

*Thai Secondary School Teachers' Perception of English Oral Presentation
Techniques and Abilities*

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Abstract

This research was carried out in order to investigate Thai secondary school teachers' perception of English oral presentation techniques and abilities. It was aimed to find out how these teachers perceive their techniques as well as their abilities when giving oral presentations in English. The participants of this study were 70 Thai secondary school teachers, from various schools in the western region of Thailand. The subjects were purposely selected because all of them had experience in teaching English and giving oral presentations in English. The results of this study revealed that most Thai secondary school teachers perceived themselves as having the ability to use common oral presentation techniques. The majority of the subjects reported that they used facial expressions and other non-verbal communication in their presentations the most. With respect to the respondents' perception of oral presentation abilities, most of the subjects responded that making good eye contact with the audience is their top skill.

Keywords: Secondary school teachers, oral presentation techniques, oral presentation abilities, perception

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Introduction

English is essential in this age of globalization in which people all over the world are flooded with information and technology, and rapid changes in socio-economics in the West affect every corner of the earth. Networks and global institutions have been established, and English has become one of the tools that play a key role in all aspects including education. English is studied as a second or foreign language throughout the globe. The countries, where people who can communicate in English, have an advantage in the globalized world. Mydans (2007) wrote “As a new millennium begins, scholars say that about one-fourth of the world population can communicate to some degree in English.”

Thai people study English as a foreign language (EFL) in basic education for at least 12 years, but their English capacity and ability is considered low and inadequate for communication in English in the globalized world when compared with other countries, particularly those in South East Asia. Education First (EF) tested the English skills of 750,000 adults from 60 countries in 2013, and Thailand was ranked 55th, in the “very low proficiency” group, whereas Singapore and Malaysia were ranked in the highest group, and the Philippines and Vietnam were in the average group. Additionally, when the proportion of the use of English for communication among the ASEAN countries was studied, the results showed that Singapore was ranked first with 71% of the people using English for communication, the Philippines second (55.49%), Brunei third (37.73%), Malaysia fourth (27.24%), and Thailand fifth (10%) (JobsDB.com, 2014).

The low quality of English instruction in Thailand is caused by many factors, and one of them is the qualifications of the teachers. Most teachers teaching English in primary and secondary schools cannot effectively communicate in English, since they do not have knowledge of and skills in teaching the language. Some of them did not even major in English but the lack of English teachers in their schools requires them to teach the subject undeniably. Consequently, their students could not achieve a satisfactory level of English (MThai.com, 2014).

Many elementary and secondary schools in Thailand are offering English or international programs to students, and some even hire native English-speaking teachers to teach English, hoping it will be more beneficial to their students for their speaking skills. However, hiring these foreign teachers is extremely costly and many schools, especially in rural areas, cannot afford it. Furthermore, some foreign teachers only stay teaching for a short period of time, and unfortunately some of them do not have knowledge or experience in teaching English. Thus, Thai teachers eventually end up being responsible for teaching English subjects to students, despite their lack of linguistic education and English teaching skills.

Thanut Rukngam (2012) supported the aforementioned idea that, even though, bilingual and English programs have been established in Thai curriculums, many government schools at all levels still offer very few English speaking courses. Furthermore, some of these courses are only optional for the students.

Relatively, the presentation of ideas or information to listeners has been recognized as the key objective of speaking skills in communicative English. Chonlakon Buapan

(2012) pointed out that oral presentations are an important instrument that a speaker uses to convey information or contents to the audience, in order to inform, motivate, instruct, or change their attitude or ideas.

Development of teachers' English skills in communication is one aspect urgently needed for educational reform at present. Additionally, after entering the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) at the end of 2015, Thailand needs to have more effective teachers and curriculums for Thai students at all levels of education. With regard to this, the English Department of the Faculty of Arts at Silpakorn University annually gives training to Thai secondary school teachers to improve their English skills. In 2014, the training's topic was "Developing English Skills of Teachers for the ASEAN Community".

