

ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS OF
THAI ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF WORKING IN AN INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL IN BANGKOK

A MASTER'S PROJECT

BY

PASSAMON PIROMSRI



Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts in Business English for International Communication
at Srinakharinwirot University

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AN ABSTRACT
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The purpose of the study was to explore the three main points, the first of which was the English oral communication problems between Thai administrative staff when communicating with foreign teachers and parents. The second was identifying the educational backgrounds of the Thai administrative staff, who had difference in English oral communication problems. The final purpose was to identify the strategies used to solve problems by Thai administrative. The participants this study consisted of forty Thai administrative staff working in an international school in Bangkok. The study conveyed on both listening and speaking in English, as well as conveying intercultural communication problems. Survey questionnaire and open-ended questions were employed and analyzed by percentage, mean, SD, t-test and content analysis. The results demonstrated that the main listening problems of Thai administrative staff including do not understanding English jargon, slang or idioms, they could not speak English fluently because of their limited English vocabulary and in terms of intercultural communication problem, these staff lacked or had insufficient cultural background to communicate with teachers and parents. With regard to the second purpose, it was found that there were significant differences in the educational backgrounds of the staff in term of English speaking problems and intercultural communication but it had no significant relationship to problems with listening to English. The most common strategies which Thai administrative staff used to solve problems were non-verbal expressions.

ปัญหาการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษทางการพูดและการฟังของพนักงานชาวไทย
ที่ทำงานในโรงเรียนนานาชาติ ในกรุงเทพมหานคร



เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตาม
หลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ

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วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยเล่มนี้คือศึกษาปัญหาการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษทางการพูดและการ
ฟัง ของพนักงานชาวไทยที่ทำงานในโรงเรียนนานาชาติในกรุงเทพมหานคร งานวิจัยนี้เน้นศึกษา 3
หัวข้อ ได้แก่ ปัญหาแท้จริงที่เกิดขึ้นในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษทางการพูดและการฟังของพนักงาน
ชาวไทย ระดับการศึกษาของพนักงานชาวไทยมีความแตกต่างของปัญหาในการสื่อสาร
ภาษาอังกฤษทางการพูดและการฟังหรือไม่ และกลวิธีที่พนักงานชาวไทยใช้แก้ปัญหาเมื่อต้อง
เผชิญหน้ากับครูและผู้ปกครองชาวต่างชาติ อีกทั้งยังศึกษาครอบคลุมถึงปัญหาด้านการฟัง การพูด
ภาษาอังกฤษ และปัญหาด้านความแตกต่างทางทางวัฒนธรรมอีกด้วย ซึ่งงานวิจัยนี้ใช้แบบสอบถาม
และคำถามเพื่อเก็บข้อมูลพนักงานชาวไทย 40 คน เป็นเครื่องมือในการวิจัย

ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่าปัญหาหลักจากการสื่อสารระหว่างพนักงานชาวไทยและครู
ผู้ปกครองชาวต่างชาติ ดังนี้ 1. ปัญหาการฟังที่เกิดขึ้นของพนักงานชาวไทยในการสนทนากับครู
และผู้ปกครองชาวต่างชาติ เกิดขึ้นจากการไม่เข้าใจคำเฉพาะกลุ่ม แสลง หรือสำนวนภาษาอังกฤษ
ด้านปัญหาการพูดเกิดขึ้นจากพนักงานชาวไทยไม่สามารถพูดภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างคล่องแคล่ว
เนื่องจากมีคลังคำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษที่จะใช้อย่างจำกัด ปัญหาด้านความแตกต่างทางทางวัฒนธรรม
เกิดขึ้นเนื่องจากมีความรู้และเข้าใจด้านประวัติและความแตกต่างทางด้านวัฒนธรรมไม่เพียงพอจึง
ทำให้เกิดปัญหาการสื่อสารกับครูและผู้ปกครอง 2. ความแตกต่างของระดับการศึกษามีความ
แตกต่างในด้านปัญหาการพูดภาษาอังกฤษและด้านความแตกต่างทางทางวัฒนธรรม แต่ไม่มีความ
แตกต่างในด้านปัญหาการฟัง 3. กลวิธีที่พบบ่อยที่สุดที่พนักงานชาวไทยใช้ในการแก้ปัญหาเมื่อต้อง
พูดคุยสื่อสารกับครูและผู้ปกครองชาวต่างชาติ คือ การใช้ท่าทางประกอบการพูดคุย การแสดงออก
ทางสีหน้า และยังใช้การพยายามหาคำศัพท์ที่ง่าย หรือใกล้เคียงกับคำที่ครูหรือผู้ปกครอง
ชาวต่างชาติต้องการสื่อสาร รวมไปถึงการวาดภาพแทนคำศัพท์

The Master's Project
titled
English Oral Communication Problems of Thai Administrative Staff
Working in an International School in Bangkok
By
Passamon Piromsri

has been approved by the Graduate School as partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of
Srinakharinwirot University.

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April, 2017

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	1
International school in Thailand.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purposes of the Study.....	3
Research Questions.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	4
Scope of the Study.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	5
II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	7
English Communication skills	7
English Oral Communication problems.....	9
Intercultural Communication.....,,.....	11
Previous Studies Related to English Communication Problems	13
III METHODOLOGY.....	17
Research Design.....	17
Item-Objective Congruence Index: IOC	18
Data Collection Procedures.....	19
Data Analysis.....	19

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Chapter	Page
IV RESULTS.....	21
Personal Information of Thai Administrative Staff.....	21
Results of the Research Question 1.....	23
Results of the Research Question 2.....	28
Results of the Research Question 3.....	33
V DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	34
Discussion: Research Questions 1.....	34
Discussion: Research Questions 2.....	39
Discussion: Research Questions 3.....	41
Conclusions and Implications of the Study.....	42
Recommendations for Further Studies.....	43
REFERENCES.....	45
APPENDICES.....	49
APPENDIX A: Letter for Population.....	50
APPENDIX B: Questionnaire.....	52
VITAE.....	62

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Educational Background.....	22
2 Educational Institution	22
3 Experiences in using English	22
4 English Listening Communication Problems of Thai administrative staff.....	23
5 English Speaking Communication Problems of Thai administrative staff	25
6 Intercultural Communication Problems of Thai administrative staff	27
7 Comparison of Education backgrounds of Thai administrative staff have different in Listening English communication problems	28
8 Comparison of Education backgrounds of Thai administrative staff have different in Speaking English communication problems.....	30
9 Comparison of Education backgrounds of Thai administrative staff have different in Intercultural communication problems.....	31

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

English is an international language, with a presence in almost every country and most facets of modern life including education, business, tourism and entertainment. In the modern, connected world, in which businesses and products have a global reach, English is the default communication medium and is now confirmed as the global language of international business (Graddol, 2006).

English has been accepted as a key instrument of communication in the Thai business context, and English in the education sector in particular is becoming increasingly important, as proficiency in English is key for a country's regional and international success. To illustrate this, between 2009 and 2015 Thailand was part of the roadmap for the ASEAN community, and English has risen to become the recognized international business language and the standard workplace language for ASEAN countries (Fatimah, 2012). It follows that in order to be an effective and influential member of the ASEAN community, Thailand must be a nation with a population highly skilled in English. Moreover, employees in Thailand are increasingly required to use English to communicate with people of member countries in ASEAN and beyond.

An increasing number of families are choosing to send their children to study in an international school for a quality international education (ISAT, 2014). Foreign parents who move to Thailand for work will generally also send their children to an international school, as they want their children to obtain the same high level of education

as they would receive in their country of origin, ideally in English or their native language (for example French or Korean).

International School in Thailand

An international school in modern Thailand is a multinational and multicultural workplace, with a moderate to large workforce employed in various capacities that include teachers, teacher assistants, and administrative personnel. In administrative positions the majority of staff members are Thai, in contrast to teaching staff where foreign nationals are more highly represented. Information from International Schools in Thailand (2014) states that “There are over 100 International Schools in Thailand offering education in English and other languages such as French, German, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. These schools offer education from K-12 for local and international students.”

A significant component of an administrative role within an educational institution is coordination and communication with teachers, students, parents and colleagues, a large number of whom may be native and non-native speakers of English. Such Thai administrative personnel need to be proficient in English, and a lack of strong oral communication skills in English in particular will be disadvantageous to their ability to carry out their responsibilities (Crosling & Ward, 2002 as cited in Fatimah, 2012). It is obvious that those who can communicate well in English are regarded more highly in the workforce, have more opportunities in their career and have a better chance of achieving a higher education.

