

# **การสำรวจความคิดเห็นที่มีต่อสาเหตุของ ความสามารถด้านการฟังในระดับที่ต่ำ ในวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ 2 ของนิสิตชั้นปีที่ 1 มหาวิทยาลัยทักษิณ วิทยาเขตพัทลุง**

**A Survey on First-Year Students' Opinions  
Concerning Causes of Their Low Performance  
in Listening in the English II Course at  
Thaksin University, Phatthalung**

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## **บทคัดย่อ**

การศึกษานี้มุ่งสำรวจความคิดเห็นที่มีต่อสาเหตุของความสามารถด้านการฟังในระดับที่ต่ำในวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ 2 ของนิสิตชั้นปีที่ 1 มหาวิทยาลัยทักษิณ วิทยาเขตพัทลุง กลุ่มประชากรในการวิจัยคือนิสิตจำนวน 264 คน จาก คณะวิทยาศาสตร์ คณะสาธารณสุขศาสตร์และวิทยาการการกีฬา และ คณะเทคโนโลยีและพัฒนาชุมชน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูลคือ แบบสอบถามสำหรับนิสิต

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ในแบบสอบถาม เพื่อสำรวจความคิดเห็นของนิสิต ผู้วิจัยได้พิจารณาปัจจัย 6 ประการ ที่เป็นสาเหตุให้นิสิตมีความสามารถด้านการฟังในระดับที่ต่ำ ปัจจัยดังกล่าวคือ ความรู้พื้นฐานทางภาษาที่สองของนิสิต แรงจูงใจนิสิต กลยุทธ์ในการเรียนของนิสิต กลยุทธ์ในการเรียนนิสิต วิธีการสอนของครู สภาพแวดล้อมในชั้นเรียน และสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกในชั้นเรียน ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณ ผู้วิจัยได้ใช้โปรแกรมสถิติสำเร็จรูปสำหรับสังคมศาสตร์ (SPSS) ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณในส่วนของข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพ ผู้วิจัยได้ใช้วิธีการอภิปรายผลข้อมูลผลของข้อมูลซึ่งวิเคราะห์จากค่าเฉลี่ยรวมของปัจจัยทั้งหมด ประการ พบว่านิสิตส่วนใหญ่ไม่เห็นด้วยกับปัจจัยดังกล่าวว่าเป็นสาเหตุของความสามารถด้านการฟังในระดับที่ต่ำ อย่างไรก็ตาม ถ้าพิจารณาจากค่าเฉลี่ยของแต่ละปัจจัยย่อย พบว่ามีปัจจัยย่อย 6 ประการ ที่นิสิตส่วนใหญ่เห็นด้วยว่าเป็นสาเหตุของความสามารถด้านการฟังในระดับที่ต่ำ ปัจจัยย่อยที่กล่าวถึงคือ (1) ฉันไม่เคยเรียนทักษะอ่านและเขียนมากกว่าทักษะฟังและพูด (ค่าเฉลี่ย 2.87) (2) พื้นฐานทางคำศัพท์ ไวยากรณ์ และระบบเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของฉันค่อนข้างต่ำ (ค่าเฉลี่ย 2.78) (3) ฉันไม่เคยร่วมกิจกรรมทางภาษาอังกฤษที่จัดในประเทศไทยหรือต่างประเทศ (ค่าเฉลี่ย 2.72) (4) ฉันไม่เคยปรึกษาครูเกี่ยวกับปัญหาการฟังทั้งในและนอกห้องเรียน (ค่าเฉลี่ย 2.66) (5) ฉันไม่เคยพูดคุยกับเจ้าของภาษา ภาษาอังกฤษหรือชาวต่างชาติ (ค่าเฉลี่ย 2.55) และ (6) หลังจากฟัง ฉันไม่สามารถทำแบบฝึกหัดเกี่ยวกับการฟังโดยปราศจากการอภิปรายคู่หรือกลุ่มกับเพื่อนวิชาเอกเดียวกันหรือต่างกัน (ค่าเฉลี่ย 2.54) ปัจจัยย่อยทั้งหมดประการนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของสองปัจจัยหลักเท่านั้นคือ ความรู้พื้นฐานทางภาษาที่สองของนิสิตและกลยุทธ์ในการเรียนของนิสิต นอกจากนี้ นิสิตส่วนใหญ่ ร้อยละ 29.11 ให้ความเห็นเพิ่มเติมว่า อัตราการพูดของเจ้าของภาษาในแผ่นซีดีรอมเป็นอีกปัจจัยหนึ่งที่เป็นสาเหตุของความสามารถด้านการฟังในระดับที่ต่ำ ด้วยเหตุนี้ อาจารย์สอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ 2 ควรมีความรู้เกี่ยวกับปัจจัยหลักสองปัจจัย และอีกหนึ่งปัจจัยใหม่ข้างต้นก่อนที่จะพิจารณาสีปัจจัยที่เหลือเมื่อสอนทักษะฟังเพื่อแก้ปัญหาในการฟังของนิสิตได้อย่างเหมาะสม

