

การสำรวจทัศนคติของนักศึกษาสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ หลักสูตรครุศาสตรบัณฑิต
เกี่ยวกับการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครูในสถานศึกษา
An Investigation of Thai Pre-service English Teachers' Perceptions Towards
Using English as The Medium of Instruction in Teaching Practicum

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยเชิงสำรวจนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 1. เพื่อสำรวจทัศนคติของนักศึกษาสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ หลักสูตรครุศาสตรบัณฑิตเกี่ยวกับการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครู 2. เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครู และ 3. เพื่อศึกษาอุปสรรคและปัญหาเกี่ยวกับการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครู กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยคือ นักศึกษาสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ หลักสูตรครุศาสตรบัณฑิต จำนวน 40 คน ที่กำลังฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครูในสถานศึกษา งานวิจัยนี้ใช้วิธีวิจัยแบบผสมในการเก็บข้อมูลและวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล โดยเครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูลได้แก่ แบบสอบถามออนไลน์ จำนวน 21 คำถาม และการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างที่เกี่ยวกับการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครู ผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณพบว่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างส่วนใหญ่เห็นว่าการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการสอนในระหว่างการฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครูในสถานศึกษาเป็นสิ่งสำคัญ แต่อย่างไรก็ตามมีจำนวนกลุ่มตัวอย่างน้อยกว่าครึ่งที่เห็นด้วยเป็นอย่างมากว่าพยายามใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการสอน นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณชี้ให้เห็นว่ากลุ่มตัวอย่างส่วนใหญ่หลีกเลี่ยงการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในขณะฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครูในสถานศึกษาเนื่องจากมีความเห็นว่ามันยากและไม่เข้าใจ บทเรียนการสอนเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ และกลุ่มตัวอย่างส่วนหนึ่งกล่าวว่ารู้สึกไม่มั่นใจในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในเรื่องคำศัพท์ ไวยากรณ์ และการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษ จึงทำให้เกิดความวิตกกังวลเวลาพูดภาษาอังกฤษ จากผลการศึกษาดังกล่าวแสดงให้เห็นว่ามหาวิทยาลัยควรมีการจัดกิจกรรมหรือการฝึกอบรมเพิ่มเติมให้แก่ นักศึกษาสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ หลักสูตรครุศาสตรบัณฑิตเพื่อลดความวิตกกังวลและเพื่อเป็นการเตรียมความพร้อมก่อนออกฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครูในสถานศึกษา

คำสำคัญ: ความวิตกกังวลในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ, ทัศนคติ, นักศึกษาเตรียมฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครู, ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ

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Abstract

This exploratory study aims to 1. investigate the perceptions of Thai pre-service English teachers towards using English as the medium of instruction in schools, 2. to explore the factors that motivate Thai pre-service teachers to speak English as the medium of instruction, and 3. to explore the challenges Thai pre-service teachers have on using English as the medium of instruction in teaching practicum. The participants were 40 students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teacher Training Program at a university in the central region of Thailand, who attended the Teaching Practicum. A mixed methods research design was employed as a data collection and analysis tool. The research instruments were an online survey with 21 questions that related to perceptions towards using English when teaching during their practicum experience and semi-structured interview. The quantitative results showed that more than half of participants agreed that using English when teaching is important, however, less than half of them strongly agreed that they tried to use English as much as they should. The qualitative results indicated that the participants avoid using English when teaching because they are concerned about their English competence including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Additionally, most of the participants perceived that using English when teaching in the classroom may cause difficulties for their students to understand, causing unwillingness to speak English. Based on the findings, the study showed there is a need to determine strategies or provide training to decrease Thai pre-service English teachers' foreign language speaking anxiety.

Keywords: English language Speaking Anxiety, Perceptions, Pre-service Teachers, Teaching Practicum, English as a Foreign Language

Introduction

In the past decades, English teaching and learning has been one of the most debated issues in Thailand, even though enhancing its quality level is emphasized as one of the most important policies in the National Education Act (NEA) of 1999 and accordingly necessary actions were taken by the Ministry of Education. Thai students' English proficiency level, however continues to lag far behind other Asian countries (Halilinger & Lee, 2011; Kantavonga, Nethanomsak, & Luang-ungkool, 2012). In 2020, Education First, an international education company, reported that Thailand ranked the 89th out of 100 countries across the world, which fell into “very low proficiency” for English language skills. Moreover, a significant amount of funds and time have been invested by the Thai government to motivate both teachers and students at all educational levels to develop their English skills. However, it is still not fully successful because it seems the true problems have not been properly addressed, and thus they still remain unsolved.