Statement of the problem

As previously stated, in an international business it is necessary for employees to have a high level of proficiency in English, meaning the ability to communicate effectively in English through speaking, listening, writing and reading. In Thailand specifically, Thai administrative personnel working for an international business will generally have learned English for many years or have been exposed to English in the workplace, but they are non-native English speakers and therefore can be impeded by a limited vocabulary, and may not be sufficiently fluent to successfully communicate their ideas or contribute effectively to an international team (as cited in Suwanpakdee, 2012). As such, Thai administrative staff who work and regularly communicate with native and non-native English teachers or parents can encounter issues such as misunderstanding or miscommunication, and frustration and lack of cohesion within a team or school unit. The inability of staff in an international school to effectively and fully communicate or understand ideas will result in the breakdown of communication in the workplace.

Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the oral English communication problems, and strategies to overcome them, as used by Thai administrative staff working in an international school based in Bangkok. The results of this study can be of value to guide courses or training programs to develop Thai administrative staff in order to make them to more capable communicators, and improve their potential in the school.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine what actual oral English communication problems exist between Thai administrative staff and foreign teachers and parents in the

context of an international school, specifically in the area of listening and speaking skills. My attention was also drawn to investigate how the staff resolve their difficulties in communication with teachers and parents in terms of their different educational backgrounds.

Research question

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the actual oral English communication problems encountered by Thai administrative staff communicating with foreign teachers and parents in an international school based or located in Bangkok?
2. Does the educational background of Thai administrative staff have an effect on their oral English communication problems?
3. What strategies do Thai administrative staff use when they encounter problems in English communication with foreign teachers and parents in the workplace?

Significance of the Study

The outcome of this study can help schools and Thai administrative staff identify problems or gaps in the communication process, and determine a means by which those problems can be addressed and mitigated in the future. Also, the findings of this research study can be beneficial to both the school and staff in identifying the existence and the extent of problems with effective oral English communication of Thai administrative staff

working in the international school. Furthermore, an understanding of the current problem presented in this study may be useful more broadly within the education and business sectors generally. Firstly, it is relevant in human resource development departments and management teams in order to improve efficacy when setting up training courses or programs for staff to improve oral English communication skills. In addition, human resource departments can set appropriate criteria when recruiting new Thai administrative staff. Secondly, staff members themselves may be able to identify where their own competencies in English communication need improvement, which ideally leads to them being encouraged to find ways to improve and develop these skills, with the support of the organization.

Scope of the study

This study is limited to the investigation of the problems of English language communication, in the area of speaking and listening skills, between Thai administrative staff and foreign teachers and parents in an international school in Bangkok. The number of participants is 40 which all of them are Thai administrative staff working in each administrative and educational department within the school.

Definition of Term

Oral Communication is the process of interaction between people by speaking and listening, to give and exchange information and ideas.

English speaking skill is the ability of a person to interact and involves producing, receiving and processing information in the English language.

English listening skill is the process of attentive hearing, understanding and interpreting the meaning of English conversation.

Intercultural communication is a form of communication between people that aims to share information across different cultures and social groups from different countries in which people speak different languages and have different cultural backgrounds.



CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the 21st century, the increased number of international businesses and educational institutions establishing a presence in Thailand has resulted in a much greater requirement for Thais to associate with foreigners in a professional capacity. As a consequence, there has been a significant increase in the use of English as a communication mechanism and the need for Thais working or interacting with multinational organizations to have well developed English communication skills. The subjects reviewed in this chapter include the importance of English communication skills, intercultural communication, English oral communication problems and related researches. Some of the related literatures and researches were reviewed in order to gather background knowledge for the study.

English Communication skills

As with other languages, English communication proficiency can be categorized into key skills; speaking, listening, reading and writing. Rodger (1986) said that these four skills create the basis of the interdependence of language and communication (as cited in Upamai, 2012). Consequently, these discrete communication skills are crucial in the communication process and have a direct effect in the work place, in society and in our personal lives (Rodger, 1986 as cited in Upamai, 2012). In many international workplaces, English play significant roles as it is a medium language use for communicate between people who come from different countries and have their own

languages. The ability to communicate is important and oral communication is the mode of choice in most workplaces today.

Krashen's theory of second language acquisition contains five main hypotheses. One of these hypotheses is referred to as "input" and he noted that "learning is less important than acquisition", which attempts to explain how the learner acquires a second language. The emphasis is on "acquisition" rather than "learning" because acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language with natural communication where speakers focus on the communicative activities, not in the form of their utterance. On the contrary, learning is more specifically a conscious process in acquiring knowledge about the language, for example knowledge of words or rules of grammar, patterns and stressing sounds etc. (Stephen Krashen's Theory, 2015.). Another hypothesis is "Affective filter" that identifies three variables, namely motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. These variables play a role in learning a second language whereby Krashen states that learner with high motivation, self-confidence and low level of anxiety they were more success in second language acquisition.

Kassim & Fatimah (2010) authored study into English communication events and skills needed for engineering work at a multinational company concluded that the English skills that are the most important are speaking and listening. Moreover, another result show that communication in English for recruitment and promotion within an organization were considered more favorably compared to the execution of daily tasks pertinent to the role. Another researcher, Evan (2010), who studied the English language needs of professionals in Hong Kong's workplace concluded that effective oral English communication is necessary for presentations, telephone communication, meetings and negotiations.

Prachanant (2012) found that spoken English is a necessity for employees in the tourism industry to carry out their routine work, as speaking directly and effectively is required in order to inform, guide, protect, socialize and otherwise communicate with foreign tourists. Listening was also identified as a crucial skill and distinctly explains that listening skills are also a key success factor.

Kassim & Ali (2010) identified the forms and skills of English oral communication used by IT graduates as perceived by IT employees in Malaysia, and the expectation from employers in the IT industry in regard to the level of competency of employees in English oral communication. The result shows that personnel in the IT sector most frequently utilize spoken English, followed by English listening skills in their workplace. The ability to competently speak English and be an effective listener were crucial skills in the industry and is highly regarded by employers.

According to many previous researchers, English communication skills are necessary and important in the majority of modern workplaces, employees who have high proficiency in English skill will more success than who have low proficiency. As a consequence, in order to be successful in English communication speakers should have core skills that consist of correct pronunciation, stress, intonation, sound and the ability to communicate meaning contextually and culturally.

English Oral Communication problems

Thailand uses English as a foreign language; it is not the country's official language. Thai people generally learn English from childhood in the school system until adulthood and there are many language institutes in Thailand for people who are

interested in learning English outside of the school system. In a business context in Thailand, international organizations use English as a common communication medium between Thai employees and foreigners. Miscommunication and misunderstanding are common problems when Thais communicate in English as it is not our native language. Additionally, cultural differences exist that Thai people should be aware of when communicating with people who come from another other part of the world.

As Thai people use English as a foreign language, there are a multitude of problems that can occur during the communication process between Thais and native and non-native English speakers. It is particularly difficult for Thais to speak English without listening and speaking with fluent native speakers Khamkhian (2010) and (Wiriyachitra, 2002 as cited in Suwanpakdee, 2012). This is complicated by the fact that English is the native language of many countries and many dialects exist, such as British English, American English, Australian English, Indian English, and Malaysian English all of which are spoken by native and non-native English speakers. While the fact that English is a foreign language is also the case in a large number of other countries, Bautis & Gonzales (2009) noted in their study that Thais have a low level of English proficiency when compared with other Asian countries (e.g. Malaysia, the Philippine and Singapore) (as cited in Suwanpakdee, 2012.). This may be related to the relatively low penetration of English and American culture in to Thailand in comparison to countries such as Singapore and the Philippines who have had a long standing foreign domestic presence (for example American military bases have been present in the Philippines for many decades and Singapore was once a British colony).

Intercultural communication

Communication is the key to success for any business, whether you are operating nationally or internationally, but when operating internationally it becomes even more important due to the potential for language barriers to be a limitation. Intercultural communication is necessary in business today and it is a skill that will become increasingly required as businesses continue to expand globally. Understanding a culture includes respecting its customs, traditions and etiquette. An ideal intercultural communicator is able to recognize examples of cultural differences in both verbal and nonverbal behaviors, and use that information to better communicate with others.

Intercultural business communication is defined as “communication by member of different cultures for business or workplace purpose.” (Baemer & Varner 2008 as cited in Suwanpakdee, 2012.). Different cultures have different habits and different customs. In this study, intercultural communication is defined as a form of communication between people that aims to share information across different cultures and social groups from different countries, who speak different languages and have different cultural backgrounds. These different factors can naturally and inadvertently lead to communication problems. The reality is that language and cultural barriers and the misunderstandings that can result from cultural differences can hinder effective communication and complicate interaction in the workplace.

