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Email: editorjlrp@gmail.com
Website: <https://so17.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JLRP>

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A Study of Neologisms and Semantic Shifts in Queer Discourse: The Influence of Drag Lexicon in RuPaul's Drag Race on Audience Language Practices in the Comments

Natcha Namkhang¹, Pimlada Raitongrunroj¹, Prakaifa Pongsatatkij¹,
Wachira Zeingchong¹, Kasidit Supan^{1*}

Abstract

Language is a tool for communication and a medium that reflects creativity, identity, and community belonging. In the queer community, many specialized words have emerged, and media such as *RuPaul's Drag Race* play a crucial role in spreading them to wider society. This study examines queer lexicons in three dimensions: neologisms, semantic shifts, and polarity. The data come from *RuPaul's Drag Race* Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16 (comprising 53 episodes), chosen to compare the early and contemporary periods. The analysis combines quantitative methods, focusing on word frequency, with qualitative discourse analysis. The results reveal 166 queer lexicons: 35 neologisms from the early period and 60 from the contemporary period, as well as 30 semantic shifts from the early period and 51 from the contemporary period. The findings also show that positive polarity dominates in both periods, while negative polarity appears more often in the contemporary period but still less than positive polarity. These outcomes highlight the dynamic nature of queer language, which reflects identity, creativity, and the influence of mainstream media. The study also uses audience comments as supporting evidence of the spreading of queer language.

Keywords: Drag, Neologisms, Semantic Shifts, Polarity

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* Corresponding Author
E-mail: kasidit.supa@ku.ac.th
¹ Kasetsart University, Thailand

1. Introduction

Nowadays, language is a significant tool to communicate with people around the world. In addition, language has always changed over time. In drag culture, performers often develop innovative language that they use to identify and categorize themselves; there is a uniqueness in their language. The linguistic innovations that appear also reflect the cultural experiences of queer individuals. In sociolinguistics (Wardough, 2005, 2006), the language used in a specific social group or situation is referred to as a register. Registers show the identity and characteristics of their users. This perspective is supported by Simmons (2015), who demonstrates that drag queens on RuPaul's Drag Race construct a "speech code" that operates not only as a register, but also as a form of performance that encourages community belonging and challenges mainstream linguistic norms.

The important group of people who have a significant impact on social media is the LGBT and drag community. In this study, the researchers focus on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, a reality show that has been influential since 2009. The show features language from the LGBT community that reflects the identity of drag culture. The linguistic innovations examined in this research, which collected neologism patterns and semantic shifts that appear in *RuPaul's Drag Race*, demonstrate how linguistics has evolved. This process of linguistic innovation reflects Zimman's (2014) findings, which show how trans men use language to reshape discourse about their bodies, emphasizing that queer and trans speakers not only reflect identity through language but also construct and negotiate it. Thus, LGBT and drag communities play a crucial role in changing or generating new linguistic forms.

The semantic shifts and neologism within the LGBT and drag community can be found in the selected seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Neologism is a newly formed word, expression, and a new meaning assigned to an existing word that has recently become widespread in use to express a new concept or approach to a topic. It can arise deliberately or naturally from popular culture and blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, and coinage. Once a neologism becomes established in dictionaries, it is no longer considered a neologism but part of the standard language. Therefore, the creation of new words reflects the dynamic and adaptable nature of language as it continuously interacts with society and technology. This ongoing process ensures that language remains relevant and capable of meeting contemporary communication needs.

Drag communities often create new words to describe their identities, experiences, and self-expression. For example, the word "Hunty" was changed from the original word "Honney," which means "close friend." On the other hand, semantic shift refers to a change in meaning in which an original word is used in a new context and takes on a different meaning from its original one. The language of the drag community clearly represents this kind of semantic shift. For example, the word "shade," originally meaning "shade," is used informally

to mean playful sarcasm or irony. The word “slay,” originally meaning “kill” or “destroy,” is transformed into a compliment for uniqueness, beauty, or talent. Therefore, RuPaul's Drag Race has become an important platform for sharing both neologisms and semantic shifts with the wider community. These terms are being spread across digital and social media platforms.

The purpose of this study is to analyze and categorize the distribution of neologisms and investigate how many semantic shifts occur in the selected seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. This study also focuses on the influence of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and its adaptation by viewers through social media. Moreover, the study aims to identify the linguistic functions and polarity of these words to examine how *RuPaul's Drag Race* influences audience language practices in the comments.

Research questions

1. How are neologisms distributed through different word-formation processes?
2. How many words have undergone semantic shifts?
3. Which polarity of the neologisms and semantic shifts occurs more often?

2. Literature review

2.1 What is Neologism and Semantic Shift?

The first process of creating new words through various processes is called neologism. Mariano et al. (2024) explain that the word “neologism” has Greek roots, where “neo” means “new” and “logos” means “speech or utterance.” Therefore, “neologism” means a new term or utterance. In general, neologisms refer to new words that have not yet been entered into the dictionary or words that are still in the process of lexicalization. This phenomenon occurs frequently in the LGBT community through various processes, such as the work of Harijanto and Dimara (2023), which includes blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, and coinage. In addition, Harijanto and Dimara (2023) point out that the “word formation process” reflects identity construction and community affirmation.

In addition, there is also another process by which words remain the same, but their meanings change, as Hamilton et al. (2016) stated: semantic change or semantic shift, which refers to any change in the meaning of a word that occurs over time. Moreover, Mariano et al. (2024) explain that semantic shift occurs because words are repeatedly used in different contexts, under different situations, and with diverse intentions. These varying intentions are shared within the speech community and gradually become conventionalized in usage, which ultimately leads to semantic shifts.

In conclusion, neologism and semantic shift are important mechanisms that keep language moving and adapting. Both processes add to the vocabulary and show linguistic creativity as well as the building of community identity. As Harijanto and Dimara (2023) state that neologism, semantic shift, and language use mark and affirm the identity of the queer

community. This produces what is known as queer language, which members use to show their existence and to express knowledge, views, identity, and imagination (Harijanto & Dimara, 2023).

2.2 What is Polarity?

Firstly, as Wilson, Wiebe, and Hoffmann (2005) explain, positive polarity is used to indicate positive emotions, evaluations, and stances. For example, (I'm happy), (Great idea!), and (She supports the bill) are all subjective expressions that reflect positive polarity. Building on this idea of positivity in language use, Harijanto and Dimara (2023) show that queer TikTok users often create and spread new words such as “slay,” “werk,” and “yaaas queen!” to express pride and foster a sense of community participation

Secondly, Wilson et. al. (2005) also noted that negative polarity in subjective expressions applies to those that convey negative feelings and disapproving assessments. For example, (I'm sad), (Bad idea!), Furthermore, words like “shade” and “read” reflect the negative nature of criticism and teasing yet remain within the framework of entertainment and community bonding (Simmons, 2014; Hall, 2019).

Thirdly, as also mentioned by Wilson, Wiebe, and Hoffmann (2005), the neutral polarity applies to subjective expressions that either convey alternative forms of subjectivity, such as speculation, or that lack any clear positive or negative polarity. For example, the formal term “homosexual” or a playful coinage like “Apololie” does not carry an explicitly positive or negative meaning but instead highlights belonging to the group or reflects aspects of drag culture (Simmons, 2014).

In summary, the three types of polarity—positive, negative, and neutral—not only classify subjective expressions but also demonstrate how linguistic choices convey emotions, evaluations, and stances. They also emphasize the symbolic role of language in the formation of identity, the support of community ties, and the definition of social interaction, especially within LGBT communities, where creative language use acts as a sign of pride, resistance, and unity.

2.3 The Language Use in LGBT Community

In the present time, language plays an important role in communication to express identity and social belonging within the LGBT community. The use of language in the LGBT community usually reflects identity, resistance, and creativity, especially in gay or drag culture. They often use distinctive words, vocabulary, speech patterns, and style to create an in-group linguistic culture. For example, words such as tea (meaning gossip or truth), shade (a subtle insult), and read (a humorous but sharp critique), as well as performative terms like werk, slay, and queen, have become emblematic of queer linguistic expression. These terms, often humorous or exaggerated in delivery, carry deeper cultural vitality as symbols of resistance, community, and pride. This point is supported by Simmons (2015), who found that

the speech practice of drag queens, for instance, playful exaggeration and performance of speech styles, refers to markers of identity and in-group belonging through the drag community.

Moreover, language use in LGBT communities is used to resist norms and create new ways of expression. It reflects the fluidity of gender and sexuality. Another point beyond communication, it helps build a sense of community and belonging, supporting each other, which allows members to connect and express their identities. Moreover, evidence from Zimman (2014) shows how trans men reconstruct language around gendered bodies and sexuality, which links speech to identity and empowerment. These linguistic practices strengthen bonds within the community and influence broader social and cultural conversations, which shows how language can be both a tool for empowerment and social change.

2.4 Language Change in the LGBT Community

Language in the LGBT community is in a constant state of change in response to social, cultural, and media contexts. For example, “Queer” was used in a derogatory manner, but now this word is used to present identity affirmation, diversity, and a sense of proud community (Harijanto & Dimara, 2023; Luhulima et al., 2023). This creation of a new meaning also reflects the potential of language as a “political tool” that challenges cultural domination and allows marginalized communities to define the framework of meaning for the words they use to describe themselves.

Furthermore, Zimman (2014) offers an analytical approach to the construction of body and gender meaning through language, pointing out that language plays a crucial role in accommodating queer individuals' experiences. In terms of both the assertion of the right to self-determination over one's own body and the challenge to the rigid framework that links gender to biology, such changes include the creation of new vocabulary that is not bound by a binary gender system and the promotion of gender-neutral language. In other words, language not only serves to reflect the reality of gender but also has the power to continuously produce and reshape the understanding of gender and the body.

In summary, linguistic change within the LGBT community reflects a profound relationship between language, identity, and social change, both through the creation of new words, the reshaping of word meanings, and the development of language that accommodates gender diversity, as well as the transformation of language into a space for identity negotiation and a platform for marginalized groups to express themselves and gain greater acceptance in mainstream society. (Harijanto & Dimara, 2023; Luhulima et al., 2023).

2.5 The Influence of *RuPaul's Drag Race*

Since 2009, *RuPaul's Drag Race* has become a highly influential television show in the language and culture of the gay community, particularly among drag queens, who express themselves linguistically with distinctive traits such as overacting speech, slang, wordplay, and technical terms such as “shade,” “read,” “sickening,” and “realness,” which, as Simmons (2015) analyzes, have become a “speech code” for drag queens to express their identities and, at the same time, become part of popular culture that has spread to a wider audience. These words not only serve as communicative terms but also as symbolic tools that reflect the creative, satirical, and socially critical power of drag culture. The choice of these words is therefore significant. The choice of these words is significant, not only for entertainment but also for resistance against gender norms and sexuality norms that oppress diverse people.

