

# A Study of English Speaking Skill Problems of Khmer Krom Students in Faculty of Humanities at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

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## Abstract

The mixed-method research aimed to investigate and proposed the solutions for problems of English speaking skill problems encountered by Khmer Krom students focused on students' motivations, teachers' teaching techniques, and environments and students lack time for English speaking. The participants were 20 students and 5 teachers in Faculty of Humanities of Mahachula longkornrajavidyalaya University, Wangnoi, Thailand during the academic year 2018-2019 and selected by the quota sampling techniques. The questionnaires and In-depth interviews were used as an instrument. The statistics used for data analysis were frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The results obtained from the study indicated that the students had moderate level for  $\bar{X} = 2.88$  (S.D. = 1.06) as they were not confident, they also were poor at tenses and were afraid to speak English because their pronunciation was very poor. The students had high level for  $\bar{X} = 3.66$  (S.D. = 0.54) problems as English teachers speak a lot in class. In additional, the students had moderate level for  $\bar{X} = 3.48$  (S.D. = 0.51) problems as most of them spoken in their mother tongue. Moreover, to solve the

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problems of speaking, the researcher recommended the strategies as follows: students should review grammar and study more vocabulary. The students should read a newspaper and books to improve their pronunciation. The students should often listen to the native speakers' speaking through using social media, etc. The students should practice English speaking via social networks and attend the activities based on the playing games and speaking tasks those for everyone.

**Keywords:** English speaking skill, Khmer Krom students, English Skill Solutions

## Introduction

English language is as the second language or foreign language for all ASEAN students as well as MCU student those who must use English in their daily communication and studying. Therefore, English is an important tool that students must learn to approach new knowledge and have good opportunity in their education. Learning to speak English in Foreign Language (EFL) will be facilitating when learners are actively engaged in attempting to communicate. (Rechard, Jack C, 1995, P. 51). Like that, language in fact is the machine tool, which makes human culture possible. (Charles Barber, Joan c. Beal, & Philip A. Shaw, 2009).

Anyway, (Hornby, 1995) defined that speaking is the skill that the students will be judge upon most in real-life situations. It is an important part of everyday interaction and most often, the first impression of a person is based on his/her ability to speak fluently and comprehensively. So, as teachers, we have a responsibility to prepare the students as much as possible to be able to speak in English in the real world outside the classroom. According to Tanigan (1990) defined that speaking is a language skill that is developing in child life, which is preceded by listening skills, and that period teaching skill is to communicate

efficiently. Furthermore, Glenn Fulcher, (2014) said that speaking is one of language skills that are very important to be mastered by students in order to become good communicators. Speaking is the verbal use of language to communicate with others.

The Khmer Krom Sangha is located in southern Vietnam, has sent Khmer Krom students to choose MCU for their further studies more than 300 persons. Since the first time most of them come to study for learning about Buddhism in Thai language, until they are in the fourth year, they just have opportunity to learn in course of English languages of Buddhism. Then, they have many challenges with conversation about languages in four skills of English such as writing, reading, listening and speaking. Furthermore, Khmer language is the official language of Khmer Krom in their daily life. They were affected from Vietnamese language too. Because Vietnamese language is the official language and English is considered as second languages in the country.

Apart from that, Ven. Tang Chamnan (2017) stated nowadays there are many Khmer people learning English all over the country, most of them say that English speaking is a difficult task. They understand the language and know a lot about its grammar and lexicon, but when they have to speak, they cannot remember the vocabulary. They had many challenges with a conversation about languages in four skills of English such as writing, reading, listening and speaking.

Besides, (Mr.Boonlerd Phengsuk, 2004) said there are some speaking problems that, EFL learners come across in English speaking. The basic communication problems are hard to deliver the comprehension really. They always happen in the use of unsuitable words from a person to another. However, Penny Ur (1966) stated that problems on the English learners often encounter with shyness and inhibition, they are lack of topical knowledge. She also suggested

in her another English teaching book that teachers need to come across in getting students to talk in the class room. There are problems of inhibition, low or uneven participation of activities.

