

A Study of English-Speaking Problems of Indian Students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

Anurag Kumar

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand

Corresponding Author, Email: anuragindia360@gmail.com

Retrieved: May 14, 2025; Revised: October 28, 2025; Accepted: October 29, 2025

Abstract

This study entitled “A Study of English-Speaking Problems of Indian Students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University” aimed to (1) survey the current problem situations of Indian students, (2) examine their English-speaking difficulties, and (3) propose effective solutions to improve their communication skills. The research employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. The population consisted of 21 Indian students studying at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand, and as the total number of Indian students was limited, all were included as the study’s target group. Data were collected through questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and group discussions. The research instruments were also reviewed by three experts in English education to ensure content validity and reliability. Statistical tools such as mean, percentage, and standard deviation were used to analyze the data, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis.

The findings revealed that Indian students encountered major English-speaking problems in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and confidence. These difficulties were largely influenced by limited exposure to English-speaking environments, interference from their mother tongue, and a lack of regular practice. The study further proposed several solutions, including encouraging students to practice English beyond the classroom, promoting English-only instruction in certain subjects, providing daily vocabulary-building tasks, and creating opportunities to use online learning platforms for language practice.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to enhancing English communication among Indian students in multicultural academic contexts, offering practical strategies for educators and institutions to strengthen students’ speaking proficiency and confidence.

Keywords: Speaking Problems; Communication; Indian Students

Introduction

Language serves as the primary means of communication through which individuals express ideas, feelings, and thoughts. Among thousands of languages spoken globally, English has emerged as an international medium of communication, education, and technology. However,

for many non-native speakers, particularly in non-English-speaking countries, mastering spoken English remains a major challenge.

India represents one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with hundreds of regional languages and dialects. While Hindi and English function as official languages, the vast linguistic variation significantly influences how individuals acquire and use English. This diversity often results in pronunciation difficulties, grammatical inconsistencies, and limited fluency, as learners unconsciously transfer patterns from their mother tongues into English. Studies such as those by Burnkart (1998) and Nunan (1991) have shown that similar challenges occur among non-native speakers in other Asian contexts, including Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam, where the absence of English-speaking environments limits communicative competence.

Within this broader context, Indian students studying at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) in Thailand face unique linguistic and sociocultural barriers. Although many of them have studied English academically in India, they often struggle with fluency, pronunciation, and confidence when required to use English in an international classroom setting. The multicultural environment at MCU, where English functions as the medium of instruction among students from various countries, highlights the need to investigate these specific speaking challenges.

Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the English-speaking problems of Indian students at MCU and proposing practical solutions to enhance their communication skills. By identifying the major linguistic and psychological barriers, this research seeks to contribute to improving the English language learning experience for Indian students and provide insights applicable to similar contexts in other non-native English-speaking academic environments.

Objectives

1. To survey the current problem situations of Indian students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand.
2. To study the English-speaking problems of Indian students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand.
3. To find out the solution to the English-speaking problems of Indian students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand.

Research Methodology

1. Population and Sample

This study employed a mixed research method, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The target population for this research was Indian students enrolled at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 21 participants. This approach focused on recruiting students who met specific criteria relevant to the research questions.

2. Research Tools

This research used a descriptive method to understand the objective and the emotional factors which are hard to observe and cannot be conducted by another. The descriptive method provides us with facts to identify the current situation of learning and teaching oral expression. The research question for interviews is created by the researcher and gives an assessor to interview people who are concerned with this research. And the other things are that the researcher will interview and do an observation when the Indian students continue studying in English. At last, to conclude the information from the researcher discussed with the group of students and created a tool in the research as below:

1. The research tools were carried out to build up a review of the theoretical concept and research related to the study of English speaking skills for communication of Indian students of Mahachulalongkornraja Vidyalaya. The measure establishes a question about the four levels based on the concept of like by determining the answer as follows:

- a. Researchers created objectives and research tools with the help of advisors.
- b. Tools and the presentation of the tools for further research as recommended.
- c. Research tools for target people that tools are similar to simple to research to determine the confidence of precision tools.
- d. To print the complete questionnaire ready to collect data from the sample group.

