

# Fear Factors in Speaking English of Nursing Students: A Comparative Study of Ratchathani University and Boromarajonani College of Nursing Sanpasithiprasong

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## Abstract

This study aimed to compare the fear factors in speaking English of nursing students encounter while studying English. A comparative study from the previous study results, conducted with nursing students at Ratchathani University (RTU) and nursing students at Boromarajonani College of Nursing Sanpasithiprasong (BCNS), carried out in the 2014 and 2016 academic year. Statistics used to analyze the resulting data included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The Independent t-test was used to compare the overall results of each group. There was not a significant difference in the scores for Nursing students at RTU ( $M = 46.93\%$ ,  $S.D. = 7.86$ ) and scores for Nursing students at BCNS ( $M = 46.46\%$ ,  $S.D. = 18.24$ ) at the condition of  $t(38) = 0.106$ , and  $p = 0.916$ . The study results led school administrators to concern about the fear rate and fear factors in speaking English of nursing students and prepare the appropriate lessons to improve English speaking and decrease the students' fear rate.

**Keywords:** English speaking, Fear, Nursing students

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## Introduction

The English language is agreed to be interlingua between ASEAN Community (AC) member countries. Thailand is one of AC members. In 2015, free flow of skilled labors; for example, doctors, dentists, nurses, architects, accountants, is considered one of the key future drivers of knowledge transfer and competition (International Labor Organization, 2014, p. 4). To prepare the transferring of Thai skilled labor, the ability to communicate in English fluently is essential. Penprapa and Anuwat (2011, pp. 34-50) said that Thai laborers can work efficiently but cannot communicate in English. Consequently, many language institutions have short courses. According to the employer survey conducted by the Ministry of Labor in 2015, a large proportion of both semi-skilled and skilled Thai workers demonstrated lower-than-expected performance in terms of various skills, including English language, computing, mathematics, communication, management and occupational competency (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2017, p. 51). It is undeniable that the English language is the world's interlingua in every aspect: education, society, economic. International cooperation between countries uses English for communicating, data and knowledge transferring. Therefore, motivation of English language improvement will increasingly develop international affairs among countries worldwide.

English education in Thailand mostly concentrates on grammar and vocabulary memorization (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 1), which does not enable the learners to speak English in their real life (Nopporn, 2015, p. 3). There are many language institutes as a tutoring class out of the school system to improve English speaking ability. As a result, learning management in the school or university is ineffective, unable to improve English speaking ability as needed. Piset (2006, p. 14) stated that 99% of Thai people failed to communicate in English. The same situation occurred at the International students who study abroad as well. Two studies at the University of Alberta revealed that speaking and writing were found to be the main challenges for international students (Berman & Cheng, 2001, pp. 25-40; Chacon, 2000).

The previous studies conducted from Nursing students at Ratchathani University—RTU and Nursing students at Boromarajonani College of Nursing Sanpasithiprasong—BCNS, which were carried out in 2014 and 2016 academic year. The samples, selected by the Purposive Sampling method, comprised 149 and 155 Nursing students from each institution. The research tool used was a questionnaire containing 4 sections; 1. Demographic survey, 2. Fear factors in speaking English, 3. English conversation development activities and suggested teaching methods, and 4. Opinions about English conversation by rating and ranking level of satisfaction (5 scales). Questionnaire questions were tested using an index of item objective congruence (IOC) evaluated by three experts in the field. The IOC value was between 0.65 – 1.00. A pilot study was carried out with 10 Nursing students from other institutions in Ubonratchathani province to test the reliability by using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.95. The reliability was within the acceptable range thereby validating the questionnaire questions. Statistics used to analyze the resulting data included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The study from RTU (Methavee & Wisaroot, 2014, pp. 427-435) showed that the fear levels in English Speaking of Nursing students in Part 1: Causes of fear in English speaking, the highest score went to "Lack of sufficient amount of vocabulary to start an English conversation" (75.79%). The lowest score went to "No confident of speaking out because people will laugh at me" (37.34%). Part 2: English speaking improvement activities, the highest score went to "Practice English with foreigners often and continuous" (67.09%). The lowest score went to "Listen to English-speaking online radio" (16.46%). Part 3: Effective lesson plans for English speaking class, the highest score went to "Listen for main idea" (79.75%). The lowest score went to "Class presentation either alone or in group" (27.22%). Overall opinions toward English speaking were "Strongly agree" ( $\bar{X} = 4.81$ ), the highest one went to "English speaking needs English grammar knowledge" ( $\bar{X} = 4.87$ ), the lowest one went to "English speaking needs sufficient amount of vocabulary" ( $\bar{X} = 4.65$ ). Moreover, the researcher found that efficient teaching methods include inspiring the students to understand what they heard, recognizing the necessity of English communication, to realizing the advantage of English communicative skill and being aware of the fact that students will develop their