Specifically, one skill that is very important when teaching English, the "communicative language for AEC," is speaking. The researcher understands that these secondary school English teachers should recognize and rate themselves as good or at least fair in speaking English. Therefore, a study of the perception of Thai secondary school teacher's English oral presentation techniques and abilities can reveal some specific techniques the majority of them use, and how they perceive themselves as English oral presenters. In this research, only the oral presentation techniques and abilities of the participants in this training are examined.

Research Question

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do Thai secondary school teachers perceive their English oral presentation techniques?
2. How do Thai secondary school teachers perceive their English oral presentation abilities?

Literature Review

Perception

The word "perception" is clearly defined in major academic dictionaries including Oxford, Cambridge, Macmillan, and Merriam-Webster. As written in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2010), the word perception (noun) refers to an idea, a belief, or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something. Cambridge Dictionary (2016) states that perception is a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem. Macmillan Dictionary (2016) defines perception in three different ways: 1) a particular way of understanding or thinking about something, 2) the ability to notice something by seeing, hearing, smelling etc., and 3) the ability to understand and make good judgments about something.

Darby J. Bem, a social psychologist and professor emeritus at Cornell University, reviewed some scholars' opinions (Mead, 1934; Ryle, 1949; Skinner, 1957) and suggested "perception, an individual's ability to respond differentially to something

and its controlling variables, is a product of social interaction” (as cited in Bem, 1967, p.184).

Neisser (1993) described that the occurrence of our perception would most likely emerge from “an awareness of where we are, what we are doing, and what we have done”, which by all means could be related connectively to - our “schemata”. In other words, the sources that we use, when perceiving ourselves as something, come mostly from our past experience and present activity.

To link perception with communication, Whitman & Boase (1983) explained that everybody must once act collaboratively as the source and receiver in a communicative activity. Therefore, the importance of the roles of individual interaction must not be neglected. People who can perceive their strengths and weaknesses could be influential and establish rewarding interpersonal relationships with others. How we see ourselves affects the degree of confidence with which we approach a communicative activity.

In conclusion, perception could be defined mainly in terms of individual idea of a person; how a person believes or understands something. When perception is linked to communication, the person who can understand his/her strengths and weaknesses should be more confident when establishing interpersonal relationships with other communicators.

In this study, the subjects (Thai secondary school teachers) are being investigated about their degree of confident in English communication in the form of giving an oral presentation. So, if they are confident in themselves, they should establish good personal relationships with their students, and therefore, help them to communicate better English.

Oral Presentation

An oral presentation is a form of interpersonal communication, which is the term used to describe two-person or small-group communicative activities, where the speaker shares thoughts and feelings with the audience (Coopman and Lull, 2012). It is considered the most important instrument of communication for a presenter to effectively deliver messages or proposals to his/her audience.

Chonlakon Buapan (2012, p.4) explained that an oral presentation could be used “to inform, motivate, persuade as well as instruct or change the audience’s attitudes or ideas”. It could also be inferred that in order to make an effective oral presentation, a communicative interaction between the presenter and the audience must occur.

Lucas (1989, as cited in Chonlakorn Buapan, 2012, p.4) suggested that an oral presentation was more challenging than a basic conversation. Therefore, in order to make a productive and effective presentation, many oral presentation abilities must be adopted. However, these abilities are difficult to acquire. It can be concluded that making an oral presentation requires the presenter to have various communication skills and knowledge.

Organization and Techniques of Oral Presentations

Hamilton (2011) suggested that the basic organizations for informative and persuasive presentations are the same. They consist of 1) an introduction, 2) a body, and 3) a conclusion. However, the body of each presentation is different. The body of an informative presentation can be divided into three main points, each with supporting materials. On the other hand, the body of a persuasive presentation can be described in various patterns.

