



A Study on Problems and Improvement Strategies of English Listening and Speaking Skills of Students Studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were: 1) to investigate the problems in English listening and speaking skills of students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok, and 2) to construct improvement strategies to enhance the English listening and speaking skills of the students. The participants of this study consisted of 224 students and 24 teachers at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in the academic year 2025, obtained through the Simple Random Sampling Method. A mixed-method design was employed in this study. The research instruments were: 1) questionnaires for investigating students' English listening and speaking skill problems and 2) a set of questions for the focus group discussion meeting for the evaluation and approval of the improvement strategies. The data and information collected were analyzed through statistical devices and the content analysis method and then presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The results indicated that: 1) the problems in English listening and speaking skills of students were found at the highest level rated by the students and teachers. The students rated the problems in the range of mean from 4.22 to 4.85; while teachers rated the problems in the range of mean from 4.21 to 4.75. Unfamiliar accent was found the major English listening problems; while using mother tongue (Thai) instead of English was considered the main speaking problems, and 2) the improvement strategies for enhancing English listening and speaking skills were categorized into five chapters, namely, Chapter 1: Learner Responsibility, Chapter 2: Instructor Mission, Chapter 3: Classroom Environment, Chapter 4: Instructional Materials, and Chapter 5: Learning Assessment. The strategies were approved for their correctness and suitability by the three specialists; therefore, they could be used for the enhancement of English listening and speaking skills of the students.

Keywords: Problems in English listening, Problems in English speaking, Improvement strategies

1.Introduction

In today's globalized academic environment, English proficiency has become a vital asset for foreign students studying in non-native English settings. Among the four language

skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), listening and speaking are often the most challenging for learners to master, yet they are essential for effective communication, academic success, and social integration (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2016). Listening comprehension acts as the gateway to understanding spoken input, while speaking enables learners to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and interact meaningfully with others. Students of English listening and speaking frequently struggle with these skills due to a confluence of linguistic, psychological, and contextual factors. On the listening side, difficulties arise from fast speech rates, unfamiliar accents, reduced forms, and limited vocabulary knowledge (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2016; Zhu, 2021). In addition, authentic listening input often contains cultural references or idiomatic expressions unfamiliar to learners, imposing a cognitive load (Alamri, 2025). Teachers and learners alike acknowledge that many of the challenges in listening comprehension stem from misalignment between classroom materials and real-world spoken language (Nushi, 2020). Speaking, likewise, presents multiple barriers. Learners often experience communication anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and negative evaluation, which inhibit active participation (Shen & Chiu, 2019). These psychological factors are often more significant than purely linguistic constraints (e.g. vocabulary, grammar) or environmental limitations (e.g. lack of speaking opportunities) in shaping learners' oral performance (Shen & Chiu, 2019). Empirical studies in EFL contexts show that linguistic difficulties—pronunciation, grammar, limited lexical resources—compound the hesitation and lack of fluency in speaking (Normawati et al., 2023). Moreover, in many EFL settings, learners have insufficient exposure to authentic communicative contexts, further decreasing their opportunities to practice spoken English (Normawati et al., 2023). Despite the accumulated research on listening and speaking difficulties, most studies focus on general EFL populations or local learners in their home countries. There is, however, a notable gap in examining the experiences of foreign students in contexts where English is not the dominant language environment—such as Thailand. These students face not only typical linguistic and psychological challenges but also cultural adaptation and environmental constraints.

Thus, this study aims to investigate the specific listening and speaking problems faced by students in Thailand and to propose the improvement strategies to support the students' listening and speaking English development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English Listening Problems of EFL Students

Underwood (1989) identified possible problems with learning English listening skills as follows: The primary issue with listening comprehension among students is their inability to keep pace with the speed of speakers, since they cannot regulate the rate at which information is delivered. The second aspect is that listeners are afraid to ask for repeated words. The third aspect is listeners' inadequate vocabulary knowledge; when students encounter unfamiliar words, they may stop to process or comprehend them, ultimately resulting in a breakdown of communication. The fourth reason is that students may lack background knowledge. Fifth, students struggle to concentrate on listening, causing listeners to quickly lose focus on the speaker's conversation. Sixth, students felt anxious about comprehending a certain phrase or words. Lastly, listeners encounter unfamiliar accents. Moreover, Nadhira and Warni (2021) indicated the listening challenges faced by EFL students, including unfamiliar vocabulary, speech pace, unfamiliar accents, unclear pronunciation, recording quality, and insufficient resources. In addition, Khampool (2024) identified English listening problems of Thai EFL university students regarding the speaker's speed, pronunciation, and the listener's ability to comprehend at the first time of listening. To summarize, the problems of English listening faced by EFL students include the speed of speakers, unfamiliar accents, unclear pronunciation, inadequate vocabulary, a lack of background knowledge, concentration, feeling anxious and afraid to ask for

repetition.

