EIC Students' Views on Factors Affecting their English Speaking in the ES1 course

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In Thailand, English is the number one foreign language and is regarded as an essential communicative tool in terms of education, career advancement, international trade, medicine and entertainment. Although extensive attempts have been made to reform the English language curriculum, many Thai learners' English abilities are below required standards, particularly in terms of communicative competence. This study therefore aims to investigate English for International Communication students' (EIC) views on the factors affecting their learning in the English Speaking 1 course at Rajamagala University of Technology Lanna Tak campus (RMUTL). Data collection instruments consisted of two parts: 1) questionnaire surveys to elicit 25 EIC students' views on the internal and external factors which were analysed by adapting the SPTES model (speaking model), and 2) a student focus group interview. Following the mixed-methods design, the the Friedman test was used to analyse quantitative data and determine the mean rating while qualitative data was examined through content analysis. Findings show that EIC students' views on factors effect of their learning in ES1 were to a large extent shaped by their beliefs in practice on language-based exercises. They focused on difficulty in language knowledge, such as English vocabulary and pronunciation, and a lack of other internal factors like topical knowledge, strategic competence, affective factors and personal characteristics.

Key words: *English speaking, competence, SPTES model, internal and external factors.*

Definition and importance of speaking

Many definitions of the term 'speaking' have been suggested by researchers. The Webster New World dictionary states that speaking is to say word orally and to make a speech (Nunan, 1995). Brown (1994, 2000) and Joyce (1997) define speaking as an interactive process of making meaning which includes producing, receiving and processing information. According to Chaney (1998), speaking is the process of making and sharing meaning by using verbal and non-verbal symbols within different situations and contexts. Eckard and Kearny (1981), Florez (1999), Howarth (2001), and Abd El Fattah Torky (2006) describe speaking as a two-way process that consists of the true communication of opinions, emotions and information. Lastly, Bygate (1987) posits that speaking is the production of auditory signals to produce different verbal responses in listeners. Speaking is the act of combining sounds systematically to construct meaningful sentences.

Importance of speaking

According to Efrizal (2012), Pourhosein Gilakjani (2016) and Boonkit (2010), speaking holds great importance for everyday human interaction in a variety of contexts. Richard and Rodgers (2001) state that within traditional classroom teaching methods, however, reading and writing education was favoured over speech skills. Ur (2000) states that of all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking is the most essential for effective communication.

Importance of English speaking in Thailand

English is a compulsory course in the Thai education system, signifying English learning and teaching as significant practices worth investigating (Office of the Education Council 2006). A number of researchers indicate the importance of English speaking skills for Thai learners: Ang Wattanakul (cited in Luangsaengthong 2002) observes that among the four English language skills, speaking is the most important as it enables individuals to communicate on a daily basis. Similarly, Luangsaenthong posits that the acquisition of speaking skills should hold a vital position in the Thai education curriculum (Luangsaenthong 2002). Luangsaenthong (2002) also notes that speaking is an imperative communication technique in Thailand and is widely used in many essential areas. Despite this notable importance, many Thai students fail to meet the required workplace standard of English speaking (Wiriyachitra 2001). Wiriyachitra (2002) reports that during seminar organised by the Chulalongkorn University Institute attended by 200 businessmen from 100 different enterprises, delegates expressed their dissatisfaction with Thai university students' spoken English. Delegates claimed that these students were unable to use English effectively in communication, thus substantiating the idea that speaking skills are lacking from Thai students' educations.

Although English has been a compulsory subject in the Thai schooling system for many years, students continue to struggle with appropriate English communication (Wiriyachitra 2001).

Studies of teaching English speaking in Thai context

Exposure to the English language is somewhat limited in Thailand as it is taught as a foreign, or second, language (Khamkhien 2010). While extensive attempts have been made to reform the English language curriculum, many Thai learners' English language skills lack communicative competence. In 1999, the Thai National Education Reform was enacted to develop Thai students' English skills through a modern education system. This system involved a specialised learner-centred and communicative language teaching method (CLT) (Office of the Education Council 2004), which led to the Eight Thai National Education Development Plan in BE. 2540-2544 (Office of the Education Council 2004). The plan noted that Thai students should be presented with more opportunities to develop English speaking proficiency and that teachers should employ a variety of approaches in English teaching, such as the learner-centred and CLT methods, to motivate students to learn English more effectively. Educators and language teachers have since attempted various teaching approaches in efforts to improve learning, including task-based instruction, content-based approaches and CLT (Wongsothorn 1999).