Several studies reveal that intercultural communication has a direct effect on communication between Thai people and foreigners. According to Suwanpakdee (2012) studied result showed that a Thai film crew cited prejudice as a primary cause of communication problems and negatively affected in work efficiency and performance. Another study from Verapornvanichkul (2010) also showed that different communication

styles displayed by different nationalities is the main impedance to communication on the part of Thai employees, along with a lack of understanding of cultural differences. And also they felt nervous when they had to communicate face to face with unfamiliar language in their daily life.

According to Geert Hofstede, who researched how people from different countries and cultures interact based on six different categories of cultural dimensions. Those categories are; power Distance, this dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society or organization accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Follow with uncertainty avoidance, this dimension expresses the degree to which the member of a society feels uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. Individualism vs. collectivism, this dimension focuses on the questions about whether people prefer a close network of people or prefer to be left alone to fend for themselves. Masculinity vs. femininity, masculinity represents a preference in society for achievement, assertiveness and material reward for success. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Last dimension is long-term vs. short-term orientation, long-term orientation dimension can be interpreted as dealing with society's search for virtue. Societies with a short-term orientation generally have a strong concern with establishing the absolute truth.

Geert Hofstede's cultural dimension, Thai people were found to rank in high level in power distance dimension which means that in a society or organization in which inequalities are accepted; as employees show loyalty respect to the elder or their superiors in return for protection and guidance. On the other hand, for western people, power distance is very low. It means that inequalities among people should be reduced and people should be treated as equals. Another dimension of Thai characteristic from Geert

Hofstede that was also the high rank was collectivism; it was obviously seen in a close long term commitment to the member 'group' such as family, or extended relationship. Thais are close and respected their family but in workplace, there is some boundary to build strong relationships where everyone takes response of their work or duty for counterpart member of their group. On the contrary, western people are individualism, they are more individual and private people as young western children are taught from early age to think and help themselves what their unique objective in lives are.

In addition to the above intercultural obstacles, there are other related problems, namely the three main causes of cross culture problems identified in Metta (Siritipong 2008, as cited in Verapornvanichkul, 2010). The first is the barrier of cognition that refers to people who lack a commonly used language and do not understand the appropriate level of language. The second is the barrier of attitude and feeling e.g. stereotyping, bias. The third is the barrier of behavior this is related to the lack of objectivity and inability to learn and absorb cultural surroundings including awareness of different culture.

Previous Studies Related to English Communication Problems

There have been many research studies focusing on business English communication, such as a research study from Fatimah (2012), that showed that Thai customer service employees working in international petroleum companies had encountered English communication problems, specifically with listening comprehension and grammar usage. Another study from Ekwannang (2004), found that the context and content of messages between Thais and expatriates are often subject to misinterpretation

due to significant difficulty with vocabulary, pronunciation and accent (as cited in Suwanpakdee, 2012). Therefore, cross cultural communication barriers based on verbal factors between western expatriates and Thai personnel are a common business problem.

Suwanpakdee's study (2012) specifically illustrates oral communication problems encountered by a Thai film crew when communicating with a non-native English speaking film crew. "...on the part of communication from both crew and the second problem was Thai film crew did not clearly understand the accent, tone of voice, stress pattern, and pronunciation of speakers". In term of the speaking problem, the Thai film crew's major problem were lack of voice quality, an ability to use correct pronunciation or to speak English correctly, precisely, or fluently.

Upamai (2012) authored study focused on oral communication problems between foreign executives and their Thai subordinates in the banking sector. The result of the study was qualified into two types; listening problems and speaking problems. In regard to listening problems the result showed that "...Thai subordinates could not understand their colleagues when they used English technical terms, idioms, jargon, or slang and (b) Thai subordinates had word limitation problems when communicating with their colleagues". As for speaking problems she found that Thai subordinates had problems due to their limited English vocabulary, and did not know how to use English technical words, idioms or slang and moreover, English pronunciation and accent were identified as a problem when communicating with their colleagues.

According to Khamkeaw's study (2009) research about needs and problem in English and speaking skill of Metropolitan officers with foreigner tourist. It showed that the major listening problem were several of English accents, cannot catch the main idea

and listening basic expression. While speaking problems were cannot speak in complete sentences and pronounce of English vowel sounds.

The study from Somsai & Intaraprasert (2011) investigated about communication strategies for coping with face-to-face oral communication problem of university students majoring English for International communication. In the study Somsai & Intaraprasert found that communicate strategies to solve problem defining as a message senders attempt to get the intended message across to the interlocutor successfully with or without an intermission or a pause. The strategies can be classified into two main categories that are strategy for conveying message from the speaker to the interlocutor and the strategy for understanding the message. The strategies for conveying message has two subcategorized namely; the continuous interaction and discontinuous interaction, for example using familiar words, phrases, or sentences, using non – verbal expression such as mime, gesture and facing expression, drawing picture, repeat words, dictionary, goggle, app etc. The strategy for understanding the message defines as the sender is attempting to understand the interlocutor's message such as asking the interlocutor for repeating or speaking slow down.

From many previous research efforts, the common English communication problems can be summarized as follows:

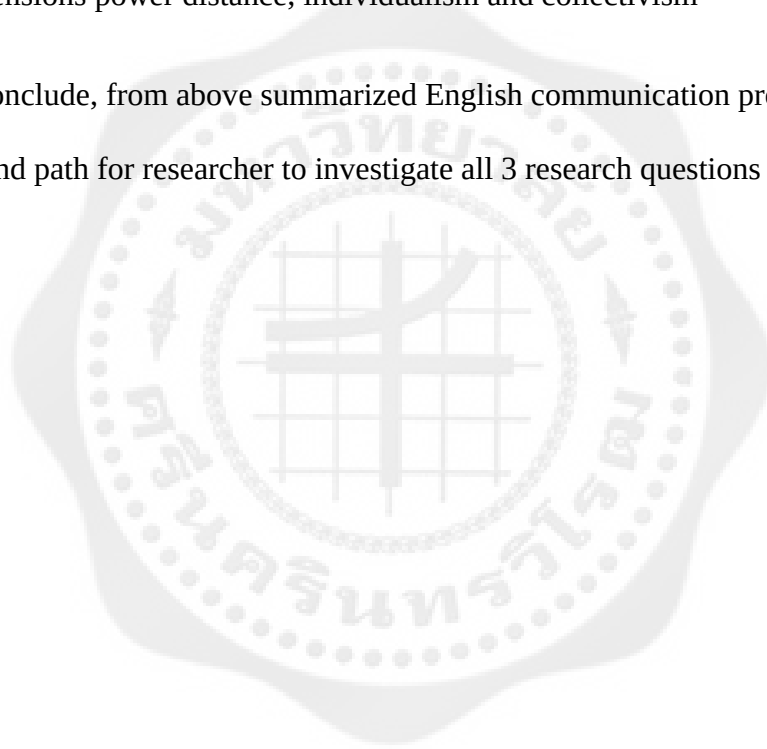
1. Listening comprehension due to a limited vocabulary and difficulty correctly interpreting tone of voice, stress pattern, pronunciation and accent. Pronunciation is specifically one of the main problems leading to the misinterpretation of messages from an English speaker.

2. Grammar usage. English is a complex language and grammar can be very difficult to understand and correctly apply for non-native English speakers.

3. Speaking comprehension such as a lack of voice quality, an ability to use correct pronunciation or to speak English correctly, precisely, or fluently.

4. Intercultural communication where barriers such as uncertainty avoidance, stereotyping, cross culture or cultural awareness may be present. Geart Hofstede's cultural dimensions power distance, individualism and collectivism

To conclude, from above summarized English communication problems were the instruction and path for researcher to investigate all 3 research questions in this study.



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This Chapter includes the research design of the study, which consists of the participants, research instrument, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

Research Design

Participants.

This study focused on the English communication problems endured by Thai administrative staff. The participation group is made up of Thai administrative staff whose responsibilities require them to communicate with teachers, students, and parents on a daily basis. The numbers of participants are 40 people and they are working at an international school based in Bangkok. The target school is a well-known international school with several campuses in Bangkok, and is therefore a good representation of an international school in Bangkok which is appropriate to be participants for this research study.

Instrument.

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire which is self-administered by each participant questionnaire concentrated on oral English communication problems endured by Thai administrative staff and foreigner teachers and parents. To assure that the data obtained from the participants can be generalized, the questionnaire were sent to 3 professional personnel in order to determine validity and

reliability in this research study. Moreover, the researcher asked the head of school to check the appropriateness of questions and are related to their work proficiency.