Significance of the study

In Thailand, compulsory education mandates nine years from elementary school to lower secondary school (i.e., from Grade 1 through Grade 9). The English language is a mandatory subject from Grade 1 and continues through the university level. Although Thai people have studied English for more than 10 years, the ability to use English in daily life to speak English in personal and professional settings is still a challenge after years of formal instruction (Noom-Ura, 2013; Vibulphol, 2016). English is spoken as a foreign language in Thailand; as a result, the opportunity for Thai people to use English in daily life is rather limited (Charoensukmongkol, 2019; Tantiachai, 2016). Moreover, Thai people are shy and lack of confidence to speak English in public (Ka-kan-dee & Al-Shaibani, 2018). This is still true even though Thailand welcomed nearly 40 million foreign visitors in 2019. According to Ka-kan-dee and Al-Shaibani (2018), Thai EFL students majoring in Tourism tend to avoid speaking English because they have high level of anxiety when having English conversation (60%) and more than 60% for public speaking. Similarly, in the English classrooms, the majority of Thai students and teachers are unwilling to speak English because of various reasons. For instance, they are much concerned about making mistakes and errors in front of other people because they do not want to lose face. It seems that this characteristic of Thai people makes it very difficult to

develop their English-speaking skills (Akkakoson, 2016; Basilio & Wongrak, 2017; Un-udom, S., Jampeehom, K., & Chaidet, C., 2017).

After having taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a university in Thailand and also served as a supervisor of pre-service English teachers for several years, the researcher (first author) realized that one of the main problems regarding Thai students' English acquisition is a lack of quality teaching, as noted by Noom-Ura (2013) and Ulla (2018). Moreover, from the researcher's own teaching experience, it appears that one of the efficient ways to solve the problems of English teaching and learning in Thailand is improving the quality of teaching, especially that of pre-service English teachers. This is quite critical since they are very likely to make a strong influence on their future students' learning processes and their outcomes. However, the researcher (first author), as their supervisor, noticed that most of the seniors in the EFL teacher training program hardly spoke English during their teaching practicum in school. Furthermore, most pre-service English teachers do not follow the recommendations from their supervisors and mentors, have asked them to use English as the medium of instruction in their teaching. Consequently, both the students and teachers had few opportunities to use English and develop their English listening and speaking skills despite the fact that they were in an English classroom. Additionally, although the pre-service English teachers enrolled in many courses related to English teaching and English language arts at the university, to make themselves better prepared before their teaching practicum, they had a little chance to practice speaking English and to develop their speaking skills. This critical lack appears to be a true and essential problem. They also need to learn to speak English with more accurate pronunciation as what they speak will be taken as a model for their students and it is very likely to be imitated.

According to previous studies, pre-service teachers and university teachers continue to avoid speaking English while they teach English, and this still remains as one of the largest problems in the EFL context (Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2013; Klaichim, 2014; Klantrit & Sroinam, 2012). In recent decades, most of the studies on the pre-service EFL teachers in Thailand did not examine their English-speaking skills. Instead, they explored the pre-service teachers' problems, needs, anxiety, and motivation towards teaching practicum (Klaichim, 2014; Klantrit & Sroinam, 2012; Noom-ura, 2013). Although some previous studies aimed to investigate the Thai pre-service English teacher's speaking skills, the issues have not yet been fully uncovered, and, thus, we still do not know about their various aspects in detail (Kahamprated, 2012;

Ngowananchai, 2012; Vibulphol, 2016). The purpose of this exploratory study is to provide empirical evidence on the perceptions of students in a Thai university EFL teacher training program towards their using English as the medium of instruction in the teaching practicum. The study also attempted to uncover the factors and challenges possibly related to these perceptions and beliefs. The findings of this study described what the Thai pre-service English teachers think about using English in class as the medium of classroom instruction. In addition, this study provided important information pertaining to how to motivate Thai teachers, both pre-service and in-service teachers, to use English more frequently in their teaching.

