AN INVESTIGATION OF ENGLISH INDEPENDENT AND INTEGRATED SPEAKING TASKS OF THAI STUDENTS STUDYING IN A MASTER'S PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

A THESIS

BY

PAWEENA NUMPOON

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Master of Arts in English

at Srinakharinwirot University

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AN ABSTRACT

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This study was conducted to investigate how Thai students performed their English independent and integrated speaking tasks. Students studying in a Master's program in English in the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University in Thailand participated in the study. The *Oral Proficiency Test* developed by the researcher using the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) as a model was used as an instrument of this study. The test was divided into two parts: (a) independent speaking tasks and (b) integrated speaking tasks. The purpose of the test was to evaluate how the participants performed those tasks. In the independent speaking tasks, the participants were required to speak in response to a given topic using their own opinions and experience. In the integrated tasks, the participants were required to speak in response to a given topic using information in the reading and listening passage provided for them. The test was graded by two native speakers of English. The results of the test showed that the participants' performance in both the independent and integrated English speaking tasks was at the intermediate level. The problems that were found in both tasks were: (a) grammar usage, such as subject and verb agreement, two-word verbs, and verb inflection; (b) vocabulary limitations; (c) pronunciation; and (d) fluency. The results indicated that the four problems found made it difficult for native speakers of English to understand their speech. Therefore, recommendations for improving the speaking skills of Thai students and how to arrive at an

effective way for language classrooms around the world to use English as a foreign language were discussed.

การสำรวจความสามารถทางการพูดภาษาอังกฤษแบบ INDEPENDENT TASKS และ INTEGRATED TASKS ของนิสิตไทยที่ศึกษาอยู่ในระดับปริญญาโทสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ

บทคัดย่อ

ของ

ปวีณา นุ่มพูล

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ
มิถุนายน 2555

ปวีณา นุ่มพูล (2555). *การสำรวจความสามารถทางการพูดภาษาอังกฤษแบบ INDEPENDENT TASKS และ INTEGRATED TASKS ของนิสิตไทยที่ศึกษาอยู่ในระดับปริญญาโทสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ* ปริญญานิพนธ์ ศศ.ม. (ภาษาอังกฤษ). กรุงเทพฯ: บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ. คณะกรรมการควบคุม: ผศ. ดร. สายวรุณ จำปาวัลย์ อาจารย์ ดร. ศิรินันท์ ศรีเนาวรัตน์

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีจุดประสงค์ เพื่อสำรวจความสามารถทางการพูดภาษาอังกฤษแบบ Independent Tasks และ Integrated Tasks ของนิสิตไทย นิสิตที่ศึกษาอยู่ในระดับปริญญาโทสาขาวิชาภาอังกฤษ ระหว่างปีการศึกษา 2552 – 2553 ที่มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒได้เข้าร่วมเป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่างในงานวิจัยครั้งนี้ ผู้วิจัยได้สร้างแบบทดสอบประสิทธิภาพทางการพูด (Oral Proficiency Test) ขึ้นเพื่อเป็นเครื่องมือในการทดสอบความสามารถทางการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิต ในการสร้างเครื่องมือสำหรับงานวิจัยนี้ ผู้วิจัยได้ใช้ข้อสอบ Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) เป็นต้นแบบ แบบทดสอบประสิทธิภาพทางการพูด (Oral Proficiency Test) แบ่งออกเป็น 2 ส่วน ในส่วนของ Independent Tasks นิสิตต้องพูดภาษาอังกฤษในหัวข้อต่างๆ เพื่อแสดงความคิดเห็น และเล่าถึงประสบการณ์ส่วนตัว ในส่วนของ Integrated Tasks นิสิตต้องฟังบทสนทนา หรือฟังเสียงการบรรยายในหัวข้อที่กำหนด และอ่านข้อความเกี่ยวกับการบรรยายนั้นๆ แล้วพูดสรุปใจความสำคัญเป็นภาษาอังกฤษและแสดงความคิดเห็นต่อหัวข้อนั้น หรือตอบคำถามตามที่กำหนดไว้ในแบบทดสอบ ผลการทดสอบแสดงให้เห็นว่าความสามารถทางการพูดภาอังกฤษของนิสิตทั้งใน Independent Tasks และ Integrated Tasks อยู่ในระดับกลาง ปัญหาที่พบในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษในแบบทดสอบทั้งสองแบบของนิสิตคือ (1) ไวยากรณ์ เช่น ความสอดคล้องในการใช้คำกริยากับประธานของประโยค การใช้กริยาวลี และการผันคำ (2) ความรู้ในการใช้คำศัพท์มีจำกัด (3) การออกเสียง และ (4) ความคล่องแคล่วในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่าปัญหาในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษที่พบในงานวิจัยนี้มีผลต่อความเข้าใจของเจ้าของภาษา กล่าวคือการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของคนไทยทำให้เจ้าของภาษาเข้าใจได้ยาก ดังนั้นงานวิจัยนี้จึงมีการอภิปรายข้อเสนอแนะเพื่อปรับปรุงทักษะทางการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตไทยเพื่อประสิทธิภาพสูงสุดในชั้นเรียนภาษาอังกฤษด้วย

The thesis titled

"An Investigation of English Independent and Integrated Speaking Tasks

of Thai Students Studying in a Master's Program in English"

by

Paweena Numpoon

has been approved by the Graduate School as partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Master of Arts in English at Srinakharinwirot University.

…… Dean of Graduate School

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Somchai Santiwatanakul)

June , 2012

Thesis Committee

…….Major-advisor

(Asst. Prof. Dr. Saiwaroon Chumpavan)

……..Co-advisor

(Dr. Sirinan Srinaowaratt)

Oral Defense Committee

…..……..Chair

(Dr. Ubon Dhanesschaiyakupta)

……Committee

(Asst. Prof. Dr. Saiwaroon Chumpavan)

……Committee

(Dr. Sirinan Srinaowaratt)

……Committee

(Dr. Walaiporn Chaya)

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Introduction

Thailand has become one of the countries in Asia where international companies are interested in establishing their offices. The use of English has also increased among people who work in those companies. Therefore, it is necessary for Thais to have a good command of English to communicate with people coming from different parts of the world.

According to Galvin and Cooper (1999, p. 12), "communication affects every area of one's life." People need to interact with each other in different roles as a part of the entire society. For example, they need to communicate with people in the family, with friends at school, and with colleagues at their workplace. Speaking, therefore, is considered as the most important component of the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing).

With the needs of English for communication for Thai people, English has become a required course for Thai students in the new National Curriculum. It is stated in the Thai National Curriculum that Thai students are required to study English from Grades 1 to 12. In addition, the goal of English teaching has been changed from focusing on grammatical structures to communicative purposes by integrating all four language skills into the language classroom and oral communication is one of the life skills that Thai students should be prepared for. However, Thai people still have problems communicating in English although they have studied English for years. Thus, it is important to find out specific problems that Thai people encounter in order to improve their English speaking skills.

The common speaking skills used in everyday life concerning both inside and outside the classroom are divided into two types: (a) independent speaking skills and (b) integrated speaking skills. According to the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), these two skills are described as follows.

1. Independent Speaking Skills

Independent speaking skills include the skills speakers use to discuss opinion and to create an appropriate response to complete a successful communication goal. Independent speaking skills occur when people are communicating with each other. For example, students need independent speaking skills to discuss their opinion on one topic in the classroom, so they need to be able to speak articulately, with clarity and conviction. In addition, it is stated in the TOEFL that English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) learners need to be able to use independent skills to: (a) describe familiar persons, places, and objects; (b) express and justify likes, dislikes, values, and preferences; (c) recount events and actions; (d) express an opinion and support it; (e) take a position and defend it; and (f) make a recommendation and justify it (Educational Testing Service [ETS], 2004). These abilities are required in order to perform independent speaking skills proficiently.

2. Integrated Speaking Skills

Integrated speaking skills are more complex than independent speaking skills. According to the TOEFL, ESL/EFL learners perform integrated speaking skills when they: (a) take and use notes to organize information before speaking, (b) identify and summarize major points and important details from written and spoken sources, (c) paraphrase information from written and spoken sources, (d) synthesize information from written and spoken sources, (e) elaborate on ideas and information from written and spoken sources, (f) recognize and convey a speaker's attitude and

intent, (g) connect concrete information with abstract concepts, (h) express an opinion in relation to what has been read or heard and support it, (i) take a position and defend it, and (j) make a recommendation and justify it (Educational Testing Service [ETS], 2004).

Independent and integrated speaking skills help people to achieve communication goals and overcome difficulties in their speaking. Thus, proficiency in these two skills enables ESL/EFL learners to use the language efficiently like a native speaker.

English speaking difficulties of ESL/EFL learners.

Although people communicate daily, they do not always succeed in reaching their communication goals (Hybels & Weaver, 1995). According to Peel (1995), there are several factors that can affect face to face communication: (a) emotional reactions, (b) distractions, (c) shyness, (d) fear, and (e) unfamiliar situations. These factors are only parts of many others that people may encounter while interacting with others in their society. However, they are obstacles which appear with people in general in one society where they speak the same language. With people from different parts of the world combined together to communicate in order to reach one goal in understanding each other, problems found in this group of people will surely be more complex as there are variations in language used among them. To be specific, some studies were carried out to investigate ESL/EFL learners in the purposes of finding out difficulties encountered when they speak other languages.

Altenberg's study (2005) reported the interference of the first language in ESL/EFL learners' English pronunciation. It concluded that the first language is the cause of mispronouncing in the second language. Similarly, Yamada (2005) conducted a study to investigate ESL/EFL learners' speaking performance. The results showed that their first language affected their speaking ability in the second one. Yamada stated that the

participants tended to spend some time thinking in their first language before they were ready to speak in English and that some even spoke in both languages in order to make their conversation more understandable.

Derwing, Munro, and Thomson (2007) observed the improvement of ESL/EFL learners' English speaking ability in their study. They found that the opportunity to speak English in real life situations was important. They also found that a group of participants who had more opportunities to speak English outside the classroom had better improvement than the other group. Accordingly, the opportunity put them to more practicing, and it benefited them in their speaking performance. On the other hand, lack of opportunity to practicing failed the other group to improve their English speaking skills.

In Thailand, Ekwannang (2004) and Noreewong (2006) conducted similar studies inquiring problems affected communication between Thai people and foreigners in their workplace. The results of these two studies showed difficulties during the conversation in the same direction. They concluded that problems occurred due to the following factors: (a) misinterpretation of the contexts and the contents, (b) English accent of people from various parts of the world, and (c) level of language. Furthermore, they said that some cultural barriers, such as common characteristics of the Thais and culture differences, had an influence on communication between Thais and foreigners.

Sursattayawong (2006) studied difficulties Thai nurses encountered when they spoke English at their workplace. It was found that the difficulties were: (a) grammatical errors; (b) difficulty in self-expression; (c) limited knowledge to use appropriate vocabulary; (d) inappropriate use of intonation, word stress, and mispronunciation; and (e) lack of self-confidence. In addition, it was found in Aungcharuen's study (2006) that

Thai language interfered with Thai people's English pronunciation, and this caused problems to foreigners when they communicated with Thai people.

Statement of the Problem

Although studies regarding English speaking of ESL/EFL learners have been conducted worldwide, studies investigating English speaking proficiency focused on independent and integrated speaking skills of graduate students in Thailand could not be found. Consequently, the researcher was interested in investigating how the graduate students studying in a Master's program in English perform in their independent and integrated speaking tasks in authentic communication on an *Oral Proficiency Test* constructed by the researcher based upon the TOEFL. The specific problems in their English speaking focusing on five important components were also investigated in order to find out what needed to be improved. The five important components of English speaking include grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University perform the independent tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?
2. How did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University perform the integrated tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?
3. What problems did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University encounter regarding the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation,

fluency, and comprehensibility) of the independent tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

4. What problems did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University encounter regarding the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) of the integrated tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

Significance of the Study

The results obtained from this study providing information concerning speaking proficiency and problems found in English speaking of graduate students enrolled in a Master's program in English at Srinakharinwirot University. If it was found that the independent tasks' scores and integrated tasks' scores of the students on the *Oral Proficiency Test* were lower than the intermediate level, activities in the language classroom should allow the students to discuss, give personal opinions, or summarize the text being read or listened to. If it was found that the students had grammatical problems, such as false usage of tenses that may distort the information in their speaking, the instructors should realize that English grammar needs to be taught in appropriate ways. Thus, the results of this study would show how well the students respond to independent and integrated tasks provided in the *Oral Proficiency Test*. The results might also indicate problems in each speaking component which occur during the test. Accordingly, they might give some ideas to language instructors to find effective ways to improve communication skills of Thai people.

Methodology

Participants.

Srinakharinwirot University has been well known as the Higher Teacher Training School since 1949. It has developed with a variety of academic fields. The students studying in the Faculty of Humanities, especially those who are studying at the graduate level, are expected from Thai society to be well qualified in social and language skills. As the skills might be used in their future careers, it is important to know how well they can perform those skills genuinely. Therefore, they were asked to participate in this study as the purposive sampling. There were nine students willing to participate in.

The students were informed that results in this study would be guidelines for them to improve their English speaking abilities as they were required to speak English in various topics. Accordingly, the results would highlight problems found in their speaking and would also indicate how well they performed their English speaking skills.

Instrument.

The instrument used in this study was a test that aimed to investigate the participants' speaking proficiency and problems found when they perform independent and integrated speaking skills on the *Oral Proficiency Test* developed by the researcher. The speaking part on the TOEFL, a standardized test widely used to test English proficiency of English language learners, was used as model to develop the *Oral Proficiency Test* for this study. The test concerned five important speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility.) The thesis adviser and EFL experts were asked to examine the test questions and determine if they were appropriate and valid. Changes were made based on comments from the adviser and the EFL experts. They were asked to examine the test again, and they agreed

that the content of the test was appropriate and valid to use as the instrument for this study.

The test was also pilot tested with the graduate students studying in the weekend program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language for the purpose of test reliability. After the pilot test, it was found that the reliability of the test stands at .92. Therefore, the *Oral Proficiency Test* could be used to investigate the English independent and integrated speaking tasks of graduate students in a Master's program in English at Srinakharinwirot University.

Data collection procedures.