The survey questionnaire consists of three parts, which are as follow: including both close-ended and open-ended questions. The first part of the questionnaire was participant's educational background. In the second part participants were asked to complete a series of questions about their assessment of English communication problems while communicating with foreign teachers and parents, and the answer was measured by the five point Likert scale. In this part of the questionnaire are included listening problems, speaking problems and intercultural communication problems which each participant asked to rate the problems by choosing one of five items on a Likert scale; strongly agree (5), agree (4), moderately agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). The third part was an open-ended questionnaire in order to gather more in-depth information on what strategies Thai administrative staff usually use when encounter problems in English communication with foreigner teachers and parents in your workplace.

Item-Objective Congruence Index: IOC.

To assure that the data obtained from the participants can be generalized, the questionnaire sent to 3 professional personnel; there are professor Piyawan Kullamai who expertise in English writing, reading and translating, next is assistant professor Nattha Kaewcha who expertise in English writing, the last person is Dr. Ratchaneeya Klinnamhom who expertise in Thai linguistics and pragmatics. All of 3 professional are lecturers at humanities faculty at Srinakharinwirot University. The questionnaires were process by 3 professional in order to determine validity and reliability in this research

study. Then these questionnaires sent to the head of school to check the appropriateness of questions and were related to their work proficiency.

Data collection Procedures.

The data collected in April 2016. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and gave participants three days in order to completely answer it and sent it back to the researcher. A letter asking for participations to contribute to the study, along with information about the study and the researcher's contact information are included with the questionnaire.

In this research study one threat to data validity has been identified, specifically that the period of time available to participants to complete the questionnaire. Where participants do not have sufficient time to answer the questionnaire there is a risk that results can be incorrect or subject to error. Hence, to mitigate this threat, the researcher planned the schedule for data collection by providing the questionnaire to participants prior to the school closing for the semester.

Data analysis.

The data collected from the close-ended and open-ended questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. The results of the questionnaire were interpreted, collated and categorized, imported into a computer spreadsheet and presented in tables and figures together with the study. The results will also be interpreted as statistical values as follows:

1. The education background and length of experience using English described by using percentage.

2. The mean score (M) and standard derivation (SD) are used to interpret the average level of the participant's perceived problems with oral English communication in order to present the results of research questions 1 and use t -test showed the result of education background that has different on English oral communication for research question 2.

3. Answer from research question 3 described by using content analysis.



CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter described the result from data analysis of the oral communication problems of Thai administrative staff with foreigner teachers and parents in an international school. The data was analyzed and presented in form of frequency, mean, percentage and standard deviation. The result of this research was reported to response for these three research questions:

1. What are the actual English oral communication problems encountered by Thai administrative staff communicating with foreign teachers and parents in an international school based or located in Bangkok?
2. Do the education background of Thai administrative staff have effect in English oral communication problems?
3. What strategies Thai administrative staff usually use when encounter problems in English communication with foreigner teachers and parents in your workplace?

Personal Information of the Participants

Personal information about education background, education institution and experience in using English was collected to provide information about participants. The results are presented in Tables 1-3 below

Table 1

Frequency and percentage of education background of Thai administrative staff

Education Background	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	28	70.00
Higher than Bachelor's Degree	12	30.00

Table 1 explains the participant's education background. Out of 40 participants in the study, 28 participants (70.00%) were bachelor's degree, and 12 participants (40.00%) were higher than bachelor's degree.

Table 2

Frequency and percentage of education institution of Thai administrative staff

Educational Institution	Frequency	Percentage
State University	26	65.00
Private University	14	35.00

Table 2 explains the participant's education institution. Out of 40 participants in the study, 26 participants (65.00%) were state university, while 14 participants (35.00%) were private university.

Table 3

Frequency and percentage of experience in using English of Thai administrative staff

Experience in using English	Frequency	Percentage
2 - 4 years	14	35.00
More than 10 years	12	30.00
5 - 7 years	11	27.50
0 – 1 year	3	7.50

Table 3 shows the participant's experience in using English. Out of 40 participants in the study, the highest number was 14 participants (35.00%) who had experience in using English for 2-4 years, 12 participants (30.00%) had experience in using English more than 10 years, 11 participants (27.50%) had experience in using English for 5 – 7 years, and the last ranking were 3 participants (7.50%) had experience in using English for 0 – 1 year.

Research Question 1

What are the actual English oral communication problems encountered by Thai administrative staff communicating with foreign teachers and parents in an international school based or located in Bangkok?

Results.

The results of this Research Question 1 interpreted data from questionnaire part II. Table 4 – 6 includes quantitative data which present the mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) score which the participants rated their level of agreement.

Table 4

English Listening Communication Problems of Thai administrative staff (n = 40)

English Listening Problems	Mean	SD
I do not understand when teachers and parents use English jargons, slangs or idioms.	3.2	1
I do not clearly understand what teachers and parents say because I am not familiar with their tone of voice, stress patterns and pronunciation.	2.93	1
After listening to teachers and parents. It takes me a while to understand them as It takes me a moment to translate from English into my native language.	2.83	1.21

Table 4 (*Continued*)*English Listening Communication Problems of Thai administrative staff (n = 40)*

English Listening Problems	Mean	SD
I cannot understand the main point when teachers and parents speak fast.	2.73	0.98
I cannot participate in discussions with teachers and parents because I have problem listening to English.	2.13	0.79
I cannot summarize the main idea when listening to long conversation with teachers and parents.	2.73	1.06
I do not understand words or sentences when teachers and parents speak English.	2.55	0.96
Even though teachers and parents repeat words or sentences for me, I still do not understand.	2.43	0.93
I have listening problems when having conversation with teachers and parents because of my poor English grammar.	2.28	0.93
I feel nervous and anxiety when teachers and parents speak English to me.	2.2	1.01

Table 4 describes listening English communication problems of Thai administrative staff. The information, bases on rating by the participants showed their level of agreement of this research. The data indicated that listening English communication problems of Thai administrative staff were: (a) Thai administrative staff had listening problems because they were not understand English jargons, slang or idiom ($M = 3.20$); (b) Thai administrative staff also could not understand clearly because they were not familiar with teachers and parents 's tone of voice, stress patterns and pronunciation ($M = 2.93$); and (c) Thai administrative staff takes a while to understand after listening to teachers and parents and takes them a moment to translate from English into their native language ($M = 2.83$). Moreover, they could not catch the main point

when teachers and parents spoke quickly ($M = 2.73$); they could not sum up the main idea in long conversation ($M = 2.73$); they could not understand words or sentences when teachers and parents spoke ($M = 2.55$); although teachers and parents repeat words or sentences they still could not understand ($M = 2.43$); they had listening problem because of their poor English grammar ($M = 2.28$); they felt nervous and anxiety when teachers and parents spoke to them ($M = 2.20$), and they could not participate in discussions with teachers and parents because they had problem in English listening ($M = 2.13$).

Table 5

English Speaking Communication Problems of Thai administrative staff (n = 40)

English Speaking Problems	Mean	SD
I do not speak English fluently because of my limits of English vocabulary.	3.00	1.17
I do not speak English correctly or precisely with appropriate word.	2.98	1.25
I do not speak English fluently because of my poor English grammar.	2.73	1.13
I do not think that my English is good enough to participate in discussion with teachers and parents.	2.68	1.20
I pause too long when speaking English.	2.65	1.16
I understand when listening to teachers and parents but I have difficulty to expressing my opinion in English.	2.65	1.23
I cannot respond immediately while speak to teachers and parents because I like to translate from my native language into English.	2.60	1.19
I lack of self-confidence and feel anxiety to speak English with teachers, parents.	2.53	1.06

Table 5 (*Continued*)*English Speaking Communication Problems of Thai administrative staff (n = 40)*

English Speaking Problems	Mean	SD
Teachers and parents do not understand me because of my tone of voice, stress pattern and pronunciation.	2.48	1.02
I focus on speak English grammatically correct sentences more than conveying message to teachers and parents.	2.43	0.98

Table 5 describes speaking English communication problems of Thai administrative staff. The information was grounded on the participants rating their level of agreement in this research. The data indicated that speaking English communication problems of Thai administrative staff were: (a) Thai administrative staff cannot speak English fluently because of their limits of English vocabulary ($M = 3.00$); (b) Thai administrative staff also could not speak English correctly or precisely with appropriate word ($M = 2.98$); and (c) Thai administrative staff could not speak English fluently because they had poor English grammar ($M = 2.73$). In addition, speaking English problems of Thai administrative staff were as follow; they thought that their English were not good enough to participate in discussion with teachers and parents ($M = 2.68$); they paused too long when they spoke English ($M = 2.65$); they understood what teachers and parents said but they struggled to express their opinion in English ($M = 2.65$); they could not respond immediately while speaking to teachers and parents as they like to translate from Thai into English ($M = 2.60$); they lacked of self-confidence and felt anxiety to spoke English with teachers and parents ($M = 2.53$); Teachers and parents could not understand them because of their tone of voice, stress pattern and pronunciation ($M = 2.48$) and they would rather focus on grammatically corrected than convey message to teachers and parents ($M = 2.43$).