2.2 English Speaking Problems of EFL Students

Hadijah (2014) identified several issues affecting students' English speaking abilities, including difficulties with grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Additional factors included shyness, lack of self-confidence, a preference for their first language, challenges in comprehending speaking materials in English textbooks, and an unsupportive environment for practicing English in daily life. Furthermore, Al Hosni (2014) identified the primary English speaking problems faced by EFL students as linguistic issues, reliance on their mother tongue, and inhibition. Students cannot communicate in English due to insufficient vocabulary and grammatical structures. They also lack proficiency in sentence construction, resulting in reliance on their native language. Students also find it uncomfortable to make errors while speaking in front of their classmates, and thus many choose not to speak to avoid such circumstances. Moreover, Khamprated (2012) identified problems faced by Thai students in English speaking, including difficulties in speaking with correct intonation, fluency comparable to native speakers, and frustration when practicing with classmates of lower English proficiency. Their anxiety about making errors while speaking in front of their classmates, and frequent omissions of final sounds in words. Their inadequate grammar skills hindered their ability to communicate in English, resulting in feelings of nervousness and anxiety when interacting with foreigners. They expressed concern that others might make fun of them for any mistakes they made during speaking.

In conclusion, students have difficulties in speaking English caused by linguistic and psychological barriers. The primary linguistic difficulties are inadequate vocabulary, grammar, sentence construction, pronunciation (especially precise intonation and final sound omission), and fluency compared to native speakers. Language deficiencies result in significant reliance on the native language. Shyness, low self-esteem, inhibition, and anxiety about errors, sometimes caused by anxiety about judgment by classmates or other people, are significant psychological barriers. Environmental and pedagogical challenges including comprehending textbook speaking subjects, practicing with classmates of different proficiency, and an unencouraging environment for daily English usage.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method design. The research instruments were: 1) questionnaires for investigating students' English listening and speaking skill problems and 2) a set of questions for the focus group discussion meeting for the evaluation and approval of the improvement strategies. The data and information collected were analyzed through statistical devices and the content analysis method and then presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

1. Population

This research was conducted at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok, Thailand as a case study. The population in this research project were divided into 2 groups, namely, 502 students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 and 24 English teachers at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok, Thailand in Academic Year 2025.

2. Sample groups

The sample groups in this research project were 224 students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok, Thailand in Academic Year 2025. The sample size (n) was obtained through the Yamane. (Yamane, 1973). The respondents were obtained through the Simple Random Sampling Method.

3. Research Instruments

The main research instrument were questionnaires which were in both in Thai and English and a set of questions for 1 focus group discussion meeting for the approval of the strategies. The first instruments were the questionnaires. The questionnaires, which were employed for the investigation of problems with the listening and speaking skills of students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School in Bangkok. All questions in the questionnaire were evaluated and approved for their correctness and suitability by the 3 specialists in terms of the Index of Congruence (IOC), which was found in the range of 0.66-1.00. In addition, the questionnaires were tried out in a group of 30 students, and the reliability value in terms of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.68. The questionnaires are, therefore, qualified to be used as the instrument for this research. The questionnaires were divided into 2 parts: 1) general information and 2) closed-ended question were used to investigate the students' opinions towards English listening and speaking problems. The researcher used a 5-point Likert scale to categorize the level of problems of English listening and speaking skills. The second instrument was a set of questions for the focus group discussion was used to evaluate and approve the improvement strategies for English listening and speaking skills of students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School.

4. Data Collection

4.1 For the investigation of English listening and speaking problem, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents by the researcher herself. However, the letter of permission request endorses by the program director was submitted to the school director in advance.

4.2 For the collection of comments towards the correctness and suitability of the strategies from the 3 specialists was conducted through the focus group discussion meeting.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 For the investigation of the problems, the data and information collected were analyzed and then interpreted and presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean ($\bar{x}$), standard deviation (SD).

5.2 For the approval of the improvement strategies for their correctness and suitability, the comments of the three specialists collected from the focus group discussion meeting were analyzed through the content analysis method.