In addition, the spread of this language goes beyond television shows and has expanded through digital platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok. Common examples include “Yaaas queen!”, “She came to slay!”, and “No tea, no shade.” These comments not only reflect popularity but also present identity and participation in LGBT culture (Harijanto & Dimara, 2023; Luhulima et al., 2023). Nevertheless, scholars caution that once these terms enter the mainstream, they may lose the social, political, and historical significance associated with their original communities (Luhulima et al., 2023). And in many cases, the language of the LGBT community has been used by users outside the community whether through parody or through semantic shifts, this demonstrates the dynamics of language as it is relocated into wider contexts of use.

In conclusion, *RuPaul's Drag Race* is not only an entertaining show, but it is also a very important media that has a great influence on the spread of the language and culture of the LGBT community. The show spread the language of the LGBT community, specifically the language that represents the identities and uniqueness of drag queens, which has gained popularity and spread rapidly across digital and social media. One important piece of evidence of the influence of this language is that ordinary viewers have incorporated vocabulary from the show in various comments.

2.6 Previous Studies

According to the research Harijanto and Dimara (2023) explored the use of Queer English in Dean Modah's TikTok videos by employing a sociolinguistic approach to examine how members of the queer community use English to express their identities. The study identified several types of word-formation processes including conversion, clipping, derivation, compounding, blending, and coinage, as well as different types of semantic shifts. However, this research has adopted the research procedures and word formation classifications from Harijanto and Dimara (2023) as its foundation.

Additionally, in the research by Mariano et al. (2024) study of neologisms and semantic shifts that have occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which analyzes politically created terms through morphological and semantic analysis. This research study adopts the concept of semantic shift from Mariano et al. (2024) as a framework for discourse analysis to investigate the semantic shifts that occur within the queer language of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Moreover, this study not only focuses on identifying semantic shifts, but it also emphasizes the duration of the existence of words that occur from early to contemporary.

Furthermore, in the research by Wilson, Wiebe, and Hoffmann (2005) study approaches to resolving the ambiguity of contextual polarity. In the first step, clue instances which words or phrases carrying emotional implications were classified as either Neutral or Polar. In the second step, the words identified as Polar were further categorized as positive, negative, both, or neutral. In this research study applies this concept as part of its analytical framework as well. Specifically, it begins by separating Neutral from Polar terms and then classifies the remaining Polar words into positive, negative, and neutral based on their actual usage contexts in *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Moreover, this study extends the analysis to examine polarity change between the early and contemporary stages to explore the evolution of word usage among the LGBTQ+ community.

In conclusion, the review of previous studies has clearly shown that neologism, semantic shift, and the use of polarity in communication all play crucial roles in expressing identity and reflecting the experiences of various communities whether in political contexts or within queer communities. These studies demonstrate that language is constantly changing and adapting to real-life contexts. In the present research applies these concepts to the study of language used by the LGBT community in *RuPaul's Drag Race*, not only examining what kinds of new words or semantic changes occur. But also analyzing how frequently these words appear, what factors contribute to their emergence, and how their polarity shifts from the early seasons to the present.

This study therefore highlights that Queer language is not merely a collection of entertaining expressions, but rather a linguistic and cultural force used to construct identity, build community, and spread into the wider society.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

In this research, the focus is on queer lexicons from *RuPaul's Drag Race* (Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16; 2009–2024) and their linguistic features. The analysis covers three dimensions: neologisms, semantic shifts, and polarity, with YouTube comments used as supporting evidence of diffusion and adoption. The conceptual framework views language as a cultural resource reflecting creativity, identity, and community. Neologisms are newly created words through blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, or coinage. Semantic shifts

involve transformations of meaning in early or contemporary contexts. Polarity reflects the evaluative orientation of words as positive, negative, or neutral depending on context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative interpretations. In the quantitative stage, the analysis focuses on calculating the frequency and polarity of neologisms, as well as identifying instances of semantic shifts and their functions in *RuPaul's Drag Race*. In the qualitative stage, the data are examined through discourse analysis, which interprets the distribution of neologisms (blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, and coinage) and compares their patterns. The data were collected from the reality competition program *RuPaul's Drag Race*, specifically from Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16, comprising a total of 53 episodes. These seasons were purposefully chosen to allow comparison between the early and contemporary periods of the show, recognizing how neologisms and semantic shifts have appeared and how the program continues to influence queer and drag-related language use.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of this research comprises the linguistic data contained in *RuPaul's Drag Race*; the reality drag competition that has been broadcast for multiple seasons since 2009. The study focuses on LGBT+ language, specifically examining neologisms and their word-formation processes, the number of semantic shifts in *RuPaul's Drag Race*, and the polarity of both neologisms and semantic shifts.

The sample consists of four seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*: Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16. Seasons 1 and 2 represent the early stage of the show; on the other hand, Seasons 15 and 16 represent the contemporary form. This long gap of time shows the comparison that the language has changed over time, especially in neologisms and semantic shifts.

3.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument of this study is descriptive content analysis, designed to identify and categorize neologisms and semantic shifts in *RuPaul's Drag Race* and related viewer comments. The coding scheme records the word-formation processes of neologisms, including blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, and coinage. Polarity is determined by identifying the positive, negative, and neutral connotations of words according to their linguistic and situational use. The scheme allows for quantitative analysis, including the frequency of neologisms and semantic shifts, as well as calculation of polarity in both early and contemporary stages.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study were collected from RuPaul's Drag Race Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16, which were watched on the WOW Presents Plus streaming platform, and to see how viewers are actually using these new words on YouTube. These seasons were chosen to compare the early and contemporary allowing for diachronic comparisons and the identification and categorization of the six types of word formation in neologism and semantic shifts over time

3.5 Data Analysis

This section describes the procedure used for analyzing the data in order to answer the research questions. The analysis consisted of five main stages which were designed to ensure both systematic examination and reliability of interpretation.

a. Data selection

The study selected *RuPaul's Drag Race* Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16, which represent the early and contemporary stages of the franchise. Episodes were viewed on the WOW Presents Plus platform, and audience comments were collected from YouTube.

b. Identifying neologisms and semantic shifts

After watching the selected episodes with transcription, the next step was to identify and extract utterances that contained neologisms and semantic shifts.

c. Categorization and coding

The identified neologisms and semantic shifts were coded using the coding scheme developed for this study. Each instance was classified according to (a) type (neologism or semantic shift), (b) word-formation process (blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, coinage), (c) polarity (positive, negative, or neutral). Contextual notes were also included to ensure that each occurrence was interpreted within its discourse environment.

d. Stage of comparison

The quantitative and qualitative data were compared between the early stage (Seasons 1 and 2) and the contemporary stage (Seasons 15 and 16) to identify the innovation and the linguistic change, including the frequency of neologisms, semantic shift, and polarity.

e. Summarizing the findings

The final stage of the analysis was to summarize both the quantitative and qualitative results. Audience comments were also analyzed as evidence of how neologisms and semantic shifts from *RuPaul's Drag Race* have been adopted and circulated by viewers. These summarized findings were then used to address the research questions.

4. Findings

This section aims to present the findings of the study based on linguistic analysis to answer the three questions stated in the research following.

4.1 To categorize the distribution of neologisms and identify their part of speech that occurs the most.

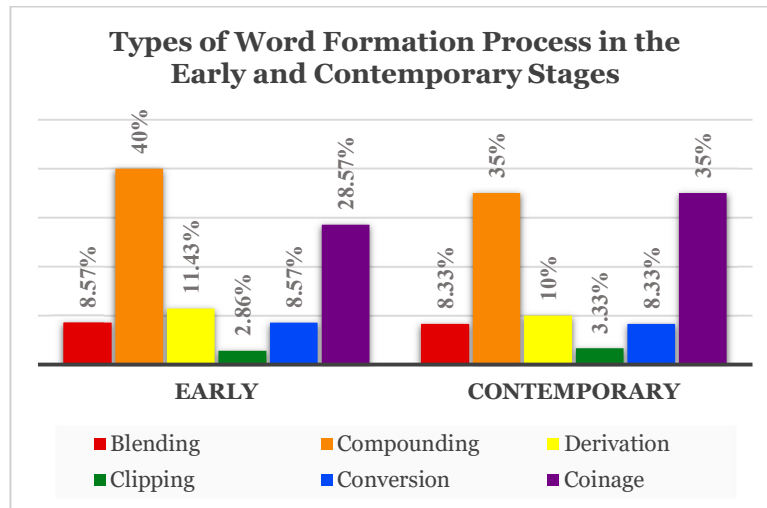


Diagram 4.1 percentage of word-formation processes in the early and contemporary stages

Diagram 4.1 shows the percentage of word-formation processes in the early and contemporary stages of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. In the early stage, compounding is the most frequently used process, with 40%, followed by coinage at 28.57%, and derivation at 11.43%. Blending and conversion both account for 8.57% each. The lowest percentage is clipping with only 2.86%. In the contemporary stage, compounding and coinage are equal at 35% each, followed by derivation at 10% and conversion at 8.33%. Blending is at 8.33% and clipping remains the lowest at 3.33%.

Table 4. 1 types of word-formation processes in the early stage

No.	Types of Word-Formation Processes	English Registers Units	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Blending	Condragtulations, Hunty and She-Mail	3	8.57%
2.	Compounding	Drag mother, Drama Queen, Eleganza Extravaganza, Fatass, Gaff in, Kitty girl, Lip-sync for your life, Maxi challenge, Pit crew, Read to filth, Snatch Game, Two piece and a biscuit, Volume Serving and Werkroom	14	40%
3.	Derivation	Fierceness, Gurl, Realness and Sickening	4	11.43%

No.	Types of Word-Formation Processes	English Registers Units	Frequency	Percentage
4.	Clipping	Mug	1	2.86%
5.	Conversion	Read, Shade and Untuck	3	8.57%
6.	Coinage	Bam, BGB, Bitch Stole My Look, Body-ody-ody, C.U.N.T, Eleganza, Gentlemen, Start your engines, Sashay away, Shantay and Shanté, you stay	10	28.57%
Total			35	100%

Overall, the results show that *RuPaul's Drag Race* uses word formation mainly through compounding and coinage, which support creativity, humor, and identity construction. Less frequent types like clipping appear rarely because drag discourse prioritizes expressiveness over brevity. This reflects how drag performers use language not only to communicate but to perform, empower, and entertain.

