($M= 3.75$, $SD= 1.04$). In addition, we can see that they were stressed and embarrassed when speaking English ($M=3.66$, $SD=$

1.05). The overall mean score of the English pronunciation problem was ($M=3.78$) with standard deviation ($SD= 0.72$).

Table 3: Problem related to Vocabularies

No	Items	N	Mean	S.D
1	Having a problem when using English vocabularies.	150	3.89	0.97
2	Using unsuitable vocabularies when speaking English.	150	3.43	1.08
3	Lack of English vocabularies.	150	3.81	1.04
4	Do not understand the word that has a different speaking but has same meaning.	150	3.81	1.03
Average		150	3.73	0.76

As can be seen from table 3 that they had a problem when using English vocabularies ($M= 3.89$, $SD= 0.97$). Similarly, they did not understand the word that has different speaking but has the same meaning ($M= 3.81$, $SD= 1.03$). As well as the fact that they showed the Lack of English vocabularies ($M= 3.81$) with standard deviation ($SD= 1.04$). Similarly, some of them proved that they used unsuitable vocabularies when speaking English ($M= 3.43$, $SD= 1.08$). So we can see that the respondents faced problem related to vocabularies, as evidenced by their total average score ($M=3.73$) with standard deviation ($SD=0.76$).

Table 4: Problem related to listening comprehension.

N	Items	N	Mean	S.D
o				
1	Problem of comprehension with English speech.	150	3.89	1.02
2	Do not understand speech or sentences when native speak too fast.	150	3.95	0.99
3	Problem with native accent.	150	3.81	1.08
Average		150	3.88	0.82

The results as shown in Table 4 demonstrated that, most of them were not sure that they did not understand speech or sentences when native speak too fast ($M= 3.95$) with standard deviation ($SD= 0.99$). Similarly, they also proved that they had problem with comprehension with English speech ($M= 3.89$, $SD=1.02$). However, some of them still illustrated that they had problem with native accent ($M= 3.81$, $SD=1.08$). The overall mean score of English listening comprehension problem was ($M= 3.88$) with standard deviation ($SD= 0.82$).

Table 5: Problem related to grammar

No	Items	N	Mea	S.D
n				
1	Use wrong grammar when communicating English.	150	3.81	1.06
2	Unable to use the structure of plural noun.	150	3.79	0.97

3	Unable to use correct structure of English tenses such as: present, past and future.	150	3.75	1.15
---	--	-----	------	------

Average	150	3.78	0.88
----------------	-----	------	------

Based on the result from Table 5 showed that, most of the participants used wrong grammar when communicating English ($M= 3.81$) with the standard deviation ($SD= 1.06$) and they were unable to use structure of plural noun ($M= 3.79$, $SD= 0.97$). In addition, we can see that they were unable to use correct structure of English tenses such as: present, past and future ($M= 3.78$, $SD= 0.88$). In this part, the total mean score of grammar problem was ($M= 3.78$) with the standard deviation ($SD= 0.88$).

Table 6: Problem related to fluency

No	Items	N	Mean	S.D
1	I do not speak English fluently.	150	3.96	1.03
2	I have a long pause when speaking English.	150	3.57	1.05
3	I understand when natives speak, however, I do not know to respond.	150	3.63	1.25
Average		150	3.71	0.95

It can be seen from the data in Table 6, the participants did not speak English fluently ($M=3.96$) with standard deviation ($SD=1.03$). Similarly, the result illustrated that they understood when natives spoke. However, they did not know how to respond ($M=3.57$, $SD= 1.05$). Significantly, they approved that most of them had a long pause when speaking English ($M=3.63$, $SD=$

1.25). However, the overall mean score for problem which related to fluency was ($M=3.71$) with standard deviation ($SD=0.95$).

2. Overall mean value and Std. Deviation of the problem in using English speaking for communication.

No	Items	N	Mean	S.D
1	Lack of self-confidence	150	3.71	0.77
2	Problem related to pronunciation	150	3.78	0.72
3	Problem related to vocabulary	150	3.73	0.76
4	Problem related to listening comprehension	150	3.88	0.82
5	Problem related to grammar	150	3.78	0.88
6	Problem related to fluency	150	3.71	0.95