English communication when being under the lowest degree of fear. The study from BCNS (Methavee, Parichart, & Wilawan, 2016, pp. 245-259) demonstrated that the greatest cause of fear amongst students speaking English was “Not sure what grammar to use in each sentence” (52.41%), while the lowest cause of fear was “Afraid of being scoffed at by other people when pronouncing words incorrectly” (40.36%). The study also found that the highest rated improvement activity to be “Practice English with foreigners often and continuously” (69.88%), while the lowest rated was “Buy English conversation self-improvement CD / DVD” (37.95%). Additionally, an effective lesson plan technique which scored the highest was “Memorizing vocabulary in a group of words, e.g., dressing items” (54.22%), while the lowest one was “Individual / Group presentation in front of the class” (36.14%). Moreover, from the overall opinions about English conversation by rating and ranking levels of satisfaction, the study showed a high number of participants chose “Agree” ( $\bar{X} = 4.27$ ). The highest choice was “English speaking needs to think of vocabularies” ( $\bar{X} = 4.95$ ) and the lowest choice was “English speaking causes some stress” ( $\bar{X} = 3.66$ ).

## Research objective

To study whether there is a significant difference between scores from the previous research studies of the fear factors in speaking English of Nursing students at Ratchathani University—RTU (Methavee, & Wisaroot, 2014, pp. 427-435) and Boromarajonani College of Nursing Sanpasithiprasong—BCNS (Methavee, Parichart, & Wilawan, 2016, pp. 245-259), Ubonratchathani province, Thailand.

## Research Methodology

### 1. Population and Sample

Population of the study is the Nursing students, who are currently studying in Ubonratchathani province, consisted of 700 students (Thailand Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2016, pp. 1).

Samples of the first study were the Nursing students in Ratchathani university consisted of 149 students and the samples of the second study were the Nursing students in

Boromarajonani College of Nursing Sanpasithiprasong consisted of 155 students determined with the reference to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970, pp. 607-610) table, where the minimum sample size for population with  $N = 700$  is  $n = 142$  (the sample proportion  $p$  is within  $\pm 0.15$  of the population proportion  $P$  with a 95% level of confidence).

## **2. Research tool**

The comparison analysis between Ratchathani university and Boromarajonani College of Nursing Sanpasithiprasong results used frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and the Independent t-test.

## **3. Data collection**

The same research tool, which was a questionnaire containing 4 sections; 1. Demographic survey, 2. Fear factors in speaking English, 3. English conversation development activities and suggested teaching methods, and 4. Opinions about English conversation by rating and ranking level of satisfaction (5 scales), was used with both previous studies. The scores from the previous research studies of the fear factors in speaking English of Nursing students were used to compare and analyze section by section.

## **4. Data analysis**

Section 1: Analysis of demographic survey of gender, age, college year, and domicile by using percentage due to the different sample numbers of each study.

Section 2: Analysis of fear factors in speaking English by considering the percentage of each fear factor.

Section 3: Analysis of English conversation development activities and suggested teaching methods by considering the percentage of each activity/ each teaching method.

Section 4: Analysis of opinions about English conversation by rating and ranking level of satisfaction.

Finally, the Independent t-test was used to compare the results from each section.

## Conclusion and discussion

### Conclusion

**Section 1.** Analysis of demographic survey of gender, age, college year, and domicile.

**Table 1:** Demographic survey of gender, age\*, college year, and domicile.

Demographic survey	RTU (N=149)		BCNS (N=155)	
	Amount	%	Amount	%
1. Gender				
- Female	124	83.22	136	87.74
- Male	15	10.07	10	6.45
- Not specified	10	6.71	9	5.81
2. College year				
- First year	84	56.38	-	-
- Second year	38	25.50	82	52.90
- Third year	7	4.70	56	36.13
- Fourth year	14	9.40	12	7.74
- Not specified	6	4.03	5	3.23
3. Domicile				
- Ubonratchathani	53	35.57	69	44.52
- Sisaket	49	32.89	37	23.87
- Yasothon	15	10.07	13	8.39
- Amnat Charoen	21	14.09	11	7.10
- Surin	2	1.34	8	5.16
- Nakhon Panom	5	3.36	4	2.58
- Others	4	2.68	13	8.39

\* RTU: average age was 18.92 years old. BCNS: average age was 20.56 years old.