2. The researcher will gather data in the forms of Open-ended questions, Close-ended questions, Likert scale questions, and lastly Demographic questions. The researcher will collect data by administering a questionnaire in the form of structural questions which is a questionnaire for individual interview purposes by using the above forms. Respondents will be asked to answer by marking "Yes or No" in the box, and also through a rating scale such as clicking How agree with the researcher's questions. Other questions, however, will require respondents to provide detailed answers by elaborating their ideas as well.

There will be the scales used in this questionnaire are-

- i. a) Yes b) No and,
- ii. the second point consists of a rating method from 1 to 5 as it is shown:
 - a. 1 = Poor
 - b. 2 = Fair
 - c. 3 = Average
 - d. 4 = Great
 - e. 5 = Superb
- iii. The second point consists of five scales as follows-
 - a) 1 = Never
 - b) 2 = Rarely
 - c) 3 = Sometimes
 - d) 4 = Often
 - e) 5 = Always

3. Data Collection

Qualitative Data: For this research, in-depth interviews were used. In-depth interviews are personal and unstructured interviews, whose aim is to identify participant's emotions, feelings, and opinions regarding a particular research subject. The main advantage of personal interviews is that they involve personal and direct contact between interviewers and interviewees, as well as eliminate non-response rates, but interviewers need to have developed the necessary skills to successfully carry out an interview (Fisher, 2005, Wilson, 2003).

Quantitative Method: The researcher conducts the process of informal interviews with international Indian students to answer all the questions, give out techniques, and propose solutions from students, including participant observation and group discussion of all information that will be collected. Lack of Indian students studying in the faculty of Humanity (only 3 students), the Researcher decided to interview all Indian students who are studying at Mahachulalongkornraja Vidyalaya to help contribute information on the struggles they face in English communication and how they overcome. To collect the data for this research study, the Researcher uses two methods called primary data and secondary data:

Primary data is directly collecting information from the target group of research which consists of 21 international Indian students by answering the questionnaire, observation, and face-to-face interviews.

Secondary data is collected from documentary surveys such as the thesis books, academic books, academic articles, newspapers, journals, and libraries. These things are used to support information and study. The documentary survey is also a good guideline for developing the research.

4. Data Analysis

In conclusion, data collection will be conducted through direct observation and the administration of questionnaires to Indian students. The resulting data will be meticulously entered into a computer system and subjected to statistical analysis using specialized software, with percentages employed for quantitative interpretation. Concurrently, insights obtained from in-depth interviews will be analyzed qualitatively on an individual basis, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the findings.

1. Data Analysis: The questionnaire data will be analyzed using frequency counts and percentages to determine the distribution of responses.

2. Qualitative Data Analysis: Qualitative data, collected from interviews, was analyzed by transcribing the voice recordings and identifying key themes and patterns in the content.

Based on the interview, a thematic approach was used qualitatively to analyze the interview transcripts. The feedback from teachers was integrated to supplement and validate the findings. Further interpretation of data was carried out. The study had a conclusion, discussion, and recommendation according to the theme identified.

Results

Quantitative Findings

To accomplish the research objectives, data were collected from 21 Indian students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University using a questionnaire focusing on five main aspects of English-speaking problems: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and confidence. The responses were analyzed using percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Table 1 Summary of English-Speaking Problems among Indian Students (n = 21)

Aspect	Mean	Interpretation	Percentage of Students Reporting Difficulty
Pronunciation	4.35	High problem	85.7%
Grammar	4.10	High problem	80.9%
Vocabulary	3.95	Moderate problem	76.1%
Fluency	4.20	High problem	82.3%
Confidence	4.25	High problem	83.3%

(Scale: 1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High)

The results reveal that pronunciation, confidence, and fluency were the most challenging aspects of English speaking among Indian students at MCU. Grammar and vocabulary were also identified as major areas of concern but to a slightly lesser extent.

Qualitative Findings

To complement the quantitative data, in-depth interviews and group discussions were conducted with selected participants. Thematic analysis identified three major themes: language interference, psychological barriers, and limited exposure to English.

Theme 1: Language Interference

Many students reported difficulty avoiding the influence of their mother tongues when speaking English.

“When I speak English, sometimes Hindi words come first in my mind,” said one participant.

Theme 2: Psychological Barriers

A lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes negatively affected their fluency.

“I know the words but feel shy to speak because I think others will laugh if I say it wrong.”

Theme 3: Limited Exposure

Students mentioned that opportunities to practice English outside the classroom were very limited.