In Thailand, CLT has been introduced and promoted to meet curriculum reforms that aim to revise teaching materials and develop teaching facilities for communicative objectives (Khamkhien 2010). Saengboon (2004) discusses the use of CLT in Thailand:

> In Thailand, it is deemed that CLT often fails to create sufficient opportunities for genuine interaction in the language classroom. This is because most of the Thai teachers are not familiar with the aural-oral method of CLT. They would emphasise grammatical competence and provide learners with pattern drills and rote memorisation of isolated sentences, creating incorrect language forms and limiting authentic speaking activities. (Seangboon 2004, p.48)

Bailasha and Kwangsawad's (2004) study supports this notion of CLT use in Thailand, noting that 'Thai teachers did not understand how to design speaking activities during practice and production' (p.12). Further, Kanokislapatham suggests that 'Thai teachers experienced difficulty in selecting materials and activities that would match the students speaking ability' (Kanoksilapatham 2007, p.23). These studies suggest that the use of CLT by English language teachers in Thailand does not adequately support students' proficiency in acquiring English communication skills. The suggestion to Thai teachers is therefore that 'they should

improve teaching communicative competence, including testing, by promoting the communicative approach that needs to be revised' (Khamkhien 2010).

According to Yunibandhu (2004), '…the majority of English teachers are Thai in all levels of education who are largely unqualified as teachers' (p.18). In general, the grammar-translation teaching method is employed in TEFL while the communicative skill of speaking is rarely taught in language classrooms (Prapphal 1997). Teachers predominantly teach English grammar and vocabulary in students' first language (L1), enabling students to better understand the intricacies of these technical aspects. Foley (2005, p. 34) states, however, that this overt focus on grammatical details detracts from effective English learning, along with inappropriate textbook use and testing and evaluation practices.

Such concerns regarding Thai students' English-speaking abilities prompted the current study to investigate potential causal factors of this situation. This study examines EIC students' views on factors that may affect their learning of the ES1 course, why learning English speaking has been so unsatisfactory and why appropriate speaking skills are lacking. The research will aim to bridge this gap in teaching English speaking to Thai EIC students and to gain a better understanding of their affected learning in the ES1 course at RMUTL Tak campus, Thailand.

A model of speaking process (SPTES)

'The model of Speaking Process for Thai EIC students' (SPTES) was constructed specifically for this study. SPTES consists of three parts, addressing respectively external factors, internal factors and three stages of processing. All three parts are involved in the process of English speaking that EIC students engage in during the ES1 course at RMUTL Tak campus. This model is depicted below in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The model of SPTES
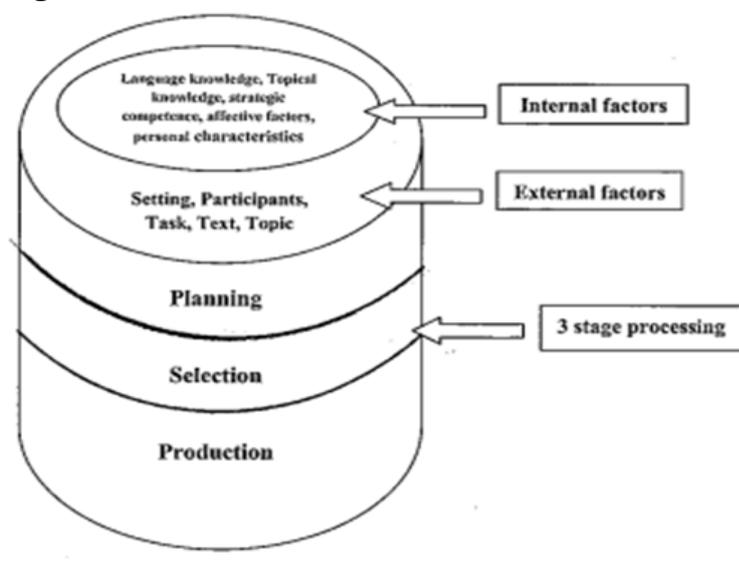
The SPTES is based on the three existing models designed by Bachman and Plamer (1996), Bygates (1987), and TOEFL (Luoma 2004). According to the SPTES model, speech begins with internal factors that are motivated by EIC students' perceptions and influenced by both external factors and three-stage processing. The main internal operations of language proficiency occur in working memory, which facilitates interactions between five internal factors (topical knowledge; personal characteristics; strategic competence; affective factors, and three-stage processing). These interactions result in language production which is reflected in EIC students' choice of verbal expression.

