English-Speaking Problems and Solutions:
A Case Study of Thai EFL Interns in Hospitality and Tourism Industry

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Research Article

Abstract

Keywords

This paper aims to study English-speaking problems/ obstacles of Thai EFL interns in the hospitality and tourism industry and to explore interns' solutions to problems in developing English-speaking skills for future careers. The samples were 146 graduates from a public university in Chonburi province, Thailand. They were required to attend a 12-week internship program in premier hotels, travel agencies, airlines, or in the field of MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition Centers) to get real-world experience before graduation. The instruments utilized in this study were questionnaires and structured-interview questionnaires. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentage, mean, standard deviation (S.D.), T-test (One-way ANOVA), F-Test as well as content analysis. The results revealed that English speaking was required of the interns in the four main fields of the service industry (i.e., hotels, travel agencies/ tour operators, airlines, and MICE business). The interns in each field had English-speaking problems at a moderate level; the major problematic issues were lack of vocabulary (or an inability to think of appropriate vocabulary) and feeling wary about making grammatical mistakes. Interestingly, these obstacles affect interns' English-speaking competence. Solutions to overcome English-speaking difficulties were discussed in the study. The findings of this study can shed light for students and novice staff on how to improve English-speaking skills before entering the industry. Moreover, the study will be beneficial for instructors when implementing ESP pedagogies as well as designing courses and as curriculum.

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ปัญหาและแนวทางแก้ไขในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ: กรณีศึกษานิสิตฝึกงานในอุตสาหกรรมท่องเที่ยวและบริการ ที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

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พิมพรรณ สุจารินพงค์**

บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาปัญหา/อุปสรรคในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ (English as a Foreign Language) ในการฝึกงานในอุตสาหกรรมการบริการและการท่องเที่ยวและเพื่อสำรวจแนวทางแก้ไขปัญหาของนิสิตฝึกงานเพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการพูดภาษาอังกฤษสำหรับอาชีพในอนาคต กลุ่มตัวอย่างในการศึกษาคือบัณฑิตสาขาการโรงแรมและการท่องเที่ยวจากมหาวิทยาลัยรัฐบาลแห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดชลบุรี ประเทศไทย จำนวน 146 คน ที่ได้เข้าร่วมโครงการฝึกงาน 12 สัปดาห์ ในโรงแรมชั้นนำ บริษัทนำเที่ยว สายการบิน และในธุรกิจไมซ์ (MICE: Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition) หรือธุรกิจที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการจัดประชุมบริษัทข้ามชาติ การท่องเที่ยวเพื่อเป็นรางวัล การประชุมนานาชาติ และการจัดนิทรรศการ เพื่อรับประสบการณ์จริงก่อนสำเร็จการศึกษา เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการศึกษาครั้งนี้ ได้แก่ แบบสอบถามและแบบสอบถามแบบสัมภาษณ์แบบมีโครงสร้าง วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนา (ค่าร้อยละค่าเฉลี่ยส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน (SD) T-test (One-way ANOVA) และ F-Test รวมทั้งการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา จากผลการศึกษาพบว่านิสิตฝึกงานใน 4 สาขาหลักของอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยว ได้แก่ โรงแรม บริษัทนำเที่ยว สายการบินและธุรกิจไมซ์ (MICE) ซึ่งจำเป็นต้องใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการทำงาน นิสิตฝึกงานในแต่ละสาขามีปัญหาในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษอยู่ในระดับปานกลาง ส่วนปัญหาที่สำคัญในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ คือ ขาดคำศัพท์หรือไม่สามารถคิดคำศัพท์ที่เหมาะสมได้ และกลัวหรือกังวลเกี่ยวกับการพูดผิดไวยากรณ์ สิ่งที่น่าสนใจจากการศึกษา คือปัญหาเหล่านี้ส่งผลต่อความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตฝึกงานและเป็นอุปสรรคต่อการทำงานในอุตสาหกรรมท่องเที่ยวบริการอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ งานวิจัยนี้ยังได้เสนอวิธีการแก้ไขปัญหาและอุปสรรคเพื่อพัฒนา

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ทักษะการพูดภาษาอังกฤษสำหรับนิสิต อาจารย์และบุคคลที่สนใจ เพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการพูดภาษาอังกฤษก่อนเข้าสู่การทำงานในอุตสาหกรรมท่องเที่ยวและบริการ