## Section 2. Analysis of fear factors in speaking English.

**Table 2:** Fear factors in speaking English

Fear factors in speaking English	Number of respondents			
	RTU	%	BCNS	%
1. Don't understand what people said, either how to response	95	60.13	69	41.56
2. Feeling shy to speak out. Have to think of building words to sentences. Awkward speaking	75	47.47	74	44.58
3. Lack of sufficient amount of vocabulary to start an English conversation	126	79.75	81	48.80
4. Not sure what grammar to use in each sentence	88	55.70	87	52.41
5. Afraid of making others don't understand	68	43.04	73	43.98
6. Afraid of being scoffed at by other people when pronouncing words incorrectly	59	37.34	67	40.36
	Base* = 149		Base* = 155	

\* More than one answer allowed

From table 2, the results concluded from the RTU nursing students showed that fear factors in speaking English they agreed the most were “Lack of sufficient amount of vocabulary to start an English conversation,” then “Don't understand what people said, either how to response,” “Not sure what grammar to use in each sentence,” “Feeling shy to speak out. Have to think of building words to sentences. Awkward speaking,” “Afraid of making others don't understand,” and “Afraid of being scoffed at by other people when pronouncing words incorrectly” respectively.

In addition, the results from the BCNS nursing students showed that fear factors in speaking English they agreed the most were “Not sure what grammar to use in each sentence,” then “Lack of sufficient amount of vocabulary to start an English conversation,” “Feeling shy to speak out. Have to think of building words to sentences. Awkward speaking,” “Afraid of making others don't understand,” “Don't understand what people said, either how to response,” and “Afraid of being scoffed at by other people when pronouncing words incorrectly” respectively.

**Table 3:** Comparison between RTU's and BCNS's Fear factors in speaking English Group Statistics

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SUM	1	45.2817	4.54867	1.85699
	2	53.9050	15.12477	6.17466

The Independent t-test was used to compare the results from each group. There was not a significant difference in the scores for Nursing students at RTU ( $M = 45.28\%$ ,  $S.D. = 4.55$ ) and scores for Nursing students at BCNS ( $M = 53.91\%$ ,  $S.D. = 15.12$ ) conditions;  $t(10) = 0.1337$ ,  $p = 0.211$ .



**Section 4.** Analysis of English conversation development activities and suggested teaching methods.

**Table 4:** English conversation development activities

English conversation development activities	Number of respondents			
	RTU	%	BCNS	%
1. Special classes / tutoring classes	95	60.13	75	45.18
2. Buy English conversation self-improvement CD / DVD	65	41.14	63	37.95
3. Practice English with foreigners often and continuously	106	67.09	116	69.88
4. Watch English-speaking movie often	91	57.59	97	58.43
5. Listen to English-speaking online radio often	26	16.46	68	40.96
6. Play online games from other countries often	43	27.22	65	39.16
	Base* = 149		Base* = 155	

\* More than one answer allowed

From table 4, the results concluded from the RTU nursing students showed that English conversation development activities they found most effective were “Practice English with foreigners often and continuously,” then having “Special classes / tutoring classes,” “Watch English-speaking movie often,” “Buy English conversation self-improvement CD / DVD,” “Play online games from other countries often,” and “Listen to English-speaking online radio often” respectively.

Moreover, the results concluded from the BCNS nursing students showed that English conversation development activities they found most effective were “Practice English with foreigners often and continuously,” then “Watch English-speaking movie often,” having “Special classes / tutoring classes,” “Listen to English-speaking online radio often,” “Play online games from other countries often,” and “Buy English conversation self-improvement CD / DVD” respectively.

**Table 5:** Comparison between RTU's and BCNS's English conversation development activities**Group Statistics**

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SUM	1	6	48.5933	12.82240	5.23472
	2	6	44.9383	20.10438	8.20758

The Independent t-test was used to compare the results from each group. There was not a significant difference in the scores for Nursing students at RTU ( $M = 48.59\%$ ,  $S.D. = 12.82$ ) and scores for Nursing students at BCNS ( $M = 44.94\%$ ,  $S.D. = 20.10$ ) conditions;  $t(10) = 0.375$ ,  $p = 0.715$ .