The data in this study were collected from students who were willing to take the test during the 2009 to 2010 academic year. The participants were asked to complete all tasks one by one. They had to follow the instruction in each task and had varied amounts of time to prepare and speak depending on the task they were taking. Their speaking was recorded meanwhile. Two native English speakers were asked to evaluate the participants' speaking from the recorded material.

Data analysis.

The data were analyzed to answer the four research questions, and the results from this study indicated how well the participants perform the independent and integrated speaking tasks. Their English speaking proficiency were also evaluated in five areas: grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility. Raters reported the participants' speaking problems in order to define in which specific area the participants need to improve.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted using the *Oral Proficiency Test* developed by the researcher to evaluate English speaking proficiency of graduate students studying in a

Master's program in English at Srinakharinwirot University. The participants were limited to the students who were willing to participate in this study. Therefore, those who were not willing to participate in the study were excluded.

The results represented students' English speaking proficiency and problems found in their speaking. According, only verbal language was used to evaluate their speaking abilities. Any non-verbal language was not included in the study. Furthermore, the participants' reading and listening skills might affect their speaking performance as the tests involved some reading and listening materials. If the participants had difficulties in reading and listening abilities, they could affect the results from their speaking tests.

Confidentiality of Participants

The participants were informed that their names and personal data would not appear in the study or would be included in the data analysis. Their information was destroyed immediately after the study was completed.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I in this study introduces the background, problems, and research questions of the study. Chapter II presents a review of literature and research related to the study. Chapter III details the method of the study. Chapter IV presents the results, and Chapter V contains a discussion and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents research literature related to the present study. The review of the related literature is divided into five main parts:

1. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Thailand
2. Oral Communication
3. Oral Communication Problems Experienced by EFL Learners
4. Academic and Authentic Communications
5. Studies Related to English Speaking Difficulties Experienced by EFL Learners

The first part introduces the subject of teaching English as a foreign language in Thailand. The second part focuses on oral communication. The third part identifies oral communication problems experienced by EFL learners. The fourth part discusses academic and authentic communications. The final section is a discussion of the studies related to English speaking problems and difficulties of EFL learners.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Thailand

During the period of King Rama IV, a native English speaker was hired to teach the princes in the palace. The purpose of English language teaching during this period was to prepare the country for modernization. As Thailand became increasingly important in terms of trade and commerce in Southeast Asia, the need for Thais to develop English language skills became crucial. Later on, English language teaching became part of the Thai education system and the Ministry of Education began to develop the teaching and learning of the English language throughout the country. In the early to mid-1990s, the Thai government reformed education by focusing on internationalization. The reason for this change was to prepare young people for an increasingly intercultural global era. The 2001 Basic Education Curriculum established English as part of the core curriculum for foreign language learning and made English a requirement at all levels of study until graduation (Ministry of Education 2005).

According to the new National Curriculum, English teaching and learning methods have changed from a focus on grammatical rules to a more communicative approach. In addition, the Ministry of Education also provides teachers with handbooks that train them to organize activities in the language classroom that will encourage students to practice their English language skills in real life situations. As stated in the curriculum, the ultimate goal of English language teaching is to improve the English proficiency of Thai students. However, it was found in many studies that Thai students still experience oral communication problems when they speak with foreigners. Therefore, one of main problems experienced by English language learners in Thailand is a lack of communication skills.

In conclusion, English language teaching in Thailand has developed over decades, and it is still a very important aspect of Thai education as English language skills are

increasingly necessary in the current international environment in Thailand. The Ministry of Education has also been trying to improve the ability of Thai students to focus on the communicative approach to English. However, Thai students still experience difficulty with English communication skills. As a result, English teaching and learning methods need to be continuously improved in order to improve the English proficiency of Thai EFL learners.

Oral Communication

Communication has been defined differently by various linguists. According to Hybels and Weaver (1995, p. 6), "communication is any process in which people share information, ideas, and feelings," while Verderber (1996, p. 6) defined communication as "the transactional process of creating meaning." According to Galvin and Cooper (1999, p. 5) communication is "the process of sending and receiving messages in order to share meaning." However, Seiler and Beall (2002, p. 28) gave a more detailed definition of communication as "the simultaneous sharing and creating of meaning through human symbolic action, a process by which verbal and nonverbal symbols are sent, received, and given meaning."

These definitions of communication share some common ideas, one of which is that communication is a process of sharing and creating meaning. In this process, meaning is transferred from one person to another person or group of people. This means that two or more people are involved in sharing and creating the meaning of the messages they send to each other. Additionally, the meaning provided through messages can be considered one of the goals of communication. Therefore, it is important that communicators have the same idea about the meaning of the messages they send. If not, a communication breakdown might occur. People who communicate well are capable of sending messages by using language as a tool to reach their communication goals.

According to Tubbs and Moss (2003, p. 21), "communication is effective when the stimulus, as it was initiated and intended by the sender, or source, corresponds closely to the stimulus as it is perceived and responded to by the receiver." In other words, effective communication arises when both communicators have a similar understanding of the messages sent between them. In order to use language effectively for the purpose of communication, communicators should follow the following strategies (Gibson & Hanna, 1992).

1. Choose to expand their vocabulary
2. Use simple language
3. Choose specific language
4. Choose action verbs
5. Illustrate abstract ideas
6. Employ language for purposes of comparison and contrast

The first strategy, choosing to expand vocabulary, enables the learner to communicate more effectively for a number of reasons. It is stated that the more words an individual knows, the better quality conversations they can create or sustain. Also, individuals with a larger vocabulary may improve the impressions they make on others in terms of their language skills, as well as an increased ability to express their opinions and to perceive the world more accurately. For these reasons, the choice to expand vocabulary is considered to be the initial stage of effective communication.

The second strategy, to use simple language, is recommended by many communicators. Although listeners may have a very good knowledge of the language they are using, it is not necessary for the speaker to use difficult words or complex phrases to form sentences when interacting with listeners. For example, it is recommended that speakers should use simple words such as "go with" instead of

"accompany," "help" instead of "benefit," or "show" instead of "demonstrate." The use of simpler words and phrases can save time, make messages easier to understand, and give the listener a clearer idea of what the speaker intended to say.

The third strategy, to choose specific language, is recommended in order for the speaker to give the listener an image of what they are describing, especially when it is too general to be easily understood. The use of more specific language, especially when using abstract words, helps to reduce the difficulties experienced by listeners. A comparison between general and specific language is shown below:

General (abstract)	Specific (concrete)
Corporation	Exxon, IBM, General Motors
Labor	chopping wood, digging
Labor union	National Federation of Labor
Organization	Boy Scouts of America
Tall	six feet, seven inches

(Gibson & Hanna, 1992, p. 86)

Specific language is easier to understand and more to the point as it provides clearer images than more general language. Therefore, specific or concrete language is recommended for use in conversations.

The fourth strategy is to choose action verbs. Listeners are more likely to understand the idea of the messages they are receiving if the speaker uses action verbs. Consequently, it is better for communicators to use action verbs or the active voice in their messages.

The sample below portrays the difference between two passages using the passive and the active voice:

Passive voice

> The response latencies to the last four practice trials were averaged to establish a reaction-time covariate for each person. In order to examine the effects of self-perception on the level of industriousness, each person's responses to the scale items tapping that domain were combined (after appropriate reversals) to create an additive index. (Gibson & Hanna, 1992, p. 87)

Active

> We arranged the response latencies in the last four practice trials. We wanted to discover each person's reaction time. We also combined each person's responses to particular items. We wanted to study what respondents thought of their own industriousness. So, it was necessary to create an additive index of this dimension. (Gibson & Hanna, 1992, p. 87)

These passages present the same ideas and meaning from different perspectives. As the active voice provides shorter sentences, more time words and interrupted rhythms, the passage with active voice is more likely to be understood better than the passive voice.

The fifth strategy is to choose to illustrate abstract ideas if there is the possibility that the message is unclear. In some cases, an example or an illustration may help listeners to understand messages if there is an aspect they can imagine or see as a picture in their mind. In short, such samples allow the listeners to visualize abstract ideas received from the speakers.

The final strategy is to employ language for purposes of comparison and contrast for the following purposes: (a) to make things clear or vivid, (b) to support or to prove something, and (c) to make something abstract more concrete (Gibson & Hanna, 1992, p.

87). The basic idea of using comparison and contrast is to show the similarities and differences between two things. The thing to be compared has to be something that is known to the listeners, otherwise, the given messages remain unclear.

Iwashita, Brown, McNamara, and O'Hagan (2008) stated that in order to communicate effectively, communicators should be able to form accurate grammar, use appropriate vocabulary, utter correct and clear pronunciation, speak fluently, and create comprehensive messages. In terms of grammatical accuracy, speakers should be able to perform language tasks using correct sentence forms. An error should not appear in an effective communication or in a message that the speaker intends to send to the listener. In terms of vocabulary usage, speakers should be able to choose the appropriate words to communicate in any situation. As inappropriate word choices cause misunderstandings, speakers should have enough knowledge to match the right word to the right purpose in a conversation. In terms of pronunciation, speakers should be able to use word stress like a native speaker, and the pronunciation of each word should also be clear. Incorrect word stress or mispronunciation can change the entire meaning of a word and create confusion. In order to speak fluently, speakers should create speech without pauses or anything else that may make speech incomprehensible. Speakers should be able to create coherent messages in order to make a conversation flow. Last, in order to create comprehensive messages, speakers should be able to communicate and respond to any question they may encounter during a conversation.

Learners can use all of the above-mentioned abilities in combination in order to make messages more comprehensible and easily understood. Consequently, in order to perform effectively, ESL/EFL learners should be taught to use appropriate language with the aforementioned abilities in order to achieve language competence.

Oral Communication Problems Experienced by EFL Learners

Hybels and Weaver (1995, p. 4) stated that "even though we have been communicating since birth, we are not always effective. Sometimes communication does not work and we end up frustrated." People experience difficulty with face to face communication throughout their lives for a number of reasons. Face to face communication may also be affected by the following factors: (a) emotional reactions, (b) distractions, (c) shyness, (d) fear, and (e) unfamiliar situations (Peel, 1995).

Peel subsequently described each of these aspects in more detail. Firstly, problems in communication often occur when the emotional reactions of the speaker are barricades to message production, by either twisting or blocking out the message the speaker intended to send. An emotional involvement between the speaker and listeners can result in poor communication if they have a poor relationship. The speaker may unintentionally send an unpleasant message to listeners if the speaker has any negative feelings toward them.

There are various communicative situations in everyday life that all five senses which can distract both speakers and listeners from the message being communicated. For instance, a conversation will be interrupted if someone drops a heavy object on their toes, or hears traffic on a nearby road, or sees low-flying aircraft through the window. The communicators, therefore, need to focus on the information being transmitted during their conversations.

Shyness is another factor that causes communication problems. Although most shy people are perceived as quiet and reclusive, their behavior does not always conform to this stereotype. In fact, some learners may even adopt aggressive behavior which may lead to others discriminating against them. Hence, people either need to try to understand

the characteristics of shy people or shy people themselves need to improve their interpersonal skills.

Fear is similar to shyness, but it differs in that it has some connection to a specific time or event. When people experience fear, such as during a job interview, their anxiety may cause them to struggle to find the right words. As a result, such fear may stop the speaker from effectively sending the intended message and ruining the communication process.

An unfamiliar situation may also result in communication difficulties. For example, if the speaker is in any situation in which they have to say something or interact with someone for the first time, the speaker may feel uncomfortable. Accordingly, the speaker may need some time to prepare himself for the new situation.

Due to the aforementioned problems, communicators in a second or foreign language may face difficulties at any time and in any situation. In order to communicate effectively, they need to try to prepare themselves to overcome these obstacles. Furthermore, they should also learn to use appropriate language and to apply it properly in everyday life.

Academic and Authentic Communications

In the past, English language learning in Thailand was mostly limited to the classroom. Now it is increasingly necessary for Thais to actively use their foreign language skills in daily life. However, the focus has shifted from an emphasis on grammatical structure to effective communication, and being able to communicate well in real life situations has become the ultimate goal of language learning in Thailand.

In the classroom, interaction between the students and the instructor is based on asking and answering questions, or discussing a variety of topics with each other. Similarly, in communication outside the classroom, people also have discussions or ask or

answer questions. This implies that academic and authentic communications are closely related to one another. Consequently, speaking skills in academic and authentic communications are divided into two types, independent and integrated speaking skills (Nunan, 1989).

Independent speaking skills.

Independent speaking skills include those that the speakers use to express opinions and to create an appropriate response to reach a communication goal. When speakers encounter a specific situation or are given a topic to speak about, for example, attending a job interview or making a spontaneous speech on a given topic in a speaking test, they use their independent speaking skills to reach the communication goal. Independent speaking skills are also used when people communicate with each other in typical daily situations, such as expressing an opinion, responding to a question, and describing their own experiences. Accordingly, people need independent speaking skills to achieve articulate communication.

Additionally, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) stated that ESL/EFL learners need independent speaking skills in order to: (a) describe familiar persons, places or objects; (b) to express and justify likes and dislikes, or values and preferences; (c) to recount events and actions; (d) to express and support an opinion; (e) to take a position and defend it; and (f) to make a recommendation and justify it (Educational Testing Service [ETS], 2004). These independent skills are required in order to achieve the communication goals needed for use in everyday life. In order to communicate proficiently, independent speaking skills are required. The example of an ETS independent speaking activity is shown below (ETS, p.21).

Activity Title: Love It or Hate It

Target Skill: Independent speaking

Learning Objective: Express and justify likes and dislikes, or values and preferences

Expressions for Offering Opinions:

1. In my opinion/view…
2. Personally, I believe/think that…
3. From my point of view, I think…
4. As far as I'm concerned…
5. I like/don't like ____ because…

Positive	Negative
1. It's delicious.	1. It tastes strange/bad.
2. It's fun.	2. It's not much fun.
3. She/he is beautiful.	3. She/he is strange.
4. It's not expensive.	4. It's too expensive.
5. ____ makes me happy.	5. ____ makes me sad/depressed.
6. ____ is great.	6. ____ is awful/horrible.
7. ____ is exciting because…	7. ____ is boring because…
8. ____ is interesting because…	8. ____ is not good because…

According to the example, ESL/EFL learners are required to express their opinions on a particular topic and to support their ideas. First, they have to describe and recount a situation or event that they have experienced. Then they have to defend it or make a

recommendation to the listeners. These activities are one way of practicing independent speaking skills.