The SPTES model is used as the conceptual framework for the student questionnaire survey design. In investigating EIC students' views on elements that affect their learning, this survey offered various factors identified in the SPTES model as possible causes of impacted development in the ES1 course.

Research questions

This study proposes the following research question: What are the EIC students' views on the factors that affect their learning English speaking in ES1 course at RMUTL Tak campus? The following data collection, analysis and discussion will aim to provide answers and potential solutions to this issue.

Research Methodology

Data collection

Data collection was performed at the RMUTL Tak campus with 2015 and 2016 first year EIC students. Included in the provided questionnaire surveys were invitations to participate in further interviewing sessions. These participants were randomly selected for the student focus group interview from the resultant volunteer pool.

Quantitative data analysis

This study adopts the triangulation mixed-method research design, categorising the data into two sets: quantitative and qualitative data. The analysis of the quantitative data collected through the EIC student questionnaire (QES1students) requires quantification of the survey responses. The Friedman test was thus applied to analyse the mean ratings collected through EIC students' multiple response ratings to Type 3 questions.

Analysis of the EIC student focus group interview

To analyse the quantitative data obtained through the EIC student focus interviews, a priori content analysis was performed on the questionnaire survey presented in the findings.

Results

25 questionnaires were completed and collected for subsequent analysis from the RMUTL Tak campus. Three types of questions were implemented in the EIC student survey with Type 2 questions designed to elicit information about students' views on English speech learning in the ES1 course. In order to effectively analyse the students' perceived needs, expectations and difficulties from the quantitative data, the study aimed to reducing the number of variables and thereby condense the data. This was achieved by grouping variables together (i.e. the questions in EIC questionnaire) with similar characteristics to form clear categories.

Factors shaping the development of English speaking in ES1

Results of the rotation and scree plot indicated five principal factors that emerged from the analysis. 45 variables representing the 45 Type 2 questions were then examined in terms of their contributions to corresponding factors. Factors 1-5 were named to signify their most accurate and applicable componental variables:

-Factor 1: Mediation provided in ES1

-Factor 2: Textbooks used in ES1
-Factor 3: Insufficient provisions in ES1
-Factor 4: English Grammar in ES1
-Factor 5: Students' self-efficacy in ES1

Supplementary information based on Type 3 questions about the five factors

QES1Students' responses to Type 3 questions required rankings according to the students' preferences, from the most important to the least important factor. The most important, or the most preferred, factor was signified by the number 1, with each subsequent higher number representing less importance or lower preference. Information obtained through the seven Type 3 questions in QES1Students were then examined to determine their contributions to aforementioned five factors extracted from Type 2 question responses.

While the mean statistical rating could signify the average importance or preference that EIC students attached to each feature, it was unclear whether EIC students differed significantly in their provided ratings. The Friedman test was therefore applied to analyse the mean ratings collected through the Type 3 question responses. The Friedman test is known as a two-way analysis of variance by ranks (Ferguson 1976; Portney & Watkins 1993). The underlying theory of Friedman's Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is based on ranked data (Field 2009); through calculating the sum of ranks for each variable, the mean rank for each variable can then be determined and compared. Garson defines the Friedman test as follows:

> If the groups do not differ on the criterion variables, rankings of each subject will be random and there will be no difference in mean ranks between groups on the criterion variables. That is, the Friedman test calculates if multiple ordinal responses may be assumed to come from the same population. (Garson 2006, p.2-5)