“In the temple and with friends, we speak our own languages, so English practice is very little.”

Summary of Findings

Objective 1 (Survey of Current Problems):

The survey results indicated that Indian students at MCU experienced difficulties mainly in pronunciation, fluency, and confidence, as presented in Table 1.

Objective 2 (Specific Speaking Problems):

Qualitative analysis showed that these problems were primarily caused by mother-tongue interference, psychological shyness, and a lack of regular practice opportunities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Indian students' English-speaking challenges are both linguistic (related to pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary) and psychological (related to confidence and fear of error).

Discussion and Suggestions

The findings of this study show that Indian students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) experience difficulties in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and confidence when speaking English. These challenges are consistent with previous research on ESL/EFL learners, which highlights limited exposure, mother-tongue interference, and psychological barriers as major obstacles to oral proficiency (Nunan, 1991; Burnkart, 1998; Tuan & Mai, 2015). Although English serves as one of India's official languages, the country's vast linguistic diversity reduces opportunities for authentic English communication. As a result, many students arrive at MCU with good grammatical knowledge but limited communicative ability.

The findings reaffirm Hymes's (1972) theory of communicative competence, emphasizing that language mastery involves not only grammar but also the ability to use language effectively in real contexts. Despite having studied English academically, MCU students lack the natural English-speaking environment required to build fluency and spontaneity. The results also support Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) and Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985), which together suggest that language acquisition improves through meaningful exposure and regular language production. Because students at MCU seldom use English outside class, their limited input and output opportunities lead to hesitation, mispronunciation, and lack of confidence.

The persistence of these problems stems from both linguistic and psychological factors. Linguistically, the influence of native languages results in direct translation, grammatical errors, and pronunciation difficulties. Psychologically, students feel anxious and fear negative evaluation when speaking English. The Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) explains how such emotional barriers restrict natural language acquisition. To address these underlying issues, teachers should adopt communicative and task-based teaching methods, creating opportunities for authentic interaction through activities like role plays, group discussions, and presentations. Establishing English-speaking zones, conversation clubs, and online practice platforms can further encourage confidence and consistent language use.

This study achieved three objectives: (1) surveying current English-speaking problems among Indian students at MCU, (2) identifying their causes, and (3) proposing solutions for

improvement. The combined findings indicate that these problems result from interconnected linguistic, psychological, and environmental factors that hinder communicative competence. The implications extend beyond MCU, offering insights for educators working with multilingual learners in similar EFL settings.

Pedagogically, the study underscores the need to shift from teacher-centered grammar instruction to student-centered communicative learning, where the emphasis is on active participation and self-expression. Teachers should act as facilitators who guide and motivate students to use English beyond the classroom. Institutions can reinforce this by organizing English-speaking events, peer activities, and cross-cultural programs that promote natural language interaction.

While this research provides meaningful insights, it is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single institution. Future studies should involve larger, more diverse populations and examine long-term effects of communicative teaching strategies. Comparative studies across different cultural backgrounds could also enhance understanding of how multilingual contexts affect English-speaking development.

In conclusion, improving English-speaking competence among Indian students at MCU requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both linguistic proficiency and psychological readiness. By fostering communicative learning, providing meaningful practice, and nurturing supportive environments, educators can help students transform academic knowledge into confident, real-world communication. These findings contribute to the ongoing advancement of ESL/EFL pedagogy, emphasizing the balance between language skill and learner confidence as key to successful communication in multicultural academic settings.

References

Burnkart, G. S. (n.d.). *Spoken language: What it is and how to teach it*. Retrieved 2025, Retrieved January 12, fromfrom <http://www.nclrc.org/essentials/speaking/goalsspeak.htm>

Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (1996). *Teaching pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Derwing, T. (2017). *The Routledge handbook of instructed second language acquisition*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold Publishers.

Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected readings* (pp. 269–293). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Kachru, B. B. (1994). Englishization and contact linguistics. *World Englishes*, 13(2), 133–154.

Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*. New York: Prentice Hall International, Ltd.

Rubin, J., & Thompson, I. (1994). *How to be a more successful language learner*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Sridhar, K. K. (1989). *English in India: The sociolinguistic and ethnographic context*. London: Penguin Books.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–253). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Nguyen, T. T. A. (2015). The key principles for development of speaking. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, 3(1), 49–53.