Research Questions

1. What do Thai pre-service English teachers perceive the frequency of their speaking English and using it as the medium of classroom instruction in their teaching?
2. What factors do Thai pre-service teachers perceive impact their motivation to speak English and use it as the medium of classroom instruction in their teaching?
3. What challenges do Thai pre-service teachers perceive, regarding their speaking English and using it as the medium of classroom instruction in their teaching?

Method

A mixed methods research approach was employed in this exploratory study. In other words, data collection and data analysis from both quantitative and qualitative research were integrated in order to answer the research questions and to gain insight into participants' perceptions rigorously (Creswell, & Creswell, 2017). Also, the mixed methods research allows the researchers to apply the triangulation method in order to compare data from more than one source and to find its consistency (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016).

1. Participants

This study was conducted in an undergraduate English teacher training program at the university in the central part of Thailand in 2019. The intact group of participants ($N = 40$) who enrolled in a teaching practicum I and II during the academic year of 2018 before graduation voluntarily completed an online survey. According to the demographic data shared on the questionnaire, the participants' ages ranged from 20-25 years old. In addition, 12 % of them are males and 88% are females. All participants speak Thai as their first and official language.

Further, 25% of the participants were in a short-term exchange student program abroad and 28% were English tutor.

2. Sample Selection

Thai pre-service English teachers were selected via homogenous sampling (Pajo, 2017). It is a subtype of purposive sampling that “...participants are chosen based on a trait or characteristic of interest to the researcher” (Pajo, 2017, p. 144). To recruit the participants, after the researcher received the approval from the International Review Board (IRB), the head of the English teachers training program invited all of the students who enrolled in Teaching Practicum Courses I and II to participate in this study and asked to complete an online survey. The researchers and the head of the English teacher training program informed the participants that the results from this research will be confidential and used for research purposes only and their responses to the survey would not affect their degree.

3. Research Instruments

The quantitative data in this study was collected by the online survey. The language used in this survey was Thai so that the participants would clearly understand the content. The English translation of the survey was proofread by a native English speaker who was a graduate student in the English program. The participants in this study were asked to complete the survey, which includes two parts, namely reporting of demographic data and responding to statements. Demographic data includes gender, age, the experience of studying abroad, and experience of tutoring the English language. The participants rated each statement using a 5-level Likert scale item from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. To determine the validity and reliability of the survey, the researchers received expert opinions from three professors in the Literacy program. There are 25 statements that relate to perceptions towards using English when teaching during practicum, however, four questions were screened out according to the experts’ feedback as they were considered unclear in meaning. The quantitative data from a completed online survey was analyzed using statistical analyses include frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviations.

4. Semi-Structured Interviews

The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured online interviews via Line application, which is one of the most popular freeware mobile apps among Thai people. Online interviews were employed in this process because the participants were in Thailand while the researchers were in the United States. The participants ($n = 6$) were selected via convenience

sampling, which is a non-probability sampling procedure, as they were part of the larger study and volunteered to be interviewed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The academic advisor of this cohort asked all participants about their willingness to volunteer as interviewees. Eventually, six participants agreed to participate in the interviews. Interviewees were asked to respond to 10 open-ended questions. All interviewees were given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. Each participant was interviewed virtually in Thai language for 30 - 45 minutes with one of the researchers who is Thai. The conversations were voice-recorded and transcribed afterwards. The questions related to teaching experience, perspectives towards using English as the medium of instruction when teaching in the classroom as well as factors and challenges that participants encountered while speaking English when teaching. The English translation version of the excerpts from the interviews was proofread by two native English speakers.

In terms of data analysis, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data from the verbatim transcriptions. After the initial codes were generated, the emerged themes were identified from combining codes as a result of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding was created based on the features of the data that related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings

This section illustrates the results of the study using descriptive statistical analyses of survey item responses, followed by the qualitative data and discussion of the findings.

Quantitative Data Results

The results of descriptive analyses from the survey revealed that generally the majority of participants rated the items moderately to positively within the five themes. Specifically, out of 21 questions, the mean scores of 10 items were above 4.00 while the remaining 11 items were rated between 2.75 and 4.00. Table 1 illustrates Thai pre-service English teachers' perceptions on speaking English as a language of instruction in teaching practicum.

