



## **Problems in Using English of Foreign Teacher Coordinators at Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University**

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### **Abstract**

The purposes of this study were to identify the problems in using English at work of foreign teacher coordinators working in Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. The participants were 10 officers working in Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. The research instrument used was a questionnaire on the problems in using English at work of the foreign teacher coordinators. The items to identify the problems in the questionnaires were divided into four sections: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The questionnaires were distributed to the samples and the data were collected. The results were that the overall problems in using English at work of foreign teacher coordinators were at a moderate level. Writing was found to be the most problematic skill, and the second, third and fourth problematic skills were speaking, listening, and reading, respectively.

**Keywords:** English, foreign teacher coordinators, problems



## 1. Introduction

In many workplaces, people with different jobs must be able to converse with foreigners using English language. For example, a receptionist in a hotel must receive guests and they must use English to talk to them. A taxi driver must pick foreigners up from an airport or many places around a city and directly deals with foreigners when talking about directions and fares. Moreover, people who work at an airport are, most especially, highly required to use English. A flight attendant must speak English to serve foreign passengers on board. Also, airline staff must deal with foreigners in domestic and international flights. Therefore, English is very important in the workplace.

In almost every university, foreign teachers are a part of educators working with the people in the campus. Obviously, they are required to teach English to students, so in every class they must speak English, and students must listen to what they say. In offices, they must talk with Thai teachers and officers every day. In addition, they are required to give academic services to organizations in the university and are required to help teachers to do some English documents.

In Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, there are foreign teachers from many different countries working in different faculties. They are from English native speaking countries like America, Australia, the Netherlands, and Britain. Some come from the Philippines and can use English very well. All of them work in faculties namely Humanities and Social Sciences, Education, Agricultural Technology, Industrial Technology, Science Technology, and Management Science. They are required to work for certain faculties and have to deal with teachers, students and staff.

However, it is difficult for both foreign teachers and other people working together in a faculty because they must use English to communicate with each other. Therefore, staff and teachers who are in charge of foreign teachers are required to use English in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In speaking and listening, officers and teachers must converse with and listen to foreign instructors with different English accents. In reading and writing, officers and Thai teachers have to write English memorandum, emails, and other English documents, and they must read English documents like passports, VISA, and work permit. These result in a lot of communication problems.

To deal with these difficulties, it is essential to investigate certain problems that really occur when communicating with foreign teachers. Many studies have examined the problems in using English at workplaces. Chaichana, Chaiwchan, and Tongnen (2017) study found that the English communication problems of receptionist at a hotel in Nan from a tourist's perspective were at high level. Saisaengjan (2016) studied about problems and needs on English language skills for coffee house employees. Yoyram (2016) studied about problems and needs in using English language of staff at Bridge Future International Training and Service. Pawabutra (2018) examined the needs and problems of ground service staff on communicative skills at Sakon Nakhon Airport.



This study was to identify the problems in using English of the foreign teacher coordinators working in Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. The results will be used as guidelines to solve the problems of the officers who coordinate with foreign teachers.

## 2. Method

In this study, the participants, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis were as follows:

### 1) Participants

The participants were 10 foreign teacher coordinators who worked in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Industrial Technology, Agricultural Technology, Science and Technology, Management Science, and Education in Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. They were assigned to be coordinators for dealing with foreign teachers.

### 2) Research Instrument

The research instrument was a questionnaire on the problems in using English adapted from the questionnaire of Khammueang (2007). This questionnaire was used to survey the problems in using English of the foreign teacher coordinators. The questionnaire comprised of two parts. The first part asked about the general information of the foreign teacher coordinators. The second part was the problems in using English, which were divided into four sections such as problems of listening (7 items), speaking (9 items), reading (6 items) and writing (10 items), respectively.

### 3) Data Collection

To obtain data, the problems in using English questionnaires were administered to foreign teacher coordinators. They took about five minutes to answer the questionnaires. After the participants finished the questionnaires, the data were collected for further analysis.