Table 4. 2 types of word-formation processes in contemporary stage

No.	Types of Word-Formation Processes	English Registers Units	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Blending	Apololie, Condragulations, Hunty, Leotarded and Rusical	5	8.33%
2.	Compounding	Big girl, Country Realness, Death drop, Drag mother, Drama queen, Eleganza Extravaganza, Fierce jazzercise realness, Lip Sync for Your Life, Lip-sync assassin, Meryl Streep Realness, Pit crew, Purse first, Pussycat, Quick Drag, Sissy That Walk, Snatch Game, Soul Train Realness, Throw shade, Walk that fucking duck, Werk Room drama and Werk room wisdom	21	35%
3.	Derivation	Bitchy, Gurl, Piggy, Realness, Sickening and Voguing	6	10%
4.	Clipping	Lewk/ Look and Mug	2	3.33%
5.	Conversion	Read, Shade, Spilling the tea, Tea and Untuck	5	8.33%
6.	Coinage	Aet, Bam, Body-ody-ody, C.U.N.T., Cucu, Gu-huh, Halleloo, Henny, Hieeee, Kai kai, Kiki, Ladyboy, Miss Vanjie, Okurr, Sashay Away, Shablam, Shantay, Shanté, you stay, She done already	21	35%

No.	Types of Word-Formation Processes	English Registers Units	Frequency	Percentage
		done had herses, Who-ho and Yas, queen		
Total			35	100%

In summary, the results show that *RuPaul's Drag Race* uses word formation mainly through compounding and coinage, which support creativity, humor, and identity construction. Less frequent types like clipping appear rarely because drag discourse prioritizes expressiveness over brevity. This reflects how drag performers use language not only to communicate but to perform, empower, and entertain.

Table 4. 3 *parts of speech of neologisms*

Function	Frequency		Percentage	
	Early		Contemporary	Early
Noun	19	30	51%	47%
Verb	3	9	8%	14%
Adjective	2	3	5%	5%
Interjection	5	13	14%	20%
Other	8	9	22%	14%
Total	37	64	100%	100%

In the early stage, nouns accounted for the highest proportion (51%), followed by interjections (14%), others (22%), verbs (8%), and adjectives (5%). This indicates that earlier neologisms were mainly created to name new concepts, identities, and objects within the drag community, such as drag mother, realness, and werk room.

In the contemporary stage, nouns remained dominant (47%) but slightly decreased, while verbs and interjections increased to 14% and 20%, respectively. The rise in verbs (e.g., to werk, to slay, to serve) reflects the community's growing emphasis on performance and action, showing how language evolved to express empowerment and self-expression.

Overall, the comparison shows a linguistic shift from naming (nouns) to performing (verbs and interjections). This change suggests that language in drag culture has evolved from defining static identities to expressing dynamic performance, attitude, and emotion in modern contexts.

4.2 To analyze which words have undergone semantic shifts

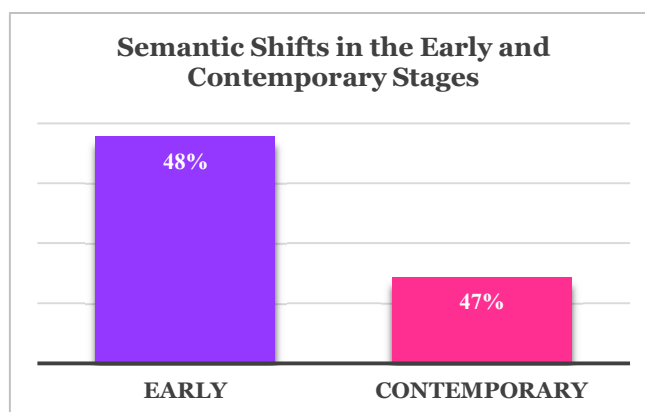


Diagram 4.2 the percentage of semantic shifts in the early and contemporary stages

Semantic shift in the early stage occurred 30 out of 62 words (48.39%), while in the contemporary stage, the semantic shift showed 51 out of 104 words (41.22%).

Semantic shifts occurred more frequently in the early stage because, during the beginning of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, the show and its community were still forming a shared identity and linguistic style. This process allowed them to reclaim mainstream vocabulary and give it a queer or drag-specific meaning, helping to build a sense of in-group identity and solidarity.

In contrast, in the contemporary stage, semantic shifts became less frequent because the drag community had already developed a rich and established lexicon. This shift reflects the evolution of drag language from redefining existing vocabulary to inventing brand-new words that represent the maturity, confidence, and global influence of the drag culture.

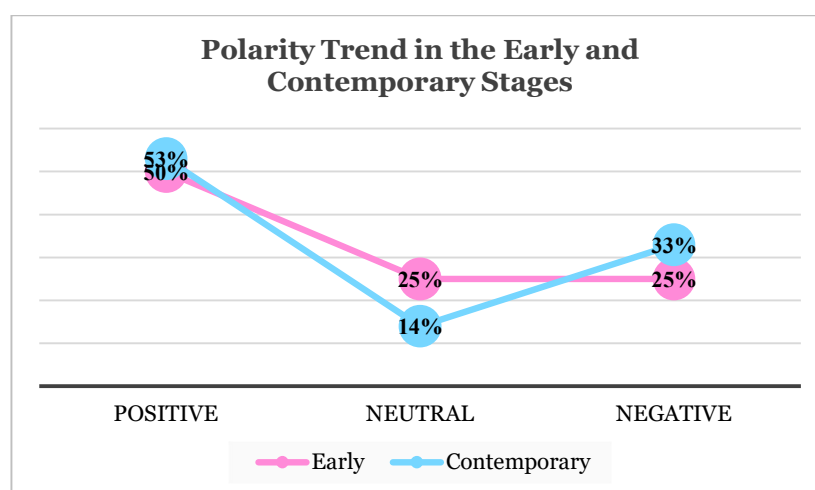
Table 4. 4 examples of semantic shifts in early stage

No.	Word	Part of Speech	Original Meaning	Drag Meaning
1.	Beat	Verb	To defeat somebody in a game or competition	To apply your makeup flawlessly
2.	Bitch	Noun	A female dog	Insult / friendly call
3.	Box	Noun	A container made of wood, thick card, metal, etc. with a flat base and sides and often a lid, used especially for holding solid things	Male genitalia (slang)
4.	Busted	Adjective	Caught in the act of doing something wrong and likely to be punished	Being unpolished or messy

Table 4.5 examples of semantic shifts in contemporary stage

No.	Word	Part of Speech	Original Meaning	Drag Meaning
1.	Boot	Verb	To kick somebody/something hard with your foot	To reject or eliminate
2.	Busy	Adjective	Having a lot to do; perhaps not free to do something else because you are working on something	Busy, skilled
3.	Camp	Noun	A place where people live temporarily in tents or temporary buildings	Exaggerated, theatrical style
4.	Chic	Adjective	Very fashionable and attractive	Stylish and elegant

4.3 Polarity of the neologisms and the semantic shifts

**Diagram 4.3** the polarity trend in the early and contemporary stages

In the early stage, positive polarity accounted for 50% (32 words), while both neutral and negative polarities showed the same rate at 25% (16 words each), indicating that positive words were dominant during this period. Similarly, in the contemporary stage, positive polarity remained the most frequent with 53.45% (59 words), followed by negative polarity at 32.76% (17 words) and neutral polarity at 13.79% (28 words). This overall pattern suggests that positive expressions were consistently dominant across both stages.

4.3 Examples of Audience Comments

Comment 1 (From 13 years ago)

“Ru...Now Honey....that last wig? **Busted!**”

Comment 2 (From 12 years ago)

“The way Sharon Needles and Phi Phi O’Hara move in the video are **SICKENING**”

Comment 3 (From 9 years ago)

“That **shade** pandora threw at trya.”

Comment 4 (From 5 years ago)

“CAROL CHANNING Was SHeelarious!!! That Was My All-Time Favorite **Snatch** Contestant **Hanny!!**”

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

This research outlines three questions elaborated in the research questions.

The first question that must be answered is to categorize the distribution of neologisms and identify their part of speech that occurs the most in the selected seasons of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. The second one is to analyze which words have undergone semantic shifts. The third question is to examine the polarity of the neologisms and the semantic shifts in terms of positive, neutral, or negative. The analysis in this study is based on three main theories, namely the Word Formation Theory by Harijanto and Dimara (2023), the Semantic Shift Theory by Mariano et al. (2024), and the Polarity Theory by Wilson et al. (2005).

The findings of this study reveal that compounding is the most dominant word-formation process of neologisms in *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. This finding suggests that the queer or drag community often creates new words by combining existing words into innovative and creative terms. Since compounding is the most frequently used, it reflects queer or drag communities’ linguistic creativity and memorable expressions that come with the entertaining and performative nature of drag culture. This supports Simmons (2015), who found that the speech practices of drag queens, such as playful exaggeration and the performance of speech styles, act as markers of identity and in-group belonging within the drag community. Moreover, this process indicates that neologisms in *RuPaul’s Drag Race* tend to prioritize identity, creativity, and playfulness.

The findings also indicate that a total of 81 words have undergone semantic shifts. The semantic shifts in the early stage are most frequent, which shows that the earlier seasons of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* had a more significant impact on redefining words within queer discourse. Since the early stage, this queer community wanted to express their identity vividly and show the new creation of identity, and during this period, this community was also shaping their linguistic identity to call out for acceptance. According to the results, in the contemporary stage, fewer semantic shifts occur than in the early stage because of language stabilization, and there is more creation of new words instead. This broader pattern can also be seen in digital spaces. This research aligns with Harijanto and Dimara (2023), showing that on TikTok, queer people perform their identities openly through language, gestures, and memes to build community, show individuality, and resist heteronormative norms.

Regarding polarity, the analysis shows that positive expressions occur more than both neutral and negative ones in early and contemporary stages. As Wilson, Wiebe, and Hoffmann (2005) explain, positive polarity is used to indicate favorable feelings, opinions, and viewpoints. This result indicates that neologisms and semantic shifts in *RuPaul's Drag Race* are mostly used to express confidence, colorfulness, and amusement rather than negativity or criticism. In addition, the positive polarity shows how language functions as a tool for self-expression, encourages identity affirmation, and promotes acceptance through humor and pride. Similarly, Harijanto and Dimara (2023) point out that queer communities often generate and circulate new words to express pride and strengthen collective identity. On the other hand, the data may be slightly inaccurate because the mainstream may restrict or not be able to widely disseminate negative words, as the mainstream tends to promote positive things that affect no one. As Luhulima et al. (2023) caution, once such terms are absorbed into the mainstream, they risk losing the social, political, and historical significance tied to their original communities.

5.2 Conclusions

This research aims to study the neologisms and the semantic shifts from the LGBTQ community in *RuPaul's Drag Race* from Season 1 (2009), Season 2 (2010), Season 15 (2023), and Season 16 (2024). The research findings are summarized as follows:

Research findings distribution of neologisms and their part of speech that occurs the most

From the study across the four selected seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, it was found that the *Neologism* words were most frequently formed through *compounding* in both periods, accounting for 35 words, coinage (31 words), *derivation* (10 words), *blending* (8 words), *conversion* (8 words), and *clipping* (3 words). It can be seen from this research that nouns were the most frequently occurring word class in both periods. This research is based on the study by Harijanto & Dimara (2023). The process of word formation was categorized into several types, including conversion, clipping, derivation, compounding, blending, and coinage. The classifications are classified according to the frequency of occurrence that from the most common to the least common types in both times as follows:

- 1. Compounding:** The study found that compounding was the most frequently used word-formation process with 14 words, accounting for 40.00% in the early stage and 21 words, accounting for 35.00% in the contemporary stage, such as “Kitty girl” does not mean “a small female cat” but refers to a drag queen who embodies femininity with confidence, cuteness, sexiness, and playfulness.
- 2. Coinage:** The research found that coinage was the second most common process with 10 words, accounting for 28.57% in the early stage and 21 words, accounting

35.00% in the contemporary stage. such as “C.U.N.T” is a created term formed by combining the words of four words into a new word.