**Table 6:** Suggested teaching methods to improve English speaking

Suggested teaching methods to improve English speaking	Number of respondents			
	RTU	%	BCNS	%
1. Individual / Group presentation in front of the class	43	27.22	60	36.14
2. Listen for a main idea of given conversation	126	79.75	71	42.77
3. Watching movie and group discussion	52	32.91	85	51.20
4. Memorizing vocabulary in a group of words, e.g., dressing items	96	60.76	90	54.22
5. English speaking role play	61	38.61	79	47.59
6. Playing games using English speaking	71	44.94	78	46.99
7. Interviewing foreigners and writing English report	48	30.38	83	50.00
8. Writing an essay and discussion with classmates	34	21.52	77	46.39
	Base* = 149		Base* = 155	

\* More than one answer allowed

From table 6, the results gathered from the RTU nursing students stated that suggested teaching methods to improve English speaking they most recommend were “Listen for a main idea of given conversation,” then “Memorizing vocabulary in a group of words, e.g., dressing items,” “Playing games using English speaking,” “English speaking role play,” “Watching movie and group discussion,” “Interviewing foreigners and writing English report,” “Individual / Group presentation in front of the class,” and “Wring an essay and discussion with classmates” respectively.

Also, the results gathered from the BCNS nursing students stated that suggested teaching methods to improve English speaking they most recommend were “Memorizing vocabulary in a group of words, e.g., dressing items,” then “Watching movie and group discussion,” “Interviewing foreigners and writing English report,” “English speaking role play,” “Playing games using English speaking,” “Wring an essay and discussion with classmates,” “Listen for a main idea of given conversation,” and “Individual / Group presentation in front of the class” respectively.

**Table 7:** Comparison between RTU’s and BCNS’s suggested teaching methods to improve English speaking

#### Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SUM	1	8	46.9125	5.54540	1.96059
	2	8	42.0113	19.46670	6.88252

The Independent t-test was used to compare the results from each group. There was not a significant difference in the scores for Nursing students at RTU ( $M = 46.91\%$ ,  $S.D. = 5.55$ ) and scores for Nursing students at BCNS ( $M = 42.01\%$ ,  $S.D. = 19.47$ ) conditions;  $t(14) = 0.685$ ,  $p = 0.505$ .

**Section 4.** Analysis of opinions about English conversation by rating and ranking level of satisfaction (5-point Likert scale).

**Table 8:** Opinions about English conversation

English conversation	RTU			BCNS		
	M	S.D.	Fear Ranking	M	S.D.	Fear Ranking
a. English speaking needs to concern about grammar	4.87	0.32	1	4.42	0.88	1
b. English speaking concerns mostly about pronouncing words	4.83	0.42	8	4.70	0.90	7
c. English speaking needs to think of vocabularies	4.65	0.48	10	4.95	0.80	9
d. English speaking needs to practice often	4.87	0.36	3	4.13	1.01	3
e. Low listening ability causes difficulty in English conversation	4.84	0.44	5	4.75	1.05	5
f. Thai people don't need to speak English	4.87	0.33	2	3.94	1.12	10
g. English speaking causes some stress	4.83	0.41	7	3.66	1.04	6
h. English speaking causes embarrassment	4.65	0.47	9	4.22	1.03	2
i. English speaking causes people to look down	4.87	0.39	4	3.98	1.00	4
j. English practicing is wasting time	4.84	0.45	6	3.99	1.03	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.81</b>	<b>0.40</b>		<b>4.27</b>	<b>0.99</b>	

From table 8, the results concluded from the RTU nursing students revealed that opinions about English conversation by rating and ranking level of satisfaction they most satisfied were “English speaking needs to concern about grammar,” then “Thai people don't need to speak English,” “English speaking needs to practice often,” “English speaking causes people to look down,” “Low listening ability causes difficulty in English conversation,” “English practicing is wasting time,” “English speaking causes some stress,” “English speaking concerns mostly about pronouncing words,” “English speaking causes embarrassment,” and “English speaking needs to think of vocabularies” respectively.