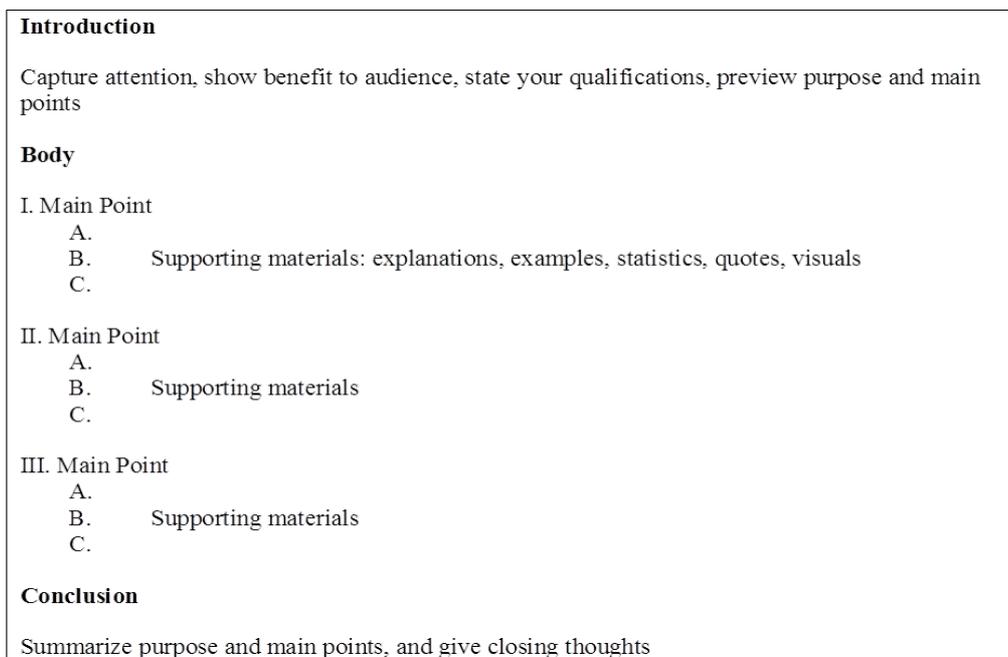


Figure1. Format of an Informative Presentation

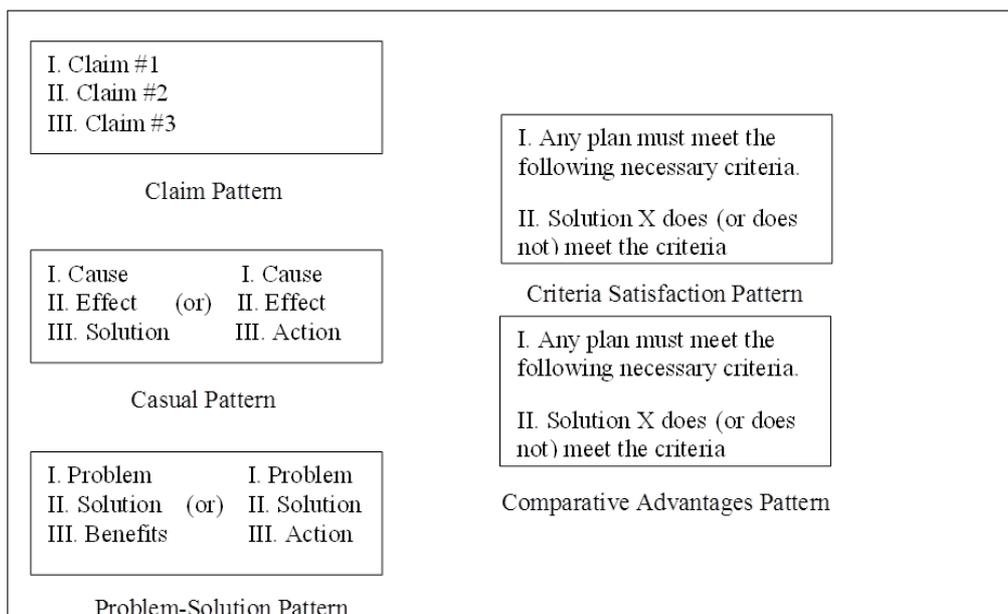


Figure2. Patterns of a Persuasive Presentation

Hamilton (2011) recommended some common techniques to make the presentation more interesting and reliable. These techniques are summarized as follows:

1. *Grabbing the audience's attention in the introduction* by asking a question, using humor, giving an illustration, citing a quotation or famous words, etc. to make the introduction of the presentation more interesting.