## Abstract

This study attempts to survey the first-year students' opinions concerning the causes of their low listening performance in the English II course at Thaksin University, Phatthalung Campus. The 264 students of the Faculties of Science, Public Health and Sport Science, and Technology and Community Development were chosen as the research subjects. A student questionnaire, the only instrument for gathering the data, was used to explore the students' opinions by considering six factors that may have caused low listening performance: students' L2 prior knowledge, students' motivation, students' learning strategies, the teachers' teaching methods, classroom environment, and classroom facilities. The SPSS program was used to analyze the quantitative data while the teaching researcher's discussion was used to describe the qualitative data. The findings revealed that from the total results or the means

of the six factors, the students disagreed with the six factors causing their low listening performance. However, considering the mean of each sub factor, there were six sub-factors the students agreed as the causes of their low listening performance: (i) I had previously learnt reading-writing rather than listening-speaking ( $\bar{x} = 2.87$ ), (ii) My background on vocabulary, grammar and sound systems in English is quite poor ( $\bar{x} = 2.78$ ), (iii) I never attended English activities launched in Thailand or other foreign countries ( $\bar{x} = 2.72$ ), (iv) I have never consulted with the teachers on my listening problems inside and outside the classroom ( $\bar{x} = 2.66$ ), (v) I never talk to native English speakers or foreigners ( $\bar{x} = 2.55$ ), and (vi) After listening, I cannot perform listening exercises without discussing in pair or group of the same or different major students ( $\bar{x} = 2.54$ ). These sub-factors were under the two factors: the students' prior L2 knowledge and the students' learning strategies. Moreover, the majority of the students, 29.11%, agreed that the native speakers' rate of speech in the CD-ROM was the other additional factor causing their low listening performance. As a result, the English II course teachers should be aware of the two factors and additional factor above before the rest of the four factors when teaching listening skills in order to solve the students' listening problems in an appropriate way.

## Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has been stressed in the Thai university curriculum for many years. Thai students are expected to be able to effectively communicate in English both inside and outside the classroom. However, the low performance in listening hinders Thai students' communication in English as they neither understand their Thai teachers nor native speakers or foreign nationals.

Listening is a difficult skill for Thai EFL students due to scarcity of opportunity for language experience with the target language. Many Thai university students face problems in sound discrimination when listening to native spoken English because of unfamiliarity with the English sound system and the inability to differentiate English pronunciation from Thai (Wannana Boonyakarn, 1991). Research on 65 fourth-year English major students' listening ability in the Faculty of Education in two universities in Bangkok found that after listening to the spoken texts, the majority of them could neither give details nor could they give main ideas due to both inadequacy of listening practice and ineffective communicative listening activities (Rawiwan Jayawasu, 1988). Furthermore, Thai students in rural schools could not interpret many long and complicated sentences of spoken texts in a short period of

time. Often they did not have opportunities to listen to a variety of spoken texts with the aid of good equipments nor did they learn English with native teachers (Soomboon Chetchumlong, 1987). All these causes reflect Thai university students' problems in listening skills.

Similarly, first-year students at Thaksin University (TSU), Phatthalung Campus have been encountering listening problems in the English I and English II compulsory 3-credit-hour courses. Based on the teacher researcher's experience, the students are not able to comprehend the teacher's English lectures. They cannot respond to the teacher's questions, the teacher thus switches from English to Thai to counter the students' lack of English proficiency. Moreover, the majority of them did not pass the course book based listening test that scored 10 %.

Although a course-related English CD-ROM has been introduced to the classroom, the students showed little motivation in using it. Often they did seem to take full advantage of using authentic material in the classroom. Even though the teacher explained vocabulary items, structures and contents in L1 to the students before listening to the CD-ROM and performed exercises in English, they still were unable to perform the exercises in the target language. This seems to be the focus of the listening problem.