Table 1 Summary of percentage, means, and standard deviations for the response of Thai pre-service English teachers' perceptions on speaking English as a medium of instruction in teaching practicum

Items and Item Descriptions	Participants (N = 40)						
	(1) Strongly disagree (%)	(2) Somewhat disagree (%)	(3) Neither (%)	(4) Some what agree (%)	(5) Strongly agree (%)	Mean	SD
1. Motivational factors on speaking English when teaching							
I believe the more I speak English when teaching, the better my English will improve.	0.00	0.00	5.00	42.50	52.40	4.47	1.73
I believe that the more I use English in teaching practicum, the better my students' English will improve.	0.00	0.00	7.50	32.50	60.00	4.50	1.75
I believe teaching in the Thai language will be clearer and easier for students to understand.	2.50	2.50	27.50	37.50	30	3.90	1.45
2. Importance of speaking English in the classroom							
Using English when teaching is important.	0.00	0.00	5.00	27.50	67.50	4.62	1.80
I prefer speaking Thai when teaching.	10.00	17.50	22.50	35.00	15.00	3.27	1.13
I wish I could speak	2.50	2.50	12.50	37.50	45.00	4.20	1.60

Items and Item Descriptions	Participants (N = 40)						
	(1) Strongly disagree (%)	(2) Somewhat disagree (%)	(3) Neither (%)	(4) Some what agree (%)	(5) Strongly agree (%)	Mean	SD
English more when teaching, both in the first and the second semester.							
I wish I could use English more when I become an in-service teacher.	0.00	0.00	10.00	37.50	52.50	4.42	1.71
3. Frequency of speaking English when teaching							
Although, it is not a university requirement to speak English when teaching, I tried to speak English as often as possible.	0.00	2.50	7.50	35.00	55.00	4.42	1.71
I tried to use English when teaching as much as I could no matter what.	5.00	7.50	10.00	35.00	42.50	4.05	1.52
I continued speaking English when teaching, even though my students had a negative reaction to it.	5.00	2.50	25.00	50.00	17.50	3.72	1.36

Items and Item Descriptions	Participants (N = 40)						
	(1) Strongly disagree (%)	(2) Somewhat disagree (%)	(3) Neither (%)	(4) Some what agree (%)	(5) Strongly agree (%)	Mean	SD
In second semester, I spoke English when teaching more than the first semester.	0.00	5.00	12.50	42.50	40.00	4.17	1.58
4. English proficiency affected on using English when teaching							
I do not wish to speak English when teaching because I am afraid that I will pronounce the words incorrectly.	30.00	15.00	12.50	35.00	7.50	2.75	0.87
I do not wish to speak English when teaching because I am afraid it would be grammatically incorrect.	15.00	22.50	17.50	35.00	10.00	3.02	1.01
I do not wish to speak English when teaching because I have not acquired much vocabulary.	7.50	30.00	7.50	50.00	5.00	3.15	1.07
How often I used English in my classroom is depending on	0.00	5.0	15.00	42.50	37.50	4.12	1.56

Items and Item Descriptions	Participants (N = 40)						
	(1) Strongly disagree (%)	(2) Somewhat disagree (%)	(3) Neither (%)	(4) Some what agree (%)	(5) Strongly agree (%)	Mean	SD
students' language proficiency.							
I do not wish to speak English when teaching because I believe if I am incorrect, my students would acquire bad habits of the English Language.	5.00	25.00	15.00	42.50	12.50	3.32	1.16
If I use English when teaching, I believe that many of my students will not be able to understand.	7.50	15.00	20.00	35.00	22.50	3.50	1.25
5. Obstacles affected on the use of English when teaching							
I do not wish to speak English when teaching if there are mentor teachers, supervisors or other teachers in the classroom.	7.50	27.50	5.00	47.50	12.50	3.30	1.15
I feel more confident to speak	2.50	0.00	2.50	47.50	47.50	4.37	1.68

Items and Item Descriptions	Participants (N = 40)						
	(1) Strongly disagree (%)	(2) Somewhat disagree (%)	(3) Neither (%)	(4) Some what agree (%)	(5) Strongly agree (%)	Mean	SD
English when teaching when I am only in the classroom with my students.							
I do not wish to speak English when teaching because it causes me to feel anxious or causes stress.	15.00	25.00	22.50	25.00	12.50	2.95	0.97
I do not wish to speak English when teaching because it would be more time consuming to prepare for the class.	17.50	20.00	22.50	32.50	7.50	2.92	0.96

Discussion of Themes

Theme 1: Motivational factors on speaking English when teaching

According to the results of the online survey, more than half of participants strongly believed that if they speak more English when teaching, not only their English but also their

students' English skills will be developed. For example, 52.4% of the participants strongly agreed that they believe the more they speak English when teaching, the better their English will improve.