4. Results

4.1 Problems in English listening and speaking skills of students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok

Table 1: Problems in English listening and speaking skills of students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok (Students)

Items	n=224		Level of problems
	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1. I find it difficult to understand English conversations because I do not know enough vocabulary.	4.35	0.62	Highest

2. I find it difficult to understand English because the speaker speaks too quickly.	4.32	0.61	Highest
3. I find it difficult to understand English when the listening material is too long.	4.34	0.63	Highest
4. I have trouble understanding English when the speaker has an unfamiliar accent.	4.37	0.61	Highest
5. I struggle to understand English when the topic of the audio is unfamiliar to me.	4.22	0.59	Highest
6. I feel nervous or anxious when I have to speak English.	4.47	0.61	Highest
7. I cannot speak English fluently because I stop frequently, trying to remember the right English words or phrases.	4.50	0.64	Highest
8. I cannot pronounce some English words correctly.	4.43	0.64	Highest
9. I often use my mother tongue (Thai) instead of English when communicating with friends in English class.	4.85	0.38	Highest
10. I have difficulty using the correct grammar (e.g., verb tenses, word order) when speaking English.	4.58	0.55	Highest
Total	4.44	0.59	Highest

According to table 4.3, it is indicated that the students rated the problems of English reading comprehension at the highest level at the range of $\bar{X} = 4.22$ (SD = 0.59) – $\bar{X} = 4.85$ (SD = 0.38).

Table 2: Problems in English listening and speaking skills of students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok (Teachers)

Items	N=24		Level of problems
	μ	σ	
1. Your students find it difficult to understand English conversations because they do not know enough vocabulary.	4.33	0.47	Highest
2. Your students find it difficult to understand English because the speaker speaks too quickly.	4.29	0.45	Highest
3. Your students find it difficult to understand English when the listening material is too long.	4.54	0.50	Highest
4. Your students have trouble understanding English when the speaker has an unfamiliar accent.	4.38	0.48	Highest
5. Your students struggle to understand English when the topic of the audio is unfamiliar to them.	4.21	0.58	Highest
6. Your students feel nervous or anxious when they have to speak English.	4.46	0.50	Highest

7. Your students cannot speak English fluently because they stop frequently, trying to remember the right English words or phrases.	4.42	0.49	Highest
8. Your students find it difficult to pronounce some English words correctly.	4.58	0.49	Highest
9. Your students often use their mother tongue (Thai) instead of English when communicating with their friends in English class.	4.75	0.43	Highest
10. Your students have difficulty using the correct grammar (e.g., verb tenses, word order) when speaking English. (	4.50	0.50	Highest
Total	4.45	0.49	Highest

According to table 4.4, it is indicated that the teachers rated the problems of English reading skills at the highest level at the range of $\mu = 4.21$ ($\sigma = 0.58$) – $\mu = 4.75$ ($\sigma = 0.43$).

4.2 The improvement strategies for enhancing English listening and speaking skills of Mattayomsuksa 1 students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok

Table 3: The 5 chapters of the improvement strategies for enhancing English listening and speaking skills of Mattayomsuksa 1 students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok

Topics/Contents
Chapter 1: Learner Responsibility
1. Self-Management
2. Active Strategy Use
3. Seeking Practice Opportunities
Chapter 2: Instructor Mission
1. Creating a Supportive and Engaging Learning Environment
2. Developing Listening Strategies and Comprehension
3. Promoting Fluency, Accuracy, and Interactional Competence
4. Integrating Skills and Language Focus
5. Monitoring, Assessing, and Providing Feedback
Chapter 3: Classroom Environment
1. Psychological and Social Environment
2. Physical Setup and Resources
3. Activity-Based Practices
Chapter 4: Instructional Materials
1. Audio and Visual Media
2. Interactive Digital Tools
3. Print and Traditional Materials
4. Authentic Communication Tasks
Chapter 5: Learning Assessment
1. Formal assessments
2. Informal assessments
3. Assessment criteria and rubrics

According to table 3, the improvement strategies for enhancing English listening and

speaking skills of Mattayomsuksa 1 students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok are composed of 5 chapters; namely, Chapter 1: Learner Responsibility, Chapter 2: Instructor Mission, Chapter 3: Classroom Environment, and Chapter 4: Instructional Materials, and Chapter 5: Learning Assessment. All the 5 chapters were approved by the three specialists (One Thai professors and two English native speakers) in terms of correctness and suitability of the contents. Therefore, the constructed enhancement strategies for improving English listening and speaking of students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok could be used as guidelines for the enhancement of listening and speaking skills.