Table 6

Intercultural Communication Problems of Thai administrative staff (n = 40)

Intercultural Problems	Mean	SD
I lack or have insufficient cultural background to communicate with teachers and parents.	2.83	0.93
I think that cultural differences will affect the expression of both ideas and emotion when I speak to teachers and parents.	2.83	0.98
I think cultural differences will affect professional relationship between teachers, parents and me.	2.58	0.93
While communicating in English with teachers and parents, I am sometimes confused by their gestures or non-verbal messages.	2.43	0.87
I lack of ability to adapt to different culture into my work, so it blocks smooth oral communication with teachers and parents.	2.33	0.76

Table 6 describes intercultural communication problems of Thai administrative staff. The information was grounded on the participants rating their level of agreement of this research. The data pointed out that intercultural communication problems of Thai administrative staff were: (a) Thai administrative staff had intercultural communication problems which they lack or have insufficient cultural background to communicate with teachers and parents ($M = 2.83$). Similarly, (b) they thought that cultural difference would affect their expression of both ideas and emotions when they were speaking with teachers and parents. The result also showed that they thought cultural differences would affect professional relationship between teachers, parents and them. In addition, Thai administrative staff mentioned that they sometimes were confused by the gestures or non-

verbal messages while communicating. They lack of ability to adapt themselves to different culture in workplace therefore the oral communication is not smooth.

Research Question 2

Do the education backgrounds of Thai administrative staff have different in English oral communication problems?

Results.

The data were analyzed and calculated using independent-sample t-Test analysis. The results of this Research Question 2 interpreted data from questionnaire part II which the participants rated their level of agreement of English oral communication problems. Table 7 – 9 present the t-test analysis that show the education backgrounds of Thai administrative staff which have effect in English communication problems.

Table 7

Comparison of Education backgrounds of Thai administrative staff have different in Listening English communication problems.

English Listening Problem	Bachelor Degree		Higher than Bachelor Degree		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. I do not understand words or sentences when teachers and parents speak English.	2.61	0.96	2.42	1.00	0.57
2. I do not clearly understand what teachers and parents say because I am not familiar with their tone of voice, stress patterns and pronunciation.	3.00	0.90	2.75	1.22	0.72
3. Even though teachers and parents repeat words or sentences for me, I still do not understand.	2.39	0.96	2.50	0.90	-.330

Table 7 (Continued)

Comparison of Education backgrounds of Thai administrative staff have different in Listening English communication problems.

English Listening Problem	Bachelor Degree		Higher than Bachelor Degree		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
4. I do not understand when teachers and parents use English jargons, slangs or idioms.	3.32	0.86	2.92	1.24	1.19
5. I cannot summarize the main idea when listening to long conversation with teachers and parents.	2.86	1.15	2.42	0.79	1.21
6. I cannot participate in discussions with teachers and parents because I have problem listening to English.	2.14	0.85	2.08	0.67	0.22
7. I have listening problems when having conversation with teachers and parents because of my poor English grammar.	2.32	0.98	2.17	0.83	0.48
8. I feel nervous and anxiety when teachers and parents speak English to me.	2.32	1.06	1.92	0.90	1.16
9. I cannot understand the main point when teachers and parents speak fast.	2.82	1.06	2.50	0.80	0.94
10. After listening to teachers and parents. It takes me a while to understand them as It takes me a moment to translate from English into my native language.	3.07	1.21	2.25	1.06	2.03

* $P < .05$

As demonstrated in Table 7, it was found that there was no significant difference between Thai administrative staffs graduated in Bachelor's degree ($n = 28$) and Thai administrative staffs graduated in higher than Bachelor's degree ($n = 12$). These results

suggested that education background have no effect in listening English communication problems for both group of Thai administrative staffs.

Table 8

Comparison of Education backgrounds of Thai administrative staff have different in Speaking English communication problems.

English Speaking Problem	Bachelor Degree		Higher than Bachelor Degree		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. I do not speak English fluently because of my limits of English vocabulary.	3.29	1.05	2.33	1.23	2.50*
2. I do not speak English correctly or precisely with appropriate word.	3.39	1.13	2.00	0.95	3.72*
3. Teachers and parents do not understand me because of my tone of voice, stress pattern and pronunciation.	2.64	0.87	2.08	1.24	1.636
4. I pause too long when speaking English.	2.89	1.17	2.08	1.00	2.10*
5. I understand when listening to teachers and parents but I have difficulty to expressing my opinion in English.	2.89	1.26	2.08	1.00	1.98
6. I do not think that my English is good enough to participate in discussion with teachers and parents.	2.96	1.14	2.00	1.13	2.46*
7. I do not speak English fluently because of my poor English grammar.	2.96	1.10	2.17	1.03	2.13*
8. I focus on speak English grammatically correct sentences more than conveying message to teachers and parents.	2.71	0.94	1.75	0.75	3.15*
9. I cannot respond immediately while speak to teachers and parents because I like to translate from my native language into English.	2.89	1.20	1.92	0.90	2.53*
10. I lack of self-confidence and feel anxiety to speak English with teachers, parents.	2.82	0.98	1.83	0.94	2.95*

*P < .05

As demonstrated in Table 8, it was found that there was significant difference between Thai administrative staffs graduated in Bachelor's degree and Thai administrative staffs graduated in higher than Bachelor's degree. The results revealed that education background has effect in speaking English communication problems as following : Thai administrative staff do not speak English fluently because of their limited English vocabulary ($t = 2.50, p = .02$); they do not speak English correctly or precisely with appropriate word ($t = 3.72, p = .00$); they pause too long when speaking English ($t = 2.10, p = .04$); they do not think that their English is good enough to participate in discussion with teachers and parents ($t = 2.46, p = .02$); they do not speak English fluently because of their poor English grammar ($t = 2.31, p = .04$); they focus on speaking English grammatical sentences rather than conveying message to teachers and parents ($t = 3.15, p = .00$); they cannot respond immediately while speaking to teachers and parents because they like to translate from Thai into English ($t = 2.53, p = .02$) and they lack of self-confidence and felt anxiety to speak English with teachers and parents ($t = 2.92, p = .01$).

Table 9

Comparison of Education backgrounds of Thai administrative staff have different in Intercultural communication problems.

Intercultural Problem	Bachelor Degree		Higher than Bachelor Degree		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. I lack or have insufficient cultural background to communicate with teachers and parents.	3.00	0.82	2.42	1.08	1.87
2. While communicating in English with teachers and parents, I am sometimes confused by their gestures or non-verbal messages.	2.43	0.79	2.42	1.08	0.04

Table 9 (Continued)

Comparison of Education backgrounds of Thai administrative staff have different in Intercultural communication problems.

Intercultural Problem	Bachelor Degree		Higher than Bachelor Degree		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
3. I lack of ability to adapt to different culture into my work, so it blocks smooth oral communication with teachers and parents.	2.43	0.79	2.08	0.67	1.322
4. I think that cultural differences will affect the expression of both ideas and emotion when I speak to teachers and parents.	3.07	0.98	2.25	0.75	2.59*
5. I think cultural differences will affect professional relationship between teachers, parents and me.	2.71	0.90	2.25	0.97	1.47

* $P < .05$

As demonstrated in Table 9, it was found that there was significant difference between Thai administrative staffs graduated in Bachelor's degree and Thai administrative staffs graduated in higher than Bachelor's degree. The results showed that education background have effect in intercultural communication problem; they think that cultural differences will affect the expression of both ideas and emotion when they speak to teachers and parents ($t = 2.59, p = .01$).

Furthermore, there are data collected from questionnaire in Part III; an open-ended question which asks Thai administrative staffs how they have solved communication problem. The results showed in content analysis.

Research Question 3

What strategies Thai administrative staff usually use when encounter problems in English communication with foreigner teachers and parents in your workplace?

Results.