Preliminary to any in-depth study, this one will for a start survey students' opinions concerning causes of their low performance in listening in the English II class considering these factors: students' prior L2 knowledge, students' motivation, students' learning strategies, the teachers' teaching methods, classroom environment, and classroom facilities.

## **Objective of the Research**

The objective of this research study was to explore the first-year students' opinions concerning causes of their low performance in listening in the English II course at Thaksin University, Phatthalung Campus.

## **Significance of the Study**

The findings will be the worth as a preliminary study on factors causing the first-year Thaksin University students' listening problems in the English II course. Moreover, they will serve as a data-base for the Department of Western Languages and Thaksin University and will be useful towards understanding students' problems in second language courses. They may also be used to suggest ways to improve students' listening ability because ultimately when students have adequate listening ability, their overall English (L2) communication skills will improve. In addition, the findings will be a guide for Thai

teachers of English at other tertiary institutes when conducting research in the teaching and acquisition of L2 listening skills.

## Literature Review

The literature review mainly discusses two topics: theoretical concepts of the terms concerning 'listening' and factors influencing Thai and foreign students' low performance in listening.

### Theoretical Concepts of the Terms Regarding 'Listening'

Many terms relating to 'listening', for instance, 'listening ability', 'listening comprehension', 'listening skills' and 'listening comprehension' have interchangeably been used. Indeed, they are different.

- (1) **Listening Ability** or 'Listening Proficiency' or 'Listening Competence' is the term of final outcome of listening to be achieved by listeners. It seems to be an enduring feature of effective listeners. To attain this level, listeners must be skilled through five levels: *sub-skills or mechanical skills, knowledge skills, transferring skills, communicative skills, and evaluating or criticizing skills* (Pheerphong Suk-kaew, 2005). Listeners' listening ability will emerge when they have been developed through listening skills with many listening strategies for listening comprehension. During the developing process, listeners' listening performance will appear.
- (2) **Listening Performance** involves an act of listening performed by listeners, learners. In the light of classroom practice, it concerns results of listening activities the teacher uses to enable learners to carry out; how effective or ineffective learners activate listening tasks. In this respect, Brown & Yule (1994) categorized classroom listening performance into six types as follows:
  - (i) **Reactive performance** requires the teacher to enable learners to listen to the surface structure of an utterance and to repeat what they had heard.
  - (ii) **Intensive performance** emphasizes components of spoken language or listeners' bottom-up level such as phonemes, sounds, words, intonation, discourse markers and grammatical structures.

- (iii) **Responsive performance** focuses on comprehending short stretches of spoken discourse. The teacher asks learners to immediately respond to what they hear from the teacher's speaking.
  - (iv) **Selective performance** requires the teacher to enable learners to scan or distract longer stretches of spoken discourse in order to understand their general and global meaning.
  - (v) **Extensive performance** is to develop learners' listening at the top-down level; learners are required to globally understand the spoken language of, e.g. lengthy lectures and conversation.
  - (vi) **Interactive performance** points out the relationship between listening and speaking; learners are required to participate in discussion and debates, etc.
- (3) **Listening Skills** are related to the main process the teacher used to train learners to be able to understand listening tasks or to gain 'listening comprehension' in order to reach 'listening ability through sub-skills or micro-skills as' follows (Field, 1998):
- (i) **Discrimination** or a bottom-up level skill enables learners to distinguish minimally different words through ear training and the teacher's dictation.
  - (ii) **Segmentation** enables learners to identify words in continuous speech through the teacher's dictation, such as focusing on weak forms.
  - (iii) **Exploration** asks learners to work out the spelling of unrecognized words via the teacher's dictation and learners' guessing.
  - (iv) **Anticipation** or a top-down level skill requires learners to work out what came next via the teacher's playing half a sentence and learners' completing.
  - (v) **Reference** enables learners to relate pronouns to the items they refer to.
  - (vi) **Monitoring for information** requires learners to monitor a long text for key words.
  - (vii) **Relevance** asks learners to identify important points made by filling specific and general points in tables.