According to (Wikipedia) Kampuchea Krom or Khmer Krom (Khmer: កម្ពុជាក្រោម) is the region known as Cambodians until today, covering the southernmost part of the historical Cambodia territory around the Mekong River delta. Kampuchea Krom is located in the south and southeast of present Cambodia roughly corresponds the current Vietnamese administrative regions of the Mekong Delta and the Southeast. “Krom” in Khmer means “below”. Thus “Kampuchea Krom” literally means “Lower Cambodia” implying the “southern” part of Cambodia. “Krom” here is used to distinguish from ‘central’ Cambodia, the modern day Cambodia. Even Cochinchine (Cochin China) is widely known under French colonization, Kampuchea Krom is still the preferred term used by Cambodians today. Khmer people belong to Kampuchea Krom are called Khmer Krom. According to Ven. Preichea Kuoen Thach (2014, p, 45) Rector of Prey Nokor News stated Khmer Krom consists of 21 provinces, 2 major islands. It was originally divided into only four provinces Daun Nay, Lung Haor, Moat Chrouk, and Peam.

At this point, UNPO (2018) stated Kampuchea-Krom (Khmer Krom) means "Cambodia Below" or "Southern Cambodia". The Khmer Krom describes themselves as the "Cambodians of the South". Kampuchea-Krom was the southernmost territory of the Khmer Empire. Once known as (French) Cochinchina, it is now located in the South-western part of Vietnam, covering an area of 67,700 square kilometers bordering Cambodia to the north, the Gulf of Siam to the west, the South China Sea to the south and the Champa's territory to the northeast. Prey Nokor, later Saigon and now Ho Chi Minh City, was one of the most important commercial cities in Kampuchea-Krom.

Thereupon, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University where it will stand as the center of Buddhism of Thailand, there are two major universities of Buddhism as Theravada and Mahayana sections. As previously known that the Buddhism is the main religion by following the Buddha's teaching to spread the doctrines into the 21 century, which is trying to develop potential and support the human resources for peaceful world. Besides, all people who come to study at MCU, they will get the knowledge and valuable experiences about the teaching of the Buddha. On the other hand, according to the university's policies are having the main objectives for enhancing and developing the English speaking skills of Undergraduate students and the significant mission of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University for finding the ways to improve both monks and universities together.

Meanwhile Mr. Alexander Willis suggested that in order to develop students' speaking skills, the students must speak. This means that students have to talk more and teachers should talk less. In the work of pair and group, I have presented the dialogue or activity and come to demonstrate and then the teachers allow the students to practice with their partners or their groups. This practice is known as Present / Practice / Product (PPP). (Bhikkhuni Nguyen Thi My Hanh, 2018)

In summary, the problems will lead to conduct the effective English speaking skills, the majority of Khmer Krom students and others who are students speak the first native language in English class. So, students have to practice with the actual speaking activities or foreign friends for fluent communication and correctly, for achievement of goals. Therefore, expression in the second language is the problems for them. The purpose of this study is to help learners to have more confidences in speaking skills. That can really help them to have efficiency and accuracy to speak English with foreigners and gaining better opportunities in their future careers.

## Objectives of Research

1. To investigate English speaking skill problems of Khmer Krom students in Faculty of Humanities at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Wangnoi, Ayutthaya.

2. To propose solution to the problems of English speaking skill problems of Khmer Krom students in Faculty of Humanities at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Wangnoi, Ayutthaya.

## Research Methodology

### Population

The total simple size of this mixed method research was 25 included 20 students and 5 teachers in Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Wangnoi, Ayutthaya, Thailand during the academic year 2018-2019. The participants were participated and selected by the quota sampling techniques.

### Instruments

#### 1. The Quantitative method

The questionnaires were made to interview for English speaking skills by using questions; to survey of the fourth year Khmer Krom students

**Part one:** Personal information of the participants

The questionnaires involved the background about personal information of participants based on demographic details as gender, age, education background, English experience, and requirement of English subject skills and academic year of 20 fourth year Khmer Krom students.