Theme 2: Importance of speaking English in the classroom

The results for perceptions on the importance of speaking English in the classroom indicated participants perceived that speaking English when teaching is crucial, and they tried to speak more when teaching. Analyses indicated that 67.5% of participants believe that “using English when teaching is important” and 45% of participants reported that they wish they could speak English more when teaching, both in the first and the second semester.

Theme 3: Frequency of speaking English when teaching

The results of the survey also revealed that most participants tried to speak English as much as they can during teaching practicum. For instance, 55% of them strongly agreed that although it is not a university requirement to speak English when teaching, they tried to speak English as often as possible” and 42.5% of them also strongly agreed that they I will try to speak English as often as possible.

Theme 4: English proficiency affected on using English when teaching

Most of the participants agreed that students' English proficiency has an impact on their use of English when teaching. For example, 42.5% of participants agreed that how often they used English in my classroom is depending on their students' language proficiency, as well as they do not wish to speak English when teaching because they believe if they are incorrect, their students would acquire bad habits of the English Language.” Interestingly, this is in contrast to the similar percentage noted in the theme above in which participants state they use English as often as possible in teaching.

Theme 5: Obstacles affected on using English when teaching

There are some obstacles that participants reported being a cause of avoiding speaking English in the classroom. For example, 47% of participants strongly agreed that they feel more confident speaking English when they are only in the classroom with their students.

Qualitative Data Results

Based on the research questions, there are six themes that emerged through the interview data: 1) frequency of speaking English when teaching, 2) language choice, 3) language contact, 4) internal factors, 5) external factors, and 6) English language skills. The findings from

pre-service English Teachers' perceptions towards using EFL in their teaching practicum in suburban Thailand are reported specifically in relation to the three separated research questions as follows:

Research question 1: To what extent do Thai pre-service English teachers perceive they speak English as a foreign language when teaching in their classroom?

The results from the interviews demonstrated that the amount of using English in teaching practicum is varied by each participant. However, four participants admitted that they hardly used English as the medium of instruction. For example, Amilie stated, "I didn't use English often, and not every day". This is similar to Bella who indicated, "I didn't speak English a lot. I tried to use simple sentences. Well... I used to use English a lot, but students didn't pay attention to me at all.

Even though Thai pre-service English teachers did not frequently use English in their classroom, the results showed that sometimes they attempted to speak English either at the beginning of the class, during the class, or the end of the class. According to the results, English is most commonly used at the beginning of the class. This was shown in the excerpt below:

"At the beginning of the class, I often said 'please stand up... good morning, kind of greeting and warm up, like...open the book at page... something like this.'" (Maggie)

During the class, instruction generally is focused on the content and the participants stated they intentionally used Thai more than English as a participant exemplified below:

"So...I have to use 'Thai' in explanation, in order to enable them (students) to understand. Otherwise, they will not understand 'at all'." (Bella)

Before the end of the class, the participants identified that they often asked students in English if they had any questions related to the lesson. For example, Paula shared that she asked students, "Are there any questions? Do you have any questions or concerns?"

Regarding language choice, the participants determined to use either Thai or English, then if they spoke in English, it was followed by Thai translation. Occasionally they decided to use code switching (using English in discourse or sentences) or code mixing (using English in phrases or words), depending on situation and students' English proficiency:

“I prefer using English words or phrases, like look at the board, close the book, look at the book at page, then they (students) will be like...’ahhh I have to turn to this page’...then they will be able to memorize it.” (Maggie)

Research question 2: What factors do Thai pre-service teachers perceive impact their motivation to speak English and use it as the medium of classroom instruction in their teaching?