- (4) **Listening Comprehension** is regarded with the complex process in which listeners attempt to understandably decode the meaning of spoken messages presented by speakers (Wannana Boonyakarn, 1991). The listening comprehension process contains four phases according to the similar views of Wantanee Poomchareon (1992), Wannana Boonyakarn (1991) and Vandergrift (1999) as follows:
- (i) **Perceiving:** Listeners listen to a raw speech and perceived it into their short-term memory. Sound elements are then retained in the listeners' echoic memory or long-term memory.
  - (ii) **Organizing:** Listeners organize what they hear into segments. They then identify the segments' contents and function. While the new speech is in the listeners' echoic-memory, the initial speech analysis may begin and encoding process may lead to the meaningful understanding of the spoken text.
  - (iii) **Parsing:** Listeners use the segments to construct proposition, to group the proposition together in order to form a coherent message. The size of the segment of information processed depends on listeners' linguistic and general knowledge of the topic and on how the information is presented.
  - (iv) **Utilizing:** When the propositional meaning is identified and reconstructed, it is retained in long-term memory and the form in which the message is originally received is deleted. In other words, long-term memory works with meaning (proposition), not with form (sentence).

### **Factors Influencing ESL/EFL Students' Listening Performance**

Factors influencing ESL/ EFL students' low performance in listening are learners, speakers, teaching methods, linguistic and non-linguistic elements of listening tasks, characteristics of the spoken language and classroom facilities.

#### **Learner Factors**

Learner factors contain many sub-factors. First, the learners' overall linguistic competence with respect to cognitive development: this implies that learners will have better listening skills when getting older. Other sub-factors creating

difficulty in listening comprehension are that learners are not prompted to learn listening due to their personal problems. Moreover, they have low expectation in listening skills; because of low English proficiency, they do not seek any ways to solve their listening problems. Furthermore, they lack self-confidence and significant listening practice opportunities (Chetchamlong, 1987)

### **Speaker Factors**

Speaker factors contain some sub-factors. ESL/EFL learners are used to listening to their English teachers' accents or standard variety of British and American English, and thus it is difficult to listen to other accents of English (Yagang, 1993). The number of speakers in the text as well as the speed and clarity of speaking should also be considered (Anderson & Lynch, 1988). These reflect the backgrounds of speakers in relation to learners' listening performance.

### **Teaching Methods Factor**

According to Pheeraphong Suk-kaew (2005), Matayomsueksa six students of seven educational areas in Bangkok had low listening proficiency in English due to the teachers' traditional methods: grammar translation method (GTM). The focus of GTM was more on reading-writing and grammar practice through L1 instruction than listening-speaking via L2. In other words, Thai students had no opportunities to practice listening to Thai teachers of English, nor native English teachers; their problems in aural comprehension were chronic.

### **Linguistic and Non-Linguistic Factors**

Anderson & Lynch (1988) discuss the way in which the information is organized, especially how the sequencing of event is described in the spoken text. In other words, learners' ability in following the order of events in listening tasks will affect their listening performance. Their listening performance is also affected by the level of difficulty in listening tasks. If some complicated sentences and unknown words in spoken texts are simplified, learners will have better performance.

### **Characteristics of the Spoken Language**

Brown & Yule (1999) provide eight characteristics of the spoken language: clustering, redundancy, reduced forms, performance variables, colloquial language, delivery rate, stress-rhythm-intonation, and interaction.

### **Classroom Facilities**

Classroom facilities or physical setting include noises, audio-visual aids and time. According to Yagang (1993), because cassette-tapes or radios lacked visual and aural environmental clues, students could not see the speakers' body language and facial expression. They, thus, face difficulty to understand the speaker's meaning. Moreover, if the classroom is noisy and contained poor-quality equipment, students' listening comprehension certainly decreases. For the time factor, listening activities are always integrated with other skills such as through dictation and lectures due to time constraint. This will not help students to fully develop their actual listening comprehension.

## **Research Methodology**

### **The Research Subjects**

264 first year students were chosen as the research subjects. After passing the English I course as a requisite course in the 2005 semester 1, they could enroll in seven groups of the English II course in the 2005 semester 2, which were taught by three teachers at Thaksin University, Phatthalung Campus. These subjects were from 9 majors and 3 faculties; the Faculty of Science includes majors in Statistics, Aquaculture Science, Environment Science, and Applied Physics, the Faculty of Technology and Community Development includes majors in Food Science and Technology, as well as Agricultural Technology, the Faculty of Public Health and Sport Science consists of majors in Public Health, Sport Science, and Industrial Hygiene and Safety majors. The subjects are all science students who share similar factors affecting the acquisition of English as a foreign language as well as in studying the English II course in the classroom environment and facilities. Hence, the factors that cause these student' low listening performance to be included in the instrument could easily be chosen in relation to their learning backgrounds.