Integrated speaking skills.

Integrated speaking skills are more complex than independent speaking skills. Integrated speaking skills are used when a speaker needs to combine information from one or more than one source with their own knowledge or provide their opinions on a particular topic before they discuss it. Speakers need to organize their information from these sources or from opinions or self-knowledge in order to speak convincingly. Therefore, it is necessary for the speaker to prepare what they intend to say in order to successfully reach communication goals.

According to the ETS, ESL/EFL learners perform integrated speaking skills when they: (a) take and use notes to organize information before speaking, (b) identify and summarize major points and important details from written and spoken sources, (c) paraphrase information from written and spoken sources, (d) synthesize information from written and spoken sources, (e) elaborate on ideas and information from written and spoken sources, (f) recognize and convey a speaker's attitude and intent, (g) connect concrete information with abstract concepts, (h) express an opinion in relation to what has been read or heard and support it, (i) take a position and defend it, and (j) make a recommendation and justify it (ETS, 2004). Independent speaking skills are widely used in situations such as debating a specific subject, providing information about tourist attractions, reporting news, presenting a project in the classroom, and sharing knowledge in a conference. Hence, a speaker needs to communicate with clarity and conviction.

In conclusion, the difference between independent and integrated speaking skills is clear: integrated speaking skills require some kind of source to support what the speaker will say and the speaker usually needs some time to prepare himself. On the other hand,

independent speaking skills are used when a speaker talks naturally about anything without relying on written or spoken sources. As a result, independent skills are learned more rapidly than integrated ones. However, these two skills may be used in the same situations and sometimes even in the simplest conversations. People may also use integrated skills for interpersonal communication. An example of this would be when a speaker mentions what someone else has said, or reads from a magazine article. An example of an ETS integrated task is provided below (ETS, p. 25).

Activity Title: The Film Critic

Target Skill: Integrated listening, reading, and speaking

Learning Objective:

Part One – Note taking

1. Take and use notes to organize information before speaking
2. Identify differing points of view on the same topic

Part Two – Speaking

1. Summarize major points and important details from written and spoken sources
2. Synthesize information from written and spoken sources
3. Express an opinion in relation to what has been read or heard and support it

Instructor Directions

Part One – Note taking

1. Have the students read a written film review, which provides one perspective on a well-known film. (*Titanic* is used here as an example.) The students take notes and indicate whether the reviewer's comments are positive or negative.
2. Have students listen to a review expressing the opposite perspective. The students take notes and again indicate whether the reviewer's comments are positive or negative.

Part Two – Speaking

1. Ask the students to summarize the two different views of the film and explain which of the two reviews they personally agree with.

Reading Passage (2-3 minutes)

This reading passage is based on the review by Stephanie Zacharek, found at the following website: http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/1997/12/cov_17titanic.html.

James Cameron's *Titanic* New Disaster Movie Deserves a Watery Grave

In the opening scene of James Cameron's "Titanic," the most expensive movie ever made, we see eerie undersea shots of the Titanic's submerged treasures and fixtures. For Cameron, the story of the downed ship is nothing but a backdrop, a handy excuse for whiz-bang special effects, and that's what makes "Titanic" a travesty. Cameron manhandles the real story, scavenging it for his own puny narrative purposes. It's a film made with boorish confidence and zero sensitivity, big and dumb even as it tries to fool us into thinking we're seeing elegance and gravity. "Titanic" is history rendered colorless – and virtually emotionless.

There's nothing wrong with using a real-life tragedy as a background for a made-up story. But the story has to serve the event, not the other way around. It's obvious, though, that Cameron wasn't thinking in those terms. "Titanic" puts two lovers (Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio) at center stage and sketches in all the other details sloppily. We know that lots of people died, but we have very little sense of the dead as real people. Every character – including DiCaprio, a third-class passenger who won his passage on the ship at the last minute in a poker game, and Winslet, a spunky upper-class teen who's being forced to wed a rich stuffed shirt – is a stereotype. The rich, in first-class, are all nasty and self-centered; the poor, in third-class, are all spirited and noble.

Cameron has little finesse, or originality, as a storyteller. That "Titanic," at 3 hours and 10 minutes, is a crashing bore is a big enough problem. I could almost forgive the movie if it at least succeeded as a romance. But its two leads, both of them hugely capable actors, are undermined by ham-fisted direction and loads of blockhead dialogue.

Listening Passage (2 minutes; listening to sound file on CD-ROM)

This passage is based on Roger Ebert's review found at the following website:

http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/1997/12/121904.html

Titanic ★★★★ (PG-13)
Jack Dawson: **Leonardo DiCaprio**
Rose DeWitt Bukater: **Kate Winslet**
Cal Hockley: **Billy Zane**
Molly Brown: **Kathy Bates**
Brock Lovett: **Bill Paxton**

Written and directed by **James Cameron**

James Cameron's 194-minute $200 million film of the tragic voyage is in the tradition of the great Hollywood epics. It is flawlessly crafted, intelligently constructed, strongly acted and spellbinding.

The human story involves a 17-year-old woman named Rose DeWitt Bukater (Kate Winslet) who is sailing to what she sees as her own personal doom. She has been forced by her penniless mother to become engaged to marry a rich, supercilious snob named Cal Hockley (Billy Zane), and she hates this prospect so much that she tries to kill herself by jumping from the ship. She is saved by Jack Dawson (Leonardo DiCaprio), a brash kid from steerage, and of course they will fall in love during the brief time left to them.

Movies like this are not merely difficult to make, but almost impossible to make well. The technical difficulties are so daunting that it's a wonder when the filmmakers are also able to bring the drama and history into proportion. I found myself convinced by both the story and the saga. The setup of the love story is fairly routine, but the payoff – how everyone behaves as the ship is sinking – is wonderfully written, as passengers are forced to make impossible choices.

Student Directions

Part One – Note taking

1. Use the outline for taking notes on the following points made in the two different movie reviews.
2. If a comment is **positive**, put a "+" next to it; if a comment is **negative**, put a "-" next to it.

Areas of Comparison	**Ebert's Review**	**Zacharek's Review**
General description of the movie		
Writing		
Description of the love story		
Acting		

Part Two – Speaking

You will have 1 minute to summarize the two different views about the movie *Titanic* and then to explain which review you agree with more.

To help you get started, here are some sample phrases for expressing contrasting viewpoints and your own opinion.

Both reviewers stated that _____. However, Roger Ebert said _____ about _____, while Stephanie Zacharek felt that _____.

I tend to agree more with _____ about the film, because _____.

I don't agree with either reviewer. I feel that _____.

According to this example, ESL/EFL learners are required to read a passage on a particular topic, listen to information related to it, take notes on the information from both reading and listening sources, then speak about it in order to integrate of the overall information received. Thus, ESL/EFL learners need several language skills, such as reading, listening and writing in order to complete the integrated speaking process.

In summary, both independent and integrated speaking skills are equally important aspects of effective communication in everyday life situations. They are tools to help people to communicate more efficiently. Accordingly, the better the speakers can use these tools, the more effectively they will communicate. However, in order to be proficient in English communication, it is necessary to be aware of the difficulties or problems that speakers may experience and how to cope with them. Therefore, studying these problems is essential for effective English speaking performance.

Studies Related to English Speaking Difficulties Experienced by EFL Learners

Altenberg (2005) conducted a study using three tasks – a meta linguistic judgment task, a perception task, and a production task – in order to investigate the knowledge, the ability, and the evidence of first language transfer that native Spanish speakers acquiring English had about English word-initial consonant clusters. A group of native English speakers acquiring Spanish were also asked to participate in the judgment and perception tasks on Spanish word-initial consonant clusters in order to compare their responses with the native Spanish speakers. The participants in this study consisted of 10 undergraduate students who were native English speakers. There were also 30 native Spanish speakers who participated in this study, who also studied English as a second language or as a foreign language.

This study indicated that the native Spanish speakers were unable to use their prior knowledge of the English word-initial consonant clusters effectively because there was

some evidence of transfer from their first language. In summary, Altenberg's study identified that one difficulty experienced by ESL/EFL learners was that their first language had an effect on the spoken performance of their second language, which caused them to mispronounce some words. In comparison to everyday conversations, communication is ineffective if the speakers are unable to pronounce words correctly as it may cause some misunderstanding.

Yamada (2005) carried out a study to examine the relationship between the process of communication in a second language (L2) and the outcome of a set task by analyzing the speech of the participants during a private map-completion task. The participants in this study were 159 undergraduate students at two universities in Tokyo. They all spoke Japanese as their mother tongue and were asked to voluntarily participate in the study. According to Yamada (2005, p. 89), the study was an attempt to empirically investigate the nature of task proficiency mediated through L2. It is essential for language teachers and testers to understand the way that language learners communicate with other people in a second language. The participants were asked to complete the map task in pairs: one person was designated the information giver, while the other person was designated the information follower. The participants were not allowed to see each other's maps, which provided slightly different landmarks, but in the same positions on both maps. The information follower had to draw an appropriate route on the map by following spoken directions from the information giver. They were allowed to freely ask each other questions, but were not allowed to use hand gestures. These conversations were also recorded.

Yamada hypothesized that a successful map-task performance in terms of the accuracy of the route drawn will be associated with effective mediational means. In other words, a relatively low lexical density and a relatively larger vocabulary size, as obtained

from the pattern of a concordance of a first language (L1) private speech. It was also hypothesized that separate comprehension processes are involved in processing picture stimuli and L2 word stimuli, as it takes more time for participants to process L2 word stimuli than picture stimuli, and negative responses will take longer than positive responses in terms of processing L2 word stimuli.

The results showed some of the difficulties experienced by the participants, such as that they depended on their L1 as they both thought and spoke Japanese in their conversations in order to be more clearly understood. They took time before giving a certain direction, such as east, west, north, or south, because they had to think twice: first in their own language and then in English. Therefore, the main difficulty experienced by these students was translating from their first language into a second or foreign language before they were ready to speak. This means that the participants had some difficulties in their integrated speaking skills.

In Thailand, Aungcharuen (2006) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between word stress perception and word production among Thai students at the secondary school level, based on the hypothesis that their first language was interfering with English speech and pronunciation. The participants included 160 students, who were asked to identify the stressed syllable of each word pronounced by a native English speaker. Later, they were asked to pronounce each word in order to provide data on word stress pronunciation for the study.

The results from Aungcharuen's study showed that the native language of the participants had a negative effect on Thai students as it made them unable to speak English comprehensibly. The Thai language is spoken in monotone. Therefore, it is unusual for Thai learners to pronounce words or speak English with different tones the way that native speakers do. Although the results showed that the participants were more

skilled at perceiving word stress than producing it, it seemed that their perception of word stress did not play an important role in improving their word stress production. With regard to the overall English speaking ability of Thai EFL learners, when they have an opportunity to speak English, they often pronounce words in a monotone as it sounds more natural to them. These results were consistent with the findings made by Altenberg and Yamada, which also revealed that the mother tongue interference influenced the EFL learner's English skills. Accordingly, the participants in these studies would experience difficulties in both independent and integrated speaking in everyday life conversations.

Ekwannang (2004) conducted a study to investigate verbal cross-cultural communication barriers, problems, and solutions when Western expatriates communicate with Thai staff in their workplace. The participants included 20 people from Western countries who were asked to participate an in depth and face-to-face interview as well as complete a questionnaire. The study revealed that verbal cross-cultural barriers between Western expatriates and Thai staff included the Thai staff misunderstanding both the context and the content due to a lack of English vocabulary, while the Western staff, who were from different countries, were difficult for the Thai staff to understand because of the variety of unfamiliar accents. There were other issues, such as the unfamiliarity of the Thai staff with the idiomatic language and slang used in conversations by the Western staff and a common Thai characteristic, acknowledging a question by saying 'yes', which mislead the Western staff into believing they have been understood when their question had merely been acknowledged.

Ekwannang also concluded that these communication barriers have some impact on their work performance, such as wasting time, a lack of progress at work and confusion. The Western staff was given the following solutions to improve their relations with the Thai staff such as creating mutual understanding, being more patient as effective

communication is time consuming, increase sensitivity to cultural differences, and the use of simple language.

As a result, Ekwannang's study implied that English speaking difficulties occurred due to cultural differences. As a result, the communicators encountered some problems during their conversations in the workplace. Furthermore, these problems affected their job performance. Therefore, both of these groups of communicators needed solutions to their problems.

Noreewong (2006) provided results that were similar to Ekwannang's study. Noreewong investigated the difficulties experienced by Western expatriates and Thai colleagues as a result of cultural differences. This study also explored practical solutions to these problems. The participants in the study consisted of 15 Western expatriates and 15 Thai staff members working for aclEnglish (Thailand). The participants were asked to give an in depth and face-to-face interview as well as to complete questionnaires. The questionnaires given to the Westerners were written in English, and the questionnaires given to Thais were written in Thai.

This study had similar results to Ekwannang's in that the most common problems experienced during conversations between Thais and Westerners were that Thais misinterpreted the context and the content, while the Western staff, who were from different countries, were difficult for the Thai staff to understand because of the variety of unfamiliar accents and the level of their language.

The only significantly different result between Noreewong's and Ekwannang's studies are that Westerners tend to communicate more directly than Thais in that they reported both good and bad things in meetings. On the other hand, Thais performed smoothly in interpersonal relationships and avoided making criticisms of colleagues.

Therefore, Ekwannang's and Noreewong's studies both led to the same conclusion regarding the problems experienced when Thai EFL learners communicate with native English speakers. They also both stated that solutions were required in order to improve or solve any problem the participants in their studies experienced in conversations. Thus, cultural differences may cause EFL learners some difficulties with the content of the context in their conversations with foreigners.

Sursattayawong (2006) conducted a study to investigate the English speaking problems of Thai nurses who spoke English in their workplace. The participants of the study consisted of 20 professional nurses at Rajavithi Hospital. The research questions posed in the study are as follows:

1. How often do nurses at Rajavithi Hospital speak English with foreign patients, doctors, and nurses?
2. What kinds of problems do the nurses experience when speaking English?