There are two main factors that influenced pre-service teachers to use or not use English in teaching practicum. First, the internal factors revealed that pre-service teachers felt uncomfortable using English in their classrooms. They had an anxiety and felt nervous when using English and that led them to avoid using English when teaching. Nicole and Amelie addressed their feelings when spoke English in their class:

“At the beginning of the semester, I was excited and nervous. I was worried and wondered if students will understand my English or not. Later on, I chose to speak easy English words or phrases like ‘repeat after me’ or whatever that they would understand me.” (Amelie)

Secondly, the external factors play a vital role to motivate pre-service teachers to use English more or less when teaching. Seven categories were found from this theme include students’ English proficiency, students’ reaction, pre-service teachers’ English proficiency, a mentor /supervisor, learning disabilities (LD) students, time limit, and students’ feedback. Thai pre-service teachers indicated that determining the use of English when teaching was mainly based on students’ English proficiency. They reported that the higher class, the better for speaking more English. In other words, Thai students who are placed in higher classrooms perform better in English skills and they have good reactions to teachers when they were taught in English. Unlike students who are in the lower-level class, their reactions to English made pre-service teachers feel uncomfortable using English as Amelie stated below.

“When I used English in a higher-level class, they had interacted with me. I really like it, and so do they. I felt like my teaching went smoothly. But when I used English in a lower-level class, they didn’t care about me. They talked, used their cellphones, played with their classmates or just sat still. Even I repeated it four to five times, they still didn’t understand.” (Amelie)

Additionally, pre-service English teachers reported that they prefer using Thai when teaching occasionally because there are a few students in the class with learning disabilities. As

a result, using Thai is easier to communicate with them. The following are excerpts from the interviews with Bella and Maggie.

“I was unfortunate that I had to teach lower-level classes with a few LD students. So, in order to make the class go smoothly, I decided to switch between Thai and English.” (Bella)

Furthermore, pre-service teachers’ using English in teaching practicum also depends on students’ feedback. Some of them reported that they determined to use Thai because students asked them to do so. As Amelie mentioned:

“Students will ask me, “Teacher, please speak Thai. I do not understand.” When I said I would translate for them, they said ‘Please use Thai.’ It’s easier to understand.” (Amelie)

Another interesting factor that influences pre-service teachers’ use of English when teaching is their mentors. Apparently, mentors are their role models. When they noticed that their mentors use Thai when teaching, then they decided to use Thai in their classroom as Paula indicated below:

“I used to observe my mentor’s teaching. She used Thai as a main medium language.” (Paula)

At both the elementary and high school levels, one class period lasts 50 minutes. Some pre-service teachers indicated that the short time period was an obstacle in using English when teaching, as noted in the following statement:

“Time constraint is also important. For example, it takes only 50 minutes for a primary level, teaching in Thai is faster. Whatever I said in Thai, students totally understand.” (Paula)

Research question 3: What challenges do Thai pre-service teachers perceive, regarding their speaking English and using it as the medium of classroom instruction in their teaching?

English language skills are the significant problems that pre-service teachers have when speaking English in the classroom. In this study, it showed three different areas of language obstacles: 1) pronunciation, 2) speaking, and 3) grammar. When asking participants what kind of problems they had when using English in the classroom. All of them identified that English pronunciation is the priority, some participants addressed below:

“Pronunciation is a big problem. I felt a lack of confidence when pronouncing /r/ and /l/. I always substitute /r/ with /l/.” (Paula)

“For me, I think I should improve my English pronunciation to be more accurate and clearer. But even though the kids have no idea if I pronounced the words correctly or not, I, myself know that it was incorrect. Therefore, I want to improve my pronunciation first, before I teach them.”
(Nicole)

Many of Thai pre-service English teachers also indicated that their speaking skills have an influence on using English in their classroom. They felt intimidated because their speaking of English is not strong enough as Jasmine addressed below:

“I have to improve my English speaking. For example, using long sentences, I cannot do it. I am good at using words or basic sentences in the classroom. But if they’re complex sentences, I still have to improve a lot.”
(Jasmine)

Moreover, some participants reported that along with pronunciation, grammar is also a language barrier that prevented them from using English when teaching as Paula stated below:

“My English grammar is poor. I am not sure how to form correct sentences in English, so I avoid speaking English when teaching.” (Paula)