### **Instrument**

The only one instrument used to gather the data for this study is a student questionnaire. It was designed by many stages as follows:

- (i) Studying problems in ESL/EFL teaching-learning of listening, as well as certain factors that cause EFL students' low listening performance from relevant research in Thailand,
- (ii) Revising issues related to teaching-learning of listening activities and factors influencing students' low listening ability from the researcher's English II course files,
- (iii) Designing the English and Thai versions of the questionnaire by integrating the findings from (i)-(ii),
- (iv) Submitting the first draft of the questionnaire for the specialists' approval, and adjusting the new questionnaire according to their suggestions,
- (v) Using the approved questionnaire for pilot study, adjusting the pilot questionnaire, and using the finalized questionnaire to collect the actual data.

The questionnaire description is detailed in **Appendix A**. The English version questionnaire was translated into Thai for gathering the data in the pilot study and actual data collection due to the respondents' clearer understanding. It consisted of two parts.

**Part One**, titled 'The Students' Background Information', was intended to gather the respondents' general information about gender, major, faculty, as well as the English university entrance examination score and the grade received in the English I course. Such information, a dependent variable, showed how the respondents' personal factors influence other factors of listening performance.

**Part Two**, entitled 'The Students' Opinions Concerning the Causes of Their Low Performance in Listening', was the highlight of the questionnaire. It contained two sections. Section A focused on the respondents' rating their degree of agreement or disagreement with various factors provided. Section B was to ask the respondents to give additional information regarding other factors that causes their low listening performance.

The rating scale of the respondents' opinions contained four ranges with different means ( $\bar{x}$ ) and interpretation shown as follows:

**Table 1: The Rating Scale of the Respondents' Opinions**

No.	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Interpretation
4	3.27 - 4.00	Strongly agree
3	2.52 - 3.26	Agree
2	1.76 - 2.51	Strongly disag
1	1.00 - 1.75	Disagree

In fact, the rating scale of the questionnaire was adapted from the five ranges of the Likert Scale. In an effective questionnaire, the third range should be 'no comment'. However, in this study, it was not used. The researcher worried that many subjects would too conveniently provide their opinion through this level due to their lack of confidence and effort. Thus, the results of the data might have more invalid with it.

#### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted to find the reliability of the questionnaire before it was used to collect the actual data. In the second week of January, 2006, the Thai version of the approved questionnaire was used in a trial. It was distributed to a group of 35 students taught by a different teacher. These students, from the Public Health and Sport Science Faculty, were chosen from the 264 students, especially who enrolled in the seventh group of the English II course at Phattalung Campus. After the 35 questionnaire copies were returned to the researcher, they were analyzed through the Statistic Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. By the end of January 2006, the results of the reliability analysis found that the scale (ALPHA) valued 0.8758. In other words, the questionnaire was reliable. The researcher could thus use it to gather the actual data from the remaining 229 students.

#### **Data Collection**

The actual data collection started in the second week of February, 2006. The final Thai version of the questionnaire was distributed to the six groups of 229 respondents with the assistance of the other two teachers of the English II course at Phatthalung Campus. By the end of February, 2006, only 201 of the 229 questionnaire copies were returned to the researcher. This valued 87.77 percent. Due to the scheduling of the final examination week, it was difficult to collect the rest of the questionnaire copies.

## Data Analysis

Analyzing the data from the 201 questionnaire copies started in the second week of March, 2006. The SPSS program was used for this process. In Part One and Section A of Part Two of the questionnaire, the analysis emphasized descriptive statistics for frequencies in percentage, mean and standard deviation of the students' opinions concerning the causes of low performance in listening. In this part, the analysis is interpreted via the rating scale of the respondents' opinions in **Table 1**. However, the data from Section B of Part Two, which was analyzed by the researcher himself, revealed the percentage of other factors influencing the students' low performance in listening. These quantitative findings would be used for the detailed qualitative study discussing the students' opinions concerning the causes of low performance in listening.