The participants were asked to complete a survey, and it was found that their difficulties with English were: (a) grammatical errors, (b) difficultly with self-expression, (c) a limited knowledge of appropriate vocabulary, (d) inappropriate intonation and word stress, (e) mispronunciation, and (f) a lack of self-confidence. It was also found in Sursattayawong's study that these problems resulted in the lack of confidence among the nurses when they spoke English. Another similar finding was that shyness was a common trait among Thais which resulted in struggling or feeling awkward when communicating in English in the workplace. Moreover, their background knowledge was inadequate to express what they wanted to say in English and this often made them feel ashamed or afraid that they would look ridiculous in front of their peers if their pronunciation was very poor. Thai students who learn English as a foreign language

often experience similar problems. Accordingly, these problems may cause them difficulties when performing their integrated speaking skills.

Derwing, Munro, and Thomson (2007) conducted a longitudinal study (over a period of two years) comparing the English speaking fluency and the development of the comprehensibility of well-educated adult immigrants from Mandarin and Slavic language backgrounds enrolled in introductory ESL classes. The participants in the study consisted of 32 students, who were separated into two groups, one of 16 adult immigrants from a Mandarin language background and another group of 16 adult immigrants from a Slavic language background. The participants were monitored for improvements in their English speaking fluency and comprehensibility, but there was no formal testing involved.

The study showed that Slavic language speakers made small improvements in both fluency and comprehensibility, while the performance of Mandarin speakers did not change, although both groups started at the same level of oral proficiency. The development between the two groups was different because of the opportunities they had to speak English and the frequency with which they spoke English outside their ESL classes. Although neither group had extensive exposure to English, the Slavic speakers reported more opportunities to speak English than the Mandarin speakers outside the classroom. Consequently, the lack of an opportunity of ESL/EFL learners to put their language skills into practice resulted in a lack of improvement in their English speaking skills. Thus, it was difficult for them to be able to perform their English independent and integrated speaking skills proficiently.

In Thailand, Khamkaew (2009) investigated the English listening and speaking skills of metropolitan police officers who worked at the counter of a Thai police station including their needs as learners and the problems they experienced when speaking

English. The participants in the study consisted of 30 metropolitan police officers. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire and were also interviewed. The research questions posed in the study are as follows:

1. What are the needs of metropolitan police officers in terms of their English listening and speaking skills?
2. What problems do metropolitan police officers experience with English listening and speaking?

The findings revealed that the police officers needed to improve their speaking skills for the following reasons: (a) greeting and offering help, (b) asking for personal details, (c) asking about problems, (d) dealing with requests, (e) giving information about accommodation, (f) giving transportation and general tourist information, (g) answering emergency calls, (h) providing directions, and (i) giving advice and instructions on safety, travel, and shopping. The study showed that most of the officers needed a good command of English, especially basic conversation skills. The officers needed to learn from English textbooks and practice dialogue. They also suggested that the trainers should be both Thai teachers and native English speakers as this will allow the officers more opportunities to practice their English in everyday life and improve their English communication skills. In addition, these opportunities would allow them to be more proficient when they perform independent and integrated speaking skills.

Summary

The results from the aforementioned studies revealed that ESL/EFL learners had problems when they spoke English which caused the communications to fail. These researchers realized that English speaking skills are important for Thais as the use of English has been increasing in Thailand. However, a study concerning the authentic use of English speech in Thailand could not be found. Therefore, the researcher conducted

this study in relation to authentic speech and focused on the speaking problems experienced by EFL learners in five significant areas: (a) grammatical accuracy, (b) vocabulary, (c) pronunciation, (d) fluency, and (e) comprehensibility. The results would be useful for Thai people as it would indicate which aspects of their English speaking needed the most attention. The study would also provide guidelines for developing teaching and learning methods in order to enable Thais to speak English more proficiently.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes research methodology employed in this study in order to investigate speaking proficiency and problems found when students in a Master's program in English at Srinakharinwirot University during 2009 to 2010 academic year performed independent and integrated speaking tasks. Five important speaking components: (a) grammatical accuracy, (b) vocabulary, (c) pronunciation, (d) fluency, and (e) comprehensibility in independent and integrated speaking tasks were evaluated. The *Oral Proficiency Test* was used to evaluate the students' English speaking. This chapter includes four main parts: (a) participants, (b) instrument, (c) data collection procedures, and (d) data analysis.

Method

Participants.

Srinakharinwirot University was established as a training school for more advanced teachers in 1949. It was also the first of its kind in the history of the country for teacher training. The university has developed rapidly with more academic fields, and it has maintained its strong reputation in producing great teachers and people for working in different areas (Srinakharinwirot University, 2009).

The Faculty of Humanities at Srinakharinwirot University offers both undergraduate and graduate programs in English. The students studying in this faculty will have opportunities to develop language and social skills beneficial to them in their chosen careers. The graduates, especially at the graduate level, are expected by Thai society to be highly qualified, knowledgeable and intellectual people. As graduate students are going to start their careers in the near future, it is important to know whether they have any problem when they speak English and to know how well they can perform their English language skills. Accordingly, the researcher was interested in finding out how well graduate students in the Master's program in English at Srinakharinwirot University speak English. Therefore, they were asked to participate in this study.

As the participants of this study were focused on students who were attending a Master's program in English at Srinakharinwirot University, the researcher made some phone calls to invite those students who were available and were willing to participate in this study. During the phone calls, the students were informed that they would be asked to take the *Oral Proficiency Test* constructed by the researcher. They were also informed that the test would be graded by two native English speakers and that they would receive the results of the test if they wished to know.

The participants in this study consisted of nine students with the age between 25 to 44 years old. They included three males and six females. The details of each participant's background are as follows:

Student 1.

This student started to study English in Grade 5. She received her Bachelor's degree in English from a university in Thailand. At the time of this study she had a chance to speak English in her workplace as she was working in an international environment. She said that she had much experience speaking with foreigners because her family had a tourism business. Therefore, she had communicated with foreigners from a young age.

Student 2.

This student also started to study English in Grade 5 and received her Bachelor's degree in English from a university in Thailand. She had been working as an English teacher in a secondary school for over six years before she participated in this study. Thus, she had opportunities to communicate with foreigners at work.

Student 3.

This student started to study English in Grade 5. She also received her Bachelor's degree in English from a university in Thailand. She was working as an interpreter at the time she participated in this study. She said that she used to be an exchange student in the United States of America and had been exposed to English in a native English speaking country for 10 months.

Student 4.

This student started to English at Grade 5. She received her Bachelor's degree in English from a university in Thailand. She had been working as an English teacher for almost four years before she participated in this study. She said that she did not have

much experience speaking English in daily life, but she sometimes had to communicate with a few foreign colleges.

Student 5.

This student started to study English at Grade 5. She also received her Bachelor's degree in English from a university in Thailand. She had been working as an English teacher for two years before she participated in this study. She said that she did not have much experience communicating in English at her workplace, although she had a few foreign colleagues.

Student 6.

This student started to study English at a pre-elementary school and received her Bachelor's degree in English from a university in Thailand. She did not have a job when she participated in this study. She said that she did not have much experience speaking English in everyday life either. However, she tried to communicate in English with foreigners when she had a chance.

Student 7.

This student started to study English at pre-elementary school. He received his Bachelor's degree in English from a university in Thailand. He had been working as an English teacher for about three years before he participated in this study. He said that he often had a chance to speak in English as he had been studying English since he was young. He also liked to make friends with foreigners and tried to practice speaking English with them.

Student 8.

This student also started to study English at pre-elementary school and received his Bachelor's degree in English from a university in Thailand. He had been working as an English teacher for almost five years before he participated in this study. He said that he

did not have much experience communicating in English with foreigners until an exchange student came from England to study at his secondary school. He said that he had a chance to practice speaking in English with the exchange student almost every day for three years. He also said that he had many foreign friends. Therefore, he often had many opportunities to communicate in English before he participated in this study.

Student 9.

This student started to study English at Grade 1. He received his Bachelor's degree in English from a university in Thailand. He had been working as an English teacher for almost 15 years before he participated in this study. He said that he had some experience speaking English since he started to study Bachelor's degree. Moreover, he often had to communicate in English with some foreign colleges. Therefore, he had a chance to speak English almost every day.

These students were informed that participating in this study would help them see how well they perform their English speaking and would also help them see their English speaking problems. It would highlight any weaknesses they had in the five important speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility). As a result, participating in this study would be beneficial to them by helping them improve their English speaking abilities.

Instrument.

The Oral Proficiency Test.

The *Oral Proficiency Test* used in this study was developed by the researcher to evaluate the proficiency of non-native speakers. The speaking section on the TOEFL was used as a model because the TOEFL is accepted by more institutions than any other English language test in the world to test the English proficiency of non-native speakers

(ETS, 2009). On the *Oral Proficiency Test*, the participants were asked to demonstrate the independent and integrated speaking skills.

This test was used to evaluate participants' English speaking proficiency in the five speaking components: (a) grammatical accuracy, (b) vocabulary, (c) pronunciation, (d) fluency, and (e) comprehensibility. Students from a different group were asked to do the test in a pilot study for the purpose of test reliability. No change was made to improve any test item as the test reliability stands at .92.

The *Oral Proficiency Test* is divided into two speaking tasks, independent speaking tasks and integrated speaking tasks. Two tasks were given to the participants in order to evaluate their independent speaking skills. In independent speaking Task 1, the participants were asked to speak about their favorite holiday and explain why they liked it. The reason that this topic was selected for the participants was due to them having some personal experience, which would allow them to speak about it easily because they would have been familiar with this in real life situations. They were allowed 30 seconds for preparation. Then the time allowed for their speaking was 60 seconds. In independent speaking Task 2, they were asked to give an opinion whether running their own business or working for a company better and then to support their ideas. The researcher chose this topic for the participants to speak about because it allowed them to express their personal opinion as well as some other topics they may have experience in everyday life conversations. They had 30 seconds to prepare themselves, then the total amount of time for their speaking was 60 seconds.

To evaluate the participants' integrated speaking skills, they were asked to complete three tasks. In integrated speaking Task 1, the participants were asked to listen to a conversation between two native English speakers discussing a school problem and solutions to it. The participants were required to describe the problem, express their

opinions about the solution that they would take, and then support their ideas. While listening to the conversation, the participants were allowed to take notes in order to help them with their speech. This topic was chosen to test the participants' English speaking because it was most likely connected to their experience when they were a student. They might have had some problems or heard about their friends' problems and spoke about it. Additionally, they might also have to make a decision or recommendation to their friends. Therefore, the topic was used in the test. The researcher gave them 60 seconds for preparation and another 60 seconds to speak about this task. They were allowed to use their notes in order to help them organize the information during the preparation time.

In integrated speaking Task 2, the participants were asked to listen to a lecture about magnetism. This was given by a native English speaker, then they were required to explain, describe, or recount the information they had heard. They were allowed to take notes while listening to the lecture. The lectured passage used in this part was taken from the test in Chumpavan et al.'s study (2006). As the reliability of the test in the study stands at .84 and the researcher was allowed to use the passage in this current study, it was used to evaluate the participants' English speaking with the integration of listening and speaking section. The topic was considered general knowledge to the participants because they may have come across this in everyday life. Accordingly, this topic was included in the integrated speaking section. The participants had 60 seconds to prepare themselves and other 60 seconds to speak. They were also allowed to use notes in order to help them organize the information during the preparation time.

In integrated speaking Task 3, the participants were asked to read a short passage about obesity and to listen to more information on the subject. They were then required to explain, describe, or recount the information from the written and spoken sources. They were also allowed to take notes while listening to more information on the subject.

As this topic is of concern to people in everyday life, the researcher chose to develop the passage based on the original source which was taken from a written passage in a newspaper. The participants might have read or listened to something related to this topic, thus, they should be able to speak about it. The participants were then given 60 seconds for preparation and 90 seconds to speak.

The independent and integrated speaking tasks are summarized as given in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Independent Speaking Tasks

Task	Type	Targeted Functions	Preparation Time (seconds)	Speaking Time (seconds)
1	Independent Speaking (Favorite Holiday)	Recount own experience	30	60
2	Independent Speaking (An Employee or a Boss)	Express an opinion and support ideas	30	60

Table 2

Integrated Speaking Tasks

Task	Type	Targeted Functions	Preparation Time (seconds)	Speaking Time (seconds)
1	Integrated Listening/Speaking (School Problem)	Explain/describe/ recount a conversation, express an opinion and support ideas	60	60
2	Integrated Listening/Speaking (Magnetism)	Explain/describe/ recount information read by a native English speaker	60	60
3	Integrated Reading/Listening/ Speaking (Obesity)	Explain/describe/ recount given information, express an opinion and support ideas	60	90

Raters.

The researcher asked two native English speakers to evaluate the participants' English speaking proficiency in this study. The native speakers have over five years experience teaching English in Thai universities in Bangkok. The researcher explained

the importance of this study to them and how to evaluate the participants' speaking skills in the speaking proficiency score card.

Speaking proficiency score card.

In order to make it more convenient for raters to assess the participants' English speaking proficiency, speaking proficiency score card was provided for them. The scale includes five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) in both independent and integrated speaking sections. Three levels: (a) beginner, (b) intermediate, and (c) advanced, were considered to evaluate each participant's English speaking ability. Comments on any problems that the participants encountered in each component were also given by raters.

Rubrics for scoring independent and integrated speaking skills.

The criteria used in this study were derived from the TOEFL speaking rubrics. Details of each criterion are as follows:

Independent speaking section.

Score: 4

General Description: The response fulfills the demands of the task, with at most minor lapses in completeness. It is highly intelligible and exhibits sustained, coherent discourse. A response at this level is characterized by all of the following:

A. Delivery: Generally well-paced flow (fluid expression). Speech is clear. It may include minor lapses, or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, which do not affect overall intelligibility.

B. Language Use: The response demonstrates effective use of grammar and vocabulary. It exhibits a fairly high degree of automaticity with good control of basic and complex grammatical structures (as appropriate). Some minor (or systematic) errors are noticeable, but do not obscure meaning.

C. Topic Development: Response is sustained and sufficient to the task. It is generally well developed and coherent; relationships between ideas are clear (or clear progression of ideas).

Score: 3

General Description: The response addresses the task appropriately, but may fall short of being fully developed. It is generally intelligible and coherent, with some fluidity of expression, though it exhibits some noticeable lapses in the expression of ideas. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Speech is generally clear, with some fluidity of expressions, though minor difficulties with pronunciation, intonation or pacing are noticeable and may require listener effort at times. (Though overall intelligibility is not significantly affected.)