**Part two:** The problems of English speaking skills problems.

In this section, it was especially aimed to answer research questions, designed by using 20 questionnaires about the problems of English speaking skills problems by using a Five-Point Liker Scale to measure the 20 fourth year Khmer Krom students consisting of five scales: strongly agree, agree, moderately, disagree, and strongly disagree.

## 2. The Qualitative Method

The section was specially used the in-depth interview, this was the most appropriate tool for collecting data as the main tool for this research study as the following:

### In-depth Interview

The researcher interviewed people who were skillful teachers at English language, especially in speaking skills, related to five English teachers and 10 fourth year Khmer Krom students who are studying in Faculty of Humanities at MCU, Wangnoi.

### Data Collection

The researcher distributed questionnaires to the 20 KK students and in-depth interviews with 10 students also Khmer Krom who can speak English and 5 teachers who are teaching at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Wangnoi during the academic year 2018-2019 for giving attitude on the problems and ways to solve English listening comprehension problems.

### Data Analysis

The data of questionnaires were analyzed by computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Meanwhile, the data from the in-depth interviews collected from 5 teachers and 10 Khmer Krom students were analyzed by using the three competencies which were identified by Henderson (1995).

## Results of Research

The results of the analysis of the data from questionnaires and in-depth interviews on the problems and the ways to solve the problems in English listening comprehension were presented in the terms of 1) students motivation, 2) teacher teaching technique, and 3) environments and students lack time to speak.

### Students Motivation

No	Questions	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Level
1	I do not like speaking English with my classmates because my English is not good.	2.55	1.47	Moderate
2	I think English is good, but I feel I am not confident to speak out.	3.20	1.24	Moderate
3	I always shy when I practice speaking English with others.	2.75	1.25	Moderate
4	I am poor at tenses and afraid to speak. Because of my pronunciation is not good	2.95	1.19	Moderate
5	I was embarrassed when I speak.	2.95	1.23	Moderate
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.88</b>	<b>1.06</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

### Teacher teaching technique

No	Questions	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Level
1	My English teacher speaks a lot in class	4.25	0.64	High
2	My English teacher just focuses on grammar.	3.35	0.99	Moderate
3	My English teachers did not give much time to a student to speak.	3.30	1.30	Moderate
4	My English teacher rarely motivates me about the importance of English speaking skill	3.75	0.72	high
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.66</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>high</b>

### Environment and Students lack time to speak

No	Questions	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Level
1	Nobody speaks English with me while staying at a room	3.45	1.23	Moderate
2	Most of my friend they always speak in the Khmer language to me	3.80	1.40	High
3	I usually hear or see people speak English in public	3.75	0.79	High
4	I spend time around 10-30 minutes to practice speaking English every day	3.65	0.88	High
5	Sometimes, for the whole day, I do not speak English at all	3.00	1.08	Moderate
6	I never practice speaking English than 1 hour with my friend	3.25	1.29	Moderate
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.48</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

### **Finding to from In-depth interviews**

The problems encountered by Khmer Krom students such as 1) the students lack the vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence was limited make them facing the most problems when speaking. Furthermore, they lost of basic grammar. 2) The students used their mother tongue more than the English language so that the sound, accent, and rhythm of them were not clear. 3) The students felt shy, anxious, and scared. They were afraid of making a mistake when speaking, and 4) about reading also the most problematic. If they are less read, they will not able to speak well too.

The problems of students found that teachers as they speak too fast to make them forgot the structure of grammar and forgot the goals of the subject, they are not sure of how to use words, phrases, and sentences and how to form sentences for in speaking. Another teacher told many more problems originated from the background of students, they had a lack of vocabulary, students felt that speaking English was very difficult, and they did not use it in daily life.