The seven Type 3 questions assigned to QES1Students were then categorised into three groups, each of which related to four of the five factors identified through Type 2 question analysis. The connections between the seven individual Type 3 questions and the four previously identified factors are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Connections between the seven Type 3 questions and the four factors

Type 3 question ID	The four related factors
Q18, Q66, Q23, Q51 and Q52	Factor 1: Mediation provided in ES1
Q56	Factor 2: Textbooks used in ES1 Factor 4: English Grammar for ES1
Q63	Factor 3: Insufficient provisions in ES1

It is clear from Table 1 that the seven Type 3 questions in QES1Students related to four factors identified from the analysis of Type 2 responses, except for Factor 5—students' self-efficacy about their performance in ES1. The identification of this fifth factor was an unexpected outcome of the Type 2 response examination and was therefore not initially considered prior to analysis. When the questionnaire was constructed, Type 3 questions were yet to be designed to examine EIC students' needs, expectations or difficulties in relation to their self-efficacy, and thus did not factor into this section of the research.

Further information about Factor 1

Five Type 3 questions (Q18, Q66, Q23, Q51 and Q52) were connected to Factor 1 'Mediation provided in ES1'. Q18 concerned the influence of external factors on learning English speaking while Q23, Q51, Q52 and Q66 targeted specific external factors for further information about the mediation provided in ES1.

Q18 included 11 elements identified in the context of ES1, which were deemed to have impacts on students' performances or achievements in the course. The mean ranking of the 11 variables are tabulated in Table 2(a) and the Friedman Test statistics of the ranked multiple responses are presented in Table 2(b). As previously mentioned, lower mean rank values for Type 3 questions signify greater importance of the corresponding external factors influences on students' English speaking skills in ES1.

Table 2(a): Varying influence of external factors in ES1

Choice ID	Mean Rank
Q18–1 Task in ES1	3.60
Q18–2 Topics in ES1	4.53
Q18–7 Learning materials	5.06
Q18–4 The relationship between the teacher and the students	5.31
Q18–9 Teaching aids and equipment	5.59
Q18–6 Opportunities to participate in learning activities	5.72

Q18–3 Time management by the teacher	5.80
Q18–5 Pair work and group work	6.53
Q18–11 Language lab	7.32
Q18–10 Self-access centre	7.72
Q18–8 The number of students in the class	8.82

It is clear from the mean ranks in Table 2(a) that EIC students considered their required learning tasks as the most important external factor, followed by the topics and learning materials used in ES1. Of least importance to students were the language lab, the self-access IT centre and the number of students in the class.

Table 2(b): Friedman Test Statistics

N	53
Chi-Square	108.351
df	10
Asymp. Sig.	.000

According to Table 2(b) above, the significance value is well below .05. This indicates a rejection of the null hypothesis that no difference exists among students' perceived influences of the 11 factors on their learning speaking education in ES1. Although an average ranking was determined from the 11 external factors, the research must therefore still consider the possibility that different students might give significantly different rankings to each of the 11 factors.

Question 23 was designed to identify which of the four elements provided in ES1 elicited the highest and lowest impacts on students' English speaking after class. The mean ranks and Friedman Test statistics of the ranked multiple responses are presented respectively in Tables 3(a) and 3(b) below.

Table 3(a): External factors' impact on EIC students English speaking after class

Choice ID	Mean Rank
Q23–3 The opportunities I have to speak English in ES1	1.68
Q23–4 The learning materials of ES1	2.53
Q23–1 Tasks in ES1	2.64
Q23–2 Topics in ES1	3.15

Table 3(a) signifies that EIC students considered the speaking opportunities in ES1 as the most helpful factor in constructing and understanding real meanings in real situations after

class. This information supports the previous finding for Factor 1, which showed that EIC students placed high importance on actual speaking opportunities provided in the course in assisting with English speaking skills both inside and outside the classroom.

Table 3(b): Friedman Test Statistics

N	53
Chi-Square	35.558
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

Table 3(b) again depicts a significance value well below .05, indicating a rejection of the null hypothesis; although the mean ranking of the four elements provides an average ranking given by the participating EIC students, it must be considered that different students may provide different rankings to the four factors.

Question 51 identifies the real-life (outside classroom) situations in which EIC students felt the most or least comfortable speaking English. The mean ranks and Friedman Test statistics of the ranked multiple responses are presented respectively in Tables 4(a) and 4(b) below.