B. Language Use: The response demonstrates fairly automatic and effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and fairly coherent expression of relevant ideas. Response may exhibit some imprecise or inaccurate use of vocabulary or grammatical structures or be somewhat limited in range of structures used. This may affect overall fluency, but it does not seriously interfere with the communication of the message.

C. Topic Development: Response is mostly coherent and sustained and conveys relevant ideas/information. Overall development is somewhat limited, usually lacks elaboration or specificity. Relationships between ideas may at times not be immediately clear.

Score: 2

General Description: The response is connected to the task, though it may be missing some relevant information or certain inaccuracies. It contains some intelligible speech but at times problems with intelligibility and/or overall coherence may

obscure meaning. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Speech is basically intelligible, though listener effort is needed because of unclear articulation, awkward intonation, or choppy rhythm/pace; meaning may be obscured in places.

B. Language Use: The response demonstrates limited range and control of grammar and vocabulary. These limitations often prevent full expression of ideas. For the most part, only basic sentence structures are used successfully and spoken with fluidity. Structures and vocabulary may express mainly simple (short) and/or unclear connections made among them (serial listing, conjunction, juxtaposition).

C. Topic Development: The response is connected to the task, though the number of ideas presented or the development of ideas is limited. Mostly basic ideas are expressed with limited elaboration (details and support). At times relevant substance may be vaguely expressed or repetitious. Connections of ideas may be unclear.

Score: 1

General Description: The response is limited in content or coherence or is only minimally connected to the task. Speech may be largely unintelligible. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Consistent pronunciation, stress, and intonation difficulties cause considerable listener effort; delivery is choppy, fragmented, or telegraphic; frequent pauses and hesitations.

B. Language Use: Range and control of grammar and vocabulary severely limits (or prevents) expression of ideas and connections among ideas. Some low level responses may rely heavily on practiced or formulaic expressions.

C. Topic Development: Limited relevant content is expressed. The response generally lacks substance beyond expression of very basic ideas. Speaker may be unable to sustain speech to complete task and may rely heavily on repetition of the prompt.

Score: 0

General Description: Speaker makes no attempt to respond or response is unrelated to the topic.

Integrated speaking section.

Score: 4

General Description: The response fulfills the demands of the task, with at most minor lapses in completeness. It is highly intelligible and exhibits sustained, coherent discourse. A response at this level is characterized by all of the following:

A. Delivery: Speech is generally clear, fluid and sustained. It may include minor lapses or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation. Pace may vary at times as speaker attempts to recall information. Overall intelligibility remains high.

B. Language Use: The response demonstrates good control of basic and complex grammatical structures that allow for coherent, efficient (automatic) expression of relevant ideas. Contains generally effective word choice. Though some minor (or systematic) errors or imprecise use may be noticeable, they do not require listener effort (or obscure meaning).

C. Topic Development: The response presents a clear progression of ideas and conveys the relevant information required by the task. It includes appropriate detail, though it may have minor errors or minor omissions.

Score: 3

General Description: The response addresses the task appropriately, but may fall short of being fully developed. It is generally intelligible and coherent, with some fluidity

of expression, though it exhibits some noticeable lapses in the expression of ideas. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Speech is generally clear, with some fluidity of expression, but it exhibits minor difficulties with pronunciation, intonation or pacing and may require some listener effort at times. Overall intelligibility remains good, however.

B. Language Use: The response demonstrates fairly automatic and effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and fairly coherent expression of relevant ideas. Response may exhibit some imprecise or inaccurate use of vocabulary or grammatical structures or be somewhat limited in range of structures used. Such limitations do not seriously interfere with the communication of the message.

C. Topic Development: The response is sustained and conveys relevant information required by the task. However, it exhibits some incompleteness, inaccuracy, lack of specificity with respect to content or choppiness in the progression of ideas.

Score: 2

General Description: The response is connected to the task, though it may be missing some relevant information or certain inaccuracies. It contains some intelligible speech but at times problems with intelligibility and/or overall coherence may obscure meaning. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Speech is clear at time, though it exhibits problems with pronunciation, intonation or pacing and so may require significant listener effort. Speech may not be sustained at a consistent level throughout. Problems with intelligibility may obscure meaning in places (but not throughout).

B. Language Use: The response is limited in the range and control of vocabulary and grammar demonstrated (some complex structures may be used, but typically

contains errors). This results in limited or vague expressions of relevant ideas and imprecise or inaccurate connections. Automaticity of expression may only be evident at the phrasal level.

C. Topic Development: The response conveys some relevant information but is clearly incomplete or inaccurate. It is incomplete if it omits key ideas, makes vague reference to key ideas, or demonstrates limited development of important information. An inaccurate response demonstrates misunderstanding of key ideas from the stimulus. Typically, ideas expressed may not be well connected or cohesive so that familiarity with the stimulus is necessary in order to follow what is being discussed.

Score: 1

General Description: The response is limited in content or coherence or is only minimally connected to the task. Speech may be largely unintelligible. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Consistent pronunciation and intonation problems cause considerable listener effort and frequently obscure meaning. Delivery is choppy, fragmented, or telegraphic. Speech contains frequent pauses and hesitations.

B. Language Use: Range and control of grammar and vocabulary severely limits (or prevents) expression of ideas and connections among ideas. Some very low-level responses may rely on isolated words or short utterances to communicate ideas.

C. Topic Development: The response fails to provide much relevant content. Ideas that are expressed are often inaccurate, limited to vague utterances, or repetitions (including repetition of prompt).

Score: 0

General Description: Speaker makes no attempt to respond or response is unrelated to the topic.

Data collection procedures.

The participants were asked to complete all tasks one by one. They were asked to follow the instructions in each task which offered them different amounts of time for the speaking preparation and the speaking performance. In each speaking task, the participants were allowed to take notes during the preparation time in order to help them organize and memorize the information needed for their speaking. The participants' speaking was recorded while they were performing their English speaking skills in each task. As soon as the test was completed, the speaking from recorded material was then analyzed by the two native English speakers who were asked to be raters in this study. It was explained to the raters how to evaluate the participants using the TOEFL speaking rubrics. The raters were also asked to report the participant's English speaking problems. All data in this study has been collected between 2009 and 2010 academic year.

Data analysis.

The results of participants' speaking proficiency represented how well the participants responded to the independent and integrated speaking tasks. Their English speaking was evaluated regarding the five speaking components including: (a) grammatical accuracy, (b) vocabulary, (c) pronunciation, (d) fluency, and (e) comprehensibility. The recorded material from the participants' English speaking was given to the two raters. It was explained to the raters how to evaluate the participants' speaking in the speaking proficiency score card by using Rubrics for Scoring Independent and Integrated Speaking Skills. The raters were also asked to grade the participants' speaking skills according to the Participants' English Speaking Measurement Scale. The

scores range in the scale indicated that students earned scores between 0.00 and 1.99 are at a beginner level, scores ranging between 2.00 and 2.99 are at an intermediate level, and scores between 3.00 and 4.00 are at an advanced level. Comments on the participants' speaking problems were reported in order to give some ideas of which specific areas in their English speaking need to be improved. All the collected data was used to answer the following research questions:

1. How did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University perform the independent tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?
2. How did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University perform the integrated tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?
3. What problems did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University encounter regarding the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) of the independent tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?
4. What problems did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University encounter regarding the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) of the integrated tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

Summary

This study investigated the English speaking of students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University. The study

also analyzed students' speaking problems regarding five important speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) in independent and integrated speaking tasks. The instrument used in this study was a speaking test developed by the researcher, *The Oral Proficiency Test*, which was based upon the TOEFL. The test was found reliable and could be used in this study as its reliability stands at .92. Therefore, the test was used to evaluate the nine students who voluntarily participated in this study.

The students were asked to complete the test which included independent and English integrated speaking tasks. The final score of each student represented their overall speaking proficiency on how well they performed their English speaking skills. The scores were categorized in three levels: (a) beginner, (b) intermediate, and (c) advanced. Comments on their English speaking problems were also reported by two native English speakers.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study was conducted to investigate the English speaking proficiency related to grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility of students in a Master's program in English at Srinakharinwirot University during the 2009 to 2010 academic year. The study also analyzed problems in the English speaking ability of the students when taking the *Oral Proficiency Test*. The participants were asked to participate in this study based on the purposive sampling. There were nine participants in this study. This chapter presents the results of this study according to the following research questions:

Research Question 1

How did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University perform the independent tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

Results.

In order to answer Research Question 1, the participants were asked to take the *Oral Proficiency Test* consisting of two tasks. The students' English speaking proficiency was evaluated by two native speakers according to the scores range in the Participants' English Speaking Measurement Scale. The scale indicated that students earned scores between 0.00 and 1.99 are at a beginner level, scores ranging between 2.00 and 2.99 are at an intermediate level, and scores between 3.00 and 4.00 are at an advanced level.

Independent speaking Task 1.

In the independent speaking Task 1, the participants were required to speak about their favorite holiday and explain why they liked it. The participants were allowed to prepare their speaking within 30 seconds. Then the time allowed for their speaking was 60 seconds.

The scores that each student earned from the two raters were significantly correlated as shown in Table 3. The results showed that the two raters graded the participants' performance in the same direction.

Table 3

Scores of Independent Speaking Task 1

Student	Rater 1 (x)	Rater 2 (x)	M	SD	Oral Proficiency Level	r	p
1	4	3	3.50	.86	Advanced	.88*	.00
2	3	3	3.00	.86	Advanced	.88*	.00
3	3	3	3.00	.86	Advanced	.88*	.00
4	3	2	2.50	.86	Intermediate	.88*	.00
5	3	2	2.50	.86	Intermediate	.88*	.00
6	3	2	2.50	.86	Intermediate	.88*	.00
7	2	1	1.50	.86	Beginner	.88*	.00
8	2	1	1.50	.86	Beginner	.88*	.00
9	2	1	1.50	.86	Beginner	.88*	.00

*$p < .05$

This table indicated that the three participants performed their English speaking in this independent task very well as their scores were at the advanced level. Three of them performed this task at the intermediate level, while the other three performed at the beginner level. The scores earned from the two raters were significantly correlated (r = .88, p = .00).

Independent speaking Task 2.

In the independent speaking Task 2, the participants were required to give an opinion whether running their own business or working for a company is better and then to support their ideas. They had 30 seconds to prepare themselves, then the total amount of time for their speaking was 60 seconds.

The scores that each student earned from the two raters were significantly correlated as shown in Table 4. The results also indicated that the two raters graded the participants' performance in the same way.

Table 4

Scores of Independent Speaking Task 2

Student	Rater 1 (*x*)	Rater 2 (*x*)	*M*	*SD*	Oral Proficiency Level	*r*	*p*
1	4	4	4.00	.79	Advanced	.73*	.01
2	3	3	3.00	.79	Advanced	.73*	.01
3	3	3	3.00	.79	Advanced	.73*	.01
4	3	3	3.00	.79	Advanced	.73*	.01
5	3	2	2.50	.79	Intermediate	.73*	.01
6	2	2	2.00	.79	Intermediate	.73*	.01
7	2	1	1.50	.79	Beginner	.73*	.01
8	2	1	1.50	.79	Beginner	.73*	.01
9	2	1	1.50	.79	Beginner	.73*	.01

*$p < .05$

This table indicated that the four participants performed their English speaking in this task very well as their scores are at the advanced level. Two of them performed this task at the intermediate level, while the other three performed at the beginner level. Correlation between the two raters is at .73 and their significance stands at .01 ($r = .73$, $p = .01$).

In conclusion, to answer Research Question 1, the average score from the independent speaking Task 1 and independent speaking Task 2 were calculated. It was done by finding out a mean score between the two raters that they had given to each participant, then calculated to find out a mean score from the results taken from all

participants. The results showed that the mean score calculated for the independent speaking tasks was 2.42. It meant the English independent speaking of the students participated in this study during the academic year 2009 to 2010 is at the intermediate level as it stands between 2.00 and 2.99 according to the Participants' English Speaking Measurement Scale.

Research Question 2

How did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University perform the integrated tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

Results.

In this part, the students were asked to complete the test including three integrated speaking tasks. The students' English speaking proficiency was also evaluated by two native speakers according to the scores range in the Participants' English Speaking Measurement Scale. The scale indicated that students earned scores between 0.00 and 1.99 are at a beginner level, scores between 2.00 and 2.99 are at an intermediate level, and scores between 3.00 and 4.00 are at an advanced level.

Integrated speaking Task 1.

In Task 1, the participants were asked to listen to a conversation between two native English speakers discussing a school problem and solutions to it. The participants were required to describe the problem, express their opinions about the solution that they would take, and then support their ideas. The researcher gave them 60 seconds to prepare their speaking and another 60 seconds to speak about this task.

The scores that each student earned from the two raters were significantly correlated as showed in Table 5. The results indicated that the two raters graded the participants' performance in the same way.

Table 5

Scores of Integrated Speaking Task 1

Student	Rater 1 (*x*)	Rater 2 (*x*)	*M*	*SD*	Oral Proficiency Level	*r*	*p*
1	4	4	4.00	.88	Advanced	.93*	.00
2	4	4	4.00	.88	Advanced	.93*	.00
3	3	3	3.00	.88	Advanced	.93*	.00
4	3	3	3.00	.88	Advanced	.93*	.00
5	3	2	2.50	.88	Intermediate	.93*	.00
6	3	2	2.50	.88	Intermediate	.93*	.00
7	3	2	2.50	.88	Intermediate	.93*	.00
8	2	1	1.50	.88	Beginner	.93*	.00
9	2	1	1.50	.88	Beginner	.93*	.00

*$p < .05$

This table indicated that the four participants performed their English speaking in this integrated task well as their scores are at the advanced level according to the Participants' English Speaking Measurement Scale. Three of them performed this task at the intermediate level, while the other two performed at the beginner level. Correlation between the two raters is at .93 and their significance stands at .00 ($r = .93$, $p = .00$).

Integrated speaking Task 2.

In the integrated speaking Task 2, the participants were asked to listen to a lecture about magnetism. This was given by a native English speaker, then they were required to

explain, describe, or recount the information they had heard. The participants had 60 seconds to prepare themselves and other 60 seconds to speak.

The scores that each student earned from the two raters were significantly correlated as shown in Table 6. The results indicated that the two raters graded the participants' performance in the same direction.