According to the results which illustrated in Table 6, the average means and standard deviation values from table 1 to table 6 were shown that the participants ranked the problems which caused English speaking for communication as the dominant problems. However, most of the respondents still proved that those problems were significant issues with English speaking for communication as it illustrated that listening comprehension was the main problem with the highest mean score ($M= 3.88$) with standard deviation ($SD= 0.82$), followed by grammar ($M= 3.78$, $SD= 0.88$), pronunciation ($M= 3.78$, $SD= 0.72$), vocabularies ($M= 3.73$, $SD= 0.76$), lack of self-confidence ($M= 3.71$, $SD= 0.77$), and Problems related to fluency ($M=3.71$, $SD=0.95$).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the result of this study found that problems in using English speaking for communication of vendors at Luan Prabang night market can be summarized as follows: most of the vendors encountered problems with listening comprehension when communicating in English with foreign customers. Followed by limitations in utilizing grammar usage and vocabularies due to low memories and misunderstanding of new vocabularies. Similarly, they encountered problems with lack of self-confidence, fluency, and pronunciation because most of them did not practice speaking and listening activities and were not sure whether their pronunciation was right or wrong. Thus, they were afraid of making mistakes and being embarrassed.

Discussion

The present study confirmed the findings about discussion based on the research question. The discussion focused on the problem of using English speaking skills for communication to foreigners of the vendor at Luang Prabang night market, Lao PDR, the academic year 2022-2023 as follows:

Concerning the questions, the result was found in the research that participants encountered problems related to listening comprehension, which was the main problem with the highest mean score ($M = 3.88$) with standard deviation ($SD = 0.82$), followed by grammar ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.88$), pronunciation ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.72$), vocabularies ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.76$), lack of self-confidence ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.77$), and problems related to fluency ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.95$). Therefore, these problems were rated as the main problems of agreement that they encountered in using English-speaking skills

for communication with foreign customers. The results were consistent with the study of Fatimah Jehrasae, (2012) which indicated that problems with English face-to-face oral communication and strategies used by Thai employees to communicate with native and non-native English-speaking customers in an international workplace. The result was found that Thai employees communicating with native English-speaking customers had problems with listening comprehension and grammar usage. The result also showed that major common oral communication strategies used by both groups of employees were (a) asking customers directly what they did not get, (b) making clarification requests, (c) paraphrasing, and (d) generalization. Moreover, it was found that there was no significant difference between the strategies used by both groups of employees.

On the other hand, Nualsri Khamprated (2012) Result of the study was that the speaking problem that the students rated as the most difficult was speaking English with the correct intonation. The most difficult speaking problem was speaking English as fluently as a native speaker, and the most difficult speaking problem was avoiding speaking English in front of friends for fear of making mistakes and forgetting to say the final sounds of words. They have had problems speaking English because of a limited understanding of grammar and getting nervous or worried when speaking English with foreigners. The final speaking problem experienced by these students was fear of people laughing at them because of the mistakes they may make while speaking, which indicates a low level of confidence among these students regarding their English ability.

Recommendation

The researcher would like to recommend some suggestions for further study as follows:

Firstly, the vendors should improve their basic knowledge of English when speaking with foreign customers. Besides that, the vendors should not be stressed, embarrassed, or afraid of making mistakes while speaking English. So that vendors can communicate more effectively, the vendors might practice speaking and solve listening comprehension and speaking problems. Language learners should first be able to analyze their own listening and speaking problems, they can apply or implement a wide variety of listening and speaking strategies to solve their problems and enhance their language abilities.

References

Andi Annisaa, H. N. (2019). A study of students' problems in daily English speaking activity. Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar. Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris.

Ahmadi, Leong. (2017). An Analysis of Factors Influencing Learners 'English speaking skill.

Aries Fitriani, D. (2015). A Study of Students English Speaking Problem in Speaking Performances. Pontianak: Tangjungpura University.

Bailey, Kathleen M. and Lance Savage. (1994). New Ways in Teaching Speaking. Illinois: Pantograph Printing.

Bailey, K. M. (2000:25). Speaking in Practical English Language Teaching. Singapore: MrGrawwHill.

Bookit, K. (2010). Enhancing the development of speaking skills for non-native speakers of English. *Procardia social and behavioral Science*, 2, 1305 – 1309.

Brown, H. Douglas. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*.

Burns, J. M. (2003). *Transforming Leadership: A New Pursuit of Happiness*. New York: GrovePress.

Chaney, A.L., & Burk, T.L. (1998). *Teaching Oral communication in Grade K-8*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Comstock, W. T. (1985). *Communicating in business and industry*. New York: Delmar.

Efrizal, D. (2012). Improving Students' speaking through communicative language teaching Method at Mts Ja-alhaq, Sentot Ali Basa Islamic Boarding School of Bengkulu, Indonesia.