Table 4(a): Most comfortable situations

Choice ID	Mean Rank
Q51-1 Talking to friends	2.04
Q51-2 Talking to teachers	2.81
Q51-3 Shopping	3.04
Q51-4 At a restaurant	3.72
Q51-5 Others (please specify)	3.40

It is clear from Table 4(a) that EIC students felt most comfortable with English speaking when talking to friends after class. This posits some additional information about the feature of mediation via social interactions as previously identified in Factor 1.

Table 4(b): Friedman Test Statistics

N	53
Chi-Square	34.642
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Table 4(b) also shows a significance value below .05, once again indicating a rejection of the null hypothesis that there is no difference in EIC students' rankings of the situations where they felt most comfortable speaking English outside class.

Question 52 identifies EIC students' preferences for situations in ES1 when they are asked to speak English. These findings and the statistics of the Friedman Test are presented in Table 5(a) and 5(b) below.

Table 5(a): EIC students' preferred situations

Choice ID	Mean Rank
Q52–3 Talking to fellow students who you know well	2.15
Q52–1 Talking to the Thai teacher	2.17
Q52–2 Talking to the foreign teacher	2.49
Q52–4 Talking to fellow students who you don't know so well	3.19

The mean ranks in Table 5(a) suggest that EIC students most preferred English speaking when talking to peers they were closer with. As with Q51, the responses to this question provide further useful information about the feature of mediation via social interactions; the better students knew the interlocutor, the more comfortable they felt speaking in English.

Table 5(b): Friedman Test Statistics

N	53
Chi-Square	22.426
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Table 5(b) shows a significance value below .05, indicating another rejection of the null hypothesis that there is no difference among the students' preferred situations in ES1.

Q66 acted as a follow-up question to elicit more specific information about the influence of the external factors on students' performances in ES1. This question was designed to determine students' favourite learning activities and thereby explain responses to Q18 about mediation via teaching content. Tables 6(a) and 6(b) below present the mean ranks Friedman Test statistics of the students' ranked multiple responses.

Table 6(a): Preferred learning activities in ES1

Choice ID	Mean Rank
Q66–5 situation conversations	1.83
Q66–1 brain storming	2.83
Q66–3 retell story	3.00
Q66–4 picture talk	3.40
Q66–2 concept mapping	3.94

Rankings of the five most frequently used types of learning activities in Table 6(a) illustrate that that EIC students most preferred English speaking practice through situational conversation, and that they least preferred concept mapping activities. These responses indicate that students favoured classroom activities representing realistic situations over task-based preparation and planning exercises.

Table 6(b): Friedman Test Statistics

N	53
Chi-Square	51.819
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Table 6(b) also shows a significance value below .05, indicating that different students might give the five learning activities significantly different rankings.

Question 56 was designed to determine more specific information about the varying influences of teaching content in ES1. These findings and the statistics of the Friedman test are presented in Tables 7(a) and 7(b) below.

Table 7(a): Influences of different teaching content on EIC students' performance in ES1

Choice ID	Mean Rank
Q56–4 vocabulary	2.55
Q56–3 grammar	2.96
Q56–1 pronunciation	3.02
Q56–5 knowledge of the topics	4.51
Q56–2 fluency	4.62
Q56–6 knowledge of culture	4.78
Q56–7 pragmatics	5.56

The mean ranks presented in Table 7(a) indicate that EIC students considered English vocabulary to impose the greatest impact on their speaking performance in ES1. It is

interesting to note that the ranking order of these seven aspects of teaching content imply that EIC students placed greater emphasis on the linguistic-related aspects than on the cultural-pragmatic aspects. The students' bias towards linguistic competence over socio-cultural and discourse capabilities offers an interesting indication of the philosophy underlying their approach to ES1.

Table 7(b): Friedman Test Statistics

N	53
Chi-Square	89.027
Df	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Table 7(b) depicts a significance value below .05, again indicating again that different students may rank the seven aspects of the teaching content significantly differently in terms of their influence on their speaking performance in ES1.