2. *Using a thesis statement* so that the audience can easily follow and remember the key points. A thesis statement is usually presented after the introduction of the talk.

3. *Using verbal and visual supporting materials* to clarify, prove, or add interest to the main points of the presentation. These materials can include statistics, explanations and examples.

4. *Using non-verbal communications*, including facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, clothing, personal appearance, etc., to give clues and additional information which can be useful for business communication.

5. *Giving a closing thought* to keep the audience thinking about the presentation after it is finished.

The above techniques are some of the main ideas used for creating the items in the questionnaire for this research. Other items derive from the researcher's own experience and from talking with some experts.

Relevant Research

1) Relevant Research on Perception and English Language Skills

Choy & Troudi (2007) investigated the changes in the perceptions and attitudes towards learning English in a Malaysian college. The main focus of this study was to investigate the changes in attitudes towards learning English during the critical transition period from the secondary school to college, where the medium of instruction was in English. The findings revealed that there were differences in students' perceptions and attitudes towards learning English in secondary schools and colleges. Therefore, the students' attitudes tended to be more positive in the college, and they perceived the college's social and classroom environment to be more conducive for learning English.

Nazara (2011) examined the students' perception on EFL speaking skill development with a 16 item questionnaire. The findings revealed that all the respondents viewed speaking important and they were willing to deal with the necessities to master it. Although they encountered interesting materials, empowering activities, and a good opportunity to practice speaking, they wanted to have more time to practice. In addition, some respondents tended to avoid speaking due to their fear of 'scolding' from the lecturer and classmates laughing when they made mistakes.

From these studies, it can be inferred that communicators perceive themselves as being more productive and willing to communicate when the environment is more desirable.

2) Relevant Research on Oral Presentation Techniques and Abilities

Nowreya, Muneera, & Hanan (2015) conducted research on EFL college students' perceptions of the difficulties in oral presentation as a form of assessment. The researchers found that the students' perceptions of the difficulties in oral presentation were at a medium level. However, the students still experienced a number of difficulties that were mostly related to 'personal traits', including the students' fear of evaluation, the avoidance of the instructor's eyes, and forgetting what they wanted to say. Moreover, there were significant differences when considering the students' GPAs and nationalities.

Chonlakon Buapan (2012) investigated the oral presentation techniques of high-proficiency graduate students. The results showed that most of the subjects performed well in their presentation techniques, except when dealing with the audience's questions and language use, which were revealed at a fair level. With regard to presentation preparation, the majority of the subjects were found good at this skill. However, the ability to prepare answers to possible questions from the audience was found to be fair.

The aforementioned studies suggest that, in the class room, students perceive themselves as having desirable oral presentation techniques and abilities. In this study, the main focus is on the techniques and perception of oral presentation of the teachers. The goal is to find out what techniques these educators use and how they perceive their presentation abilities. This study could be beneficial to further training about oral presentation.

Methodology

Subjects

To investigate the perception of techniques and abilities of Thai secondary school teachers towards English oral presentation, seventy subjects were engaged in this study. Seventy of the subjects were selected from approximately one hundred participants who attended the "Developing English Skills of Teachers for the ASEAN Community" training course held by the English Department of the Faculty of Arts at Silpakorn University, on 24-25 March, 2014.

Materials

A questionnaire for perception of oral presentation techniques and abilities was used to collect data for this research. The questionnaire includes 20 items and is divided into four parts comprising of closed-ended and open-ended questions.