Table 6

Scores of Integrated Speaking Task 2

Student	Rater 1 (x)	Rater 2 (x)	*M*	*SD*	Oral Proficiency Level	*r*	*p*
1	4	4	4.00	.88	Advanced	.90*	.00
2	3	4	3.50	.88	Advanced	.90*	.00
3	3	3	3.00	.88	Advanced	.90*	.00
4	3	3	3.00	.88	Advanced	.90*	.00
5	2	2	2.00	.88	Intermediate	.90*	.00
6	2	1	1.50	.88	Beginner	.90*	.00
7	2	1	1.50	.88	Beginner	.90*	.00
8	2	1	1.50	.88	Beginner	.90*	.00
9	1	1	1.00	.88	Beginner	.90*	.00

*$p < .05$

This table indicated that the four participants performed their English speaking in this task very well at the advanced level. One of them performed this task at the intermediate level, while the other four performed at the beginner level. Correlation between the two raters is at .90 and their significance stands at .00 ($r = .90$, $p = .00$).

Integrated speaking Task 3.

In the integrated speaking Task 3, the participants were asked to read a short passage about obesity and to listen to more information on the subject. They were then required to explain, describe, or recount the information from the written and spoken sources. The participants were then given 60 seconds for preparation and 90 seconds to speak.

The scores that each student earned from the two raters were significantly correlated as shown in Table 7. The results also indicated that the two raters graded the participants' performance in the same way.

Table 7

Scores of Integrated Speaking Task 3

Student	Rater 1 (x)	Rater 2 (x)	M	SD	Oral Proficiency Level	r	p
1	4	4	4.00	.86	Advanced	.88*	.00
2	4	4	4.00	.86	Advanced	.88*	.00
3	4	4	4.00	.86	Advanced	.88*	.00
4	4	3	3.50	.86	Advanced	.88*	.00
5	3	3	3.00	.86	Advanced	.88*	.00
6	3	3	3.00	.86	Advanced	.88*	.00
7	3	2	2.50	.86	Intermediate	.88*	.00
8	2	2	2.00	.86	Intermediate	.88*	.00
9	2	1	1.50	.86	Beginner	.88*	.00

*$p < .05$

This table indicated that the six participants performed their English speaking in this integrated task very well as their scores are at the advanced level according to the Participants' English Speaking Measurement Scale. Two of them performed this task at the intermediate level, while only one participant performed at the beginner level. Correlation between the two raters is at .88 and their significance stands at .00 (r = .88, p = .00).

In conclusion to answer Research Question 2, the mean score from the integrated speaking Tasks 1, 2, and 3 were calculated. This was done by finding out a mean score between two raters and the scores that they had given to each participant, then calculated to find out a mean score from the results taken from all participants.

The mean score calculated for the integrated speaking tasks was 2.70. It meant that the English integrated speaking of the students who participated in this study during the academic year 2009 to 2010 is at the intermediate level as it stands between 2.00 and 2.99 according to the Participants' English Speaking Measurement Scale.

Research Question 3

What problems did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University encounter regarding the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) on the independent tasks in the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

Results.

There were problems found when the participants performed their independent speaking tasks presented in the five categories, namely: (a) grammatical accuracy, (b) vocabulary, (c) pronunciation, (d) fluency, and (e) comprehensibility.

A. Grammatical accuracy

In terms of grammatical accuracy of ESL/EFL learners, the problems are divided into three major areas: (a) word order, (b) verbs, and (c) prepositions and nouns. The raters indicated the most common errors as follows:

1. Word order

In terms of word order, there was no evidence that any of the participants created a sentence using an incorrect form. Moreover, the replacement of Thai sentence structure was not found in this category. This means that the students had a good knowledge of English sentence structure and knew how to use them accurately.

2. Verbs

The errors found in verb usage by ESL/EFL learners consisted of three main parts, which included: (a) the present tense, (b) the future tense, and (c) two-word verbs. The results revealed that the participants had a good knowledge of the future tense. However, a simple mistake made by some participants was that they forgot the subject and verb agreement rules. As the basic grammatical rule is a singular subject takes a singular verb while a plural subject takes a plural verb, it was found that some participants often made a mistake by using singular verbs with both singular and plural subjects. The examples are provided below:

Student 3: Doitung is a famous attraction, so many people *visits* there.

As "people" is a plural subject, according to the subjects-verb agreement rule, the correct verb which agrees with the plural subject "people" has to be a plural

verb. Therefore, instead of saying "many people *visits* there," the participant should say "many people *visit* there" in order to create a correct grammatical structure.

Student 2: She *like* to go to the beach.

According to the grammatical rule, which is that a singular subject takes a singular verb, to say "she *like*" as shown in the example is grammatically incorrect. The verb which agrees with the singular subject "she" has to be a singular verb. Thus, the correct statement should be "she *likes* to go to the beach."

Another mistake found in verb usage is two-word verb errors. Only one out of nine participants chose to use two-word verbs. However, this participant made a mistake which changed the meaning of the sentence. The example of an error in two-word verb is presented below:

Student 5: I like to go to the beach because if you go alongside the beach, you will feel cool because of the wind and your emotion will feel good and your stress will *come out*.

This participant intended to say that "the coolness from the wind helps to release your stress." Instead of saying this, the participant used the word "come out" to describe the word "release" as a more appropriate word could not be thought of. However, it was a mistake because the word "come out" means "appear" or "become visible," which is completely different from what was intentionally meant. Accordingly, it showed a lack of understanding of the correct meaning of these two-word verbs and this may cause some errors and misunderstanding in basic speech.

3. Prepositions and nouns

In the prepositions and nouns category, there were no errors found even though the Thai and English languages differ in terms of expressing the position of an object and the number of nouns that can be pluralized. Therefore, the results showed that the participants had very good knowledge of these two categories as none of them had any difficulty performing the tasks in terms of prepositions and nouns usage.

B. Vocabulary

In terms of vocabulary, a limited vocabulary is the main problem. The raters said that some participants seemed to be struggling to find the words needed to complete the tasks. These words indicated some technical terms and words that were specific to the tasks. A lack of vocabulary is considered a problem as it prevented the participants from communicating effectively and it affected their ability to speak fluently. Although they tried to complete the tasks with the most accurate words they knew, they tended to be repetitive and the two raters also agreed that the words they had used were very simple for the graduate level.

C. Pronunciation

In terms of pronunciation, the errors found in ESL/EFL learners' pronunciation are: (a) voicing, (b) mouth, tongue, and lip position, (c) stress and rhythm, and (d) intonation. The raters noted that students experienced difficulties with pronunciation in two of the four categories, which included: (a) wrong mouth, tongue, and lip position; and (b) wrong intonation. An example is presented below:

1. Mouth, tongue, and lip position

Student 2: I prefer to *lun* my own business.

In this example, the participant pronounced the word "run" incorrectly. The cause of this problem was that the /r/ sound was uttered with the wrong tongue position.

2. Intonation

In intonation errors, as the Thai language does not provide any types of intonation like the English language does, the participants spoke in a monotone due to the influence of their mother tongue. Although the raters could understand them, these types of errors should not have occurred as they were speaking English, which uses a different intonation.

D. Fluency

In terms of fluency, ESL/EFL learners would be considered fluent if they spoke naturally and with natural pauses, interjections, and interruptions. The raters indicated that six participants had problems in this area. They noted that these problems were: (a) long pauses of over 10 seconds, (b) the organizational sentence structure, for example, some participants spoke fluently but they showed some hesitation because they needed to organize the information they intended to convey, and (c) no coherence, which occurred when there was no relation between the things they spoke about. These problems could create interruptions and stop flow or even create confusion for listeners.

E. Comprehensibility

In terms of comprehensibility, the raters indicated that six participants performed their English speaking skills with a lack of coherence. The problems found were described as follows:

1. Unclear information

It was when the raters did not understand the participants because of confusion in sentences as they were not sure what the participants had intended to say. The example is shown below:

Student 8: If you have enough resource for your own business, that will be very very good for you because you can run your business according to the way you prefer.

This was confusing because the participant did not mention resources were being used and this caused the raters to misunderstand what was trying to be conveyed.

2. Repetition

When the participants repeated an idea, they tended to hesitate, and this caused their speech to be less informative and difficult to comprehend. The example is shown below:

Student 2: This is the places that you can visit that is *very very* gorgeous and *very* beautiful in the winter time.

The participant repeated the meaning of how wonderful the place is by over using the word “very” and also used the word “gorgeous” and “beautiful” which

have a similar meaning. The raters commented that this participant was too repetitive.

3. Unorganized information

The participants lack of coherence included a mixed up idea which was difficult for the raters to understand. The example is shown below:

Student 6: The favorite holiday that I like is when I went to Cha-um with my family so they are very happy because that so there are many people visits there.

In this example this participant merged a few different ideas into one. Although the raters could guess what was being said, it could not be considered good speech because the information was disorganized and this could create confusion for the listeners.

Apart from the errors found in the categories mentioned above, the findings showed an additional error which is excluded from the grammatical accuracy and pronunciation category. An additional problem found in the grammatical accuracy category was the change of subject in sentences. The example is presented below:

Student 8: I would like to have my own business because I love freedom and if *you* have *your* own business, *you*'ll have independence in planning *your* own business.

In this example, the participant started off by referencing to herself to express her opinion using "I" as a subject. However, she continued by using "you" as a subject later on when she continued talking about herself. This mistake might

create confusion to listeners whether the participant was talking about herself or someone else.

An additional problem found in the pronunciation category is an additional sound in the end of words. The raters noted that one participant had this kind of problem when speaking. The example of this type of error is shown as follows:

Student 7: I like Surin beach. I like its because Surin island is a good place to travelling.

The correct pronunciation was not supposed to have /s/ sound at the end of the word "it." Accordingly, this additional sound changed the meaning of the word completely.

In conclusion, the raters found problems in each of the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) in the independent speaking tasks. With regard to grammatical accuracy, it was found that the participants had problems with word order and verb usage. With the use of vocabulary, the raters noted that the participants had a limited vocabulary as they seemed to be struggling to find the appropriate words for the tasks. In terms of pronunciation, the participants pronounced some words using wrong mouth, tongue, and lip position. They also spoke with wrong intonation at times. As for fluency, the participants created long pauses and organization flow hesitation which caused their speech to lack coherence. The errors found in these four categories caused the participants to create problems in the comprehensibility category, namely: (a) unclear information, (b) repetition, and (c) unorganized information. Furthermore, the raters identified two additional errors found

when the participants spoke during the independent tasks. These problems included the change of subject within the sentence and additional sounds at the end of words.

Research Question 4

What problems did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University encounter regarding the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) of the integrated tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

Results.

The problems experienced by the participants when performing their integrated speaking tasks are also presented in five categories (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility.)

A. Grammatical accuracy

According to the problems found in ESL/EFL learners (word order, verbs, and prepositions and nouns), the raters indicated that the participants only encountered one problematic area in this category, which was the incorrect usage of verbs.

The same errors with subject and verb agreement as in the independent tasks were found when participants performed their English integrated speaking tasks. As sentences with plural subjects go with plural verbs and singular subjects go with singular verbs, the participants made the same mistake in these tasks as well. The example is presented as follows:

Student 2: She better *get* a job and study together.

According to the subject-verb agreement rule, “she” as a singular subject must be used with a singular verb “gets” instead of the plural verb “get.” Therefore, what this participant said was grammatically incorrect.

B. Vocabulary

In terms of vocabulary, the errors found in the participants’ vocabulary usage were the same as those found when they performed their English independent speaking tasks. These problems were due to a limited vocabulary and a lack of knowledge in the real meaning of words. The examples are presented below:

Student 1: I didn’t get enough sleep, so I eat more to get more *power*.

The most appropriate word in this case would be “energy” rather than “power,” but the student tried to select the most appropriate word known.

In another participant’s speech, it was found that instead of thinking about the most appropriate word known, she tried to describe the action of the word she does not know. The example is shown as follows:

Student 3: It is the way that we *make* the magnet *to be more powerful*.

In this example, the participant tried to describe the word “strengthen,” by describing it as “the way that we make the magnet to be more powerful.” In other words, this participant used that description to replace the word “strengthen.”

C. Pronunciation

In pronunciation, the same problems occurred, namely: (a) mouth, tongue, and lip position; and (b) intonation. Some students pronounced the /l/ sound instead of the /r/

sound and the /d/ sound instead of the /θ/ or /ð/ sound in some words, and some of them also spoke with monotone.

D. Fluency

The fluency errors found in the independent tasks were divided into three aspects (long pauses, organization flow hesitation, and lack of coherence). The raters noted that problems were also found in these three areas when the participants performed their English integrated speaking tasks.

E. Comprehensibility

The level of difficulty for the participants in the English integrated speaking tasks remained the same as in the independent tasks. There were three aspects (unclear information, too repetitive, and unorganized information) which were identified as causes for the raters to have difficulty in understanding the participants. It can be concluded from the raters' evaluation that these factors were unable to change as a result of the skills (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency) mentioned above. Thus, the raters rated the students who participated in this study at the same level for both their English independent speaking skills and their English integrated speaking skills.

Summary

In this chapter, the results of the study were provided to answer the four research questions: (a) how graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University performed the independent tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*, (b) how the students performed the integrated tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*, (c) what problems the students encountered regarding the five important speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) of the independent tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*, and (d) what

problems the students encountered regarding the five important speaking components of the integrated tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*.

It was found from the results of the *Oral Proficiency Test* that the participants performed the English independent speaking tasks at the intermediate level as well as in the integrated speaking tasks. However, the mean score in each task type showed that their English speaking proficiency in the independent speaking was lower than their English speaking in the integrated one. However, it was found that the mean score of the participants on the integrated speaking tasks was 2.70 and it was very close to the advanced level.

To sum up, the raters also found problems in each of the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) in both the independent speaking and the integrated speaking tasks. In terms of grammatical accuracy, it was found that the participants incorrectly used verbs, in specific subject and verb agreement errors. The raters indicated the same errors in the vocabulary category that the participants made in the independent tasks, namely: (a) limited vocabulary, and (b) a lack of knowledge of the real meanings of words. In terms of pronunciation, the participants also pronounced some words using wrong mouth, tongue, and lip position. In this category, it was also found that some participants spoke with the wrong intonation or in a monotone. The errors found in the fluency category were that the participants created long pauses and organizational sentence structure which caused their speech to lack coherence. In the comprehensibility category, the raters noted that the errors made by the participants in the integrated speaking tasks were also the cause of problems found in this area. These problems included unclear information, repetition, and unorganized information. Unlike the participants' verbal performance in the independent tasks, there were no additional errors found when they spoke in the integrated speaking tasks.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to investigate the English speaking proficiency of Thai students studying in a Master's program in English concerning grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility. The participants in this study were composed of nine students in a Master's program at Srinakharinwirot University during the 2009 to 2010 academic year. The students were asked to take the *Oral Proficiency Test*. As noted in the introduction, the results of this study represent students' speaking proficiency and problems found in their English speaking in order to evaluate their speaking ability in the five important speaking components. This information could be used as a guideline for Thai teachers and students to develop techniques to teach and to learn to speak English efficiently. This study also helps Thai teachers to understand students regarding their problems with speaking.