Question 63 aimed to determine which aspects of the ES1 course EIC students found to be insufficiently provided or taught. These findings and the Friedman Test statistics are presented in Tables 8(a) and 8(b) below.

Table 8(a): Insufficient provisions in ES1

Choice ID	Mean Rank
Q63–1 need more opportunities to speak English to the teacher	2.62
Q63–2 need more opportunities to speak English to other students	2.92
Q63–3 need more grammar exercises in ES1	3.04
Q63–5 need more vocabulary exercises in ES1	3.13
Q63–4 need more pronunciation exercises in ES1	3.28

The mean ranks shown in Table 8(a) signify that EIC students found speaking English to the teacher and to other students were the two most insufficiently provided opportunities in the ES1 course. Interestingly, although linguistic-related activities were considered to have the greatest impact on their speaking performance, students wanted more opportunities to actively speak English than to engage in English vocabulary and pronunciation exercises. It must also be noted that of the seven Type 3 questions, this was the only question which elicited consistent rankings from the participating EIC students.

Converse to other results, Table 8(b) below shows a significance value well above .05, indicating that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The mean ranking of the five factors

provides a true and accurate representation of students' perceptions, and the differences in individual students' rankings are thereby statistically insignificant.

Table 8(b): Friedman Test Statistics

N	53
Chi-Square	5.238
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.264

Discussion of the EIC student's view on four factors

This section discusses findings of the students' questionnaire survey responses (QES1Students) regarding the needs, expectations and difficulties experienced in their ES1 course. To integrate these findings into two data sets, a close examination was performed of the definition, statistics and statistical interpretation of the five factors previously identified through students' Type 2 and Type 3 responses. The four features identified within Factor 1—mediation provided in ES1—(Feature 1: mediation with opportunities for practice; Feature 2: mediation with social interactions; Feature 3: mediation with the teaching content; Feature 4: mediation with instrumental support) were found to have covered the variables in Factor 2—textbook used in ES1, and in Factor 4—English grammar for ES1. This section therefore re-arranges these factors into a more cohesive grouping (see Table 9 below) with Romanic numbers to differentiate the resultant three factors.

Table 9: Table of re-categorised factors

Existing Factors		Re-categorised Factors	
Existing Factor ID	Name of the factor	Re-categorised Factor ID	Name of the factor
Factor 1	Mediation provided in ES1	Factor I	Mediation provided in ES1
Factor 2	Textbook used in ES1		
Factor 4	English grammar for ES1		
Factor 3	Insufficient provisions in ES1	Factor II	Insufficient provisions in ES1
Factor 5	Students' self-efficacy in ES1	Factor III	Students' self-efficacy in ES1

These three re-categorised factors (Factor I, Factor II and Factor III) are referred to throughout this discussion. They are also employed as the pre-set categories in the following section of this paper to analyse the student group interview.

A major finding based on Feature 1: mediation with opportunities for practice within Factor 1: mediation for learning in ES1 was that EIC students considered active English speaking opportunities as the most important element of ES1 as it would assist with verbal skills both inside and out of the classroom. Students considered Feature 2: mediation with social interactions (such as paired activities, group work and the relationship between lecturer and students) as the second most significant factor for their learning success.

Responses related to Feature 3: mediation with the teaching content indicate that the textbook used in ES1 met students' needs, and that learning experiences related to the textbook were satisfying and enjoyable. Students' views on this textbook are further discussed in the following section in relation to the interview data.

A key finding derived from the questionnaire surveys was that the EIC students attached the greatest importance to the level of accuracy in their spoken English. Responses related to Feature 4: mediation with instrumental support interestingly noted that supportive materials like the language lab or self-access IT centre were useful in developing learning.

The most important finding of Factor 2: an insufficient provision in ES1 was that learning exercises and practice opportunities were considered to be significantly insufficient in teaching and availability. As noted in the findings extracted from QES1Students, the EIC students found English speaking opportunities to be the most insufficient elements offered in the course. Among these limited opportunities for practicing or using English both in and outside of class, students considered the social interactions with close peers to be the most effective in real meaning making. Students also found that exercises provided in ES1 did not include enough vocabulary, which was ranked as the most important element in relation to their speaking performance. EIC students therefore require more English pronunciation and vocabulary activities to enhance their speaking skills.