In addition, the results concluded from the BCNS nursing students revealed that opinions about English conversation by rating and ranking level of satisfaction they most satisfied were “English speaking needs to concern about grammar,” then “English speaking causes embarrassment,” “English speaking needs to practice often,” “English speaking causes people to look down,” “Low listening ability causes difficulty in English conversation,” “English speaking causes some stress,” “English speaking concerns mostly about pronouncing words,” “English practicing is wasting time,” “English speaking needs to think of vocabularies,” and “Thai people don't need to speak English” respectively.

**Table 9:** Overall comparison

**Group Statistics**

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SUM	1	20	46.9275	7.85958	1.75745
	2	20	46.4575	18.24134	4.07889

The Independent t-test was used to compare the overall results from each group. There was not a significant difference in the scores for Nursing students at RTU ( $M = 46.93\%$ ,  $S.D. = 7.86$ ) and scores for Nursing students at BCNS ( $M = 46.46\%$ ,  $S.D. = 18.24$ ) conditions;  $t(38) = 0.106$ ,  $p = 0.916$ .

**Discussion**

The results from all sections of the survey showed that fear factors in speaking English are “Don't understand what people said, either how to response,” “Feeling shy to

speak out. Have to think of building words to sentences. Awkward speaking,” “Lack of sufficient amount of vocabulary to start an English conversation,” “Not sure what grammar to use in each sentence,” “Afraid of making others don't understand,” and “Afraid of being scoffed at by other people when pronouncing words incorrectly.” All of these factors cause the students from both institutions feeling unconfident to speak English. Therefore, they are afraid of speaking English and are reluctant to make an English conversation with their classmates or foreigners. Usanee Pothisuk (1999, p. 42) defined self-confidence as feeling, thinking, or believe in self ability. Rosenberg (Rosenberg, M's Self-Esteem, 1965, p.95) defined as satisfied or unsatisfied with us. McCroskey, Richmond, and Stewart (1986, pp. 276-298) said that suggested that assertiveness and responsiveness are two of the three critical components of interpersonal communication competence. Thus, if immediacy is as powerful a factor as the McCroskey et. al's analysis is correct, both the assertiveness trait and the responsiveness trait should be highly associated with an individual's immediacy behavior. Thai students are pronouncing words incorrectly, use wrong grammar, or do not have enough vocabularies counted as two of the three critical components of interpersonal communication competence. Therefore, students fear to speak out in English. Both groups of the students from this study showed not significantly difference in fear factors or English motivation activities or suggested teaching methods.

“English speaking needs to concern about grammar” is ranked number one for the most fear factor in English speaking compatible with the research of Chen (2007, pp. 860-879.) that learners, even though motivated by other reasons, may make minimum effort because they do not believe that they have the ability to accomplish the learning tasks. Keller (1999, pp. 7-30) also said that the primary indicator of motivation is effort, “which is one of the most crucial influences on performance.” Thus, one who is motivated is more likely to make more effort, which results in better performance. However, learners can be motivated for a variety of reasons, but make minimum effort in learning. One of the explanations of this phenomenon could be that the extent to which one makes an effort is influenced by some internal factors, such as his/her internal feeling of confidence. The respondents also ranked “English speaking needs to practice often” for the number three. Any English improvement activity, that effectively improve the ability to listen and to speak English, is the way to decrease students' fear factors in speaking English.

Remarkably, many respondents think that “Practice English with foreigners often and continuously” can improve their ability to speak English; especially with the foreigners who are English native speakers. Practice English with the English native speakers give students a chance to listen to clear English speaking and learn how to pronounce words correctly. Moreover, the respondents think that “Listen to English-speaking online radio often” can improve English speaking because listening to English-speaking online radio is different from watching news or other TV programs, which give a chance to students to observe lips of the speakers in order to guess the words they have heard. The respondents also chose “Watch English-speaking movie often” as the activity that they think will be able to improve their ability to speak English because watching English-speaking movie give a chance to the students to practice listening skill and learn the vocabularies.

### **Recommendation**

School administrators and English teachers should consider having fear rated in speaking English test for students before entering the classroom. By doing that, the educators will have a chance to prepare the appropriate lessons to improve English speaking and decrease fear rate for the students.

Practicing English with the English native speakers is a good way for English-speaking practice activities for university students because students will have a chance to listen to the correct pronunciation and imitate the sound of each word. Therefore, the educators may consider offering “Speaking English” lab or suggesting English club that operated by the English native speakers. Those activities are extra-curricular, so English native speakers and students can design their preferred activities freely.

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