Procedures

A cross-sectional analytical research design is adopted to find out what techniques Thai secondary school teachers agree on using and how they perceive their English oral presentation abilities. It was administered on 24-25 March, 2014 at the Faculty of Arts of Silpakorn University, while they were participating in the "Developing English Skills of Teachers for the ASEAN Community" training course.

A questionnaire for perception of oral presentation techniques and ability was given to the participants. They were then collected and verified for completeness and correctness of the data prior to further processing.

The data collected from the questionnaires were recorded and analyzed by using the SPSS program and Microsoft Excel. After the statistical analysis of the data was completed, the results were presented in terms of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Results

General Background Information of the Subject

The 70 subjects consisted of 5 male teachers (7.1%) and 65 female teachers (92.9%) due to the different ratio between male and female teachers, who participated in the “Developing English Skills of Teachers for the ASEAN Community” training course held by the English Department of the Faculty of Arts at Silpakorn University on 24-25 March, 2014. They were 28 teachers who hold a master’s degree (40%) and 42 teachers who hold a bachelor’s degree (60%) as their highest education degrees.

Also, 35.8% of the respondents teach in Nakhon Pathom, 20% of them teach in Ratchaburi, 15.7% of them teach in Suphanburi, 7.1% of them teach in Samut Songkhram and Prachuab Khiri Khan, 4.3% of them teach in Phetchaburi, 1.4% of them teach in Kanchanaburi, and 8.6% of them didn’t specify their schools’ location.

The result reveals that the majority of the respondents (40%) often teach their students in English, 38.6% sometimes, 17.1% always, and 4.3% reported that they rarely teach in English. Also, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents (47.1%) sometimes give an oral presentation in English, 28.6% often, 15.7% rarely, and 8.6% reported that they always give oral presentations in English.

The Respondent's Perception of English Oral Presentation Techniques

Table 1. Techniques Involving the Presenter and the Content

Items	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Uncertain 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1. I organize my speech into three parts: 1) introduction, 2) body, and 3) conclusion.	-	1 1.4%	20 28.6%	43 61.4%	6 8.6%	3.77	0.62	Agree
2. I use a thesis statement before moving on to the body of the talk.	-	4 5.7%	25 35.7%	37 52.9%	4 5.7%	3.58	0.69	Agree
3. I use visual support for my oral presentations.	-	3 4.3%	38 54.3%	24 34.3%	5 7.1%	3.44	0.69	Uncertain
4. I give explanations along with examples in my talks.	-	-	29 41.4%	35 50%	6 8.6%	3.67	0.63	Agree
5. I use facial expressions and other non-verbal communications.	-	-	23 32.9%	36 51.4%	11 15.7%	3.82	0.68	Agree
The average of the respondents' English oral presentation techniques involving the presenter and the content.						3.66	0.66	Agree

Table 1 shows the respondents' perception of their English oral presentation techniques involving the presenter and the content. Most respondents agreed that they use these techniques (Mean = 3.66, S.D. = 0.66). In this group, the highest mean (3.82) was item 5 (I use facial expressions and other non-verbal communications) and the lowest mean (3.44) was item 3 (I use visual support for my oral presentations).

Table 2. Techniques Involving the Presenter and the Audience

Items	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Uncertain 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1. I use humor to get acquainted with the audience.	1 1.4%	2 2.9%	27 38.6%	34 48.6%	6 8.6%	3.60	0.75	Agree
2. I grab the audiences' attention by asking questions.	1 1.4%	2 2.9%	22 31.4%	38 54.3%	7 10%	3.69	0.75	Agree
3. I grab the audience's attention by using quotations, testimonials, or famous words.	-	3 4.3%	30 42.9%	32 45.7%	5 7.1%	3.56	0.69	Agree
4. I grab the audience's attention by describing pictures, using anecdotes, or telling stories.	-	1 1.4%	20 28.6%	45 64.3%	4 5.7%	3.74	0.58	Agree
5. I give tasks to my audience to make them feel involved.	1 1.4%	1 1.4%	26 37.1%	36 51.4%	6 8.6%	3.64	0.72	Agree
The average of the respondents' English oral presentation techniques involving the presenter and the audiences.						3.65	0.70	Agree

Table 2 shows the respondents' perception of their English oral presentation techniques involving the presenter and the audience. Most respondents agreed that they use these techniques (Mean = 3.65, S.D. = 0.70). In this group, the highest mean (3.74) was item 4 (I grab the audience's attention by describing pictures, using anecdotes, or telling stories) and the lowest mean (3.56) was item 3 (I grab the audience's attention by using quotations, testimonials, or famous words).