## Results and Discussion

### **The Students' Opinions Concerning Causes of their Low Performance in Listening**

From the findings of the students' opinions concerning the causes of their low performance in listening, it was found that there were only two factors the respondents agreed with: students' prior L2 knowledge and stud' learning strategies in which sub-factors had the mean between 2.52 and 3.26. Meanwhile, the rest was the factors the respondents disagreed with: students' motivation, the teachers' teaching methods, classroom environment, and classroom facilities in which sub-factors had the mean between 1.76 and 2.51. As a result, the mean of all sub-factors indicated that the respondents' opinions were neither 'strongly agree' nor 'strongly disagree'.

In the respondents' opinions, they agreed that the sub-factor, namely 'I had previously learnt reading-writing rather than listening-speaking skills' of 'the students' prior knowledge factor' with the mean of 2.87 was the highest sub-factor that might cause their low performance in listening. Meanwhile, they agreed that the sub-factor entitled 'The classroom is very noisy' 'classroom facilities factor' with the mean of 1.94 was the lowest sub-factor that might cause their low performance in listening.

In fact, it was found from the mean of all sub-factors that there were only six sub-factors with the mean between 2.52 and 3.26 ranked as follows:

**Table 2: The Ranking of the Six Sub-Factors**

Factors	Sub-Factors	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )
1. Students' Prior L2 Knowledge	1.4 I had previously learnt reading-writing rather than listening-speaking.	2.87
	1.3 My English background on vocabulary, grammar, and sound systems is quite poor.	2.78
3. Students' Learning Strategies	3.4 I never attended activities in English lanuched in Thailand or other foreign countries.	2.72
	3.10 I have never consulted with the teachers on my listening problems inside and outside the classroom.	2.61
	3.3 never talk to native speakers of English or foreigners.	2.55
	3.9 After listening, I cannot perform listening exercises without discussing in pair or group of the same or different majored classmates.	2.54

According to **Table 2**, in the respondents' opinions, these six sub-factors could be considered as the causes of their low performance in listening.

In terms of the total results of the six factors concerning the respondents' agreement or disagreement as the cause of listening problems, the findings were tabulated as follows:

**Table 3 : The Total Results of the Six Factors**

Factors	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Standard Deviation
Students' Prior L2 knowledge	2.43	0.43
Students' Motivation	2.05	0.47
Students' Learning Strategies	2.40	0.45
The Teachers' Teaching Methods	2.09	0.37
Classroom Environment	2.35	0.52
Classroom Facilities	2.13	0.43

Though the six-sub factors in **Table 2** above the respondents agreed as the causes of their listening problems, the data from **Table 3** showed the respondents' disagreement of the six factors; there was no mean of more than 2.51 regarding 'agreement' in **Table 1**. In the respondents' opinions, they did not agree that the six factors above might not cause their low listening performance. However, the 'students' prior L2 knowledge with the highest mean (2.43) showed that in the respondents' opinions, it was possible that this factor might have the greatest effect on listening performance. Meanwhile, the 'students' motivation' factor with the lowest mean (2.05) indicated that in the respondents' opinions, it was possible that this factor might affect their low listening performance the least.

The students' prior L2 knowledge is considered the most crucial factor among the research subjects for many reasons. Although the students are all science and technology students who have been learning English for 10 years, they were previously taught a different focus and quality of the English language curriculum. Many had previously learnt reading-writing rather than listening-speaking while many had poor background on English linguistic elements. This reflects on a shortcoming of the Thai educational system. At the primary and secondary levels, the majority of the research subjects had been taught a few listening-speaking activities.

The students' learning strategies contain the most sub-factors relative to the mean regarding 'agreement'. It is difficult for the research subjects to attend activities in English launched in Thailand or other foreign countries. There was no English club and few English training courses at Thaksin University, Phattalung Campus. However, even as science-technology students, a few students have adopted this strategy due to their realization of the importance of extra English activities.

It was found that the research subjects disagreed with the four factors causing their listening problems: *students' motivation, the teacher's teaching methods, classroom environment and classroom facilities*. For the *students' motivation*, the subjects reported that they still had an opportunity to practice listening skills because of their self motivation as well as motivation from their classmates and close friend. In terms of the teachers' teaching methods, the subjects reported that the three English teachers did not speak English too fast, but they had clear and accurate pronunciation instead. Moreover, the teachers taught listening strategies, gave instructions properly before listening to the CD-ROM, did

not use too much Thai to explain the listening tasks, etc. For classroom environment, most of the research subjects claimed that they were not too shy and worried, but prepared to answer the teachers' questions after listening to the CD-ROM among other classmates with different majors and faculties. In terms of classroom facilities, the research subjects agreed that the classroom size was not too large; many students in a group had opportunities to participate in listening activities. Some of them viewed that the classroom was very noisy while many of them claimed that the time allocated for listening activities was not limited.