The results from open-ended question assume as the communicate strategies which is verbal and non-verbal strategies, to fill the gaps between different languages. The results collected from 15 participants out of 40 participants. These are the following strategies from the participants; for example writing in paper, drawing pictures, use smartphone finding word or meaning etc. Other strategies such as ask foreigner teachers and parents to repeat word or sentences again, tell foreigner teachers and parents to speak more slowly etc. According to answers in research question 3 the researcher categorized strategies into groups. Majority of participants used non-verbal expression for instance miming, gestures, and facial expression to make a verbal message easier to understand; they used other words by referring to object or material that are similar to the target words; drew pictures to make message clearer; spelled or wrote words, phrases or sentences on paper to clarify the message. Minority participants told foreign teachers and parents to speak more slowly in order that they would have time to think before respond; they also used dictionary, Google translate, smartphone, internet or another type of translating materials for getting the meaning of unfamiliar words. In addition, they tried to catch teachers and parents' main point to get the main message; asked teachers and parents to repeat words, phrases or sentences to confirm the message and asked teachers and parents again by using easy or simple words instead to assure of the messages.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes three parts: a discussion, conclusions of the study, and recommendations for further research.

The researcher of this study aimed to explore the actual oral English communication problems between Thai administrative staff and foreign teachers and parents in an international school located in Bangkok. Data was received from 40 participants who are working at two branches of an international school based in Bangkok. The researcher analyzed the data with reference to the following research questions:

Discussion: Research Question One

With reference to research question one, this study found that the oral English communication problems that Thai administrative staff encountered were because of listening problems, speaking problems and intercultural communication problems.

In terms of listening problems, they could not understand when foreign teachers and parents used English jargon, slang or idioms. This is because Thais are neither familiar with nor often use this kind of vocabulary in their daily life. In addition, this problem may be due to their limited vocabulary or background knowledge of word meanings. English jargon, slang or idioms cannot be translated word by word; the meaning is contained in the whole phrase or sentence. This means the staff often do not correctly understand the message. Indeed, according to Krashen's (2015), learning is

more specifically a conscious process in acquiring knowledge about language, for example knowledge of words. The other problem was that the staff were not familiar with the teachers or parents' tone of voice, stress patterns and pronunciation, because of the wide variety of these features as spoken by non-native speakers around the world. This causes problems for the staff when listening. There are also differences between Thai and English vowels and consonants; for example, voiced and voiceless stops (p, b) can cause problems when listening. Another example are that many questions end with rising intonation; however, Wh- questions (who, what, where, when, why, and how) end with falling intonation. It is important for Thai administrative staff to learn these patterns not only in order to communicate meaning clearly, but also in order to avoid unwittingly sounding rude or indecisive. Not being familiar with tone of voice, stress patterns and pronunciation can lead to misunderstanding and cause problems in communicating among speakers of different languages.

The possible explanation for these problems could be because the Thai administrative staff have insufficient knowledge of words or idioms, and also lack opportunities to practice using oral English communication in their daily life. As the participants were Thai speakers, and according to their personal data the majority of them had significantly less than 10 years' experience in using English. This results in limited exposure to and experience with English interaction, especially with foreigners. A particularly interesting issue is that two important results relating to listening communication problems in this study are identical to the findings of Winnawut (2011), who found that the listening problems of Thai employees working in international organizations comprised not understanding slang or idiomatic expressions, followed by a difficulty remembering blocks of information and unfamiliarity with foreigners' accents

and pronunciation. Furthermore, this study's results are similar to many other previous studies, such as Upamai (2012), who found that Thai subordinates had problems due to their limited vocabulary, meaning that they could not understand technical terms, idioms, jargon or slang when communicating with foreigner executives. Suwanpakdee (2012) found that Thai film crews had poor listening comprehension as they did not clearly understand the accent, tone of voice, stress pattern, and pronunciation of non-native English speech. Likewise Fatimah (2012) found that Thai employees in an international workplace had trouble regarding the volume of their voice and word stress patterns.

In terms of speaking problems, the results of this study indicated that Thai administrative staff faced significant problems. They did not speak English fluently because of their limited English vocabulary, and they did not speak English correctly, with appropriate choice of words. The results of the current study are similar, which point to Thai administrative staff having serious issues with vocabulary. The reason for these problems could be that these staff were concerned about their inability to think of or use appropriate words to express their opinions, or sometimes simply forgetting words that they have learned before. The possible reasons are that many Thais are not willing to communicate in English with others because they feel that they cannot speak English well enough, and are afraid to make mistakes. This may be caused by varieties of mother tongue interference generally in terms of pronunciation, stress, tone of voice, vocabulary, technical terms and idiomatic usage. These results could emphasize word and vocabulary problems which have been mentioned several times in both this study and other related studies. The results regarding speaking problems are supported by the open-ended question about how Thai administrative staff solve communication problems when encountering foreign teachers and parents.

The results of this study are similar to research by Upamai (2012), which found that Thai subordinates had speaking problems when communicating with foreign executives, namely limited English vocabulary, and not knowing how to use English technical words, idioms and slang appropriately. The results are also consistent with Suwanpakdee (2012), who found that Thai film crew experienced speaking problems comprising an inability to use correct pronunciation or to speak English correctly, precisely, or fluently.

Homes, Tangtongtavy & Tomizawa (2003) stated that most Thai people have learned English from Thai teachers, and given that most Thai public school curriculums emphasize reading and writing skills, listening and speaking are less practiced. In particular, the standard patterns in many Thai public schools of teaching and learning English as a second language focus on grammar rather than oral communication. However, nowadays many Thai public schools provide both Thai teachers and foreign teachers, giving students greater opportunity to interact and communicate, in order to further their oral English communication skills.

Working with people who come from different countries can cause problems. In terms of intercultural communication problems, the results of this study indicate that Thai administrative staff lack sufficient cultural background to communicate with foreign teachers and parents, and they believe that cultural differences will affect the expression of both ideas and emotions. The explanation for the results of the study are that Thai administrative staff lack sufficient cultural background, so they are anxious to express their feelings and ideas as they avoid conflict while communicating. Non-verbal language can also lead to misinterpretation. Other possible reasons are the diversity of cultural dimensions of Hofstede's theory. Thai administrative staff in this study were

courteous and respectful, especially with older people, and they were more indirect when speaking and expressing ideas and emotions. On the contrary, foreign teachers and parents were more direct. According to Homes, Tangtongtavy & Tomizawa (2003), Hofstede had surveyed two important dimensions of direct relevance to Thai people, which are *Power distance* and *Collectivist-individualist*. In Thailand these are generally different from many western countries and some are even different from those in other Asian countries. It is plausible that power distance for Thai people ranks more highly than for western people, as Thai people tend to be humble and respect older people in high ranking positions. To put this another way, Thai people tend to accept inequality (Phonmang & Chi-Chien Lai, n.a.), which contrasts with western people who believe that inequalities in society should be minimized. As part of a collectivist culture, Thai people tend to have strong relationships in society in which people distinguish between in-group and out-group, while western people tend to be more individualistic, meaning they are more private and believe in themselves (Hofstede, 2016). These two main dimensions can explain the cultural difference of Thai people, and are particularly consistent with the results of this study. Thai administrative staff have significant intercultural communication problems which affect the expression of both ideas and emotions when communicating with foreign teachers and parents, caused by their different backgrounds and ways of perceiving.

The result is consistent with Suwanpakdee (2012), who found that cultural differences affect the expression of Thai film crew members. In addition, the result of research by Fatimah (2012) revealed that Thai customer service staff had insufficient knowledge of the cultural background of their customers. Inseesungworn & Damnet (n.a.) also found in their research that most of the Thai professionals at Taiyang Industrial

Co., Ltd assessed that their own oral English communication skills as fair, especially speaking skills, but when it came to cultural communication problems, was they were not sufficiently aware of cultural differences. From my perspective, the results from this study could be explained by the context of an international school in Thailand, in which there are people of many cultures: most foreign teachers or parents in an international school based in Bangkok are from western countries. Therefore they have different cultural backgrounds, which can bring misunderstanding and can create barriers to relationships in the workplace. However, more experience working with foreign people will help both Thai administrative staff and foreign teachers and parents to learn, shape and adapt the different cultures to their daily life in the workplace.

Discussion: Research Question Two

With reference to research question two, this study stated that educational background was not significantly related to listening problems when comparing between Thai administrative staff with a bachelor's degree and those with degrees higher than bachelor level. The possible reasons for this are that both groups of participants are surrounded by foreign teachers and parents, and therefore could improve their listening skills as they become familiar with tone of voice, stress patterns, accent and pronunciation. When groups of Thai administrative staff have conversations with foreign teachers and parents, they could understand the messages that are directed at them. Although they could not understand all of the conversation, they might be able to catch the main point. Another reason may be related to their experience of using English in their daily lives or in the workplace, since most of the participants have at least two years' experience using English. An example is assimilation, which can help interlocutor's

comprehension in listening skill. When an interlocutor with less experience in using English encounters assimilation, for example progressive assimilation, they are unable to guess from the contextual clue.