The Respondent's Perception of English Oral Presentation Abilities

Table 3. Respondent's Oral Presentation Abilities

Items	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Uncertain 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1. I am comfortable speaking English in front of the public.	1 1.4%	4 5.7%	33 47.1%	27 38.6%	5 7.1%	3.44	0.77	Uncertain
2. I encourage myself to speak English in front of the public even though I may make mistakes.	1 1.4%	-	16 22.9%	45 64.3%	8 11.4%	3.84	0.67	Agree
3. I always pay attention to my pronunciation and intonation.	-	1 1.4%	16 22.9%	43 61.4%	10 14.3%	3.89	0.65	Agree
4. I always use correct vocabulary and grammar.	-	3 4.3%	34 48.6%	29 41.4%	4 5.7%	3.49	0.68	Uncertain
5. I always use gestures or body language to help express my message.	-	1 1.4%	11 15.7%	45 64.3%	13 18.6%	4.00	0.64	Agree
6. I always make good eye contact with the audience.	-	1 1.4%	8 11.4%	44 62.9%	17 24.3%	4.10	0.64	Agree
7. I always pay attention to the audience's reaction.	-	1 1.4%	13 18.6%	46 65.7%	10 14.3%	3.93	0.62	Agree
8. I am certain that the audience will memorize my presentation after it is finished	-	1 1.4%	24 34.3%	37 52.9%	8 11.4%	3.74	0.67	Agree
9. I can talk fluently and accurately on unfamiliar topics.	2 2.9 %	6 8.6%	40 57.1%	19 27.1%	3 4.3%	3.21	0.79	Uncertain
10. Overall, my oral presentation skills are good.	-	6 8.6%	42 60%	18 25.7%	4 5.7%	3.29	0.70	Uncertain
Total image of the respondents' perception about their English oral presentation abilities						3.69	0.68	Agree

Table 3 shows the respondents' perception of their English oral presentation abilities. Most respondents agreed that they perceive themselves as having these abilities (Mean = 3.69, S.D. = 0.68). In this group, the highest mean (4.10) was item 6 (I always make good eye contact with the audience) and the lowest mean (3.21) was item 9 (I can talk fluently and accurately on unfamiliar topics).

Suggestions and Other Opinions

These are some suggestions from the respondents about how they improve their English oral presentation abilities. In order to give good oral presentations, seven respondents advised that the presenter should practice speaking with native speakers. Four respondents suggested practicing speaking English as much as possible. Four respondents also recommended learning through the internet, books, songs and movies. In addition, three respondents advised attending seminars regularly would be beneficial to improving the presenter's oral presentation skills.

Discussion

How do Thai secondary school teachers perceive their English oral presentation techniques?

From the findings of this study, regarding English oral presentation techniques involving the presenter and the content, it is concluded that the majority of Thai secondary school teachers agreed with the use of common techniques as presented in this survey. Furthermore, the most popular technique used was "using facial expressions and other non-verbal communication". As suggested by Hamilton (2011), non-verbal communication could be applied to business presentations to convey additional messages. After interviewing some teachers, it is found that although these secondary school teachers might not often use this type of communication for business, they could still apply it to their teaching methods at school.

Hamilton (2011) also pointed out that there are many techniques that can be used to make the audience feel involved with the presentation of the presenter. These techniques include: 1) grabbing the audience's attention in the introduction, 2) using a thesis statement, 3) using verbal and visual supporting materials, 4) using non-verbal communication, and 5) giving a closing thought.