5. Conclusion

The title of this study is "A Study on Problems and Improvement Strategies of English Listening and Speaking Skills of Students Studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok". The objectives of this study were to: 1) investigate the problems in English listening and speaking skills of students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok and 2) construct improvement strategies to enhance the English listening and speaking skills of students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok. In this research project, Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok was selected as the case study. The population in this research project were divided into 2 groups; namely, 502 students and 24 English teachers at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok in the academic year 2025. The sample groups in this research project were 224 students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in the academic year 2025, obtained through the Simple Random Sampling Method. The main research instruments were: 1) a questionnaire, and 2) a set of questions for a focus group discussion meeting for the approval of the constructed the improvement strategies for enhancing English listening and speaking skills of students studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok. The data and information collected were analyzed and then interpreted and presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean ($\bar{X}$), and standard deviation (SD). In addition, the comments from the three specialists collected in the focus group discussion meeting towards the correctness and suitability of the strategies were analyzed through the content analysis method. According to the research results, it is indicated that 1) the students rated the listening and speaking problems at the highest level, and 2) the improvement strategies for enhancing English listening and speaking skills were categorized into five chapters, namely, Chapter 1: Learner Responsibility, Chapter 2: Instructor Mission, Chapter 3: Classroom Environment, Chapter 4: Instructional Materials, and Chapter 5: Learning Assessment.

6. Discussion

For the investigation of the problems in English listening and speaking skills of the students Studying in Mattayomsuksa 1 at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok, it was found that both the students and the teachers consistently rated the problems in English listening and speaking skills of the students at the highest level. The highest-rated specific listening problem for students was having trouble understanding English when the speaker has an unfamiliar accent. This is in line with the findings by Erzad (2020), who noted that the variety and unfamiliarity of accents pose a major listening problem for EFL students. Other highly-rated difficulties included limited vocabulary. According to the results of the study, it was found that it is difficult to understand conversations due to not knowing enough vocabulary. The results support the previous study of Lemons and Tao-Ngoen (2024), which found that a limited amount of vocabulary was one of the main listening skill problems of the

students. Furthermore, Length of material also was one of the main listening skill problems. It is difficult to listen well when the listening material is too long. It is in line with Thangpradit (2020), who indicated that students encountered difficulties in listening skills due to lengthy messages. The highest-rated specific speaking problem for students was often using their mother tongue (Thai) instead of English when communicating with friends in English class. This study's findings support Riadil's (2020) conclusion that mother tongue use poses significant challenges for EFL students. Other critical speaking issues included difficulty using correct grammar and difficulty pronouncing some English words correctly. These findings are in line with the conclusions of Jaelani and Zabidi (2020), who indicated that many students encountered challenges in speaking due to limitations in skills such as pronunciation and grammar.

For The constructed improvement strategies for enhancing English listening and speaking skills of Mattayomsuksa 1 students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamachalai School, the results indicated that the strategies were categorized into five chapters; namely, Chapter 1: Learner Responsibility, Chapter 2: Instructor Mission, Chapter 3: Classroom Environment, and Chapter 4: Instructional Materials, and Chapter 5: Learning Assessment. They were accepted and approved by the three specialists in terms of the correctness and suitability as qualified listening and speaking improvement strategies, then it could be used as strategies for the improvement methods of English listening and speaking skills of the students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamachalai School. The results are in line with Ali (2020), who indicated that understanding students' challenges may inspire teachers to improve effective learning strategies that promote the development of students' listening skills. It also offered suggested solutions to the issues. First, the teacher should adapt and enhance listening materials. Second, students need to strengthen their vocabulary with accurate pronunciation, which will facilitate their comprehension of many accents during listening practice. Third, the relevant authorities should construct a language laboratory for listening practice. Furthermore, students have to acquire foundational understanding regarding the topic. Moreover, the results are consistent with the findings of Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020), which indicated that there are consequences associated with the development of a curriculum for English speaking. Firstly, the speaking curriculum must be carefully designed. Secondly, teachers should design an English speaking curriculum that integrates technology and social media, enabling students to enhance their cultural understanding, knowledge, and experiences globally. Thirdly, teachers should enhance the English speaking curriculum by engaging with the English speaking community, thereby providing students with increased opportunities to practice speaking English both inside and outside the classroom.

7. Suggestions

1. For the use of the research findings, the listening and speaking improvement strategies constructed should be applied to English listening and speaking teaching and learning.
2. For further study, the investigation of problems in English reading and writing and the development of strategies to enhance these skills should be conducted.

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