3. **Derivation:** This process occurred in four words, accounting for 11.43% in the early stage and 6 words, accounting for 10.00% in the contemporary stage, such as “Fierceness” is derived by adding the suffix -ness to the adjective fierce turned it into a noun.
4. **Blending:** This process occurred in three words, accounting for 8.57% in the early stage and 5 words, accounting for 8.33 %in the contemporary stage, such as “Hunty” is formed from hun and cunt across to blending parts of each word to create a new one.
5. **Conversion:** This process occurred in three words, accounting for 8.57% in the early stage and 5 words, accounting for 8.33% in the contemporary stage, such as “Shade” has shifted grammatically from a noun to a verb.
6. **Clipping:** This process occurred in one word, accounting for 2.86% in the early stage and 2 words, accounting for 3.33% in the contemporary stage, such as “Mug” is clipped from “mugshot” meaning “face” or “a fully made-up face.”

Research findings words have undergone semantic shifts

From the study across the four selected seasons of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* a total of 81 words were found to have undergone semantic shift. This research found 30 words appeared during the early stage and 51 words appeared in the contemporary stage. This research applied the concept of semantic shift from Mariano et al. (2024) to study how word meanings change within queer language in *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. It also considers the presence of these words across different time periods from the early to the contemporary period in order to present a more comprehensive overview of linguistic change and the development of drag language within the context of digital society and public communication.

This research that has semantic shifts occurred most frequently in the early stage of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. During this period, the show and the drag community were in the process of constructing their own identity and language style often by redefining existing English words to suit drag culture. Such as “shade”, “read”, and “serve” which took on new meanings related to witty insults or criticism, critique, and performance.

Research findings polarity of the neologisms and the semantic shift

From the study across the four selected seasons of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* positive words were found to be the most frequent total of 91 words in all. These were separated to 32 words occurring during the early stage and 59 words during the contemporary stage. The concept of polarity in linguistic value analysis from Wilson et al., (2005) who proposed a method for distinguishing emotionally oriented words or phrases as either neutral or polar, and further

classifying polar expressions as positive, negative, or neutral according to their contextual use. This allows for a more accurate reflection of the emotional direction of meaning.

This research shows that positive polarity was the most of both two times. It found 32 words, accounting for 50% in the early stage and 59 words, accounting for 53.45% in the contemporary stage.

5.3 Implications of the research

According to the discussion and major findings, some implications are provided. First, the students can understand how language changes in queer communities by studying neologisms and semantic shifts in *RuPaul's Drag Race*, which are discussed in this research. This research might also make students aware that language has changed over time, especially the new words from queer communities.

For linguists, this study can provide the processes of neologisms and semantic shifts, along with the polarity within queer discourse. The findings of this study show that neologisms and semantic shifts are influenced by identity, culture, and performance, which reflect how society and culture affect and shape language. However, the mainstream media may limit or filter the use of negative words. Linguists should find other ways to approach accurate data.

5.4 Implications of the research

The results of this study on neologisms and semantic shifts found in *RuPaul's Drag Race* (Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16) are only part of the investigation and exploration into word formation processes, semantic shifts, and polarity. This topic of the drag community is considered highly interesting and recommended. Accordingly, the researchers offer the following suggestions for future studies.

1. The researchers should analyze alternative classification theories, which may lead to different ways of categorizing neologisms.

2. The researchers should explore semantic shifts in other seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race* to understand broader linguistic evolution.

The researchers should investigate the audience's language adoption by focusing on how viewers use neologisms and semantic shifts and exploring social and cultural factors that influence language change.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

This study focuses only on the American version of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and does not include other international versions, such as *RuPaul's Drag Race Thailand*, which could be compared in future research to investigate how linguistic features differ between Western and Thai contexts.

This study only investigates and analyzes neologisms and semantic shifts. However, there are other ways to analyze innovative linguistic features beyond neologisms and semantic shifts, which include drag or queer discourse, such as reappropriation (taking back negative

words and turning them into positive ones to empower), hyperbolic meaning shift (using drama and exaggerated expressions), and pejoration to reversal (turning the meanings of negative words into positive ones).

Authors

Natcha Namkhang A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Pimlada Raitongrunroj A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Prakaifa Pongsatatkiij A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Wachira Zeingchong A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Kasidit Supan Lecturer at Division of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

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English Reading Comprehension Skills among Second-Year English Major Students

**Kanyakorn Teemee¹, Phatthanakit Rooplor¹, Prathong Janmee¹,
Monthakan Prapairak¹, Kanokrat Kunasaraphan^{1*}**

Abstract

Reading comprehension, in particular, plays an important role in students' learning, especially for Thai learners of English as a foreign language. This study aimed to assess students' English reading comprehension skills and to examine their self-assessment of those skills. This survey study focused on the English reading comprehension skills of second-year English major students at Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus. The participants were 148 students (69 regular program students and 79 special program students).

The research instruments included an English reading comprehension test and a questionnaire. Participants were required to complete a reading comprehension test covering seven skills, consisting of two passages with 25 items. After that, they completed a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire assessing the same seven skills. The data obtained from both instruments were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

The results showed that among seven reading comprehension skills assessed, the three highest-ranked English reading skills among the students were interpreting information skill (92.13%), identifying supporting details (90.30%), summarizing information (89.81%) whereas predicting information (75.09%) was lowest. In addition, based on students' self-assessment, the top three English reading skills were identifying the main idea ($M = 3.81$), identifying supporting details ($M = 3.77$), understanding vocabulary ($M = 3.75$), but summarizing information is the lowest ($M = 3.67$). This research is beneficial in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of students' reading comprehension skills.

Keywords: Reading skills, Reading comprehension, Self-assessment

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* Corresponding Author

E-mail: kanokrat.ku@ku.th

¹ Kasetsart University, Thailand

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of Problem

Even though English is not the most widely used language in the world, it is a global language that connects people around the world. According to Swales (1987), over half of the millions of academic papers published annually were produced in English, and this proportion was steadily increasing each year. This global status has also increased the importance of English among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). EFL refers to the study of English by non-native speakers in countries where English is not normally used as a language of communication. English language skills play an important role in the modern world. They can help people communicate widely and collaborate effectively. However, EFL learners often face several challenges, such as limited opportunities to access English (Nunan, 2003) and language anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), which may hinder communicative competence.

English language has become the worldwide language that strongly influences non-native speakers of English such as Thailand that English is taught as a foreign language in primary schools. In 1913, public schools and a formal education system were established, with English officially included in the curriculum. English became an important tool for the royal court and government agencies to deal with foreigners. There are 4 skills of English language such speaking, listening, writing, and reading. One of taught skills of English is reading skills. These are the main skills that learners should study potentially.

Reading skills are essential for understanding academic texts, completing assignments, and accessing information across subject areas. Reading also contributes to the development of academic writing skills, expands vocabulary knowledge, and enhances overall comprehension ability (Duffy & Roehler, 1987). However, many learners experience difficulties in reading comprehension because of unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures, even though reading remains essential for language development. Therefore, the importance of reading skills deserves continued attention.

In study of Chawwang (2008), The participants were Thai 12 grade students in Nakhonratchasima province, Thailand. They took a reading test to evaluate English reading ability that was divided into three parts: (a) sentence structure, (b) vocabulary knowledge, and (c) reading comprehension. It showed that the reading ability of the participants was at a low level due to sentence structure, vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension.

Moreover, Shehu (2015) found the evidence from the unsatisfactory results of students in English Language Matura Exam in Albanian high school prove that students have difficulties in reading comprehension such as vocabulary, students should properly comprehend new word to decode the message, working memory that student often complain because they could not remember the information they just read, Absence of extensive

reading, when they read text shortly or nothing, they will struggle to decode a text, and type of text is also important some texts are called easy, some others are not.

Furthermore, Al-Ghazo (2016) investigated the problem of reading comprehension among Jordanian university students is meta cognitive strategies. From experimental group and control group, with appropriate adjustments to the teaching methods of each group. It shows control group were considered as low proficiency in English language from not receiving strategies-based treatment, after doing a multiple-choice reading comprehension test analyze that the post-test score of the experimental group was significantly higher than the control group. These results prove that teaching using metacognitive strategies is successful in developing students' vocabulary learning skills.

The research focuses on English reading comprehension skills of thai students who learn English as foreign language. It emphasizes on the reading comprehension skills that found in Thai students that most of them could read English, but not to understand or interpret English meaning due to problems of vocabulary and structure.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to investigate English reading comprehension skills of English major second-year students, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus. The study had two main objectives:

1. To examine the students' English reading comprehension skills across seven aspects of English reading comprehension using a reading comprehension test
2. To investigate the students' self-assessment on English reading comprehension skills in the seven aspects.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the students' levels of English reading comprehension skills, as measured by the test, across the seven aspects?
2. How do students assess their own English reading comprehension skills across the seven aspects?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research shows English reading comprehension skills in the second-year English major students. It will be beneficial for:

1.4.1 Students

The findings may help students become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in reading comprehension, including understanding vocabulary, identifying the main idea, identifying supporting details, interpreting information, making inferences, summarizing information, and predicting information. Such awareness may support further improvement in reading ability.

1.4.2 Teachers

The findings may help teachers better understand students' reading comprehension levels and identify areas requiring additional instruction, learning activities, or instructional materials. This may contribute to more effective teaching practices.

1.4.3 The Curriculum

The findings may provide useful information for curriculum development and revision, particularly in relation to course descriptions, learning outcomes, and reading-related instruction within the English major program.

2. Literature review

2.1 Related Concepts and Theories

2.1.1 English Skills

English has become the international language around the globe due to several influential factors including literary, social, political, and economic considerations (Rasheed, 2011). As a result of its global dominance, people worldwide are increasingly motivated to study English because it grants access to a broader range of information, enhances employment opportunities, and enables effective communication across international borders. Given this reality, it is essential that students develop proficiency in the four main English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are divided into two groups: productive skills, which include speaking and writing, and receptive skills, which include reading and listening. Each skill complements the others and plays a vital role in fostering comprehensive language competence (Mumtaz, 2006).