Accordingly, regarding the English oral presentation techniques involving the presenter and the audience, most respondents agreed that they could "grab the audience's attention by describing pictures, using anecdotes, or telling stories". It can be inferred from this finding that most secondary school teachers were familiar with these techniques as they could often use them in their classroom.

Moreover, the secondary school teachers were uncertain about using visual supports. After personal interviews, it is found that they might not have time to prepare and that they can describe the examples and make the audience see the picture by words.

How do Thai secondary school teachers perceive their English oral presentation abilities?

In this study, most Thai secondary school teachers were confident of their oral presentation abilities. The results suggested that they always made good eye contact with their audience the most. It can be inferred from this finding that these teachers were familiar with making eye contact with their students in class. As explained by Neisser (1993), self-perception, in terms of communication, exists environmentally and socially through face-to-face interaction between individuals.

Although the respondents agreed that they perceived themselves as having adequate oral presentation abilities as mentioned in this survey, there were still four items that they were uncertain of. First, they were unsure that they would be comfortable speaking in front of the public. Second, they were uncertain of using correct vocabulary, grammar, and parts of speech in their presentation. It can be interpreted that Thai presenters were afraid of making common mistakes such as using wrong vocabularies and grammar in their presentations. Also, most of them were not confident when dealing with the audience. Thai presenters were found to have fair ability when having to answer questions and using correct language in a presentation as suggested in the study of Chonlakorn Buapan (2012). Third, they were unsure whether they could speak fluently and accurately on unfamiliar topics. It can be assumed from this aspect that most Thai secondary school teachers were familiar with the preparation of what they would teach in class. Consequently, they would not be able to speak on a topic which had not been prepared ahead of time. Last, most teachers were uncertain whether, overall, their oral presentation skills were good. This can be interpreted that no matter how they perceived themselves as having the abilities to make an oral presentation, still, they were not entirely confident in making one.

Suggestions and Other Opinions

From the suggestions and other opinions section of the survey, many respondents gave suggestions about how they acquired their English oral presentation abilities. The majority of the teachers agreed that in order to give an effective oral presentation, the presenter should practice speaking with native speakers. Some of them suggested practicing speaking English as much as possible. Some of them recommended learning through songs and movies. This can be elaborated from the findings of Chonlakon Buapan (2012) that some speakers use books and the Internet as useful sources to do research on the topics of their presentation, especially on facts and figures. In addition, some respondents suggested that the presenter should attend seminars to improve their speaking skills.

Limitations

The subjects in this study were selected from approximately one hundred Thai secondary school teachers from the western region of Thailand, who attended the “Developing English Skills of Teachers for the ASEAN Community” training held by the English Department of the Faculty of Arts at Silpakorn University, on 24-25 March, 2014. However, only seventy questionnaires could be used because the

researcher wanted to purposively select only the respondents who had taught their students in English and given oral presentations in English.

Apart from the demographic section, only twenty items were listed in the questionnaire because the researcher did not want the respondents to take too much time filling it out. This is due to the nature of the training course and the nature of the respondents which could both be predicted from previous training courses.

Time was another limitation of this study. The subjects were given the questionnaire immediately after the training course and there were ten minutes or less left for them to fill it out. Therefore, some of the data was not completed and some might be inaccurate.

Conclusions

The majority of Thai secondary school teachers, specifically from the western region of Thailand, used common English oral presentation techniques as presented in this research study. The most popular technique used was to grab the audience's attention by describing pictures, using anecdotes, or telling stories.

Regarding oral presentation abilities, the majority of the teachers in this study perceived themselves as having good English oral presentation skills. The most perceived ability was that they always paid attention to the audience's reaction. However, the most uncertain perception was that whether overall their oral presentation abilities were good.

From these findings, it is very beneficial for the researcher to develop the training courses to teach about English communication and oral presentation to these teachers in the future.

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