### **Other Causes of the Students' Low Listening Performance**

A new factor that might cause the subjects' listening problems was found. From the findings of the category of the questionnaire, 'Other causes of the students' low performance in listening', there were many new sub-factors under the same factors above, except 'classroom environment' additionally provided by the subjects such as 'The students' basic skills in reading aloud in English were quite poor' under 'the students' prior L2 knowledge factor' and 'the students were not aware of how to discriminate sounds' under 'the students' learning strategies factor'. Nevertheless, there was a new main factor entitled 'Native-English speakers' speaking in the CD-ROM', especially the sub-factor, namely 'They spoke English too fast' with a percentage of 29.11 as the highest additional sub-factor. From the subjects' perspectives, they would have better performance in listening activities if native speakers spoke English more slowly. It is inappropriate for Thai teachers of English to simplify the native speakers' speed rate due to scarcity of the authentic material and practice. Hence, the native-English speakers' speaking factor seems to be another main obstacle in listening for Thai students.

### **Pedagogical Implication**

- (i) As the main cause of the students' low performance in listening, 'the student' prior L2 knowledge' implies that if the research subjects had previous linguistic knowledge in English, they would have performed listening activities more effectively. This poses the question, "Why didn't the secondary school teachers provide the subjects with sufficient linguistic knowledge and listening activities?" At this point, the university lecturers cannot blame other secondary school teachers for the chronic problem. Instead, they should implement various teaching methods to enhance students' prior knowledge in listening skills. In fact, this factor controls all L2 ability. If

it is controlled, other factors regarding 'listening' may not cause students' low performance.

- (ii) As in the main factor 'students' prior L2 knowledge', the highest sub-factor the students agreed as the cause of their listening problem, 'I had previously learnt reading-writing rather than listening-speaking' implies that because the students have learnt insufficient listening-speaking activities, the university lecturers cannot let them practice these activities alone. Also, they should bear in mind that the students' sufficient reading-writing abilities can enrich their listening-speaking. That is to say, the teachers should use more integrated listening activities with other skills so that the students' listening performance may develop.
- (iii) The factor 'classroom facilities', especially 'the classroom is very noisy' had the lowest mean, 1.94; it was the lowest sub-factor the subjects agreed as the cause of their listening problems. Most subjects (72.1%) reported that the classroom was not very noisy, but the mean showed that most subjects agreed that the classroom was very noisy. It is difficult to follow the interpretation of the mean. From the researcher's and other two English teachers' experience, most students at Phatthalung Campus do not seem to make the classroom noisy due to their paying attention. Their attention is also controlled by the teachers; the teachers' teaching methods influence this factor. However, due to some of the subjects' agreement of the noisy classroom resulting in the mean, it is difficult to change the result.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

- (i) As a survey study, this study explored the students' opinions concerning the factors that may cause their low performance in listening in order that other possible solutions to their listening problems might be found. Such a solution should be conducted in an experimental research setting to measure the students' listening abilities and the teachers' teaching methods.
- (ii) The findings of this study should be replicated by other Thai teachers of English from primary to tertiary levels when conducting research on exploring factors influencing students' listening performance.

## Conclusion

To carry out this study, the six factors, students' L2 prior knowledge, students' motivation, students' learning strategies, the teachers' teaching methods, classroom environment, and classroom facilities, play the most vital role in revealing the first-year students' opinions concerning the causes of their low listening performance in the English II. Totally, the majority of the students disagreed that such six factors might not cause their low listening performance. However, most of the students agreed that some sub-factors under the two factors, students' L2 prior knowledge and students' learning strategies, might cause their low listening performance.

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## Appendix A Questionnaire

### A Survey on First-Year Students' Opinions Concerning Causes of Their Low Performance in Listening in the English II Course at Thaksin University, Phatthalung

This is not a test. There are no correct or incorrect answers. It is your personal and honest answer that will be appreciated and valued here. I assure your responses will be treated with the strictest confidence in accordance with research ethics. Thank you for your kind assistance.