2.1.2 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension refers to the ability to understand words and phrases that combine to form meaningful expressions. When readers are able to recognize words, pronounce them, and understand their meanings, they can process written language more effectively. However, reading comprehension involves more than understanding individual words in isolation. It also requires readers to understand how words, sentences, and paragraphs work together to construct meaning (Thorndike, 1971). Additionally, reading comprehension encompasses more than the mere identification of explicit information at the literal level. It requires higher-order cognitive processes such as interpretation, inference-making, and critical analysis, which involve the integration and transformation of textual data into meaningful understanding (Yussof et al., 2013).

2.1.2.1 Levels of Reading Comprehension

According to Callahan and Clark Callahan and Clark (1988), there are three levels of reading comprehension: (1) reading the lines, (2) reading between the lines, and (3) reading beyond the lines.

The first and most basic level, reading the lines, refers to understanding the literal meaning of the text, what the author actually says on the surface, without interpreting or evaluating it. Reading the lines is usually evaluated by questions such as: What is the author telling us? What evidence is he giving for his statements? What does the sentence, paragraph, selection, chapter, or book mean?

The second level, reading between the lines, involves understanding what the author really means. At this stage, the reader identifies the author's intentions and purpose, interprets ideas, and evaluates what the author says. The reader looks for clues in the text, tells the difference between facts and opinions, and keeps their own ideas separate from those of the author. In addition, the reader assesses the quality and reliability of the author's evidence or sources. This is obviously a mature level of reading, requiring thinking and experience.

The third level, reading beyond the lines, requires readers to go beyond what the author explicitly states. It means finding out what the author is suggesting, guessing what might happen next, and making general ideas that the author didn't say directly. Through this process of analysis, readers are able to connect and combine ideas in new ways, leading to deeper insights and a better understanding of the meaning and value of the ideas presented in the text. This represents the highest and most demanding level of reading comprehension, as it requires both critical thinking and experience. However, some aspects of this level can still be developed by readers who are more advanced or mature in their reading skills (Callahan & Clark, 1988, p. 281).

2.1.2.2 Components of Reading Comprehension Skills

Callahan and Clark (1988) stated that developmental reading programs are designed to reinforce previously acquired reading skills and to develop new comprehension abilities that help students understand more advanced written materials. The components include:

1. Getting the central idea
2. Selecting the significant details
3. Understanding words in context
4. Following directions
5. Answering specific questions
6. Determining relationships
7. Drawing conclusions
8. Predicting outcomes
9. Outlining and summarizing
10. Determining the author's purpose and mood
11. Understanding figurative language
12. Evaluating ideas

13. Understanding graphic material
14. Increasing speed
15. Adjusting speed to purpose and content
16. Using reference material.

(Callahan & Clark 1988, p.277)

These components reflect the multidimensional nature of reading comprehension and highlight the range of subskills required for effective reading.

2.2 Related Research

2.2.1 Problems in Reading Comprehension

Several studies have examined the challenges Thai students face in English reading comprehension across various educational levels. Wonglao (2022) conducted research on Grade 6 students at Anuban Singburi School, involving approximately 150 participants. The study identified several significant issues that young learners encountered, particularly difficulties with complex sentence structures, unfamiliar vocabulary, and poor reading habits. The research employed both questionnaires and interviews, providing a combination of quantitative and qualitative data for a deeper understanding of students' struggles with English texts.

In a broader context, Chawwang (2006) investigated similar problems among Grade 12 students in Nakhon Ratchasima's Educational Regions 1, 2, 3, and 7. The sample consisted of 840 students, equally divided between science and arts programs. The study utilized a reading test comprising 50 multiple-choice questions based on three passages that targeted sentence structure, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Findings revealed that students from both academic tracks experienced comparable difficulties in all three areas, with no statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of reading ability.

Beyond the Thai context, international research has also provided valuable insights into reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners. Shehu (2015) investigated this issue among Albanian high school students and identified several key barriers, including limited vocabulary knowledge, weak working memory, insufficient reading practice, and the inherent complexity of English texts. The study emphasized that students often struggle to decode and comprehend passages effectively due to inconsistent reading habits and inadequate vocabulary acquisition, both of which hinder their ability to interpret meaning accurately.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The population in this study consisted of 183 students from the regular program and special program, who were studying in the second year of the English major at the Faculty of

Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus. All participants had taken a course related to reading, namely Introduction to Reading and Writing Skills. The reason for choosing second-year students was that they had completed the reading course in the previous semester and were also enrolled in the course English Reading in the current semester, the first semester of the 2025 academic year.

According to the Krejcie and Morgan table (1970, Vol. 30, pp. 607–610), the sample in this study consisted of 148 students. Of these, 69 students were from the regular program, and 79 students were from the special program. The participants in this study were 148 students from a population of 183 students.

3.2 Research Instrument

Instruments used in this study were a test and a questionnaire that aimed to investigate the participants' reading comprehension skills.

3.2.1 Test

The test comprised two passages concerning understanding vocabulary, identifying the main idea, identifying supporting details, interpreting information, making inferences, summarizing information, and predicting information.

The English test was a B2-level test developed by the British Council British Council and was used to investigate second-year English major students' reading comprehension skills. The test was administered to the students in the first semester of the 2025 academic year. The reading passages and test items are presented in Appendix 1.

3.2.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to investigate the English reading comprehension skills of second-year English major students in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus. The details of the questionnaire are presented below. The complete questionnaire is provided in Appendix 2.

Part 1: The General Information

The participants' background information included their study program. In this part, the students were required to answer the questions that best corresponded to their information.

Part 2: Five-likert Scale Questionnaire

In this section, a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire was used to investigate the students' opinions toward reading comprehension skills. The characteristics of the measurement format are based on a five-level rating scale, with the following score levels:

5 means Strongly agree

4 means Agree

3 means Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree)

2 means Disagree

1 means Strong disagree

3.3 Procedure

The data were collected from a sample of 148 second-year English major students selected based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) from a total population of 183 students. A questionnaire and a test were used as instruments for data collection. The data were gathered during the first semester of the 2025 academic year, after obtaining informed consent from all participants.

Prior to data collection, the researcher explained the objectives of the study and assured the participants that all information would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. After that, the questionnaire was distributed, and the test was administered. The instruments were distributed to the participants, who were given 30 minutes to complete them.

3.4 Data Analysis

Researchers analyzed the reading comprehension skills of second-year English major students. The data were analyzed using quantitative data analysis. The analysis was based on seven reading comprehension skills.

In terms of questionnaire data analysis, the findings from the five-point Likert-scale questionnaire of each skill were processed using percentage, mean ($\bar{X}$), and standard deviation (S.D.). The collected data were analyzed with the Microsoft Office Excel program. Results from the reading comprehension test were interpreted into frequencies and percentages. Researchers used statistics to analyze the data as follows:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

P represents percentage

f represents scores

N represents total score

3.5 Results of the Test

The percentages of English reading comprehension performance across seven skills among second-year students are presented below. The highest percentage of correct answers was interpreting information (92.13%), followed by identifying supporting details (90.30%), summarizing information (89.80%), identifying the main idea (85.39%), understanding vocabulary (83.40%), making inferences (81.63%), and predicting information (75.09%), respectively.

Table 1 students' percentage on English reading comprehension skills test English reading comprehension skills percentage of correct answer

English Reading Comprehension Skills	Percentage of Correct Answer
1. Interpreting information	92.13%
2. Identifying supporting details	90.30%
3. Summarizing Information	89.81%
4. Identifying the main idea	85.39%
5. Understanding vocabulary	83.42%
6. Making inferences	81.63%
7. Predicting Information	75.09%

3.6 Results of the Questionnaire

As seen in Table 2, it can be assumed that most of the participants rated themselves at a high level, as the total average score of the questionnaire in both studying programs was 3.65 (S.D. = 0.87). Moreover, most of the students perceived that they were able to identify the main idea ($\bar{X} = 3.81$, S.D. = 0.05) at a high level. This was followed by identifying supporting details ($\bar{X} = 3.77$, S.D. = 0.04), understanding vocabulary ($\bar{X} = 3.75$, S.D. = 0.06), and making inferences ($\bar{X} = 3.73$, S.D. = 0.01).

Whereas participants evaluated themselves that they could not predict what would happen next from background knowledge or textual clues, and they could not interpret implied meaning or what the author wants to convey ($\bar{X} = 3.69$, S.D. = 0.07), they also rated summarizing a passage as the lowest ($\bar{X} = 3.67$, S.D. = 0.03).

Table 2 results of regular and special students' self- assessment on English reading comprehension skills

Reading Comprehension Skills	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1. Identifying the Main Idea	3.81	0.05
2. Identifying Supporting Details	3.77	0.04
3. Understanding Vocabulary	3.75	0.06
4. Making Inferences	3.73	0.01
5. Predicting Information	3.69	0.07
6. Interpreting Information	3.69	0.07
7. Summarizing Information	3.67	0.03
Total	3.73	0.87

4. Discussion

The results indicated that the lowest score in the test was the predicting information skill, consistent with the findings of Chawwang (2008), who found that students had the most difficulty in the prediction part of English reading comprehension. According to Abiyyu (2024), determining main idea questions were the hardest for non-English major students to

answer. However, identifying the main idea skill in the present study showed a high percentage of scores. It can be assumed that participants in this study effectively used skimming, a key strategy for identifying main ideas without detailed reading (Callahan & Clark, 1988).

Additionally, the highest result of the questionnaire was the identifying main idea skill, which was consistent with the test results. Even though Callahan and Clark stated that understanding the explicit or stated meaning, or what the text actually says, is a basic level of summarizing information skill, the questionnaire result for summarizing information showed a relatively low mean score (3.67). On the other hand, 89.81% of the test results in summarizing information were correct, which was a high percentage. It showed that the participants were able to understand the text exactly as it is written.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that second-year English major students had different levels of English reading comprehension skills. Based on the test results, the students performed best in interpreting information, identifying supporting details, and summarizing information, while predicting information was the most difficult skill. Based on the questionnaire results, the students rated identifying the main idea as their strongest skill, whereas summarizing information received the lowest rating.

These findings suggest that the students had strengths in some areas of reading comprehension, but they still needed improvement in higher-level skills, especially predicting information and summarizing ideas confidently. Therefore, this study may be useful for teachers in planning suitable classroom activities and reading instruction. It may also provide useful information for curriculum development to further improve students' English reading comprehension skills.

Authors

Kanyakorn Teemee A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Phatthanakit Rooplor A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Prathong Janmee A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Monthakan Prapairak A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Kanokrat Kunasaraphan Lecturer at Division of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

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Foreign Language Anxiety and Speaking Skills: A Study of Non-English Major Students in a Thai University Context

**John Jaroenbowornkit¹, Yanisa Pengklai¹, Thananya Sochara¹,
Phattharaphon Kocharoen¹, Suphatra Sucharitrak¹, Wisut Jarunthawatchai^{1*}**

Abstract

English speaking anxiety is a significant barrier to language development among EFL learners, particularly those in non-English programs. This study examined the levels and sources of language anxiety related to speaking skills among non-English major students at a Thai university. Using a questionnaire-based design that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data, data were collected from 66 first-year business program students enrolled in English for Everyday Life in the first semester of the 2025 academic year, selected through purposive sampling. The instrument comprised a closed-ended questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz et al., 1986) and an open-ended questionnaire adapted from Paranuwat (2011). The findings revealed that students experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety ($M = 3.19$). Among the three FLCAS components, communication apprehension was the most prominent. Qualitatively, the primary sources of anxiety were low self-perception of ability and classroom practices, followed by fear of negative feedback and the role of teachers. These findings highlight the need for anxiety-aware pedagogical approaches in EFL classrooms, particularly for non-English major students.