Fatimah Jehrasae. (2012). English oral communication problems and strategies used by Thai employees in an international workplace to communicate with native and nonnative English speaking customers. Thesis, M.A (English) Bangkok graduated school, Srinakharinwirot University.

Firia, Aida. (2013). *An Analysis of Students Speaking Problems at English Education Department State Institute of Islamic Studies Sunan Ampel*. Surabaya: IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya.

Forey, G. & Lockwood, J. (2007). “I’d love to put someone in jail for this”: An initial investigation of English in the business processing outsourcing (BPO) industry. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26, 308 – 326.

Fulcher, G. (2003:23). Testing second language speaking. London and New York: Longman.

Glenn R. C. (1981). Basic oral communication. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Hayriye, Kayi. (2006). Teaching Speaking: Activities to Promote Speaking in a Second Language. Nevada: University of Nevada.

Hariswan Putera Jaya, I. P. (2016). Speaking Performance and Problems Faced by English major's students. A University in South Sumatera.

Holden, B. (1993). Analyzing corporate language training needs – a three - way approach.

Hughes, Rebecca. (2006:144). Spoken English, TESOL, and applied Linguistics: Challenges for Theory and Practice. Great Britain: CPI Antony Rowe.

Hinkel, Eli. (2005). Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning. London: Seattle University.

Richards. (2008). Teaching Listening and Speaking from Theory to Practice. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rickheit, Gert and Strohner, Hans. (2008:207). Handbook of Communication Competence. Germany.

Indah, C. a. (2012). Second language research and pedagogy: toward the development of English language teaching. Indonesia.

Indah, C. a. (2012:8). Second language research and pedagogy: toward the development of English language teaching. Indonesia.

Juhana. (2012). Psychological Factors That Hinder Student from Speaking in English Class.

Khan. (2005). Language in India. Available at: www.languageinindia.com. Viewed on: 15th November 2014.

Krizan, A. Merrier, p., & Jones, C. (2002). Business communication. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College.

Lockwood, N. (2007). Leveraging Employee Engagement for Competitive Advantage. In Society for Human Resource Management Research Quarterly (pp. 1, 1-12.).

Morgan, Krejcie. & (1970). Determining sample size for research activities.

Moslehifar, M. A. (2012:529-536). English Language Oral Communication Needs at the Workplace: Feedback from Human Resource Development (HRD) Trainees.

Myers, R. J., Penrase, J. M., & Rasberry, R. W. (2000). Advanced business communication. USA: South-Western College Publishing.

Ngadiso. (2016). Developing A Model for Teaching Speaking Using Cooperative Learning.

Ninnat, Olanvoravuth. (1999). Business English Communication. Thammasat University Press.

Nualsri Khamprated. (2012). The Problems with the English Listening and Speaking of students Studying at a Private Vocational School. Master Project, M.A. (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University. Mater's Project Advisor: Assistant Professor Dr. Saiwaroon Chumpavan.

Nunan, David. (2003, p.48). Practical English Language Teaching. New York: McGraw Hill.

Nunan. D. (2005). The Global English Pedagogical Approach: The Evolution of Technology and Value of Online English Language Learning. Global English Corporation. Brisbane, USA.

Pollard, Andrew. (2008). Reflective Teaching 3rd Edition: Evidence Informed Professional Practice. Continuum International Publishing Group.

Richard. (2008:9). the use of role play to improve speaking skills for grade XI of SMK Sangkuriang 2 Cimahi.

Spolsky, B. & Hult, F.M. (Eds). (2008) *Handbook of Educational Linguistics*. Malden, MA: Wiley- Blackwell.

Siahaan, S. (2008:95). *The English Paragraph*. Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu.

Solcova, P. (2011) . *Teaching Speaking Skills*. Thesis of Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University: Unpublished.

Sri Hainun Jusuf, H. F. (2021). *Students' performance in speaking English (A Case Study on Students' Poor Performance in Speaking English)*.

Tilahun, T. (2008). *Factors that contribute to the problems EFL learners face in the listening skills classroom*. Institute of Language Studies Department of Foreign Language and Literature. Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia.

Ur, p. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. In *Practice and theory* Cambridge. Cambridge University press.

Verapornvanichkul. (2011). *a survey of problems in oral communication skill when dealing with English speaking clients: A case study of employees at one big 4 audit firms*. Thailand.

Yin, K. & Wong. (1990). *A course in business communication for accountants. In English for Specific Purposes* (pp. 9, 253-264).