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1. Introduction

English is an important tool for education, communication, careers, and international trade. It is also used to create understanding in various fields such as politics, economic, and culture. In 2015, Thailand joined the ASEAN economic cooperation group and signed an agreement to open free trade in many area. In terms of facilitating the free flow of services, the tourism industry is one of the important branches of economic integration under the economic community pillar of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008). In order to build a better life for everyone: to bring peace, prosperity to them, and unify the people of the ASEAN community, English is used as the official language to build relationships, mutual understanding, and drive its four core aspects: political, economic, social, and cultural. Therefore, a skilled workforce, service providers, and stakeholders in the tourism industry need to apply their English skills and knowledge to deliver services that meet international standards to achieve one of the main goals of the AEC.

Recently, as part of the Thailand 4.0 strategic plan, the Thai government sector has promoted a project called "the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC)" to develop and continuously invest in the keys provinces of Eastern Thailand, being Chonburi, Rayong, and Chachoengsao. This new growth hub is considered to be the leading regional trading, transport, strategic gateways, and trade corridors to Asia (Thailand Board of Investment, 2017). In order to accelerate the Eastern Seaboard region's readiness and enhance its potential, universities in Eastern Thailand must continually develop effective programs and produce quality graduates to meet the demands of the labor market and society.

The Faculty of Management Sciences, Kasetsart University (Sriracha Campus) in Thailand is one of the well-known higher educational institutions for business administration that provides academic services in seven fields in bachelor's degree programs (i.e., Finance and Investment, Management, Digital Marketing and Branding, International Business, Hospitality Industry Management, Accounting, and Logistics Management) as well as graduate degrees in the field of Industrial Management and Development. Each year, many students graduate from this faculty, with 964 completing Bachelor of Business Administration degree in 2018 from seven branches of the Faculty of Management Sciences (Education Division, Kasetsart University, Sriracha Campus, 2018). To keep up with the world and meet the demand for highly skilled manpower in the Eastern region of Thailand, one of the main missions of the Faculty of Management Sciences is to produce quality graduates and develop a high-level workforce, especially in the fields of business administration, which covers finance and investment, marketing, hospitality, the tourism industry, accounting, logistics, and general management.

As a result, faculty members not only equip students with academic knowledge but also prepare them for 21st-century skills, including English communication skills, to ensure that their graduates can become professional entrepreneurs, qualified personnel, and a skilled workforce in the future. Students

who study in the BBA in Hotel and Tourism, a program related to the hospitality and tourism industry, are required to earn 142 credits. The students also need to continuously develop practical skills, including participating in training programs in information technology, media, and technology. Moreover, undergoing training in Amadeus ticketing courses, taking a standardized English language test, and receiving an IC3 digital literacy certificate are required. In addition, to meet the market demand for highly skilled workers, they must successfully complete an internship program in the hospitality industry and integrate the knowledge and practical experience gained into their professional life. However, according to a survey of their satisfaction with interns' work performance (Faculty of Management Sciences, Board Committee, 2018), employers in the hotel and tourism industry expressed the view that some trainees have difficulty communicating in English; they could not speak or communicate effectively. Therefore, in order to meet the qualification standards required by employers, instructors seeking for possible solutions to this challenge.

This research aims to investigate the problems/ obstacles in developing the English-speaking skills of Thai EFL interns in the hospitality industry and to explore interns' solutions to problems in developing English-speaking skills for future careers. The total number of the samples was 146 hotel and tourism graduates from Kasetsart University, Sriracha campus, who had interned in premier hotels (4- or 5-star hotels), airlines, travel agencies/ tour operators, and exhibition/ convention centers for two months in the summer semester of the 2018 academic year.

To elucidate this problems, the researchers would like: 1) to study the significant English-speaking difficulties/ obstacles encountered by Thai EFL interns, and 2) to explore various solutions to develop the interns' ability to speak English more effectively in order to meet the service standard quality of the skilled-labor market in the hotel and tourism industry.

2. Research Objectives

1. To investigate the English-speaking problems/ obstacles of interns in the hotel and tourism sector.

2. To explore the interns' opinions on selected solutions for developing their ability in speaking English.

3. Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized to investigate the English-speaking problems and to explore solutions for developing ability in speaking English from the intern's opinions. The samples, instruments, data collection, and analysis are described in this part.

1. Population and samples

The population in this study was the hotel and tourism interns from the Faculty of Management Sciences, Kasetsart University, Sriracha Campus, Thailand. The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling technique. The samples were 146 people who received a bachelor's degree in Hotel and Tourism Management from the Faculty of Management Sciences, Kasetsart University, Sriracha campus in 2019. While they were juniors, they had direct experience joining the internship program in the hotel and tourism industry for 400 hours over a period of approximately 2 months in the summer semester of the academic year 2018.

2. Research Instruments

2.1 A two-part questionnaire was designed to collect personal data and investigate the interns' English-speaking problems/ obstacles. The first part of the checklist questionnaire was the interns' general information was: gender, internship workplace, internship position, and frequency of English usage during the internship. In the second part of the questionnaire, 10 survey statements with the 5-point Likert scale were used to rate the obstacles in English speaking faced by the interns.

2.2 The structured-interview questionnaire was developed and employed to investigate the interns' perspectives on: 1) the importance of English language, 2) problems or obstacles in speaking English while they were on duty, and 3) solutions to improve their English-speaking skills from their perspectives. Both questionnaire and interview forms were translated into Thai and verified by the experts before being distributing to the samples.

3. Data Collection

After the revision of the instruments according to the experts' comments, a pilot study was carried out with 20 students to check the appropriateness and test for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The data collection for this study was conducted between August to October 2018 (during the first semester of the 2018 academic year).

4. Data Analysis

4.1 The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe the data regarding general information and the problems in speaking the English language. The percentage, mean, and standard deviation (S.D.) were used to describe the problems in English speaking. In addition, the T-test (One-way ANOVA) and F-test were used to compare the interns' opinions on English-speaking problems in different fields of internship workplaces.

4.2 The data from the interview were analyzed using content analysis to explore additional findings as well as the solutions to improve English-speaking skills from the interns' perspectives.

4. Results

The purposes of this study were to study the problems/ obstacles in English-speaking skills of interns in the hospitality industry and explore solutions to those problems. The results are presented below.

4.1 Results of the questionnaire

This part of the findings presents the descriptive analysis from the survey. The results from the first part of the questionnaire reported the respondents' general information. The samples were 125 females (85.62%) and 21 males (14.38%) who received a bachelor's degree in Hotel and Tourism Management from the Faculty of Management Sciences, Kasetsart University, Sriracha campus in 2018. They had direct experiences in attending the internship program during the summer semester. In this study, the majority of the respondents had interned in the hotel business (61.64%), followed by travel agencies (14.38%), MICE (12.33%), and airline business (11.65%), respectively (See Table 1).

Table 1

Internship Workplace

Internship Workplace	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Hotels	90	61.64	61.64	61.64
Travel Agencies	21	14.38	14.38	76.02
Airlines	17	11.65	11.65	87.67
MICE	18	12.33	12.33	100.00
Total	146	100.0	100.0	

The positions in which the respondents had interned were categorized into four main fields of work in the hotel and tourism sectors: hotel staff, travel agents, airline staff, and staff in MICE business. Regarding the categories, about 22.60% of the participants worked as F&B trainees (waiters/ waitresses), followed by tour guide assistants (4.38), ground service agents (9.59%) and sales and marketing staff (8.22), respectively. The other internship positions are also shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Positions in the hotel and tourism industry in which the respondents had interned

Internship positions	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Hotel staff				
F&B trainee (waiter/ waitress)	33	22.6	22.6	22.6
Receptionist	12	8.22	8.22	30.82
Culinary intern (Commis de cuisine)	10	6.85	6.85	37.67
Bakery intern	9	6.16	6.16	43.83
Housekeeping intern	6	4.11	4.11	47.94
Bartender	4	2.74	2.74	50.68
Reservation	2	1.37	1.37	52.05
Banquet	3	2.05	2.05	54.10
Sales and marketing officer	4	2.74	2.74	56.84
Spa receptionist	2	1.37	1.37	58.21
Customer service officer	4	2.74	2.74	60.95
Bell boy	1	0.68	0.68	61.63
Travel agents				
Tour guide assistant	21	14.38	14.42	76.05
Airline staff				
Ground service agent	14	9.59	9.59	85.64
Human-Resources department officer	3	2.05	2.05	87.69
Staff in MICE business (e.g. convention centers, exhibition and events management company)				
Sales and marketing officer	12	8.22	8.22	95.91
Human-Resources department officer	3	2.05	2.05	97.96
Accounting trainee	1	0.68	0.68	98.64
Events and service officer	1	0.68	0.68	99.32
Exhibition team	1	0.68	0.68	100
Total	146	100.00	100.00	

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the interns' English usage during the internship program. More than half of the respondents reported that they use English every day (53.4%), followed by twice/ three times a week (21.2%), and four/ five times a week (17.1%), respectively.

Table 3

Frequency of English usage during the internship program

English usage during the internship program	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Every day	78	53.4	53.4	53.4
Twice/ Three times a week	31	21.2	21.2	74.7
Four/ Five times a week	25	17.1	17.1	91.8
Others	12	8.2	8.2	100.0
Total	146	100.0	100.0	

The second part of the survey focused on English-speaking difficulties that the interns had encountered. Table 4 presents the interns' opinions on English-speaking problems during the internship program. The mean scores of the interns' responses toward English-speaking problems range from 2.32 to 3.27 and the overall mean scores ($\overline{X}$ = 2.92) showed that the interns had English-speaking problems at a 'moderate' level. The majority of the hotel and tourism interns reported their views toward the English-speaking problems they had encountered. The top-ranked English-speaking problems were: having inadequate vocabulary items (or an inability to think of appropriate English vocabulary) when they speak ($\overline{X}$ = 3.27) and feeling wary about making grammatical mistakes ($\overline{X}$ = 3.27). The third English-speaking obstacle was having poor/ unclear pronunciation ($\overline{X}$ = 3.19), followed by the inadequacy of in-campus English-speaking activities and corporate training programs ($\overline{X}$ = 3.19), and being afraid that a listener does not understand when they speak in English ($\overline{X}$ = 3.01), respectively.

Table 4

The hospitality and tourism interns' opinions toward English-speaking problems (Top 5 rankings of English-speaking problems rating by the hotel and tourism interns were presented in the table)

Rank	Statements regarding English-Speaking Problems	Scale					$\overline{X}$	S.D.
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Lack of vocabulary (or an inability to think of appropriate vocabulary)	17 (11.6%)	38 (26.03%)	60 (41.1%)	30 (20.5%)	1 (0.7%)	3.27	0.94
2	Being afraid or worried about making grammatical errors	19 (13%)	41 (28.1%)	53 (36.3%)	26 (17.8%)	7 (4.8%)	3.27	1.05
3	Having poor/ unclear pronunciation	10 (6.80%)	44 (30.1%)	62 (42.5%)	24 (16.4%)	6 (4.1%)	3.19	0.94

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Rank	Statements regarding English-Speaking Problems	Scale					$\overline{X}$	S.D.
		5	4	3	2	1		
4	Inadequacy of in-campus English-speaking activities and corporate training programs	16 (11%)	41 (28.1%)	55 (37.7%)	23 (15.8%)	11 (7.5%)	3.19	1.07
5	Being afraid that a listener does not understand the speaker's utterance	10 (6.8%)	32 (21.9%)	61 (41.8%)	36 (24.7%)	7 (4.8%)	3.01	0.97
6	Excessive number of students/ interns causing insufficient speaking practice	9 (6.2%)	24 (16.4%	56 (38.4%	38 (26%)	19 (13%)	2.77	1.07
7	Fear to speak English with customers/ tourists	9 (6.2%)	24 (16.4%)	56 (38.4%)	37 (25.3%)	20 (13.7%)	2.76	1.08
8	Lack of stimulation from instructors and others	5 (3.4%)	30 (20.5%)	51 (34.9%)	43 (29.5%)	17 (11.6%)	2.75	1.02
9	Media and materials in teaching and learning English do not promote English-speaking skill	5 (3.4%)	21 (14.4%)	60 (41.1%)	43 (29.5%)	17 (11.6%)	2.68	0.97
10	Feeling immensely shy or embarrassed to speak with others in English	4 (2.7%)	7 (4.8%)	46 (31.5%)	63 (43.2%)	26 (17.8%)	2.32	0.92
Total		146 (100%)						

Mean Scores 4.21 - 5.00 = extremely high, 3.41 – 4.20 high, 2.61 – 3.40 = moderate, 1.81 – 2.60 = low, 1.00 – 1.80 = very low

Besides, the interns' opinions toward speaking problems categorized by internship workplaces are presented in this part. In the present study, the internship workplaces relating to the hotel and tourism industry were categorized into four main businesses, namely hotels, travel agencies/ tour operators, airlines, and MICE business. The findings are presented below.

The interns in the hotel business viewed that they had English-speaking problems at a moderate level of which equals 2.89 ($\overline{X}$ = 2.89). The analysis of each aspect of the English-speaking problems shows that the mean scores of all responses range from 2.66 and 3.21. The English-speaking problems that the interns had encountered can be put in a sequence from the first to the third rank as follows.

Table 5

Top 3 rankings of aspects of the English-speaking problems viewed by the interns in the hotel business

Rank	Aspects of the English-speaking problems
1	Lack of vocabulary, or an inability to think of appropriate English vocabulary ($\overline{X}$ = 3.21) and feeling wary about making grammatical mistakes ($\overline{X}$ = 3.21)
2	Having unclear pronunciation ($\overline{X}$ = 3.20)
3	Inadequacy of in-campus English-speaking activities and corporate training program ($\overline{X}$ = 3.12)

The interns in the travel agencies or tour operators viewed that they had English-speaking problems at a moderate level of which average equals 2.93 ($\overline{X}$ = 2.93). The analysis of each aspect of the English-speaking problems showed that the mean scores of all responses range from 2.43 to 3.43. The English-speaking problems that the interns had encountered can be put in a sequence from the first to the third rank as follows.

Table 6

Top 3 rankings of aspects of the English-speaking problems viewed by the interns in the travel agencies

Rank	Aspects of the English-speaking problems
1	Lack of vocabulary, or an inability to think of appropriate English vocabulary ($\overline{X}$ = 3.43)
2	Feeling wary about making grammatical mistakes ($\overline{X}$ = 3.24)
3	Inadequacy of in-campus English-speaking activities and corporate training program ($\overline{X}$ = 3.14)

The interns in the airline business viewed that they had English-speaking problems at a moderate level of which average equals 3.06 ($\overline{X}$ = 3.06). The analysis of each aspect of the English-speaking problems shows that the mean scores of the interns' responses range from 2.35 to 3.53. The English-speaking problems that the interns had encountered can be put in a sequence from the highest to the lowest rank as follows.

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Table 7

Top 3 rankings of aspects of the English-speaking problems viewed by the interns in the airline business

Rank	Aspects of the English-speaking problems
1	Feeling wary about making grammatical mistakes ($\overline{X}$= 3.53), Inadequacy of in-campus English-speaking activities and corporate training program ($\overline{X}$ = 3.53), and being afraid that a listener does not understand the speaker's utterance ($\overline{X}$ = 3.35)
2	Lack of vocabulary, or an inability to think of appropriate English vocabulary ($\overline{X}$ = 3.43), being afraid that a listener does not understand the speaker's utterance ($\overline{X}$ = 3.35), and having unclear pronunciation ($\overline{X}$ = 3.29)
3	Lack of stimulation from instructors and others ($\overline{X}$ = 2.94)

The interns in MICE business viewed that they had English-speaking problems at a moderate level ($\overline{X}$ = 2.96). The analysis of each aspect reveals that the mean scores of the interns' responses toward English-speaking problems range from 2.33 to 3.39 which can be put in a sequence from the highest to the lowest as follows.

Table 8

Top 3 rankings of aspects of the English-speaking problems viewed by the interns in MICE business

Rank	Aspects of the English-speaking problems
1	Lack of vocabulary, or an inability to think of appropriate English vocabulary ($\overline{X}$ = 3.39),
2	Being afraid or worried about making grammatical mistakes ($\overline{X}$ = 3.33)

Additionally, when categorized by internship workplaces, the analysis of the comparison of the interns' opinions toward English-speaking problems shows that the different workplaces affect the opinions in the same way. In sum, the interns in each field had English-speaking problems at a 'moderate' level. The first rank English-speaking problems were lack of vocabulary or an inability to think of appropriate vocabulary ($\overline{X}$ = 3.27) and feeling wary about making grammatical mistakes ($\overline{X}$ = 3.27).

4.2 Results of the interview

To discover additional information, the researchers met with the participants to discuss their opinions relating to the importance of English, English-speaking difficulties, and solutions. The results are presented based on the three main parts of the interview questions.

Question 1: Do you think the English language is important to your internship program and working operations? From the interview, all of the interns agreed that the English language was imperative to the internship program and working operations. "Extremely important, essential, useful, crucial, and necessary"

were the typical responses of the participants. The reasons commonly given by the interns were: 1) the English language is crucial to their internship as most of the customers in the hospitality and tourism industry are foreigners from many countries; 2) working in the hotel business, especially in international or chain-brand hotels, it is necessary for hotel staff to communicate formally in English with guests to deliver excellent customer service and exceed the guest's expectations. Further, most of the interns in the Front Office Department reported that they were occasionally required to communicate in English in order to receive incoming phone calls, transfer the line to other departments, book rooms, and handle transactions between the hotel and guests. The common challenges encountered by the interns in this department were to be able to use English effectively to handle operational problems and guests' difficulties. Some interns also stated that in order to access leadership positions in global luxury hotels, they needed to be able to communicate in English more effectively because most of the executives are foreigners. Also, some interns from the Food and Beverage Service Department (F&B) reported that taking orders from foreign customers requires the use of English almost every day. Likewise, in the culinary/ kitchen department, some interns informed the interviewer that cooperation with chefs and sous chefs from various nationalities had to be in English. The language skills needed for the interns in the F&B and kitchen department are: listening and reading skills, which are needed to understand the key terms in cooking, remember the food ingredients, and understand and follow the cooking recipes, speaking and writing skills are required for describing food and beverages on the menu. One intern said, "in order to get a 'job well done' and get ready for the jobs in the near future, I am required to use English skills to gain more experiences in the internship and integrate English language skills and language learning strategies in the internship workplaces." In travel agencies and tour operators, the interns reported that English is extremely important as it was used as a medium for communication with foreign tourists. For example, an internship in aviation also requires the interns to communicate with foreign passengers who need assistance. One intern in the airlines stated that "Without good English language skills, I can neither effectively give travelers detailed information nor offer specialized assistance for individual passengers, for example, elderly passengers, passengers with an infant, business travelers, and first-class passengers.

Question 2: What are English-speaking problems/ obstacles during internship and working operations? The respondents reported that most of the problems that concerned them were both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. From the interview, the significant problems in speaking English were lack of vocabulary, being afraid of making grammatical mistakes while speaking, failure to understand the customers/ tourists' utterance, inability to think of English vocabulary to speak, and lack of familiarity with them causing a failure in understanding different English accents of customers, passengers, and tourists. Besides this, some interns reported that when the tourists spoke in English, the interns were afraid to respond to them so they decided to keep quiet. Another intern reported that lack of opportunity to communicate in English in daily life is an obstacle to mastering English fluently. Some samples of their statements were as follows:

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- "While speaking English, I cannot get the appropriate words to convey what I want to describe or express how I feel."

- "When I speak English, I often get stuck on how to use words and grammatical structures appropriately and correctly."

- "I hesitate to speak English because I think I cannot pronounce the words correctly nor speak like native-English speakers. So I decided to keep quiet and let others do the talking."

- "Our customers are from every corner of the world. Sometimes, I do not understand the customers' expressions or am not familiar with their accents in English. It is difficult to understand what they really mean when they speak in English. I think, for me, the obstacles to English speaking are listening and vocabulary."

- "We often use our mother-tongue in our daily life; we have not trained to speak/ use English on an everyday basis. This may be one of the reasons why most of us do not feel comfortable to speak English or cannot communicate in English fluently."

Question 3: What are suitable solutions for developing your English-speaking skills? From the interview, the interns provided many possible solutions to improve their English-speaking skills. Most of the participants suggested utilizing the Internet and technology to enhance English skills and knowledge. They try to improve their English skills by watching movies, listening to international songs and soundtracks, watching English video clips on YouTube (such as watching "English Room" hosted by Look Golf, a popular-Thai YouTuber in the edutainment field), looking up new words in an online dictionary, asking listeners to correct their mistakes, learning from the mistakes, inspiring themselves, reading English books to expand their vocabulary as well as grammatical knowledge, and talking with foreigners more often. Many of them agreed that practicing English speaking and the other skills on their own beyond the classroom are necessary for non-native speakers of English to master the language. Some of the respondents suggested the university and the workplace organize both in- and extracurricular activities that allow the students to practice English speaking through real-life situations. They proposed that lecturers arrange meaningful workshops for them to better ready students for their future professions. Some samples of the statements were as follows:

- "We are non-native speakers; we are not surrounded by an English-speaking environment. So, the possible solution for me is to get used to an English-speaking environment such as watching movies on Netflix and listening to favorite soundtracks.

- "My solution is watching the show entitled "English Room" hosted by Look Golf. I like it because it is entertaining. I always record the unknown vocabulary and expressions and try to use them if possible."

- "To overcome grammatical mistakes and gain more vocabulary, I try to read English books and search for unknown words in an online-dictionary."

- "Find a role model who can inspire you to speak English the way they do."

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- *"Maybe, we need to talk to foreigners more often so we can get used to their accents and be able to speak English comfortably."*

- *"I think the university and instructors should provide English-speaking activities or workshops for students to practice English through real-life tasks."*

5. Discussion

When investigating the interns' problems speaking English, the results showed that these problems were: 1) inability to think of appropriate vocabulary to use; 2) feeling wary about making grammatical mistakes as well as a failure to understand the meaning; and 3) unclear pronunciation. These obstacles could affect the interns' English-speaking competence. This conforms to Nongsamon Pongpanich's (2011) study of English oral communication problems of the students in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Kasetsart University, Sriracha Campus. That study aimed to find out the students' problems of English oral communication in the forms of public speaking and to explore pedagogical solutions. It contained a mixed-method research methodology. The subjects were 179 students from the Faculty of Management Sciences who enrolled in the Speech Communication course. The findings showed that two significant problems were: 1) the lack of confidence which resulted from insufficient knowledge of grammatical structures and vocabulary; and 2) lack of critical thinking skills. The findings are relevant to what Ritthirat & Chiramanee (2014) found in their study of the problems and obstacles in the development of English oral communication among Thai students. Their study investigated problems and obstacles in the self-development of English oral communication in the undergraduates enrolled in the courses that would be affected by the opening of the ASEAN Community in 2015. It was found that the problems and obstacles affecting the students' English oral communication self-development are their nervousness and fear of making mistakes while speaking English. Such findings conform to the study done by Chalardsit (2007) who explored Thai engineers' problems, causes, and solutions in using English in the workplace. This study found that major difficulties in using English are caused by the lack of knowledge of vocabulary, idioms, and slang.

For the interns' solutions in developing their English speaking, it is found that they employ English-speaking skills by implementing the Internet and technology in their learning. For example, watching movies on Netflix, listening to international songs, watching video clips in English on YouTube, and watching TV shows dubbed in English. The findings of this study support Damnet (2018), whose study found that learning the English language by using contemporary movies helps enhance the students' skills in grammar and sentence analysis. This enhancement was achieved by changing the students' attitudes and motivating them to improve their English skills by themselves. The idea coincides with Khot-Hanam & Boriboon (2016) who studied the development of learning activities using movie clips to reinforce English

listening and speaking skills of Grade 11 students. It was found that after using movie clips to reinforce English and speaking ability, the post-test results were higher than that of the pre-test with statistical significance at 0.01. The students would like their university to hold more activities that help them develop English-speaking skills apart from solely studying through the classroom lessons. This comports with the study by Ritthirat & Chiramanee (2014). In their study, it is suggested that a university and faculty should provide resources for students' development activities so that they can improve their English communication by using different methods from those they experience in the classroom.

In addition, the university should provide a variety of English-development activities, for example, English camps, English workshops, English days, and other English extracurricular activities, to push forward and increase opportunities for the students to use English in their daily lives. The interns also suggest lecturers arrange meaningful workshops to better ready students for their future professions. This is in agreement with Muangmood, Thararak, Srithong, Tungtipakorn, Burinwattana & Srisawat (2005) who studied the factors which affect the English-speaking ability of the freshmen of a two-year bachelor's degree at Rajamangala University of Technology Suvarnabhumi, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Campus. Their study included students in the areas of business administration, management, information technology marketing, and tourism. It was found that 58% of the students were at a low level of English-speaking proficiency and 2% were very low. The students needed improvement in their English-speaking skills out of the classroom and to practice the skills regularly. The study conforms to famous educators (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992) who suggested that in terms of English-speaking skill development, learners need to be stimulated to speak in different situations and there should also be interactions both in classrooms and outside. There should be interactions between learners and native speakers or other language proficient learners. Moreover, activities should be meaningful, interactive, and parallel with accuracy and fluency development. Teachers should teach the students a variety of useful communication strategies and phonology, including stress and intonation.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for implications

First, in order to give students more opportunities to use and speak English, their lecturers should provide both in- and extracurricular activities for students to support the development of their English-speaking skills. For example, providing opportunities for the students to perform on stage and practice speaking skills through role plays or simulations. To be able to speak skillfully and confidently, the students not only need to learn technical terms, useful phrases, and essential idioms needed at work, but it also takes a lot of practice until they can automatically use English in conversation. Teachers should design

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lessons that encourage students to speak and use the language in simulated practice in class as well as in real situations outside the classroom. They might, for example, take the role of a tour guide welcoming tourists to Eastern Thailand to make their English communication skills more effective. In addition, the instructors should encourage learners to be courageous to think in English, speak out, try to learn from their mistakes, and practice with perseverance. This will enhance their fluency and proficiency in speaking. While teaching, the instructor should also focus on some communicative strategies for the students in order to activate language beyond the classroom. Second, lecturers should encourage the expose to English language through self-regulated learning as well as promote learning outside the classroom through cutting-edge technology and media. Zoubi, S. (2018) mentioned in her study that the EFL students' English proficiency can be enhanced by a lot of exposure to the language; students should be encouraged to immerse themselves in an English environment happily on a daily basis, for example, by watching movies or series, surfing the Internet, listening to English songs and soundtracks, or practicing English language with native speakers. Collaborative learning should also be supported by encouraging learners to share knowledge or information obtained from various media through learning logs, which can be provided by the teachers-all of which will create a learning community that is helpful when entering the industry. In addition, such learning aids as vocabulary logs, notebooks, and flashcards are tools that support learning, increase comprehension, and retain vocabulary knowledge (MacCarthy, 1990; Walters & Bozkurt, 2009; Riensumettharadol, 2019). Third, in addition to providing materials and media for students to learn English in class or at students' own pace, pre- and post-assessments should be taken to assess the effectiveness of teaching materials, media, and pedagogical methods. Finally, the internship period and traveling seasons have a significant impact on the interns' work experience. As the participants in this study practically attended a 2-month-summer internship program during the off-season, there were very few tasks they could learn, including the ones that require communicating in English. For this reason, the interns should be required to undertake no less than 400 hours of the internship period and take at least four months instead of the two-month internship so as to be more skillful in the workplace. Apart from the different traveling seasons, natural disasters and pandemics can significantly impact the internship program. Since the beginning of the year 2020, the hotel and tourism industry worldwide has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has resulted in a decreased number of tourists during subsequent to the Covid-19 lockdowns. This also affects the intern's work experience and job opportunities in the field of hotel and tourism. In order to play safe but still enrich students' English language proficiency, lecturers should consider having students take certified online courses or virtual internships for academic credits instead of doing the traditional internship. Learning from websites, applications, virtual conferences, and online platforms such as YouTube, MOOCs, TikTok Uni, Podcasts, and similar should also be promoted. Currently, there are a lot of online platforms and programs, including Clubhouse, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, and Spatial Metaverse which are very convenient for practicing speaking English or doing a role play in a virtual classroom. A benefit is that the students can be engaged in listening, participate in the conversation, and practice listening and speaking at the same time, even during social distancing.

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Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the business in hospitality might not be the same in the future, especially in terms of the new rules and regulations (Breier, Kallmuenzer, Clauss et. al, 2021). Thus, the students, who still desire to do the internship during the Covid-19 situation, should only be allowed to do so in safe areas (or Green Zones), not in high-risk areas (or the Red and Dark Red Zones). In addition to reducing the risk of infection, the interns should get fully vaccinated for Covid-19 before doing the internship. In this way, they can have time to learn their jobs until they reach their full potential, make the most of the internship program, and fully meet the demands of the labor markets.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

1. To enhance the English-speaking ability of interns, the practical English-speaking patterns of hospitality and tourism professionals should be further studied.

2. Further research should explore the English-speaking problems and solutions of interns who will be the future workforce in other industries in the Eastern Economic Corridor.

3. The English-speaking errors of interns and staff in the hospitality and tourism industry should be investigated in further research.

7. Acknowledgement

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