### 4) Data Analysis

The statistics used to analyze the results of this study was descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviation. The interpretation of the problems in using English from the questionnaires was as follows:

1.00 – 1.80 = Very low

1.81 – 2.60 = Low

2.61 – 3.40 = Moderate

3.41 – 4.20 = High

4.21 – 5.00 = Very high



### 3. Results

The results were divided into two parts. The first part was the general information of respondents. The second part was the results of the problems in using English. The results were as follows:

#### 1) General Information

For general information, there were 5 females and 5 males. Nine of them had more than five years of work experience; one of them had one year to five years work experience. For the educational background, one of them reported to study in an English major field, and nine of them reported to hold other degrees. For the workplaces, there were 6 faculties namely Humanities and Social Sciences, Education, Agricultural Technology, Industrial Technology, Management Sciences, and Science and Technology.

#### 2) The Problems in Using English

From 12 questionnaires done by the foreign teacher coordinators, the results of the overall problems in using English were shown in the table below.

Table 1: *Overall Problems*

No.	Aspects	Mean	S.D.	Level
1.	Listening	3.05	0.99	Moderate
2.	Speaking	3.10	1.06	Moderate
3.	Reading	3.00	0.98	Moderate
4.	Writing	3.24	1.09	Moderate
	Overall	3.12	1.04	Moderate

From the table above, it was found that the problems in using English of foreign teacher coordinators were at a high level with an average mean score of 3.12.

Writing was found to be the biggest problem which was at a moderate level with mean score of 3.24. The second biggest problem was speaking which was at a moderate level with mean score of 3.10. The third biggest problem was listening which was at a moderate level with mean



score of 3.05. Lastly, reading was at the lowest aspect which was at a moderate level with mean score of 3.00.

For each aspect of writing, speaking, listening and reading, the results showed in the following table.

Table 2: *Listening Problems*

Items	Mean	S.D.	Level
Listening to different accents	3.67	1.05	High
Listening to daily conversation	2.33	1.03	Low
Listening to questions	2.33	1.97	Low
Listening to compliments	3.00	0.97	Moderate
Listening via telephone	3.33	0.84	Moderate
Listening while taking notes in a meeting	3.33	1.03	Moderate
Listening to speakers	3.33	1.03	Moderate
Total	3.05	0.99	Moderate

Table 2 showed the participants' problems in listening skills according to the mean scores ( $\bar{x}$ ). The results indicated that the most problematic aspect was listening to different accents ( $\bar{x}$ =3.67). The second most problematic aspects were listening to communication by telephone, taking notes in a meeting, and listening to speakers ( $\bar{x}$ =3.33). The third most problematic aspect was listening to compliments ( $\bar{x}$ =3.00). Other aspects were listening to questions and listening to daily conversation ( $\bar{x}$ =2.33).

Table 3: *Speaking Problems*

Items	Mean	S.D.	Level
Pronunciation	3.33	0.97	Moderate
Choosing words to speak	3.00	1.08	Moderate
Speaking with Thai accent	3.00	1.26	Moderate



Using simple sentence	2.67	1.14	Moderate
Using compound and complex sentences	4.33	1.92	High
Converse in a daily life	2.33	1.10	Low
Answering questions	3.00	0.95	Moderate
Speaking via telephone	3.33	0.97	Moderate
Receiving foreigners	3.00	0.95	Moderate
Total	3.10	1.06	Moderate

Table 3 showed the participants' problems in speaking skills according to the mean scores ( $\bar{x}$ ). The results indicated that the most problematic aspect was speaking by using compound and complex sentences ( $\bar{x}$ =4.33). The second most problematic aspects were pronunciation and speaking via telephone ( $\bar{x}$ =3.33). The third most problematic aspects were choosing words to speak, speaking with Thai accent, answering questions, and receiving foreigners ( $\bar{x}$ =3.00). Other aspects were using simple sentence ( $\bar{x}$ =2.67) and conversation in a daily life ( $\bar{x}$ =2.33).