### **Finding the ways to solutions with problems**

Among students of interview gave that first thing, you need to read more books to improve your vocabulary while you are reading the books you should read aloud up because it could help your voice or accent better. Second, to set down the title and keep practice speaking by yourself every day in the public, University, friends or teachers, ... and always have a new ideal in class while teacher teaching, you don't worry about right or wrong, some things wrong make you know about some new ideal.

The suggestion to teachers as they always should encourage all students in my class. When they speak or present in class. They repeat reading and speaking for any words and sentences whose students often use to speak

before if students have a mistake they have to correct directly that means the mistake. A teacher must apply technology to create a good atmosphere for learning. While teaching we should facilitate students to talk much and anyway teachers have to talk less.

## Conclusion and Discussion

In this section, the research was divided into two parts as follows;

For the opinion of problems in English Speaking comprehension Based on the research findings, the researcher found that there were various factors which affected the English Speaking comprehension related to speaking to the students motivations, Teachers' teaching techniques, and environments and students lack time speak English as followings;

The result of students' motivation that was a big problem for students which was encountered as they were not confident to speak out and I was embarrassed when I spoke with others. That was similar with Xinqin state that Chinese students were interviewed and identified and summarized the cause of their anxiety about speaking. The first problems was related to a lack of proficiency in English, the second was the fear of making mistakes and being subject to ridicule, and the third was related to large class sizes, followed by an unwillingness to take risk. (Xinqin & Z. 34-39). For instance, fear of exam and lack of self-confidence in accordance with Krashen's theory explained that the students will pronounce words those they had learned when language learning getting through the meaningful input, that can be understood and a learner must learn language without enforcement and this is also consistent with research of Siriwathhas Lukkana, she stated that an anxiety is feeling kind of queasy, which will come in the form of fear such as fear the examination, fear that can't exam. Krashen & S. (1995: 76).The teacher spoke in the class

too much that made the cause of problems for students, because they did not have time to express their ideas and gave opinion to discuss with others in the class. This was not the best way to help students in teaching of English speaking skill. Additional, teachers should make a good plan of teaching avoid from talking too much in class and create time for students speaking too much and do a group or pair work. As similar to Khaira Maulidar, Sofyan A. Gani & Iskandar Abdul Samad said that a goal of language teaching is to provide learners with communicative competence, classroom activities those are developed the learners' ability to express themselves through speech, therefore, it seems to be an important component of a language course, and teachers who design and administer such activities will then be more important. In short, teaching strategies are very important since they determine the success of teaching process. Strategies used by teachers should be interesting and can capture students' attention. Some of the strategies used in teaching speaking are such cooperative activities as role-play, creative tasks, and drilling. Further that, Most of students speak the mother tongue to them when they stay in room and they pay a little time to practice in English every day, these problems were occurred by students because they were not to pay positive attitude in English.

For this reason, teachers should indicate learners to improve their communication competence to complete their speaking skills in daily conversation continuously increasing, and often practice face to face or every time they do. Hence, if they were always able to speak what they want to say when they use English, they can speak English comfortably and preferably with native speaker or whatever they need in worldwide, they will be able to solve the problems and carry out a conversation successfully in the target. And researcher propose the ways to solve the problems of students as follows 1) Students should review Basic English grammar more. 2) Students should read

English newspapers, magazines, and some storybooks to help their improvement of accent and sound. Furthermore, students can write a new word to memorize. 3) Students must often listen to English every day through social media as an international channel, YouTube for improvement on their listening and knowledge. 4) The students must practice on the speaking out and loud at least 20-30 minutes a day or speak via social networks like Facebook, Line, Zalo or Instagram to get more confidence. The students should attend activities based on playing games and speaking tasks those for everyone.

### Suggestions for Research

Based on the result and information from the study, the researcher give the recommendations for teacher, students and recommendations for the further study as the following:

1. To study the strategies to deal with shame and embarrass in English speaking skill of students MCU should be conducted.
2. To study the usage of English speaking skills through the Present / Practice / Produce (PPP) method for MCU students should be conducted.
3. To study effective of Vietnam language on Khmer Krom Student should be conducted.

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