Keywords: Language Anxiety, Speaking Skills, Non-English Major Students, Sources of Language Anxiety

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* Corresponding Author
E-mail: wisut.ja@ku.ac.th

¹ Kasetsart University

1. Introduction

English has become an indispensable tool for career and business success, functioning as a global lingua franca across diverse professional and academic contexts. Among the four language skills, speaking is considered the most challenging (Rao, 2019), and this difficulty often leads learners to struggle with oral performance under stress. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) noted that speaking anxiety caused many students to feel nervous, which negatively impacted their overall language learning.

In language education, this phenomenon is widely referred to as foreign language anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) described it as tension and apprehension specific to foreign language contexts, particularly in speaking, which can hinder students' ability to communicate confidently. More specifically, Horwitz et al. (1986) defined English-speaking anxiety as a negative emotional response triggered during communication in English. This issue is particularly pronounced for learners who study English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as English is not typically used in their everyday lives (Chaisiri, 2023).

In the Thai context, although speaking skills are important for effective communication, many EFL students continue to struggle with English-speaking anxiety, which negatively affects their speaking performance. Undergraduate students, especially those in non-English programs, face several challenges in English communication, including fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and insufficient English background knowledge (Thomol et al., 2024; Kulwattanapaisarn et al., 2022).

While several studies have examined public speaking and oral presentations (e.g., Kurakan, 2021; Kalra & Siribud, 2020), research specifically targeting English-speaking anxiety among students in business programs remains limited (Kulwattanapaisarn et al., 2022). This study therefore aimed to address this gap by examining the levels and sources of language anxiety related to speaking skills among non-English major students at a Thai university. The following research questions guided the investigation:

1. What are the levels of language anxiety on speaking skills among non-English major students at Thai university?
2. What are the students' aspects that contribute to language anxiety on speaking skills among non-English major students at a Thai university?

2. Literature review

2.1 Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been widely recognized as a key affective factor in language acquisition. Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualize it as a situation-specific phenomenon arising from the uniqueness of the foreign language learning process, involving self-perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors that interfere with learning. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) describe it as a complex phenomenon characterized by nervousness and tension related to learning or using a foreign language. As a broad concept, FLA covers anxiety that may occur in various language learning situations, both inside and outside the classroom (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

Recent research has also shown that anxiety is not the only emotion learners experience in language learning. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), in a study of 1,746 FL learners worldwide, found that foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) are different but related emotions, meaning that learners can experience both positive and negative feelings during language learning at the same time. Dewaele et al. (2018) further found that among 189 British high school students, higher FLE was linked to positive attitudes toward the language and the teacher, while lower FLCA was linked to positive attitudes and higher relative standing among peers. These findings suggest that to understand FLA, researchers should pay attention not only to anxiety but also to positive emotions that learners experience.

2.2 Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

While FLA refers to anxiety in foreign language contexts in general, foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) refers more specifically to anxiety that occurs during classroom activities (Horwitz et al., 1986). FLCA focuses on the pressures of performing in a classroom setting, such as speaking in front of peers and being evaluated by teachers (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Building on this foundation, Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three core components of FLCA: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension refers to shyness, nervousness, and difficulty expressing ideas in a foreign language. Test anxiety involves stress arising from fear of failure or unsatisfactory academic results. Fear of negative evaluation reflects apprehension about others' judgments and the expectation of being assessed unfavorably.

2.3 Speaking Anxiety in EFL Contexts

Speaking anxiety is a type of FLCA that is specifically related to oral performance. While FLCA covers anxiety across various classroom activities, speaking anxiety focuses on the difficulties and negative emotions learners experience when they are required to speak in a foreign language (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). Speaking is considered the most challenging of

the four language skills (Rao, 2019), and anxiety related to oral performance has been extensively documented among EFL learners. Horwitz et al. (1986) describe English-speaking anxiety as a fear and negative emotional response triggered during communication. This anxiety may lead to difficulty expressing ideas, limited classroom interaction, and reduced engagement in academic tasks (Bui, 2025).

In the Thai EFL context, Chaisiri (2023) noted that English instruction tends to prioritize grammar and reading over speaking, which limits students' opportunities to develop oral proficiency. Consequently, non-English major students often experience insecurity about their speaking ability, resulting in hesitation and reduced classroom participation (Ngo et al., 2025).

Research consistently identifies common sources of speaking anxiety across contexts, including fear of making mistakes, insufficient practice, and limited grammatical knowledge (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020; Faqihi, 2024; Ngo et al., 2025). In Thailand specifically, test anxiety, low self-confidence, fear of negative evaluation, and teacher-related factors have been identified as primary sources (Chinpakdee, 2015; Suwannaprut, 2023). Past negative learning experiences have also been found to increase anxiety and reduce students' willingness to participate in speaking activities (Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021; Kalra & Siribud, 2020).

2.4 Sources of Language Anxiety

Luo (2012) proposes a four-dimensional model of foreign language anxiety sources, adapted from Young's (1991) framework, consisting of classroom environment, learner characteristics, target language, and foreign language learning.

The classroom environment encompasses three aspects: the role of teachers, classroom practices, and relationships among students. Teacher behaviors such as constant error correction and evaluation can heighten learner anxiety, while classroom activities such as presentations, random questioning, and role plays often provoke anxiety when students encounter unfamiliar tasks. Peer dynamics also contribute, as students fear negative judgment or mockery from classmates (Mahasin et al., 2025).

Learner characteristics represent another significant source of anxiety. Young (1991) identifies perfectionism, fear of negative feedback, low self-esteem, low self-perception of ability, and embarrassment as key learner-related factors. Perfectionist students tend to set excessively high standards and fear making mistakes, leading to higher anxiety levels compared to non-perfectionists (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Low self-perception of ability reflects learners' doubts about their pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar competence, while embarrassment manifests through silence, mispronunciation, and avoidance behaviors in the classroom (Young, 1991).

The target language itself can also be a source of anxiety, as its unfamiliar grammar, structure, and sound system present considerable challenges for learners (Young, 1991).

Finally, foreign language learning as a broader process involves the simultaneous development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, and the demands of this multi-skill acquisition can contribute to anxiety, particularly in speaking performance (Young, 1991).

2.5 The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

The FLCAS, developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), remains the most widely used instrument for measuring language anxiety in classroom settings. Its validity has been tested across multiple contexts: Aida (1994) extended the scale with American learners of Japanese, while Liu and Jackson (2008) applied it to Chinese EFL learners and found that communication apprehension was the dominant anxiety component, followed by fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. The FLCAS has also been widely used in Thai studies, including those by Thomol et al. (2024), Kulwattanapaisarn et al. (2022), and Guzman (2022). To address the specific focus on speaking anxiety in this study, items were supplemented from additional scales. Yaikhong and Usaha (2012) developed a public speaking anxiety scale for Thai learners, while Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014) and Toubot et al. (2018) designed instruments targeting speaking anxiety specifically. Additional items were drawn from Uttaranakorn (2020) and Paranuwat (2011). Together, these instruments formed the basis of the adapted questionnaire used in this study.

2.6 Previous Studies

Research on speaking anxiety among EFL learners has been conducted across various international contexts. Faqihi (2024) reported moderate anxiety levels among Saudi EFL students, with lack of preparation, limited vocabulary, and teacher-related issues as key obstacles. Nguyen (2023) found that 69% of non-English major students in Vietnam experienced moderate speaking anxiety, primarily linked to low language proficiency. Abrar et al. (2022) identified fear of evaluation and concerns about professional English competency as main anxiety sources among Indonesian pre-service teachers. Naser and Isa (2021) found moderate anxiety among Malaysian undergraduates, noting that presentation skills remained weak despite satisfactory academic results. Alnahidh and Altalhab (2020) similarly reported moderate anxiety among Saudi female EFL students, attributing it to fear of mistakes, forced participation, and negative teacher attitudes.

In Thailand, comparable findings have emerged. Thomol et al. (2024) found that communication apprehension was the primary source of speaking anxiety among students at Udon Thani Rajabhat University. Suwannaprut (2023) reported high anxiety related to grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and fear of negative evaluation among non-English majors. Guzman (2022) found high speaking anxiety among students at Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University, though academic performance remained strong. Kulwattanapaisarn et al. (2022) identified fear of being less competent than peers and test anxiety as significant sources among business communication students. Akaraphattanawong (2020) further noted

that students with lower proficiency experienced greater anxiety, particularly in communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation.

Collectively, these studies suggest that EFL speaking anxiety is a persistent and multidimensional challenge. However, most prior research has relied on a single measurement instrument and has focused primarily on quantitative outcomes. This study sought to address this limitation by integrating the FLCAS with items from additional speaking-focused scales and incorporating qualitative data to capture students' own perspectives on their anxiety sources.

3. Methodology

This study investigated the levels and sources of English-speaking anxiety among non-English major students at a Thai university. A questionnaire was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, with the closed-ended section measuring anxiety levels and the open-ended section capturing students' perspectives on the sources of their anxiety.

3.1 Participants

The participants were 66 first-year undergraduate students majoring in business programs, specifically in marketing and management, at Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus. They were selected through purposive sampling, as business students were considered particularly relevant given that strong oral communication skills are essential in professional and multinational business environments (Rao, 2019; Bui, 2025). In addition, these students were accessible to the researchers as they were enrolled in the same course, which also made the sampling partly convenience-based. It should be noted that the findings of this study are specific to this particular group of students and may not be directly generalizable to all EFL learners. However, the results may be transferable to similar contexts involving non-English major students with comparable backgrounds. All participants were enrolled in English for Everyday Life (01355101) during the first semester of the 2025 academic year.

3.2 Research Instrument

A questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection, consisting of three sections. Section 1 gathered background information, including participants' gender, age, major, years of English study, and self-perceived English-speaking ability. Section 2 comprised 30 closed-ended items measuring speaking anxiety levels, adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz et al., 1986) as the main framework, with additional items drawn from Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014), Yaikhong and Usaha (2012), Toubot et al. (2018), and Uttaranakorn (2020). Section 3 consisted of 8 open-ended items exploring students' perspectives on the sources of their speaking anxiety, adapted from Paranuwat (2011). Both sections were administered in Thai using a back-translation technique

adapted from Akaraphattanawong (2020) to ensure comprehension among non-English major participants.