**The questionnaire is divided into TWO parts.**

Part One : The Students' Background Information

Part Two : The Students' Opinions Concerning the Causes of their Low  
Performance in Listening

#### **Part One : The Students' Background Information**

Directions: Please fill in the blank and check () on each item that is applicable to yourself.

1. Gender : ( ) male ( ) female
2. Major : \_\_\_\_\_
3. Faculty : ( ) Science  
( ) Technology and Community Development  
( ) Health and Sports Science
4. The University Entrance English Examination Score: \_\_\_\_\_ Marks
5. The Grade of the English I Course: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Part Two : The Students' Opinions Concerning the Causes of Their Low Performance in Listening**

**A. Directions : Please put a tick mark () to show how much you agree with each  
of the following items.**

- 4 - Strongly agree.
- 3 - Agree.
- 2 - Disagree.
- 1 - Strongly disagree.

Factors	Opinions			
	4 Strongly agree	3 Agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
<b>1. Students' L2 Prior knowledge</b>				
1.1 Previously I never learnt and practiced listening skills.				
1.2 My previous grades of English courses were poor, so I don't think I can now improve my listening comprehension.				
1.3 My English background on vocabulary, grammar, and sound systems is quite poor.				
1.4 I had previously learnt reading-writing rather than listening-speaking skills.				
<b>2. Students' Motivation</b>				
2.1 I do not have opportunity to practice listening skills.				
2.2 I am not interested in listening skills in English.				
2.3 I think listening skills are not important, so I am not self-motivated.				
2.4 My classmates and close friends rarely motivate me to practice listening skills.				
<b>3. Students' Learning Strategies</b>				
3.1 I never listen to songs, radio news, and cassette tape or CD-ROM in English.				
3.2 I never watch television programs in English.				
3.3 I never talk to native speakers of English or foreigners.				
3.4 I have never attended activities in English launched in Thailand or other foreign countries.				
3.5 I have a short concentration while listening.				
3.6 I always get headaches when listening in English.				
3.7 I do not have knowledge of the specific topic of listening tasks while listening to the CD-ROM.				

Factors	Opinions			
	4 Strongly agree	3 Agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
3.8 I rarely take notes while listening to the CD-ROM				
3.9 After listening, I can not perform listening exercises without discussing in pair or group of the same or different majored classmates.				
3.10 I have never consulted with the teachers on my listening problems inside and outside the classroom.				
<b>4. The Teachers' Teaching Methods</b>				
4.1 The teachers speak English too fast.				
4.2 The teachers' pronunciation is not clear and accurate.				
4.3 The teachers never teach listening strategies.				
4.4 The teachers do not give instructions properly before listening to the CD-ROM.				
4.5 The teachers use too much Thai to explain the listening tasks.				
4.6 The teachers seldom give the low-level students the opportunities to answer the questions and discuss the listening tasks.				
4.7 The teachers have never encouraged the students to practice listening skills as self-study.				
4.8 The teachers have never helped me with my listening problems inside and outside the classroom.				
4.9 The teachers enjoy speaking English without caring about the students' interest and understanding.				
4.10 The teachers do not repeat the CD-ROM and moves on to other listening activities very fast.				
4.11 The teachers never use English songs and listening games to motivate the students.				

Factors	Opinions			
	4	3	2	1
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4.12 There are not enough pair and group work listening activities taught by the teachers.				
<b>5. Classroom Environment</b>				
5.1 I am too shy, worried and unprepared to answer the teachers' questions after listening to the CD-ROM among other classmates with different majors and faculties.				
5.2 Other students laugh at me if I answer the question wrong.				
5.3 If my neighboring classmates do not pay attention to the CD-ROM, I will not either.				
5.4 Some students talk or make noises while the teachers are playing the CD-ROM and I can not hear the CD-ROM properly.				
<b>6. Classroom Facilities</b>				
6.1 The classroom size is too large; many students in a group have a few opportunities to participate in listening activities.				
6.2 The classroom is very noisy.				
6.3 The time allocated for listening activities is limited.				
6.4 The use of microphones and loud speakers in the classroom is not effective.				
6.5 The use of computer to play the CD-ROM is not effective.				

**B. Directions: Please write your answer in the space provided.**

1. Other Causes of Your Low Performance in Listening :

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**