On the contrary, in terms of speaking problems, the result from this study showed that there was a significant difference between Thai administrative staff who graduated with a bachelor's degree and those who graduated with a higher degree. The different levels of speaking problems between both groups comprised not being able to speak English fluently or precisely with appropriate words. This problem is in line with educational background which having an effect on speaking problems in research question one. A plausible explanation could be that people with an opportunity to study at a higher level could possibly have a greater diversity of knowledge of grammar structure, words or phrases and therefore have a greater ability to use it. For example, Thai administrative staff who graduated with higher degrees had more accurate grammar and used a greater variety of words. In general, Thai administrative staff had actual speaking problems, meaning that they could not speak English fluently or precisely and using appropriate words, which is supported by the results from research question one.

In terms of intercultural communication problems, educational background showed significant differences between the two groups of Thai administrative staff. The results revealed that Thai administrative staff think that cultural differences will affect the expression of both ideas and emotion when they speak to teachers and parents. Once again, this problem parallels the problem from research question one. The result conform to cross culture problem from Metta (Siritipong 2008, as cited in Verapornvanichkul, 2010) that is the barrier of cognition that refers to people who lack a commonly used language and do not understand the appropriate level of language. The results of this

study indicated that communicating does play an important role not only in language but also in intercultural communication. Thai administrative staff with higher degrees may be able to learn, receive and adapt different cultures due to having a more open mind, less bias, wider vision and attitudes.

At the final stage of this research, the researcher attained the results from an open-ended question which addresses research question three, how the staff used communicative strategies when encountering foreign teachers and parents.

Discussion: Research Questions Three

The results regarding research question three show that the communication strategies that are used most were continuous interaction strategies to convey the message between interlocutors, using non-verbal or facial expressions to make the message clearer, using other words that are similar to the target word, drawing pictures, asking the speaker to speak slower, and spelling or writing on paper to clarify the message. The results of this study showed that Thai administrative staff use communication strategies to solve problems which can be divided into two categories: (a) strategies for conveying the message from the speaker to the interlocutor and (b) strategies for understanding the message. The strategies for conveying the message are separated into two subcategories, namely continuous interaction and discontinuous interaction. The staff use verbal techniques such as using other words that are similar to the target word and non-verbal techniques such as facial expressions or drawing pictures to achieve their goal in communication. They try to use simple ways to solve problems because they want to convey messages to and understand foreign teachers and parents. These strategies are

consistent with Somsai & Intaraprasert (2011), who investigated strategies for coping with face-to-face oral communication problems with university students majoring in English. The results of this current study are also similar to research by Fatimah (2012) who found that Thai customer service employees resolved communication problems by paraphrasing the message, using general words, using other words with a similar meaning or using direct words to understand their customer. Even though the Thai administrative staff encountered communication problems, they did not renounce their endeavors to achieve a communicative goal. Incidentally, it could be said that these communicative strategies are commonly used not only to bridge the gap between the linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge of the foreigner language learner, but also to keep the continuity of conversational flow inside their useable linguistic knowledge (Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011).

Conclusions and Implications

This study attempted to explore the problems that Thai administrative staff had when communicating orally in English with foreign teachers and parents. The results revealed that the major problems that they encountered were: listening comprehension, speaking skills because of their limited English vocabulary and pronunciation problems, and intercultural communication problems because of insufficient cultural background knowledge. This particularly pertains to the actual speaking problems Thai administrative staff had, namely that they could not speak English fluently or precisely with appropriate words, as well as intercultural communication problems which are supported by the research results came from research question one and research question two are the same problem. Furthermore, educational background did have an effect on

speaking comprehension and problems relating to intercultural communication. Although the staff encountered problems during oral English communication, they did not stop endeavoring to achieve their communicative goal. This is confirmed by the results of an open-ended question which showed that the staff use several communicative strategies to attempt to solve the problems.

This study shows that Thai administrative staff in an international school in Bangkok have problems with listening and speaking skills. Suggestions for improving the oral English communication competency of these staff include the fact that it is important that both public and private schools build a strong educational foundation in English, a foundation which focuses on oral communication and creates more opportunities for students to interact with native speakers. Moreover, to improve intercultural communication skills throughout their careers, staff should study other cultures and languages, respect preferences for certain communication styles, learn to write and speak clearly, listening carefully, know when to use translators, and help others adapt to their own culture. In addition, the human resources departments of schools should acknowledge these problems so that they can provide training courses for Thai administrative staff to help them to work more efficiently.

Recommendation for Further Studies

Some recommendations for further studies are presented as follows. In order to obtain reliable information, further studies should investigate teachers' or parents' feedback so that results can be compared. This study emphasized the oral English communication problems with foreign teachers and parents but it did not distinguish

between native and non-native speakers of English. Further studies would benefit from investigating this topic. Further studies may also be able to gain deeper information as to how educational background makes a difference to oral English communication problems.



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APPENDICES



APPENDIX A
LETTER ASKING FOR PARTICIPATION

**A Survey of English oral communication Problems of Thai Administrative Staff
Working in an International School in Bangkok**

My name is Passamon Piromsri, and I am conducting a research study entitled “A Survey of English Oral Communication Problems of Thai Administrative Staff Working in an International School in Bangkok.” This study is a part of Master’s Degree Program in Business English for International Communication at Srinakharinwirot University.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the English Oral Communication Problems of Thai Administrative Staff Working in an International School in Bangkok.” The following questions are intended to help to gather that information. The information you provide will be use only for purpose of this study and will be kept strictly confidential. Your cooperation in completing this survey is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,
Passamon Piromsri

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I: Educational Background

Directions : Please mark ✓ in the check box ☐ in front of the answer that describes you.

Education background:

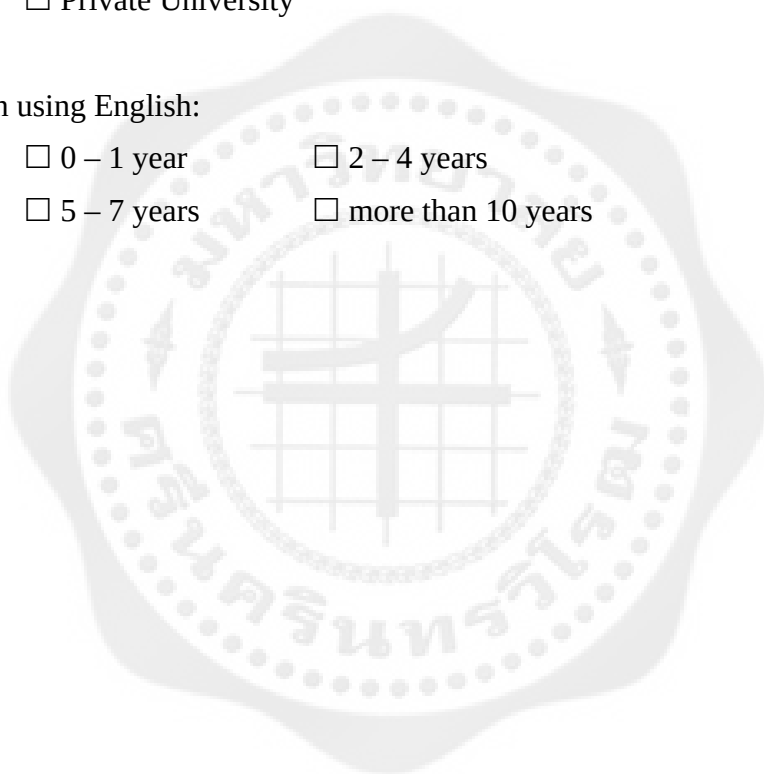
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Higher than Bachelor's Degree

Education institution:

- ☐ State University
- ☐ Private University

Experience in using English:

- ☐ 0 – 1 year
- ☐ 2 – 4 years
- ☐ 5 – 7 years
- ☐ more than 10 years



Part II: English Communication Problems of Thai administrative staff.

English Communication Problems on workplace	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Listening Problems					
1. I do not understand words or sentences when teachers and parents speak English.					
2. I do not clearly understand what teachers and parents say because I am not familiar with their tone of voice, stress patterns and pronunciation.					
3. Even though teachers and parents repeat words or sentences for me, I still do not understand.					
4. I do not understand when teachers and parents use English jargons, slangs or idioms.					
5. I cannot summarize the main idea when listening to long conversation with teachers and parents.					
6. I cannot participate in discussions with teachers and parents because I have problem listening to English.					
7. I have listening problems when having conversation with teachers and parents because of my poor English grammar.					
8. I feel nervous and anxiety when teachers and parents speak English to me.					
9. I cannot understand the main point when teachers and parents speak fast.					
10. After listening to teachers and parents. It takes me a while to understand them as It takes me a moment to translate from English into my native language.					