In this chapter, the results of the study are discussed in accordance with the following research questions. Moreover, recommendations for further research are presented.

Discussion

Research Question 1.

How did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University perform the independent tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

Results.

The participants were asked to take the *Oral Proficiency Test*. The test included two tasks. In Task 1, the participants were required to speak about their favorite holiday;

and support the idea by giving reasons that made it memorable for them. In Task 2, the participants were required to give their opinions about what is better between working as an employee for a company and running their own business. It was found that the participants' speaking proficiency was at the intermediate level.

Discussion.

The participants in this study were graduate students in a Master's program in English. Therefore, it had been expected that their speaking would be at the advanced level, especially in the English independent speaking tasks. This required them to speak about their own experience and opinions without any integration of further information from other sources. However, the results of this study showed that the participants performed their English speaking in this task at the intermediate level.

According to Derwing, Munro, and Thomson's study (2007), for ESL/EFL students at the same level of English speaking proficiency, those who have opportunities to practice their English speaking outside the classroom will be able to speak better than those who do not have opportunities to do so. They concluded that the group which had more opportunities to practice performed their English speaking better and more natural than the other group of students.

The participants in this study showed some hesitations and awkwardness when they expressed their own opinions and experiences in a common topic. This means that the participants' English speaking proficiency might be a lack of practicing authentically in real life situations or outside the classroom. As the participants struggled to speak and some of them were not confident when they spoke English, they had to take long pauses to organize the information they wanted to convey by creating sentences in Thai then translated them into English and finally spoke in order to complete the task. This method

also reflected how these participants learned English when they first took their English classes.

As most students in Thailand were taught to memorize English vocabulary and sentences in the classroom, they have a habit of thinking about the words they wanted to put into a sentence in Thai then translated those words into English before they could form a sentence. By the time they could speak in a sentence, it would take more effort for them as they had to think in this process instead of speaking naturally like when speaking Thai. This method of learning English, therefore, had some effects on their English speaking although these participants have learned English for many years.

It was also noted that some participants showed anxiety when they spoke and this seemed to cause them to create mistakes or repeated themselves. It was mentioned in Derwing, Munro, and Thomson's study (2007) that students who had more practice could speak English with a better standard of fluency and naturalism than those who were lack of practice. It was clear that speaking English regularly helped to improve the students' speaking ability, and it also helped to reduce anxiety when they speak with foreigners. Accordingly, activities in the English language classroom should require students to think and speak in English with either their peers or instructors.

Research Question 2.

How did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University perform the integrated tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

Results.

The participants were asked to complete the integrated speaking tasks in the *Oral Proficiency Test*. The test included three tasks. In Task 1, the participants were required to listen to a conversation between two students speaking about a school problem and

how to solve it. In this task, the participants were then asked to describe the problem which was mentioned in the conversation and give their opinion about which solution they would choose if they were in the situation. In Task 2, the participants were required to listen to a lecture about magnetism then they were asked to answer questions to express their understanding on this topic. In Task 3, the participants were required to read a short passage about obesity, listen to some more information about it, then they were asked to speak about this topic by referencing the information from both reading and listening sources. The results from the investigation showed that the students performed their English integrated speaking at the intermediate level.

Discussion.

Although the integrated speaking tasks required better skills in English compared to the independent tasks, it was also expected that the participants performed their English speaking at the advanced level. As these students were studying English in graduate level, they should have more opportunities to read, write, and speak in English than people in general. However, the listening activities might not be enough for them to practice in this area. Therefore, the researcher concluded that the factors which interfered with the participants' English speaking performance was the problem with their listening skills as some participants created confusion in their speaking because they could not completely understand what they heard or could not catch up with the information they had to listen to in the *Oral Proficiency Test*.

To solve this problem, the researcher recommended that the instructors provide more activities which require students to listen and read more information then take notes or summarize the entire information they were given and speak about it. This would help the students to get used to integrating several skills and perform their speaking skill more naturally. Moreover, it would also give them confidence when speaking with foreigners.

Research Question 3.

What problems did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University encounter regarding the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) of the independent tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

Results.

According to the comments given by the two raters, problems were found in all aspects in the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) when the participants performed their independent speaking. In grammatical accuracy, it was found that the participants encountered problems with the verb usage as they tended to forget about the rules with subject and verb agreement. Another problem found in this category was a problem with two-word verbs. One participant did not completely understand the meanings and had a lack of knowledge regarding those verbs correctly. In prepositions and nouns, there was no error found even though the Thai and English languages differ in the way of expressing objects' positions and numbers of nouns that can be pluralized. An additional error found was a change of subject in sentences, which may confuse listeners when the subject was switched from one to another unreasonably.

In the aspect of vocabulary, the results showed that the participants lacked knowledge regarding advanced vocabulary as most of them chose to use very simple words and seemed to be struggling to find appropriate words at the time. In pronunciation, the participants encountered their main problem with /l/ and /r/ sounds as they often mispronounced them by pronouncing the /l/ sound instead of the /r/ sound. Some students pronounced some words with /w/ sound instead of /v/ sound, while some

of them pronounced /d/ sound instead of /θ/ or /ð/ sound. In addition, the participants also uttered additional /s/ sound at the end of words.

In fluency, some participants either created long pauses or created no coherence in their speaking. Last, in comprehensibility, the raters noted that it was not easy to understand the participants because of their unclear information, repetition, and unorganized information.

Discussion.

Regarding problems found in the English independent speaking tasks, according to the comments given by the two raters, problems were found in all aspects of the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility.) In terms of grammatical accuracy, it was found that the participants encountered problems with verb usage as they forgot the rules regarding subject and verb agreement. In common Thai grammatical rules, the form of verbs stays the same with all subjects. Thus, it is possible that the students spoke without taking into consideration these rules when they spoke English, which was affected by the native language. Another problem found in this category was two-word verbs, which the participants did not completely understand and were unable to use these verbs correctly. This caused them confusion in selecting appropriate words for their speech. In the preposition and noun category, there were no errors found even though the Thai and the English language differ in the way they express the position of objects and number of nouns that can be pluralized. As a result, it means that the participants had a very good knowledge of these two categories as none of them had any difficulty in these areas. However, an additional error was a change of subject in sentences which may confuse listeners when the subject was incorrectly switched.

In vocabulary usage, the study showed that the participants lacked knowledge of advanced vocabulary usage, as most of them had very simple vocabulary and seemed to be struggling to find appropriate words at times. In terms of pronunciation, the participants' main problem was with the /l/ and /r/ sounds as they often mispronounced them by uttering the /l/ sound instead of the /r/ sound. As the /r/ sound in English is uttered differently from the /r/ sound in Thai, this problem occurred because of the participants' lack of familiarity with the correct pronunciation of the /r/ sound. In addition, they also made mistakes by pronouncing /w/ sound instead of /v/ sound as the /v/ sound does not exist in Thai. According to the results regarding the wrong mouth and tongue position, which cause learners to mispronounce words in English, some participants were influenced by this factor and this created problems when they spoke.

Intonation errors were also made in pronunciation category when the participants spoke in a monotone and the raters could then not understand them. It was also noted that these types of errors should not have occurred as they were speaking English. Additionally, the participants also uttered additional /s/ sounds at the end of words, which was noted as a typical Thai pronunciation error.

In terms of fluency, some participants either had long pauses in their speech or spoke incorrectly. These problems were a result of a lack of practice in speaking. However, the cause of these problems was not only the result of a lack of practice but also a lack of a good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary usage. As a result, in order to be able to speak English fluently, ESL/EFL learners need to integrate several types of knowledge or skills in order to be proficient.

Finally, in comprehensibility category, the raters pointed out that it was difficult to understand the participants because of unclear information, repetition, and unorganized information. Although the raters could guess what the participants tried to say, it could

not be considered fluent speech because the information was too unorganized; and this could create confusion for listeners.

Research Question 4.

What problems did the graduate students in a Master's program in English during the 2009 to 2010 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University encounter regarding the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) of the integrated tasks on the *Oral Proficiency Test*?

Results.

According to the raters, it was also noted that the participants created speaking errors in all aspects of the five speaking components (grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility) in the integrated speaking tasks. The same error made in the independent speaking tasks which is subject and verb agreement was found. Additionally, the problem with verb inflection occurred.

In vocabulary, the results showed that there was a lack of knowledge in a meaning of words as their choice of vocabulary was inappropriate for some of the situations they were speaking about. Moreover, it was also found that the participants' vocabulary was very limited. In pronunciation, it was found that the same error as in the replacement of /l/ instead of /r/, /w/ instead of /v/, and /d/ instead of /θ/ or /ð/ sound also occurred when the participants performed their English speaking in the integrated tasks.

In fluency, problems found in the integrated tasks were the same as those found in the independent tasks. These problems were long pauses, organizational sentence structure, and lack of coherence. In comprehensibility, the same as in the independent tasks, the problems were unclear information, repetition and unorganized information.

Discussion.

Regarding the problems found in the English integrated speaking tasks, it was also noted that the participants created speaking errors in all aspects in the five speaking components. The same subject and verb agreement error was also made in the integrated speaking tasks. However, the findings showed that this type of error occurred with less frequency as the participants seemed to be more cautious about making mistakes than when they did the independent section. This means that the participants were aware of their own mistakes in the previous tasks, so they paid more attention and tried not to make the same mistakes. As a result, it showed that the participants could have done better in the independent speaking section as they had enough knowledge to be aware of their own mistakes. However, the problem with verb inflection occurred. Although the participants had a good knowledge in this area, the error was caused by the influences of the native language because how they spoke during the test sounded more natural to them.

The results showed that they had a lack of knowledge of the meaning of words as well as vocabulary choices for the situations they were talking about. As they were students studying English at graduate level, vocabulary used in their speech should be more advanced. Moreover, it was found that the participants' vocabulary was very limited. Although these participants seemed to be struggling with their limited vocabulary, they at least tried to find the best word with which to describe what they were trying to say and that made the most sense to them. As some students had a different level of experience in speaking English, there was a difference in the amount of the vocabulary they knew. Those who were more familiar with speaking English in their daily life had a better vocabulary selection than those who had less experience and unfamiliar with speaking English.

In terms of pronunciation, it was found that the replacement of the /l/ sound with the /r/ sound occurred when the participants performed in the integrated speaking tasks. The researcher concluded that the participants encountered this problem because they had been continuously speaking incorrectly which has caused them to get used to how it should sound and became natural for them. However, most of them felt quite confident when they spoke English. This caused them to be less concerned about correct pronunciation and spoke quite naturally.

The problems found in the category of fluency in the integrated tasks were the same as those found in the independent tasks. These problems included long pauses, organizational sentence structure, and lack of coherence. The raters noted that the poor performance of the participants was caused by a lack of knowledge of English grammar and incorrect vocabulary usage. The same reason that was given for errors in pronunciation in the integrated tasks could also explain why there was no evidence of improvement in the latter tasks. As the participants were used to the way they spoke, they tended to ignore these errors. It was also mentioned that fluency depends on grammar and knowledge of vocabulary; and therefore, a chance for the participants to improve their fluency in the latter tasks was rare.

The same problems occurred in the comprehensibility section, which included unclear information, repetition and unorganized information, which made it difficult at times for the raters to understand what the participants were talking about. The raters noted that the problems with comprehensibility occurred because of a lack of ability in using grammar, vocabulary, accurate pronunciation, and fluency.

However, it could be hypothesized that the anxiety caused while the participants were taking the independent speaking tasks might be more than when they were taking the integrated speaking tasks as they did not know exactly what they had to deal with

during the tests. Accordingly, the results from the independent speaking tasks might have been better if the participants felt less anxiety.

In conclusion, this study is consistent with previous studies concerning the English speaking problems of Thai people which concluded that Thai people have problems with grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Ekwannang (2004) and Noreewong (2006) stated that Thai people have problems with vocabulary usage because of the different levels of language between communicators and it was found in this study that the participants were unfamiliar with the topics given in the integrated tasks and created errors or struggled with finding the appropriate words for the tasks. The previous study also showed that the accents of people from various parts of the world affected the participants' speech because they could not understand what the foreigners said. Some participants in this study experienced the same problem while taking the *Oral Proficiency Test*. The participants in this study said that they could not keep up with what the native English speakers were saying and that this made it difficult to complete the tasks properly. Sursattayawong (2006) concluded that grammatical inaccuracy and limited vocabulary were the main problems encountered by the participants in the previous study when they had to speak English. The same results were found in this study. The main reason for grammatical accuracy errors in this study was that the participants were used to speaking with incorrect grammar because it sounds more natural to them. Sursattayawong stated further that difficulty in self-expression was another common problem for Thai EFL learners. In this study, difficulty with self-expression caused the participants to create problems in the category of fluency as they showed some hesitation and took long pauses when they spoke English. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is very important to solve these problems as they affect the English speaking proficiency of Thai people. Accordingly, some additional activities in the English language classroom

are required in order to help students overcome these problems and be more ready to use their English speaking skills in real life conversations.

Guidelines to Activities in English Language Classroom

1. The instructors should create activities which require students to speak with their peers in various daily life situations. An example of this would be to assign the students to interview native English speakers in order to help them practice both their speaking and listening skills.
2. The students should practice speaking English more frequently in the English language classroom. The schools or universities could provide a few classes each week with a native English speaker as an instructor. This way, the students would get more opportunities in natural English communication.
3. The instructors should also provide the English classroom with different sources of information for students to practice their English skills integrating listening, reading, writing, and speaking. For example, the instructor might allow students to watch a movie in English once a month and assign them a discussion on the movie. They might be told to write a summary of the movie in order to practice their writing skill. The instructor might also ask them to express their opinions about what happened in the movie by allowing them to use notes in helping them organize the information before they speak about it with their peers. Thus, the students would get some experience using the integrated skills with an interesting topic of discussion in the classroom.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for further research are presented as follows:

1. In the further study, the participants might be selected from students in other disciplines, such as education, business, or engineering, in order to prepare them for

the ASEAN community in which English will be used as a medium of communication.