The 30 closed-ended items were distributed across the three FLCAS components as follows: items 1–10 measured communication apprehension, items 11–22 measured test anxiety, and items 23–30 measured fear of negative evaluation. The majority of items were adapted from the original FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986), while additional items from other scales were selected because they addressed speaking-specific anxiety situations that were not fully covered by the original FLCAS. These items were reviewed and placed under the FLCAS component that best matched their content, based on the judgment of the researchers and the expert reviewers who assessed the instrument's content validity through the IOC index. This approach aimed to maintain the coherence of the FLCAS framework while expanding its coverage to include speaking-specific situations relevant to the Thai EFL context.

It should be noted that item 11, “I feel excited when my teacher calls me in the English class,” was placed under the test anxiety component. In the Thai-language version of the questionnaire, the word used was “ตื่นเต้น,” which in Thai carries the meaning of both excitement and nervousness. Therefore, in this context, the item was intended to capture the anxiety that students feel when being called upon by the teacher, rather than positive excitement.

Content validity was established through review by three expert professors at the same institution, using the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index. Based on their feedback, the questionnaire underwent significant revision, including refinement of the Thai translation, consolidation of the theoretical framework to a single scale, and replacement of the originally planned semi-structured interview with an open-ended questionnaire due to time constraints. The revised instrument was reviewed twice by the same experts before receiving final approval from the study advisor.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from 18 to 22 September 2025 in classrooms at the LLB building. The researchers obtained permission from the course instructor prior to administration. Participants completed the questionnaire in approximately 20 minutes, and all responses were collected immediately upon completion. Participants were informed that their responses would remain confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

Quantitative data from Section 2 were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean (*M*), and standard deviation (*SD*), calculated using Google Sheets. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), and mean scores were interpreted according to the criteria adapted from Akkakoson (2016): 1.00–1.80 = very low anxiety, 1.81–2.60 = low anxiety, 2.61–3.40 = moderate anxiety, 3.41–4.20 = high anxiety, and 4.21–5.00 = very high anxiety. Qualitative data from Section 3 were analyzed using content analysis to identify and categorize recurring

themes related to sources of speaking anxiety. The responses were read and coded by the researchers, and recurring themes were identified and grouped into categories based on Luo's (2012) framework of learner characteristics and classroom environment. The categories were then reviewed by the research team to ensure that they accurately represented the participants' responses.

4. Findings

4.1 Research Question 1: Levels of Language Anxiety on Speaking Skills

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for all 30 items of the speaking anxiety questionnaire. The overall mean score was 3.19 ($SD = 1.20$), indicating a moderate level of speaking anxiety among the participants (Akkakoson, 2016). Across all items, mean scores ranged from 2.20 to 4.05, with the majority falling within the moderate anxiety range (2.61–3.40).

Within the Communication Apprehension component, the highest-scoring item was item 3: "I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation" ($M = 3.91$), suggesting that unplanned speaking situations were a particular source of stress. Item 6: "I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students" ($M = 3.64$) also scored notably high, indicating that performing in front of peers contributed substantially to apprehension. The lowest-scoring item in this component was item 9: "I get upset when I do not understand what the teacher is correcting" ($M = 2.48$), though it still reflected low-to-moderate anxiety.

Within the Test Anxiety component, item 11: "I feel excited when my teacher calls me in the English class" ($M = 3.98$) and item 15: "Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about the English speaking test" ($M = 3.58$) were among the highest-scoring items, reflecting persistent anxiety surrounding teacher-initiated interactions and formal assessments regardless of preparation. The lowest-scoring item in this component was item 17: "The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get" ($M = 2.23$).

Within the Fear of Negative Evaluation component, item 25: "I get nervous when the teacher asks questions that I have not prepared in advance" yielded the highest mean score across all 30 items ($M = 4.05$), highlighting unprepared questioning as the single greatest anxiety trigger. Item 27: "I feel anxious while I am waiting to speak English" ($M = 3.53$) also scored relatively high, suggesting anticipatory anxiety as a notable concern. The lowest-scoring item in this component was item 29: "I have trouble coordinating my movements while I am speaking English" ($M = 2.20$), indicating that physical symptoms of anxiety were less pronounced among participants.

Overall, the items with the highest anxiety scores across all three components — items 25 ($M = 4.05$), 11 ($M = 3.98$), and 3 ($M = 3.91$) — share a common pattern: they all involve

situations where students are required to speak without adequate preparation time. This pattern may reflect the teacher-fronted nature of many Thai EFL classrooms, where students are often expected to respond to teacher-initiated questions on the spot (Chinpakdee, 2015). In such a setting, unprepared speaking may feel particularly threatening because students have limited time to plan their responses or check their vocabulary and grammar before speaking. In contrast, the lowest-scoring items across all components — items 29 ($M = 2.20$), 17 ($M = 2.23$), and 9 ($M = 2.48$) — suggest that physical symptoms and confusion from studying were fewer common sources of anxiety among these participants.

Table 1 mean scores and standard deviations of English-speaking anxiety questionnaire items

No.	Item	M	SD
Communication Apprehension			
1	I get nervous when I do not understand every word my English teacher says.	3.41	0.93
2	I feel overwhelmed by the number of words I have to learn to speak English.	3.24	1.05
3	I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation.	3.91	1.17
4	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English.	3.23	1.02
5	I get nervous when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in English.	3.26	1.21
6	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	3.64	1.17
7	I am never quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English.	3.23	1.20
8	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.	3.21	1.18
9	I get upset when I do not understand what the teacher is correcting.	2.48	1.18
10	I feel confident when I speak in English class. (R)	3.24	1.11
Test Anxiety			
11	I feel excited when my teacher calls me in the English class.	3.98	1.07
12	In a speaking class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	3.42	1.14
13	I feel more tense and nervous in my English-speaking test than in other courses.	3.08	1.38
14	When I am on my way to do my English-speaking test, I feel very sure and relaxed. (R)	3.36	1.29
15	Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about the English-speaking test.	3.58	1.12
16	I worry about the consequences of failing in my English class.	3.55	1.30
17	The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get.	2.23	1.15
18	I do not feel stressed about preparing very well for the English-speaking test. (R)	2.97	1.33
19	English lessons move so quickly that I often worry that I will not be able to keep up with my friends.	2.86	1.24
20	I am usually at ease during tests in my English class. (R)	3.32	1.39
21	It would not bother me at all to take more English language classes. (R)	2.91	1.27
22	I often feel like not going to my English-speaking test.	2.64	1.40
Fear of Negative Evaluation			
23	It embarrasses me to volunteer and answer in my English class.	3.23	1.21

No.	Item	M	SD
24	I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	3.05	1.32
25	I get nervous when the teacher asks questions that I have not prepared in advance.	4.05	0.92
26	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	3.11	1.46
27	I feel anxious while I am waiting to speak English.	3.53	1.11
28	Some parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am speaking English.	2.73	1.20
29	I have trouble coordinating my movements while I am speaking English.	2.20	1.19
30	I do not worry about making mistakes in speaking English. (R)	3.21	1.23
Total		3.19	1.20

(R) = Reverse-scored item. Source: Adapted from Horwitz et al., 1986

Among the three FLCAS components, communication apprehension yielded the highest mean score ($M = 3.26$), followed by test anxiety ($M = 3.18$) and fear of negative evaluation ($M = 3.14$), all falling within the moderate range, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 mean scores by FLCAS component

Component	M	Anxiety Level
Communication apprehension	3.26	Moderate
Test anxiety	3.18	Moderate
Fear of negative evaluation	3.14	Moderate
Total	3.19	Moderate

Source: Adapted from Horwitz et al. (1986); calculations by the authors

When participants were classified by individual anxiety level, the majority reported moderate anxiety (48.48%), followed by high anxiety (31.82%) and low anxiety (19.70%), as shown in Table 3. It is worth noting that nearly one-third of the participants experienced high anxiety, which suggests that although the overall group mean falls in the moderate range, a considerable number of students may need additional support in managing their speaking anxiety.

Table 3 distribution of participants by anxiety level

Anxiety Level	n	%
High	21	31.82
Moderate	32	48.48
Low	13	19.70
Total	66	100

These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting moderate speaking anxiety among EFL learners, including Nguyen (2023), Suwannaprut (2023), Guzman (2022), and Faqihi (2024), whose participants similarly identified unprepared questioning, fear of mistakes, and negative evaluation as prominent anxiety triggers.

4.2 Research Question 2: Sources of Language Anxiety on Speaking Skills

Content analysis of the open-ended responses revealed two primary sources of speaking anxiety among the participants: learner characteristics and classroom environment. These two categories align with the theoretical framework proposed by Luo (2012), which identifies learner-related and contextual factors as key dimensions of foreign language anxiety. Within each category, multiple themes emerged from students' responses, reflecting the diverse and overlapping nature of anxiety sources in the EFL classroom. Table 4 summarizes the frequency and percentage of each identified theme across the participant group ($N = 66$).

Table 4 summary of content analysis on sources of speaking anxiety

Source	Theme	n	%
Learner Characteristics	Low self-perception of ability	46	69.70
	Fear of negative feedback	31	46.97
	Low self-esteem	11	16.67
	Embarrassment	6	9.09
	Perfectionism	4	6.06
Classroom Environment	Classroom practices	45	68.18
	Role of teachers	31	46.97
	Relationships among students	9	13.64

As shown in Table 4, learner characteristics accounted for the most frequently reported sources of anxiety overall, with low self-perception of ability (69.70%) and fear of negative feedback (46.97%) emerging as the two dominant themes. Classroom environment was equally prominent, with classroom practices (68.18%) and the role of teachers (46.97%) cited at comparable rates.

It should be noted that some of the learner characteristic themes — particularly low self-perception of ability, fear of negative feedback, low self-esteem, and embarrassment — are closely related and may overlap in some cases. In this study, these themes were distinguished as follows: low self-perception of ability refers to students' doubts about their own language skills, such as limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and difficulty making sentences. Fear of negative feedback refers to the worry about being judged, criticized, or

laughed at by others. Low self-esteem refers to a general lack of confidence and discomfort when being observed by others in the classroom. Embarrassment refers specifically to the feeling of shame when making public mistakes. Although these themes are related, they were treated as separate categories because they reflect different aspects of students' anxiety experiences, as described in their own responses.

The following sections describe each theme in detail, supported by representative quotes from participants.