Table 4: *Reading Problems*

Items	Mean	S.D.	Level
Reading resume	2.67	0.97	Moderate
Reading letters	3.00	0.97	Moderate
Reading memorandum	3.00	0.97	Moderate
Reading passport	3.00	0.84	Moderate
Reading legal document	3.33	1.17	Moderate
Total	3.00	0.98	Moderate

Table 4 showed the participants' problems in reading skills according to the mean scores ( $\bar{x}$ ). The results indicated that the most problematic aspect was reading legal document ( $\bar{x}$ =3.33). The second most problematic aspects were reading letters, memorandum and passport ( $\bar{x}$ =3.00). The third most problematic aspect was reading resume ( $\bar{x}$ =2.67).



Table 5: *Writing Problems*

Items	Mean	S.D.	Level
Writing simple sentence	3.00	0.90	Moderate
Writing compound and complex sentences	4.00	1.17	High
Writing paragraphs	4.00	1.23	High
Choosing vocabulary	3.67	1.07	Moderate
Writing letters	3.00	1.06	Moderate
Writing memorandum	3.00	0.97	Moderate
Writing e-mail	3.00	1.17	Moderate
Writing minutes of meeting	3.00	1.06	Moderate
Writing reports	3.00	1.06	Moderate
Filling forms	3.67	1.23	Moderate
Total	3.24	1.09	Moderate

Table 5 showed the participants' problems in writing skills according to the mean scores ( $\bar{x}$ ). The results indicated that the most problematic aspects were writing compound and complex sentences and paragraphs ( $\bar{x}=4.00$ ). The second most problematic aspects were choosing vocabulary and filling forms ( $\bar{x}=3.67$ ). The third most problematic aspect were writing simple sentence, letters, memorandum, e-mail, minutes of meeting, and reports ( $\bar{x}=3.00$ ).

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This section provides discussion of the results and the conclusion.

##### 1) Discussion of the results

The results of the study show that the problems in using English of the respondents were at a moderate level. This was because the foreign teacher coordinators may not deal with foreign teachers regularly, so the problems were not at a high level.

For listening skills, the most problematic aspect is listening to different accents, and this aspect is correlated to the study of Pawabutra (2018) which found that listening to different accents was most problematic to the participants. This might be due to the fact that the foreign teacher



coordinators seldom meet foreigners from different countries namely America, Australia, the Netherlands, Britain, and the Philippines, so they are not familiar with a variety of accents.

In terms of speaking, the most problematic aspect is using compound and complex sentences. This is because most English beginners always use words and simple sentence to converse with foreigners thus it is difficult to produce more complex sentences. The second most problematic aspect is to speak via telephone. This result is in accordance with Chaichana, Chiawchan and Tongnen's (2017) study showing the respondents problem in speaking via telephone.

In terms of reading, this study was correlated with the study of Khammueng (2007) showing the top two aspects of reading, which are reading specific documents and memorandums. Some documents are difficult to read as it contains unfamiliar words and structures. For example, legal documents contain a lot of legal terms.

In terms of writing, being the most difficult skills in learning English, it is no doubt that writing reveals the most problematic skills in this study. The results showed the problems of writing complex sentences and paragraph. The foreign teacher coordinators might find it more difficult to produce a long, complex text. Producing paragraphs require good paragraph organization, variety of sentence structures, appropriate vocabulary, and correct grammar.

### 3) Conclusion

In Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, officers are required to communicate with foreigners teaching in different faculties. Therefore, using English is very essential as it helps the officers to work with foreigners smoothly. However, the officers encountered many problems in using English skills as they were not familiar with the language. This study was to investigate the problems in using English for foreign teacher coordinators of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. The research instrument was a questionnaire identifying the problems in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The participants were 10 officers working in different faculties. The result revealed that writing was the most problematic aspect, and the second, third and fourth problematic skills were speaking, listening, and reading, respectively. The results suggest that the foreign teacher coordinators are required to use English in order to communicate with foreign teachers, so they must develop the four language skills to do their duties effectively.





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