2. A relationship between background knowledge and listening comprehension needs to be investigated in the further research.

3 A qualitative study using an interview to obtain in-depth data from the participants regarding their English speaking problems should be conducted in the further research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Independent and Integrated Speaking Tasks

Independent Speaking Tasks

Task 1, Independent Speaking

1. Describe your favorite holiday and explain what made it so good. Include details and examples to support your explanation.

   Preparation time: 30 seconds

   Response time: 60 seconds

Task 2, Independent Speaking

2. Some people prefer to work in the office for others, while some prefer to run their own business. Which do you think is better for you and why? Include details and examples in your explanation.

   Preparation time: 30 seconds

   Response time: 60 seconds

Integrated Speaking Tasks

Task 1, Integrated Listening/Speaking

Listening Part: 90 seconds

Student A: Hey May, how's it going?

Student B: Hi James. Uh, I'm alright but I'm a bit worried about my study.

Student A: Yeah? What's wrong?

Student B: Well, I've still got a lot of schoolwork to do but I want to finish as soon as I can so I can find a job and earn some money. I'm worried that I will be too old for some jobs by the time I've finished, besides I have no experience working anywhere so I'm thinking about getting a part-time job or something to gain some experience.

Student A: Well, that's a good idea. It's better if you try to find a job related to what you plan to do when you finish your degree. That way, you'll have some direct experience.

Student B: Yeah, but there's another problem. I'm afraid that the job will be distracting. I mean, if I get one then I will have less time for my studies and I won't be able to concentrate on them. So I just can't decide whether to find a job or just stick with my studies.

Student A: Well, if you get a job then you'll need to plan your schedule more carefully and be a little bit more disciplined.

Student B: Yeah, but if I just get on with my studies then I think I'll probably finish them sooner.

Student A: Ah, that's your decision. Do whatever is best for you.

Student B: I just can't decide.

Student A: Maybe you'd better focus on your studies for now and worry about the job later.

Student B: I suppose so.

1. The students discuss two possible solutions to the woman's problem. Describe the problem. Then state which of the two solutions you prefer and explain why.

   Preparation time: 60 seconds

   Response time: 60 seconds

Task 2, Integrated Listening/Speaking

Listening Part: 60 seconds

Magnets are materials that attract pieces of iron or steel. In ancient times, people first discovered magnetism when they found some naturally magnetic pieces of rock in the earth. They called these rocks lodestone. Lodestones have a lot of iron in them, but we now know that other materials can be magnetized as well. Nickel, cobalt, certain types of ceramics and certain blends of metals can also make good magnets.

If you could look at the magnet at the atomic level, you would notice that the magnet was divided into a number of smaller regions called domains. All of the atoms in a domain point in the same direction and, since each atom acts like a little magnet, all of their little magnetic fields join together to make a larger, stronger field. A magnet can be weakened if some of its atoms are thrown out of alignment. Hitting or heating a magnet is usually enough to scramble some of its atoms.

2. Explain why lodestones are linked to magnetism and how a magnet's strength can be decreased.

   Preparation time: 60 seconds

   Response time: 60 seconds

Task 3, Integrated Reading/Listening/Speaking

Reading Time: 60 seconds

Is There an Obesity Virus?

Have you ever heard your parents comment that people are much fatter these days than they used to be? It is a sad fact that humans are getting fatter. We use the word 'obese' to refer to people who are very overweight. Obesity has become one of the tabloid 'buzz words' in recent years. Hardly a week goes by when there is not a newspaper article on the subject. Most of us have gone on a diet at some time in our lives. You are very lucky if you never had to. It used to be that there was a simple answer - you eat too much. There has been much research in recent years and now scientists are convinced that it is much more complex and there are other factors that affect our weight.

Listening Part: 120 seconds

Scientists believe that the following factors may contribute to the rise in obesity. First is sleep. Scientists think people get obese because they don't get enough sleep. When we sleep the body produces a chemical called leptin known simply as the 'I'm full' hormone and when we are awake the body produces grehlin, a chemical that stimulates appetite. If you sleep less, then you have less leptin and more grehlin.

The next factor is medication. Most medications have side effects and often one of those effects can be weight gain. Some do this by stimulating the appetite and making you eat more or some drugs may cause fluid retention in the body.

Then there is age. As we get older, we start moving less, and less exercise equals more fat. By midlife most people put on some weight. There are also hormonal and metabolic changes to consider.

Another one is the Fat Bug. Researcher Nikhil Dhurahndar of Wayne State University believes that there is a fat virus that can be caught just like the common cold, many people may catch it and not even know they have it.

Then there is smoking. These days more people than ever are trying to quit smoking as the potentially damaging affects to health are more widely known. If you try to quit then odds are you will see some weight gain. Food can become a replacement for smoking as providing 'emotional comfort.'

Finally there is genes. Genes control all aspects of the body. One recently discovered gene called FTO is found in one in six people causing a 70% greater risk of becoming obese. It can affect how full or hungry we feel - if we feel more hungry then we will naturally eat more. It has also been shown in tests on rats that if a mother eats a lot of junk food when she is pregnant, the offspring may become 'programmed to be obese.'

3. Describe the causes for obesity that have just been discussed.

   Preparation time: 60 seconds

   Response time: 90 seconds

APPENDIX B

Rubrics for Scoring Independent and Integrated Speaking Skills

Rubrics for Scoring Independent and Integrated Speaking Skills

The criteria used in this study were derived from the TOEFL speaking rubrics. Details of each criterion are as follows:

Independent Speaking Section

Score: 4

General Description: The response fulfills the demands of the task, with at most minor lapses in completeness. It is highly intelligible and exhibits sustained, coherent discourse. A response at this level is characterized by all of the following:

A. Delivery: Generally well-paced flow (fluid expression). Speech is clear. It may include minor lapses, or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, which do not affect overall intelligibility.

B. Language Use: The response demonstrates effective use of grammar and vocabulary. It exhibits a fairly high degree of automaticity with good control of basic and complex grammatical structures (as appropriate). Some minor (or systematic) errors are noticeable, but do not obscure meaning.

C. Topic Development: Response is sustained and sufficient to the task. It is generally well developed and coherent; relationships between ideas are clear (or clear progression of ideas).

Score: 3

General Description: The response addresses the task appropriately, but may fall short of being fully developed. It is generally intelligible and coherent, with some fluidity of expression, though it exhibits some noticeable lapses in the expression of ideas. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Speech is generally clear, with some fluidity of expressions, though minor difficulties with pronunciation, intonation or pacing are noticeable and may require listener effort at times. (Though overall intelligibility is not significantly affected.)

B. Language Use: The response demonstrates fairly automatic and effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and fairly coherent expression of relevant ideas. Response may exhibit some imprecise or inaccurate use of vocabulary or grammatical structures or be somewhat limited in range of structures used. This may affect overall fluency, but it does not seriously interfere with the communication of the message.

C. Topic Development: Response is mostly coherent and sustained and conveys relevant ideas/information. Overall development is somewhat limited, usually lacks elaboration or specificity. Relationships between ideas may at times not be immediately clear.

Score: 2

General Description: The response is connected to the task, though it may be missing some relevant information or certain inaccuracies. It contains some intelligible speech but at times problems with intelligibility and/or overall coherence may obscure meaning. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Speech is basically intelligible, though listener effort is needed because of unclear articulation, awkward intonation, or choppy rhythm/pace; meaning may be obscured in places.

B. Language Use: The response demonstrates limited range and control of grammar and vocabulary. These limitations often prevent full expression of ideas. For the most part, only basic sentence structures are used successfully and spoken with

fluidity. Structures and vocabulary may express mainly simple (short) and/or unclear connections made among them (serial listing, conjunction, juxtaposition).

C. Topic Development: The response is connected to the task, though the number of ideas presented or the development of ideas is limited. Mostly basic ideas are expressed with limited elaboration (details and support). At times relevant substance may be vaguely expressed or repetitious. Connections of ideas may be unclear.

Score: 1

General Description: The response is limited in content or coherence or is only minimally connected to the task. Speech may be largely unintelligible. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Consistent pronunciation, stress, and intonation difficulties cause considerable listener effort; delivery is choppy, fragmented, or telegraphic; frequent pauses and hesitations.

B. Language Use: Range and control of grammar and vocabulary severely limits (or prevents) expression of ideas and connections among ideas. Some low level responses may rely heavily on practiced or formulaic expressions.

C. Topic Development: Limited relevant content is expressed. The response generally lacks substance beyond expression of very basic ideas. Speaker may be unable to sustain speech to complete task and may rely heavily on repetition of the prompt.

Score: 0

General Description: Speaker makes no attempt to respond or response is unrelated to the topic.

Integrated Speaking Section

Score: 4

General Description: The response fulfills the demands of the task, with at most minor lapses in completeness. It is highly intelligible and exhibits sustained, coherent discourse. A response at this level is characterized by all of the following:

A. Delivery: Speech is generally clear, fluid and sustained. It may include minor lapses or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation. Pace may vary at times as speaker attempts to recall information. Overall intelligibility remains high.

B. Language Use: The response demonstrates good control of basic and complex grammatical structures that allow for coherent, efficient (automatic) expression of relevant ideas. Contains generally effective word choice. Though some minor (or systematic) errors or imprecise use may be noticeable, they do not require listener effort (or obscure meaning).

C. Topic Development: The response presents a clear progression of ideas and conveys the relevant information required by the task. It includes appropriate detail, though it may have minor errors or minor omissions.

Score: 3

General Description: The response addresses the task appropriately, but may fall short of being fully developed. It is generally intelligible and coherent, with some fluidity of expression, though it exhibits some noticeable lapses in the expression of ideas. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Speech is generally clear, with some fluidity of expression, but it exhibits minor difficulties with pronunciation, intonation or pacing and may require some listener effort at times. Overall intelligibility remains good, however.

B. Language Use: The response demonstrates fairly automatic and effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and fairly coherent expression of relevant ideas. Response may exhibit some imprecise or inaccurate use of vocabulary or grammatical structures or be somewhat limited in range of structures used. Such limitations do not seriously interfere with the communication of the message.

C. Topic Development: The response is sustained and conveys relevant information required by the task. However, it exhibits some incompleteness, inaccuracy, lack of specificity with respect to content or choppiness in the progression of ideas.

Score: 2

General Description: The response is connected to the task, though it may be missing some relevant information or certain inaccuracies. It contains some intelligible speech but at times problems with intelligibility and/or overall coherence may obscure meaning. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Speech is clear at time, though it exhibits problems with pronunciation, intonation or pacing and so may require significant listener effort. Speech may not be sustained at a consistent level throughout. Problems with intelligibility may obscure meaning in places (but not throughout).

B. Language Use: The response is limited in the range and control of vocabulary and grammar demonstrated (some complex structures may be used, but typically contains errors). This results in limited or vague expressions of relevant ideas and imprecise or inaccurate connections. Automaticity of expression may only be evident at the phrasal level.

C. Topic Development: The response conveys some relevant information but is clearly incomplete or inaccurate. It is incomplete if it omits key ideas, makes vague

reference to key ideas, or demonstrates limited development of important information. An inaccurate response demonstrates misunderstanding of key ideas from the stimulus. Typically, ideas expressed may not be well connected or cohesive so that familiarity with the stimulus is necessary in order to follow what is being discussed.

Score: 1

General Description: The response is limited in content or coherence or is only minimally connected to the task. Speech may be largely unintelligible. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:

A. Delivery: Consistent pronunciation and intonation problems cause considerable listener effort and frequently obscure meaning. Delivery is choppy, fragmented, or telegraphic. Speech contains frequent pauses and hesitations.

B. Language Use: Range and control of grammar and vocabulary severely limits (or prevents) expression of ideas and connections among ideas. Some very low-level responses may rely on isolated words or short utterances to communicate ideas.

C. Topic Development: The response fails to provide much relevant content. Ideas that are expressed are often inaccurate, limited to vague utterances, or repetitions (including repetition of prompt).

Score: 0

General Description: Speaker makes no attempt to respond or response is unrelated to the topic.

APPENDIX C

Independent and Integrated Speaking Score Card

Independent Speaking Score Card

Participant's Name_____

Task	Type	Targeted Functions	Score
1	Independent Speaking (Favorite Holiday)	Recount own experience	
Speaking Problems:			
1. Grammar			
2. Vocabulary			
3. Pronunciation			
4. Fluency			
5. Comprehensibility			

Task	Type	Targeted Functions	Score
2	Independent Speaking (An Employee or a Boss)	Express an opinion and support ideas	

Speaking Problems:	
1. Grammar	
2. Vocabulary	
3. Pronunciation	
4. Fluency	
5. Comprehensibility	

Rater's Name_____

Integrated Speaking Score Card

Participant's Name_____

Task	Type	Targeted Functions	Score
1	Integrated Listening/Speaking (School Problem)	Explain/describe/recount a conversation, express an opinion and support ideas	
Speaking Problems:			
1. Grammar			
2. Vocabulary			
3. Pronunciation			
4. Fluency			
5. Comprehensibility			

Task	Type	Targeted Functions	Score
2	Integrated Listening/Speaking (Magnetism)	Explain/describe/recount information read by a native English speaker	
Speaking Problems:			
1. Grammar			
2. Vocabulary			
3. Pronunciation			
4. Fluency			
5. Comprehensibility			

Task	Type	Targeted Functions	Score
3	Integrated Reading/Listening/Speaking (Obesity)	Explain/describe/recount given information, express an opinion and support ideas	

Speaking Problems:	
1. Grammar	
2. Vocabulary	
3. Pronunciation	
4. Fluency	
5. Comprehensibility	

Rater's Name_____

VITAE

VITAE

Name:	Ms. Paweena Numpoon
Date of Birth:	January 29, 1985
Place of Birth:	Saraburi
Address:	129/2 Moo 2 Nong Bua Subdistrict
	Ban Mo Distrcit, Saraburi 18130

Educational Background:

2007	Bachelor of Arts (Sustainable Tourism)
	International College for Sustainability Studies,
	Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok
2012	Master of Arts (English)
	Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok