

การศึกษาความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิเคราะห์เกี่ยวกับเหตุการณ์ ปัจจุบันในประเทศไทยของนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 4 วิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษมหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่น

A Study of the Ability of Senior English Major Students to Speak Critically on Current Events in Thailand

นทิตา ศุภวัฒน์ (Natita Suphawatt)*

บุษยามินตรา จลวยแสง (Bussabamintra Chalauisaeng)**

จอห์น แดรปเปอร์ (John Draper)***

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้ เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิเคราะห์ในด้านความมั่นใจและด้านสิ่งการเกี่ยวกับเหตุการณ์ปัจจุบันในประเทศไทยของนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 4 วิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษมหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่น 2) ประเมินผลการพัฒนาด้านการคิดเชิงวิเคราะห์หลังจากเรียนวิชาการสนทนาและการอภิปรายภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาว่ามีมากน้อยเพียงใด 3) ประเมินความสามารถในการพูดเกี่ยวกับเหตุการณ์ปัจจุบันกับบุคคลต่างสถานะกันในวิชาสนทนาภาษาอังกฤษ กลุ่มตัวอย่างในการวิจัยครั้งนี้ประกอบด้วย นักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ ชั้นปีที่ 4 ปีการศึกษา 2553 จำนวน 12 คน ผู้ร่วมวิจัย ได้แก่ อาจารย์เจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษ 1 ท่าน กระบวนการวิจัยประกอบด้วย 1) แบบสอบถาม 2) แบบสัมภาษณ์นักศึกษา 3) บันทึกภาพวิดีโอ 4) โปรแกรมทรานซานา (Transana) ซึ่งเป็นโปรแกรมคอมพิวเตอร์ช่วยในการถอด จัดเก็บและนำเสนอการสัมภาษณ์ กลุ่มตัวอย่างถูกแบ่งเป็น 4 กลุ่ม ๆ ละ 3 คน แบ่งตามความสามารถทางการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ คือ กลุ่มเก่งมาก กลุ่มเก่ง กลุ่มปานกลาง และกลุ่มต่ำกว่าระดับปานกลาง ผลจากการสัมภาษณ์ถูกบรรยายในระบบคอมพิวเตอร์โดยโปรแกรมทรานซานา

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า นักศึกษามีทักษะในการพูดเชิงวิเคราะห์เกี่ยวกับเหตุการณ์ปัจจุบันในระดับ พอเพียงและบ่อยครั้งในการพูดให้ข้อมูลหรือให้คำแนะนำ 2) ความสามารถในการคิดเชิงวิเคราะห์ของนักศึกษาได้พัฒนาขึ้นหลังจากที่เรียนวิชาการสนทนาและการอภิปรายภาษาอังกฤษในชั้นปีสุดท้าย ซึ่งนักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่ให้ความเห็นว่าวิชานี้ควรมีการเรียนการสอนตั้งแต่ปีต้น ๆ ของการศึกษาเพราะวิชานี้มีประโยชน์ต่อนักศึกษาที่จะได้ฝึกฝนและนำไปใช้ในการหางานและทำงาน 3) จากการเรียนวิชาดังกล่าว นักศึกษามีความมั่นใจมากขึ้นในการพูดเชิงวิเคราะห์ในหัวข้อเกี่ยวกับเหตุการณ์ปัจจุบันกับเจ้าของภาษา อีกทั้งยังพบว่า นักศึกษาสามารถแสดงความคิดเห็นข้ามผ่านความแตกต่างด้านสถานภาพกับคู่สนทนาด้วย ในที่นี้คืออาจารย์เจ้าของภาษา

คำสำคัญ: พูดภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิเคราะห์ เหตุการณ์ปัจจุบัน

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* นักศึกษาหลักสูตรศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่น

** อาจารย์ประจำสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่น

*** อาจารย์ประจำสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่น

Abstract

The purposes of this study were to 1) investigate through discourse analysis senior students' ability to critically converse about current events in terms of assertive and directive acts, 2) assess whether senior students feel that they have improved their ability to think critically through discussion of current events in the English major conversational courses and 3) assess whether senior students feel that they can overcome power differences through discussion of current events in the English major conversational courses. The samples of this research were 12 fourth-year English major students from Khon Kaen University. A participant who was a native speaker was invited to join this to help in the interview process. The research instruments composed of a questionnaire, interview, video recording and Transana program. There were seventy one respondents for the questionnaire. The 12 students were divided into four groups of three people and classified into four levels of English speaking proficiency, i.e. advance, high intermediate, intermediate, and lower intermediate, in order to discuss topics suitable to their abilities. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) called Transana.

The results from the interviews showed that English major senior students had adequate critical skills to be able to discuss current events in English and were able to frequently express opinions and statements in terms of assertive and directive acts. After taking the conversational courses in the senior year, the students felt that they could improve their critical thinking ability. However, most of the students would have preferred the conversational courses to have been taught during the first or second year of university as it would have been more beneficial for them to practice in class and also advantageous when looking for employment or in the workplace. Moreover, the students felt that through study they had more confidence when speaking critically with a native speaker, even though they realized that topics relating to current events were difficult for them to discuss. The courses also helped students express their opinions and ideas through conversation and were also beneficial to them overcoming any power or social status differences, in this case, between a native teacher and students.

Introduction

To learn English in order to be able to communicate with other people in different societies, learners are expected to have sufficient knowledge about specific contexts. One significant theory involved in this study is 'critical theory'. According to Kellner (n.d.), during the 1960s, critical and theoretical approaches in disciplines of the humanities, for example, art history, literary studies, and cultural studies, began to be broadly applied.

Kellner further remarks that the term critical theory has also been evoked in the domains of film and media studies. This theory has brought an emphasis on the importance of English study and the global use of English in terms of communication.

When studying English, it is not just to learn how to speak correctly; speaking with thoughtful details, or talking critically, is also crucial for students to practice so that students have contexts about their community and culture to communicate.

Thus, current event issues can be topics for students to practice speaking critically in order to make connections and inform. In other words, the skill of speaking English is not only speaking with correct grammar; students should also know how to speak appropriately and critically on complex topics so that it is easier to find a good job. In a Thai classroom, in a practical way, the teaching style and context should relate to learners' interests and satisfy learner's natural requirements. In the case of English major, this is a very broad range of material, so current events discussion can be a useful tool to motivate students to enjoy studying in class.

Purposes of the Study

1. To investigate through discourse analysis senior students' ability to critically converse about current events in terms of assertive and directive acts.
2. To assess whether senior students feel that they have improved their ability to think critically through discussion of current events in the English major conversational courses.
3. To assess whether senior students feel that they can overcome power differences through discussion of current events in the English major conversational courses.

Critical Thinking and Critical Discourse

The key term to be discussed in this section is the notion of *critical*. Critical theory has become one of the crucial intellectual trends of both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and is relevant for philosophy, political theory, aesthetics, the study of modern European literatures and music, ideology, sociology, psychology and cultural studies (Kellner, n.d.). During the 1970s, critical theory was expanded

into the area of film and media studies. Smith (1992, p.124) mentions that three critical considerations affect people's thought: a broad understanding of what situations are being thought about, management to think about those situations, and authority to do so. Naturally, everyone can think of anything in various ways, depending on what matters. Yet people with critical thought can produce detailed ideas about certain subject.

Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis

The term discourse is used in a number of different ways by different linguists. For some linguists, discourse refers to a language in action whilst a text is the written version gathered from conversation (Gee, 2005). The term of discourse refers to the perceiving of the communication in context. As Gee (2005) points out, discourse is the spoken and written text by which an individual describes a situation during their communication. Discourse analysis refers to the study of language that is used in each context. The contexts cover all written forms and spoken forms from conversation. The way people think and their perspective can be retrieved from their conversation (Wood, 2000).

Development of discourse analysis is critical discourse analysis (CDA). Wooffitt (2005) states that CDA is analysis beyond the linguistic method which connects linguistic factors to broader contexts of social, political and economic features. Wooffitt further claims that the core of a way to analyze people's conversation must describe how to understand the language, which covers both social and political circumstances (p.145). Since these aspects are also counted as a part of CDA study, there are consequently many studies about CDA and different focuses on various areas, for example gender inequality, media

discourse and political discourse (Van Dijk, 1995). Such discourses generally involve issues of power, which is reviewed in the next section.

In this research, critical discourse analysis is essential throughout the process of analyzing the data. It is used to discover the ability of senior English major students to speak critically about current event issues, so the analysis of discourse is one of the significant parts of the research methodology which covers the process of selecting and collecting written texts, tape recording, and transcribing, and then read and/or listen systematically (Johnstone, 2000).

Critical Thinking and Cognitive Skills

Bloom's investigation of the cognitive domain plays a significant role for this research study as a tool in the methodological process. During 1990, a former student of Bloom made some changes to Bloom's Taxonomy (Forehand, 2005) because of perceived limitations and weaknesses. The significant weakness of the Original Taxonomy is the assumption of cognitive processes which should be based on a single dimension and can not overlap (Anderson et al, 2001 cited in Amer 2006). Thus, the names of the six categories used to be nouns, Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation, but they were changed to a verb form and the levels slightly rearranged in order to reflect the progress of thinking more (Khattiyaman & Piyapimolsit, 2006). 'Knowledge' has been changed to 'Remembering' because 'Knowledge' performs a result of thought while 'Remembering' elaborates a thinking process which is more practical (Khattiyaman & Piyapimolsit, 2006). The revised taxonomy of the cognitive domain is Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating and Creating.

Thai Social Thought and the University Curriculum

There are not many chances for students to share ideas about current events in Thailand. Hence, to practice more, the ability to explore Thai society in the English language should be developed in all English major students. However, speaking and thinking critically are not simple tasks, and not all students may be able to perform these functions naturally. Discourse topics, together with patterns of critical thinking and critical discourse, for example Bloom's Taxonomy, have been identified so that we can distinguish which students have that ability and to what extent (as cited in Forehand, 2005).

Because of the importance of Thai social studies to an only educated Thai wishing to converse with foreigners, which the course 400100 provides in terms of basic information for English major students, the curriculum in the English major has developed areas in courses that partially discuss current events. These courses are 411331 (English Conversation and Discussion 1), 411430 (English Conversation and Discussion 2) and 411431 (English Conversation and Discussion 3). This means that students, especially fourth year students, have chances to practice speaking skills through discussing current events. According to the course coordinator for 411331 and 411431, it is important for university students to discuss and share their ideas about current issues (Draper, 2009). It is suggested that the discussion will be very beneficial for them to improve their speaking skills because they can talk about the details of current events, such as the Red shirt protesters and terrorism in the South. The coordinator further stated that it is important for students to know how foreigners and expats feel towards the current situations in Thailand. Also, the coordinator (2009) noted that if students are able

to discuss and give some advice to tourists who are visiting or planning to visit Thailand, what they are likely to say about these events must reveal a critical level of understanding or it will be seen as simplified and mistrusted.

Power and Social Distance

In this research, power is focused on as it is mentioned in the research question on if English major senior students feel that they can overcome power differences. Power can be discussed in politics, which means the authority of politician (Mulder, 2000). Yet the domains of sociology and anthropology are focused on here. However, the social power of groups is one brand of a power that is of most critical work on discourse (Van Dijk, cited in Schiffirin, Tannen & Hamilton, 2003). This means social power is also one of the main factors to be discussed in critical discourse study. Van Dijk (1995) remarks that types of power can be distinguished by various aspects, for instance, force, money, knowledge, information and authority. Thus, discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis in a particular subject is used in the present research, which is to investigate the ability of senior English major students in speaking critically on current event issues as well as to find out whether senior students feel that they can overcome power differences through discussion of current events in the English major conversational courses. When power differences are present in communication, it is inevitable that this factor significantly affects ability in speaking critically.

Research methodology

The population of this study comprises 12 fourth-year English major students from Khon

Kaen University. The students will be invited to discuss current event issues. The participants will be randomly ordered and each of the twelve selected students will be having a ten-minute interview with a native speaker according to the ranged topic. The topics, of current events from April 2009 – May 2010, are provided in the following list:

- The Thai border
- The Drugs in Thailand
- The Red shirts and Thaksin
- The Insurrection in the South of Thailand

The study was also conducted and data collected by using a questionnaire, interview and video recording for the purpose of discourse analysis. Meanwhile, class observation is an option and can be done prior to all the processes. Video recording will be done during the discussion and will be transcribed using the Transana program. A Rubric for assessing ability to critically speak about current events was designed to collect data, and is for a native speaker to score the performance for each student.

Result of the Study

This section represents the findings of the study which are from the analysis approach to the research instruments: questionnaire, interview, video recording. It concludes according to the purpose of the study as to investigate and answer the research questions as follow.

1. To what extent can English major senior students talk critically about current events in English in terms of assertive and directive acts?

The findings indicate the ability of students in speaking critically on current event topics in terms of both assertive and directive acts.

The assertive act is how a student can talk about what is happening, whereas, a directive act focuses on suggestions or advice (Vanderveken & Kubo, 2002). The results in terms of assertive and directive acts were collected from both questionnaires and interview. To answer this question, the analysis was conducted and divided into three dimensions: the questionnaire, the interview and the rubric score results.

1) Questionnaires concerning assertive and directive acts.

In the questionnaire, there were many questions focusing on different prospects. To answer this research question, particular questions were analyzed. From the 5 scale-point of rating of level of capability in speaking critically, viz. very poor, poor, neither poor nor good, good and very good, it appeared that most students considered that their skills of critical speaking were 'neither poor nor good'. However, the study investigated further by conducting a questionnaire asking what reasons the students talk critically in terms of assertive and directive acts. The summary of reasons for speaking critically with a foreigner are 21 out of 123 (total number of frequency) 'to give information/facts about a topic', 11 'to advise or suggest what to do' and 32 'to describe what is happening'. These findings suggest that the students have a tendency to talk critically with a foreigner in terms of both assertive acts, giving information and directive acts, and advising or suggesting what to do. The English major senior students seem to be able to talk critically about current events in English in terms of assertive acts more than directive acts according to the results. The findings are relatively similar to their actual performance illustrated on the transcription during the interview.

2) Analysis of speech acts from the transcriptions

The capability of students to speak critically on current event topics can be presented from the summary of speech acts as collected by interviews. After the interviews and recording were transcribed in order to input them to the Transana program, the tags of speech acts were identified and counted. The criteria used as the classification items in Bloom's Taxonomy, viz. remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating, examined the ability of the students to critically talk about current events. The frequency of speech acts related to this matter may show the students' ability, which are 513 of total speech acts. The percentage of 'remembering' is apparently high, 34.0% and 'creating' is next at 15.6%. These two items are considered to be related to an assertive act, giving information and directive act, giving suggestions or advice.

The numbers of speech acttags concerning the assertive act meaning can describe the students' speaking critically in terms of assertive and directive acts. The total frequency in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy emphasizing the assertive and directive act are coincident the same number at 16.7% which may show the students' ability to moderately give information and suggestions through the topics of current events. Thus, according to the findings, the senior English major students possessed little critical speaking skill about current events in English in terms of assertive and directive acts.

3) Rubric scores

The results of the rubric scores, 3-adequate and frequents level, suggest that, through the interview, English major senior students

possessed adequate critical skill to talk about current events in English and frequently express their statements in terms of assertive and directive acts.

2. To what extent do senior students feel that they can improve their ability to think critically through their English major conversational courses?

The conversational courses, 411331, 411430 and 411431, and the subject of critical thinking are introduced to English major students when they reach their third year according to the curriculum of English language department at the Faculty of Humanity and Social Science at Khon Kaen University. The results of the research from the questionnaire found the students feel that the courses have enhanced their ability to think critically because most of them had never learnt about it before. The answers to the questions in the questionnaire from seventy one respondents involved the attitude to speaking critically on current events, the students' ability in speaking critically, what year should be the most suitable to study speaking critically, what circumstances they most speak critically, what should be the situation in speaking critically with a foreigner, and whether or not the courses 411331, 411430 and 411431 can improve critical thinking skill.

The results show that 38.0% of students stated that they like speaking critically about current events, whereas 32.4% of students disliked it. Since 25.4% of students really liked it compared to 2.8% of students really disliked it, it can be said that the most students appeared to be willing to learn about speaking critically on current issues because it is a challenging subject and useful for them in the future. But, the small number of students who disliked this subject provided reasons that it is difficult,

sensitive and boring to talk critically about current events. The outcome of the most frequent attitude towards speaking critically on current events is similar to the most frequent-level ability for speaking critically; the most frequent attitude represents quite low whereas the most frequent-level ability was in moderate level. So, this can be related and to answer the first research question about how well the students can talk critically about current events, which mean their ability is in low to moderate level. The conversational courses that include critical thinking are currently taught in the third and fourth year. Since most students like to learn how to speak critically, as the results showed previously, it appears that the highest percentage of students, 32.4%, would like to have these courses begin in the second year of university, and the next highest percentage for third year, 31.0% is not much different. It can be concluded that most students realize how important these courses are and would welcome it if the courses were introduced in an earlier year. The percentage of 23.3% implies that students consider the workplace is the most frequent setting for speaking critically. Other settings are in the classroom, 20.2%, at job interviews, 19.0% and with foreign friends, 17.8%. It can be concluded from the collected data that the volunteer students who were fourth year English major students and had already taken the conversational courses felt that their ability to speak critically had been improved.

3. To what extent do senior students feel that they can overcome power differences through their English major conversational courses?

1) Results from Questionnaires

The answer to this research question derives from the analysis of the question in the questionnaire asking about the confidence in

speaking critically with a native speaker and the analysis of the frequency of speech act concerning hesitation together with the video observation during conversations. The seventy one respondents on the questionnaire stated that, after studying conversational courses, they possessed more confidence in speaking critically with a native speaker. When the students were asked about how they felt before studying, 11.3% students felt moderately confident to critically speak with a native speaker. But the percentages obviously increased after taking the courses, to 47.9% of students. Similarly to the feeling of 'a lot of confidence', before studying, 2.8% of students felt that they had a lot of confidence to speak critically with a native speaker. After the courses, the percentages raised to 26.8%. This indicates that most students felt more confident to discuss current event topic critically with a native speaker after taking the conversational courses.

In conclusion, most of the students would have preferred the conversational courses to have been taught during the first or second year of university as it would have been more beneficial for them to practice in class and also advantageous when looking for employment or in the workplace. Moreover, the students felt that through study they had more confidence when speaking critically with a native speaker, even though they realized that topics relating to current events were difficult for them to discuss. The courses also helped students express their opinions and ideas through conversation and were also beneficial to them overcoming any power or social status differences, in this case, between a student and a native English teacher.

2) Results from Interviews

A summary of speech acts focusing on hesitation shows that during the conversation, the students made utterances to express hesitation at 69.0% of the total speech acts. In this study, hesitations, for example 'erm', 'er' and 'well', are considered to be filled pauses. According to Rose (1998), filled pauses can be helpful for a speaker in managing a conversational flow, which can mean an ability on the part of the students to overcome anxiety when discussing current event topics critically with a native teacher.

The analysis from the videos and transcriptions is a part of the research methodology. Its outcome implies that most students preferred to use filled pauses in order to assist them to make a flow speech.

Example 8 : Filled pauses and other utterance showing hesitation

NS: If you were Prime minister Abhisit, how would you solve the problem?

NNS: Erm (FP) actually (EF) erm (FP) I think (GO) the first one we have to to (RW) change. It it (RW) might (EP) be difficult for us to to (RW) do right, to change the mind of the population in our country that erm (FP) money is not the thing that we we (RW) erm (FP) we pay attention to. We have to erm (FP) to to (RW) erm (FP) just like (GE) a to to (RW) take more attention to other thing, like (GE) erm (FP) our happiness come from erm (FP) how to call (ST) erm (FP) ordinary living, just like (GE) er (FP) our His Majesty,

erm (FP) the King erm (FP) told us
to to (RW) do erm (FP) sufficiency
economy right (UN).

Key: FP = Filled pauses
GO = Giving opinion
EP = Expressing probability
EF = Expressing fact
RW = Repeating word
GE = Giving example
ST = Self talking
UN = Uninterpretable

During the conversation, as in the above example, the students often delivered filled pauses, for instance, 'erm' as well as other utterances, such as repeating words and self talking, to utilize the speech flow being used. Moreover, the interviews showed that English major senior students possessed adequate critical skills to be able to discuss current events in English and were able to frequently express opinions and statements in terms of assertive and directive acts. After taking the conversational courses in the two senior years, the students felt that they could improve their ability to think critically.

However, apart from the effectiveness of conversational courses in improving students' confidence in speaking critically, a question in the questionnaire can be analyzed as to whether the students feel that they can overcome power differences with a native speaker. Most students felt that their confidence shifted from low to moderate on overcome power difference after studying conversational course.

To sum up, for this research purpose, assessing whether senior students feel that they can overcome power differences through dis-

cussion of current events in the English major conversational courses employed three data sources, viz. the questionnaire asking about confidence in speaking critically with a native speaker, a list of topics from most difficult to most easy and the frequency of the hesitations from the transcriptions of the interviews. The summary of the findings prove that students feel that through study they have more confidence when speaking critically with a native speaker, even though they feel that topics concerning current events are difficult for them to discuss. The conversational courses are also beneficial in helping students express their opinions and ideas through conversation and in overcoming any power differences.

Conclusion

The results from the rubric scores on interviews showed that senior English major students possessed adequate critical skills to be able to discuss current events in English and were able to frequently express opinions and statements in terms of both assertive acts, ideas to show what is happening in the world at the moment, and directive acts, suggestions for someone to do something. Meanwhile, the criteria being used as the classification levels in Bloom's Taxonomy, viz., remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating, examined the ability of the students to critically talk about current events (Forehand, 2005). From the interview, four out of 12 students were able to answer and to give ideas about the current event topics in terms of both assertive and directive acts. The other eight students possessed lower skills. The average mean at 16.7% for total utterances (Table 10) indicates that the ability to speak critically about current event topics was reasonably low.

After taking the conversational courses in the senior year, questionnaire results indicate that 48 out of 71 students (67.6%) felt that they had improved their ability to think critically a lot. This result agreed with the findings of Norton (2008) that advanced-level students can improve their critical thinking skills through a discourse analysis teaching methodology and be able to discuss cultural issues. However, 23 out of 71 students (32.4%) would have preferred the conversational courses to have been started to be taught during the second year of university as it would have been more beneficial for them to practice in class and also advantageous when looking for employment or in the workplace in the future.

Moreover, the change in perception of the students 8 out of 71 (11.3%) to 34 out of 71 students (47.9%) as regards expressing a moderate degree of confidence before and after studying the conversational courses explains that, through study, they had more confidence when speaking critically with a native speaker, even though they realized that topics relating to current events were difficult for them to discuss. The courses also appeared to help the majority of students express their opinions and ideas through conversation and were also apparently beneficial to them in overcoming any power or social status differences, in this case, between a native teacher and students.

However, the rubric scores from the interview and informal interview observation indicate that one of twelve students obviously had poor skills of thinking and speaking critically, and was struggling to answer the questions. The student was unable to deliver English words properly and naturally. Even though he/she seemed to understand the questions, his/her answer did not

relate directly to the topic. A lot of hesitations, filling pauses and word repetitions were used (see Appendix L) as well as gestures. The interview setting could also be one of the reasons for extreme anxiety. Both raters, an interviewer or a native speaker and a researcher, agree that this particular student appears to be unable to communicate with critical thinking and speaking skills.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. General recommendations for further study

The study should be conducted with a higher number of students such as the whole regular population, in order to provide more accurate results. To be more precise on the investigation of the improvement, an interview of first year students can be done, perhaps in a longitudinal study, in order to compare the ability of these groups. During the video recording, the native English interviewer and the student should sit in a more relaxed setting. In the methodology, students sat behind a desk to answer questions, which could make students nervous about being in a video.

2. Specific recommendations for course improvement

Further research should be conducted upon the pre and post data collection or to compare the first or second year student and fourth year student to see the difference of improvement more clearly. A similar course to 411331, conversational course, to emphasize conversation and discussion should be added in the third year. Meanwhile, it could be beneficial to introduce basic critical thinking in the first year of the English major. A study could be conducted with other topics

for discussion, for example popular culture, to determine a baseline using easy topics. Further study can be conducted in other productive skills, for example, critical thinking on current event issues through writing. Moreover, the results of the study can be helpful for the university curriculum concerning Thai social thought.

According to the interview with Ajarn Somjai Pinla in April 2010, the Thai social studies course is included as a compulsory subject for all first year students, but no similar course is taught in English, especially for the English major. Such a course may include entry-level exercises including critical thinking and critical speaking.

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