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of Thai pre-service English teachers on using English as the medium of instruction during teaching practicum, as well as to explore factors and obstacles that influence their use of English as a language of instruction in school. The researchers found that a great deal of participants perceived speaking English when teaching as an essential issue, and they should speak English as often as possible although it is not a university requirement. However, some of the Thai pre-service English teachers reported that they do not feel comfortable in speaking English because of the English proficiency of their students and of themselves. In other words, the participants are concerned that their students would take what they speak in the class as a model and imitate it, and as the result, the students acquire inaccurate English language pronunciation. These results revealed Thai pre-service English teachers feel it is very important to be a good role model who can convey correct content knowledge to their students, which is a strong characteristic of an effective future teacher (Stronge, 2018). However, they feel intimidated to speak English in front of their classrooms. These findings from the present study agree relatively well with that from Göksel &

Rakicioglu - Söylemez (2018), EFL pre-service teachers in Turkey indicated that being able to use English fluently and correctly in the classroom is necessary for being an effective English teacher.

Regarding the factors in using English as the medium of instruction in teaching practicum, some participants addressed their limited knowledge and skills related to of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The findings are consistent with findings of past studies by Göksel and Rakicioglu-Söylemez (2018) in which Turkish pre-service English teachers rated pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary as the most important factors in their professional knowledge. However, pronunciation skills are considered the greatest issue for them. Consistent with Turkish pre-service teachers, all six interviewees in this study mentioned that they have poor pronunciation, for example they have difficulty pronouncing /r/ and /l/. The findings confirm previous studies that Thai students often mispronounce English words both in suprasegmental level and prosody level (Kitikanan, 2016; Nakina & Inpin, 2017; Sahatsathatsana, 2017).

Besides, foreign language anxiety can be experienced by EFL learners when they feel that they do not have enough knowledge and skills (Tran, 2012). In this study, some participants reported that they were nervous and excited when using English in front of the classroom. These results support Yaikhong & Usaha (2012) that many Thai pre-service English teachers experience fear and anxiety of foreign language speaking in a public speaking class. Kafes (2018) asserted that a lack of good pronunciation can cause anxiety to EFL students, as a result, English teachers should pay closer attention to students' pronunciation anxiety and help them gain more confidence when speaking English.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study revealed that even though a large number of participants positively agreed that speaking English when teaching is essential, there are many factors that influence Thai pre-service English teachers' use of English in their practicum. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, English classrooms should be a place where both teachers and students can practice their English as much as possible in a risk-free environment. However, the results of this study revealed that most participants use both English and Thai when teaching based on internal and external factors. One of the main reasons why they decide to use Thai is because of difficult aspects of English language learning, particularly English pronunciation and grammar,

which cause anxiety. All participants reported in the semi-structured interview that they avoided the use of English because they were afraid of mispronunciation.

Furthermore, although Thai pre-service English teachers are not required from the university to speak only English in the class, according to the interviews, all participants indicated that their supervisors consistently asked them to use English as much as possible. Therefore, the participants recommended that prior to teaching practicum, it would be beneficial if the English training program provide them an intensive training, particularly improving pronunciation or speaking skills for a few weeks prior to teaching practicum. Additionally, English instructors should try to help Thai pre-service English teachers to enhance their pronunciation skills by using various kinds of activities to motivate them to practice and engage them to speak English more in and outside the classroom (Lucarevski, 2018; Nakina & Inpin, 2017).

This study has attempted to gain a better understanding of Thai pre-service English teachers' use of English as a language of instruction in teaching practicum. However, it only illustrated a snapshot of perceptions of a small group of participants. There are some considerations for future research. First expanding to a large population would be worthy of exploration. In addition, it would be of interest to explore the perceptions of more diverse ethnic groups of pre-service teachers learning English as a foreign language. This study revealed fear and anxiety of Thai pre-service teachers when speaking English, however, more research in teaching strategies may be conducted to determine effective approaches to decrease anxiety while increasing speaking skills. Inter-rater reliability was applied in this study; however, one researcher, who speaks Thai, translated the qualitative responses in English and completed the initial coding, with a second rater verifying the coding. In future research, adding a member checking layer to data analysis would support the findings by having participants verify the transcripts in their first language, Thai.

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