English Communication Problems on workplace	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Speaking Problems					
1. I do not speak English fluently because of my limits of English vocabulary.					
2. I do not speak English correctly or precisely with appropriate word.					
3. Teachers and parents do not understand me because of my tone of voice, stress pattern and pronunciation.					
4. I pause too long when speaking English.					
5. I understand when listening to teachers and parents but I have difficulty to expressing my opinion in English.					
6. I do not think that my English is good enough to participate in discussion with teachers and parents.					
7. I do not speak English fluently because of my poor English grammar.					
8. I focus on speak English grammatically correct sentences more than conveying message to teachers and parents.					
9. I cannot respond immediately while speak to teachers and parents because I like to translate from my native language into English.					
10. I lack of self-confidence and feel anxiety to speak English with teachers, parents.					
Intercultural Problems					
1. I lack or have insufficient cultural background to communicate with teachers and parents.					
2. While communicating in English with teachers and parents, I am sometimes confused by their gestures or non-verbal messages.					
3. I lack of ability to adapt to different culture into my work, so it blocks smooth oral communication with teachers and parents.					
4. I think that cultural differences will affect the expression of both ideas and emotion when I speak to teachers and parents.					
5. I think cultural differences will affect professional relationship between teachers, parents and me.					

Part III: Strategies to solve English Communication Problems

What do you usually do when you encounter problems in English communication with foreign teachers and parents in your workplace?

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แบบสอบถามเรื่องปัญหาการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษทางการพูดและการฟัง
ของพนักงานชาวไทย ที่ทำงานในโรงเรียนนานาชาติ ในกรุงเทพมหานคร

ตอนที่ 1: ข้อมูลด้านการศึกษาของผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม (กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ ลงใน ☐ ที่กำหนดให้
ตรงตามความเป็นจริง)

ระดับการศึกษา :

☐ ปริญญาตรี

☐ สูงกว่าปริญญาตรี

สถาบันการศึกษา :

สถาบันการศึกษาของรัฐบาล

สถาบันการศึกษาของเอกชน

ประสบการณ์การใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ

0 – 1 ปี

2 – 4 ปี

5 – 7 ปี

มากกว่า 10 ปี

ตอนที่ 2 : ปัญหาการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษของพนักงานชาวไทยที่ทำงานในโรงเรียนนานาชาติ

ปัญหาการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษในสถานที่ทำงาน	เห็นด้วยที่สุด	เห็นด้วย	ค่อนข้างเห็นด้วย	ไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่เห็นด้วยที่สุด
ปัญหาด้านการฟัง					
1. ฉันไม่เข้าใจความหมายของคำศัพท์และประโยคภาษาอังกฤษเมื่อครู และผู้ปกครองพูดคุยกับฉัน					
2. ฉันไม่เข้าใจความหมายอย่างชัดเจนในสิ่งที่ครูและผู้ปกครองพูด เพราะว่าฉัน ไม่คุ้นเคยกับน้ำเสียง รูปแบบการเน้นเสียง และการออกเสียงของพวกเขา					
3. แม้ว่าครู และผู้ปกครองจะทวนคำ หรือประโยคให้ฉันฟัง ฉันก็ยังไม่เข้าใจในสิ่งที่พวกเขาพูด					
4. ฉันไม่เข้าใจความหมายของคำภาษาอังกฤษเฉพาะทาง คำสแลง และสำนวนสุภาษิต เมื่อครูและผู้ปกครองพูดคุยกับฉัน					
5. ฉันไม่สามารถจับใจความสำคัญจากการฟัง ในขณะที่สนทนาภาษาอังกฤษด้วยประโยคยาวๆต่อเนื่องกันกับครูและผู้ปกครองได้					
6. ฉันไม่สามารถร่วมการสนทนาภาษาอังกฤษกับครูและผู้ปกครองได้ เนื่องจากฉันมีปัญหาทางด้านการฟัง					
7. ฉันมีปัญหาด้านการฟังภาษาอังกฤษ เมื่อพูดคุยกับครูและผู้ปกครองเนื่องมาจากไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษของฉันไม่ดี					
8. ฉันรู้สึกกระวนกระวาย และกังวล เมื่อครูและผู้ปกครองพูดคุยกับฉันด้วยภาษาอังกฤษ					
9. ฉันไม่สามารถเข้าใจความหมาย สาระสำคัญของการสนทนาได้ เนื่องจากครูและผู้ปกครองพูดเร็วเกินไป					
10. หลังจากฉันได้ฟังครูและผู้ปกครองพูดแล้ว ฉันไม่สามารถเข้าใจความหมายได้ทันที เนื่องจากฉันจะต้องใช้เวลาแปลความหมายจากภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาไทยก่อน					

ปัญหาการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษในสถานที่ทำงาน	เห็นด้วยที่สุด	เห็นด้วย	ค่อนข้างเห็นด้วย	ไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่เห็นด้วยที่สุด
ปัญหาด้านการพูด					
1. ฉันไม่สามารถพูดภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างคล่องแคล่วเนื่องจากฉันมีคำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษจำกัด					
2. ฉันไม่สามารถพูดภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างถูกต้อง หรืออย่างเที่ยงตรง เนื่องจากไม่สามารถเลือกใช้คำที่เหมาะสมได้					
3. ครูและปกรรณไม่เข้าใจสิ่งที่ฉันพูดสื่อสารเนื่องจากน้ำเสียง รูปแบบการเน้นเสียง และการออกเสียงของฉัน					
4. เมื่อฉันพูดภาษาอังกฤษ ฉันจะหยุดเว้นจังหวะในการพูดนานเกินไป					
5. ฉันฟังและเข้าใจภาษาอังกฤษที่ครูและผู้ปกครองพูดกับฉันได้ แต่ฉันมีความขุ่นข้องในการพูดแสดงความคิดเห็นได้ตอบกลับไปเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ					
6. ภาษาอังกฤษของฉันไม่ดีเพียงพอที่จะมีส่วนร่วมในการแลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็นระหว่างการสอนพูดคุยกับครูและผู้ปกครองได้					
7. ฉันไม่สามารถพูดภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างคล่องแคล่วเนื่องจากไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษของฉันไม่ดี					
8. ฉันให้ความสำคัญกับการพูดให้ถูกไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษมากกว่าการสื่อความหมายเมื่อต้องพูดกับครูและผู้ปกครอง					
9. ฉันไม่สามารถพูดตอบโต้ขณะคุยกับครูและผู้ปกครองได้ทันที เพราะว่าฉันมักจะใช้เวลาแปลความหมายจากภาษาไทย เป็นภาษาอังกฤษก่อน					
10. ฉันรู้สึกขาดความมั่นใจและมีความกังวล เมื่อต้องพูดคุยภาษาอังกฤษกับครูและผู้ปกครอง					

ปัญหาการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษในสถานที่ทำงาน	เห็นด้วยที่สุด	เห็นด้วย	ค่อนข้างเห็นด้วย	ไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่เห็นด้วยที่สุด
ปัญหาทางด้านความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม					
1. ฉันมีความรู้และเข้าใจด้านประวัติและความแตกต่างทางด้านวัฒนธรรมไม่เพียงพอจึงทำให้เกิดปัญหาการสื่อสารกับครูและผู้ปกครอง					
2. ฉันไม่เข้าใจและสับสนกับการแสดงท่าทาง อิริยาบถ หรือภาษาของครู หรือผู้ปกครองขณะพูดภาษาอังกฤษกับฉัน					
3. ฉันมีความสามารถไม่เพียงพอในการปรับตัวให้เข้ากับ ความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมในงานของฉัน จึงทำให้การพูดคุยกับครูและผู้ปกครองไม่ลื่นไหล					
4. ฉันคิดว่าความแตกต่างทางด้านวัฒนธรรมมีผลต่อการแสดงออกทั้งด้านความคิดเห็นและความรู้สึกเมื่อฉันพูดคุยกับครูและผู้ปกครอง					
5. ฉันคิดว่าความแตกต่างทางด้านวัฒนธรรมจะมีผลต่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างครูและผู้ปกครอง กับฉันในการทำงาน					

ตอนที่ 3 กลวิธีที่ใช้แก้ปัญหาในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษ

คุณใช้กลวิธีใดในการแก้ปัญหาเฉพาะหน้าที่เกิดขึ้นขณะพูดคุยสนทนา หรือสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษกับครู และผู้ปกครองชาวต่างชาติ

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