The main findings from Factor 3: students' self-efficacy in ES1 indicate that students lacked confidence and satisfaction with their spoken English performance. The EIC students expected to have made better progress and higher levels of confidence with their spoken English capabilities than they did when undertaking ES1.

Interpretation of the qualitative data based on EIC student interviews

Three categories and their respective sub-categories were used as pre-sets for the priori data analysis. Following the first round of analysis, each of these categories and sub-categories were substantially instantiated without much indeterminacy. A second approach was therefore adopted for the qualitative data analysis.

Students' expectations about mediation for learning (Factor I)

Students' expectations are presented under four sub-headings: opportunities for practice in ES1; social interactions in ES1; teaching content and activities in ES1, and instrumental support in ES1.

Opportunities of practice in ES1 (Feature 1)

'Opportunities for practice' refers to the mediation provided to students via English speaking practice exercises offered in ES1. Students' interview responses reveal that they expected three kinds of opportunities to be offered by ES1: first, the chance to present individual work to the lecturer, who would then correct and guide students with appropriate vocabulary and pronunciation; second, the opportunity to practice English speaking through listening activities, and third, the chance to engage in English speaking through new and interesting listening activities from the internet. Examples of these expected opportunities are outlined below. (Note that sources of the excerpts are coded in this study and followthe principle that 'St3. G.3' stands for Student 3 in Group Interview 3.)

'I hope that after presenting our work in front of the class, the lecturer will give us correct vocabulary, pronunciation and accent. This would help us to see our mistakes and show us how to use the appropriate vocabulary and pronounce words correctly' (St3. G3).

'I agree…that it should help us to use the appropriate vocabulary after the lecturer pointed this out for us with our presentation' (St4. G3).

These remarks reveal that students expected listening activities to develop their speaking capacity in class, and that listening to English songs and participating in follow-up discussions would enhance an activity's usefulness and enjoyment. Students further considered that listening activities should involve meaningful interactions with classmates and with the lecturer, such as relating English speaking to what they listened to in the lesson.

Social interactions in ES1 (Feature 2)

'Social interactions in ES1' refers to the mediation provided to students via interpersonal classroom interactions. These exchanges could be between individual students and the whole class, with a partner in paired work, with fellow peers in group work or with the lecturer in a private or observed session.

Students' responses reveal three differing views about their expectations of these interactions: first, some students preferred individual work as it allowed them to present their own progress and gain specific feedback from the lecturer; second, other students preferred paired work due to its level of enjoyment and interest, and third, some students opted for individual or paired work (rather than group work) due to the large class size. These ideas are expressed in the interview remarks below:

'For the ES1 course, I preferred individual work…because I could present alone in front of the class, so I had a better idea about my accent' (St2. G1).

'For me, I hope the tasks run as individual or pair work. They are better than group work as my class is crowded, about 20 students, so you can imagine that working as a group…would just be listening to other friends' ideas' (St4. G4).

These excerpts show that students preferred individual work and paired work during lessons, and that they expected ES1 to offer more individual opportunities. This would allow students to better understanding how their pronunciation is received by others in the class, which is otherwise impossible. Conversely, paired work allowed students to share knowledge and ideas wheile practicing English speaking and was therefore more enjoyable than individual exercises. Group work was the least favoured by the students, particularly if the classroom was crowded. Class size was a major perceived factor in limiting speaking opportunities, thereby validating individual or paired work which allowed students to better practice their speaking skills.

Teaching content and activities in ES1 (Feature 3)

'Teaching content and activities in ES1' refers to the mediations provided to students via the teaching material content, the learning activities and the learning topics offered in ES1. Students' responses provided during the group interview reveal that teaching materials must be interesting and enjoyable to use:

'Speaking for myself, I can't follow or understand what is from the CD, it is too fast, it's not enjoyable…I am a first-year English student, so I find it difficult' (St4.G1).

'I wish the way the lecturer taught the lesson was not so rigid, and that they explained the instruction of each activity clearly…if the lecturer asked us nicely about our understanding, I think a lesson would be enjoyable' (St3. G2).

These interview excerpts indicate that a number of elements in ES1 could increase a student's lesson enjoyment and subsequent learning, including the teaching material content (such as the textbook), the classroom culture and the delivery of the lesson. It is also apparent that lessons should not be too fast or difficult, that a friendly rapport should be fostered in the classroom and that instructions should be clear and understandable.

Instrumental support in ES1 (Feature 4)

'Instrumental support' refers to mediation provided to students via the language lab or the self-access IT centre. The following student excerpts point out two problems: first, the language lab held insufficient equipment to practice listening and speaking lab, and second, students wanted to use the language lab after the ES1 class, but the equipment was often not in working condition. The following responses further detail these problems:

'At my campus, I've never used the language lab; there is not adequate equipment like computers or listening and speaking devices. The headphones…English movie DVDs and songs are out of date, some are broken, and they are not in good condition' (St6. G4).

'I hope we have chances to use the language lab after the ES1 class, so we can spend time practicing listening and speaking through equipment provided. This would help our speaking although I think, unfortunately, they're all old and broken' (St3. G5).

The above remarks show students' expectations about the language lab and the self-access IT centre, two mediation instruments that students wanted to utilise in their studies. The equipment available in both of these areas was unfortunately unsatisfactory, however, with students describing various states of broken, unusable and out-of-date tools. Nevertheless, it is clear that students still hope to use this language lab and IT centre to improve their English skills in the future.

Insufficient provision of opportunities to foster self-efficacy in ES1

Insufficient provision of opportunities was found to result in low self-efficacy in students undertaking the ES1 course. In turn, low self-efficacy was closely linked to the students' lack of self-confidence and dissatisfaction with their performance in the course. Additional support and encouragement must therefore be provided in the classroom to boost students'

self-efficacy and consequently their self-confidence, thus enhancing their spoken language abilities. Interview responses indicated that low self-efficacy was a significant characteristic of performance, as demonstrated in the following statements:

'Although my speaking gets improved a lot, I still don't understand much of what lecturer said in class' (St2. G1).

'I was not satisfied with my speaking ability and I need to practice more with other students and with the lecturer' (St1. G2).

The above statements clearly signify students' dissatisfaction with their language speaking performance in ES1, and their subsequent expectations for the lecturer to better assist with their speech. Students also attributed their low self-efficacy to lack of practice and, in turn, insufficient provision of speaking opportunities in the course.

Discussion of quantitative and qualitative results

The quantitative and qualitative data analysed in this study shows that a range of mediations should be considered in the learning and teaching of the RMUTL English Speaking 1 course. These factors include appropriate speaking practice, social interaction, instrumental support and teaching (which involves lesson content, teaching materials and learning activities). The participating English for International Communication students also identified in their responses some insufficient provisions in ES1, and voiced issues of low self-efficacy which negatively impacted course performance.

More specifically, mediation with opportunities for practice in ES1 (Factor I: Feature 1) saw students wanting more opportunities to practice English speaking with peers and with the lecturer. They considered realistic speaking opportunities as vital in improving English speech both in and outside of class.

Mediation with social interactions (Factor I: Feature 2) involved a consensus among students that social interactions in ES1 were important and that a positive relationship between student and lecturer played a key role in achieving better learning outcomes.

Regarding mediation with teaching content and activities (Factor I: Feature 3), students wanted lessons to be interesting, useful and enjoyable while adequately preparing them for future careers and real world experiences. Students also attached great importance to grammatical accuracy when they spoke English, considering knowledge of the English language more important than pragmatic and cultural knowledge when speaking English.

Mediation with instrumental support (Factor I: Feature 4) was perceived as highly useful for learning English, and students wanted better access to higher quality materials in the school language lab and self-accessed IT centre to practice their listening and speaking.

In terms of insufficient provision in ES1 (Factor II), students found that practicing English speaking with friends and with the lecturer to be the least sufficient. The lack of practical vocabulary and pronunciation exercises also resulted in reported difficulties with learning these spoken aspects of the language.

Finally, the data indicates that students were not satisfied with their spoken English in ES1, resulting in low levels of self-efficacy (Factor III). Their responses attribute lack of confidence when speaking English to anxiety about making mistakes, forcing many students to perform poorly in English speaking and subsequently in the ES1 course.

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