Learner Characteristics

The most frequently cited learner-related source was low self-perception of ability (69.70%), with 46 students reporting that limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and difficulty constructing sentences caused anxiety during speaking tasks. Representative responses included:

"I am not good at making sentences. I can read, but I cannot translate and write some words, and sometimes I might pronounce words wrong." (Respondent 3)

"I am afraid of answering the wrong questions. Consequently, I cannot arrange the answer in my head, and I do not know what I have to say." (Respondent 43)

Fear of negative feedback was the second most common source (46.97%), reported by 31 students who expressed anxiety about being judged, criticized, or mocked by peers and teachers:

"I feel fear because I remember my previous experiences of being insulted or laughed at when speaking English." (Respondent 54)

"I am afraid of answering incorrectly, and I am afraid of speaking in front of the class because I understand the teacher's question, but I do not know how to arrange the structure." (Respondent 18)

Low self-esteem was identified by 11 students (16.67%), who reported a lack of confidence and discomfort under classroom observation:

"I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking because it makes me lose confidence." (Respondent 8)

"I feel pressured by the teacher's gaze and the silence of the classroom atmosphere where all eyes are on me." (Respondent 39)

Embarrassment was reported by 6 students (9.09%), linked to the fear of public mistakes and direct criticism:

"When I pronounce English words, I am afraid that I will be scolded by the teacher, which makes me feel embarrassed." (Respondent 35)

"I do not like answering questions in front of the class, because there are many people looking at me, which makes me feel embarrassed when I speak incorrectly." (Respondent 45)

Perfectionism was the least frequently cited learner characteristic (6.06%), reported by 4 students who held high personal standards and feared that any mistake would reflect poorly on their ability:

"I feel both excited and anxious because my speaking skills are not as good as they should be." (Respondent 42)

"I feel nervous about giving the wrong answer because I do not like the moment when the correct answer is revealed. Moreover, I worry that my answer might not match the question, which could make me seem unintelligent or lazy." (Respondent 53)

Classroom Environment

Classroom practices were the most frequently cited environmental source (68.18%), with 45 students reporting anxiety when required to speak in front of the class, respond to questions, or perform during assessments:

"Listening comprehension tests make me anxious because I worry that there might be some words I don't understand, and those words might carry the key meaning of the sentence." (Respondent 8)

"I feel anxious when I have to go in front of the class to answer a question or perform a dialogue while holding a microphone." (Respondent 61)

The role of teachers was identified by 31 students (46.97%) as a significant source of anxiety, with teacher behaviors such as sarcasm, excessive pressure, and critical feedback contributing to reluctance to participate:

"The teacher often uses too much sarcasm with students. Some of the words might discourage a student so much that they no longer want to learn English." (Respondent 52)

"I do not like when teachers put too much pressure on students because teachers are the main factor influencing whether students want to come to class." (Respondent 39)

Relationships among students were cited by 9 participants (13.64%), reflecting anxiety stemming from fear of peer judgment and mockery:

"I feel uncomfortable when my classmates' eyes are on me because it makes me nervous." (Respondent 44)

"When I make a mistake while speaking, I feel anxious that my classmates will laugh at me." (Respondent 63)

5. Discussion

5.1 Levels of Speaking Anxiety Among Non-English Major Students

The quantitative results revealed that non-English major students at a Thai university experienced a moderate level of English-speaking anxiety, with an overall mean score of 3.19 ($SD = 1.20$). Among the three FLCAS components, communication apprehension was the highest ($M = 3.26$), followed by test anxiety ($M = 3.18$) and fear of negative evaluation ($M = 3.14$), all falling within the moderate range (Akkakoson, 2016). This pattern is consistent with Liu and Jackson (2008), who found that communication apprehension was the dominant anxiety component among EFL learners, suggesting that students continue to experience insecurity when speaking English in front of others regardless of context. The predominance of communication apprehension in this study further supports Horwitz et al.'s (1986) model, which emphasized that oral performance has a direct impact on foreign language learning.

However, it is worth noting that the mean scores of all three components were very close to one another (ranging from 3.14 to 3.26), with a difference of only 0.12 between the highest and lowest component. This suggests that for the participants in this study, speaking anxiety was not driven by one single component but rather by a combination of all three factors. This finding is somewhat different from studies such as Thomol et al. (2024), where communication apprehension was clearly the most dominant component. The relatively even distribution of anxiety across all three components in this study may reflect the particular characteristics of non-English major business students, who face not only classroom speaking tasks but also the pressure of future professional English use in business settings.

When participants were classified by anxiety level, 48.48% fell in the moderate category, followed by high anxiety (31.82%) and low anxiety (19.70%). These findings are consistent with Nguyen (2023), who reported that 69% of non-English major students at a Vietnamese university experienced moderate speaking anxiety, primarily linked to low language proficiency. Similarly, Kulwattanapaisarn et al. (2022) found that Thai university students reported moderate anxiety stemming from fear of negative feedback, being called upon to speak, and lack of preparation. Taken together, these results suggest that moderate speaking anxiety is a common and persistent challenge among non-English major EFL learners across different institutional contexts.

An important finding in this study is that the items with the highest anxiety scores (items 25, 11, and 3) all involve situations where students must speak without preparation. This pattern is particularly relevant to the Thai EFL context, where classroom instruction has traditionally been teacher-fronted, with teachers controlling the flow of interaction through direct questioning and calling on individual students (Chinpakdee, 2015; Chaisiri, 2023). In such classrooms, students have limited control over when and how they are required to speak, which may increase their sense of vulnerability. Furthermore, Thai cultural values such as

kreng jai (being considerate of others and avoiding confrontation) and concern for *face* (avoiding public embarrassment) may make students particularly sensitive to situations where they might make mistakes in front of peers and teachers (Kalra & Siribud, 2020). These cultural factors may help explain why unprepared, teacher-initiated speaking tasks produce especially high anxiety levels among Thai students, compared to contexts where classroom interaction is more student-centered and collaborative.

5.2 Sources of Speaking Anxiety Among Non-English Major Students

The qualitative findings identified two primary sources of speaking anxiety: learner characteristics and classroom environment, consistent with Luo's (2012) four-dimensional model of foreign language anxiety sources.

Within learner characteristics, low self-perception of ability was the most frequently cited source (69.70%), indicating that students' doubts about their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation were central contributors to anxiety. Students appeared highly focused on accuracy and reported mental blocks that made it difficult to speak effectively. These findings align with Nguyen (2023) and Alnahidh and Altalhab (2020), who similarly identified low language ability as a primary source of foreign language anxiety. The high frequency of this source in the present study may be related to the fact that non-English major students in Thailand typically have fewer English course hours and less exposure to English communication compared to English major students, which may lead them to feel less confident about their language ability (Chaisiri, 2023).

Fear of negative feedback was the second most prominent learner characteristic (46.97%). Students who had experienced past mockery or criticism reported greater hesitation to engage in speaking tasks. This is consistent with Chinpakdee (2015), who found that fear of negative evaluation was a common and persistent source of anxiety among Thai EFL learners. Several students in this study specifically mentioned past experiences of being laughed at or insulted when speaking English, suggesting that negative experiences in earlier learning contexts can have a lasting impact on students' willingness to speak. This finding supports Sugiyati and Indriani (2021), who argued that past negative learning experiences can shape learners' anxiety responses in future speaking situations.

Low self-esteem was reported by 16.67% of participants, who described how the fear of making mistakes and the discomfort of being observed by peers and teachers diminished their confidence. This finding aligns with Kalra and Siribud (2020), who found that speaking anxiety reduced self-esteem and confidence among Thai EFL students.

Embarrassment was cited by 9.09% of participants, who reported that the classroom setting heightened the risk of public failure and negative attention. This corresponds with Gregersen and Horwitz (2002), who noted that embarrassment could lead students to withdraw from participation in order to protect themselves from shame.

Perfectionism, while the least frequently cited source (6.06%), reflected a pattern in which students perceived any mistake as a significant failure. This aligns with Gregersen and Horwitz (2002), who found that perfectionist learners tend to experience higher anxiety levels than their non-perfectionist peers.

Within classroom environment, classroom practices were the most frequently cited source (68.18%). Students reported anxiety linked to activities such as speaking in front of the class, role-plays, and listening tests. These findings reinforce Horwitz et al. (1986), who identified classroom activities as key anxiety triggers, particularly during unfamiliar or unprepared tasks. It is notable that the frequency of this source (68.18%) was almost as high as low self-perception of ability (69.70%), suggesting that for these students, the classroom environment played an equally important role in creating anxiety as their own self-perceived language limitations. This finding highlights the importance of how speaking tasks are designed and implemented in the classroom, as the format and delivery of activities may be just as influential as students' actual language ability in shaping their anxiety levels.

The role of teachers was cited by 46.97% of participants, who described how excessive pressure, sarcasm, and critical feedback created an anxiety-inducing rather than supportive classroom atmosphere. This is consistent with Faqihi (2024), who found that harsh teacher evaluation and lack of support significantly increased students' anxiety and reduced classroom participation. In the Thai educational context, where teachers are traditionally viewed as authority figures and students are expected to show respect and obedience, negative teacher behaviors may have a stronger impact on students' willingness to speak than in more egalitarian classroom cultures. Dewaele et al. (2018) found that teacher-related variables significantly influenced learners' emotional experiences in the classroom, which supports the importance of teacher behavior as a factor in language anxiety.

Relationships among students, cited by 13.64% of participants, reflected anxiety arising from fear of peer judgment and mockery during speaking activities. These findings are supported by Mahasin et al. (2025), who found that negative peer dynamics led students to avoid interaction in the language classroom.

Overall, the primary sources of speaking anxiety in this study were low self-perception of ability (69.70%) and classroom practices (68.18%), closely followed by fear of negative feedback and the role of teachers (both 46.97%). These findings are broadly consistent with prior research conducted in Thailand and internationally, confirming that speaking anxiety among non-English major EFL students is shaped by both internal learner factors and external classroom conditions.

While these findings are largely consistent with previous research, the present study contributes to the existing literature in two ways. First, by combining the FLCAS with open-ended questions, this study was able to show that the quantitative anxiety levels reported by

students were closely connected to specific classroom experiences and learner concerns identified through their own words. For example, the high anxiety scores on items related to unprepared speaking were directly reflected in qualitative responses about classroom practices and teacher behavior. Second, while most previous studies in Thailand have focused on English major students or students in English programs (e.g., Thomol et al., 2024; Guzman, 2022), this study provides evidence that non-English major business students experience similar patterns of speaking anxiety, suggesting that anxiety-aware teaching practices should be extended to all EFL courses, not only those in English programs.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the levels and sources of English-speaking anxiety among first-year non-English major students at a Thai university. The findings revealed that students experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety ($M = 3.19$), with all three FLCAS components — communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation — falling within the moderate range. Qualitative analysis further identified two primary sources of anxiety: learner characteristics, particularly low self-perception of ability and fear of negative feedback, and classroom environment, particularly classroom practices and the role of teachers.

These findings have practical implications for EFL instruction. Instructors teaching non-English major students should be mindful of the anxiety-inducing potential of unprepared speaking tasks and critical feedback styles. Creating a low-pressure classroom environment, providing adequate preparation time before speaking activities, and offering constructive rather than evaluative feedback may help reduce students' speaking anxiety and encourage greater participation.

Based on the findings, several specific recommendations are proposed for EFL instructors working with non-English major students. First, instructors should reduce the use of cold-calling or random questioning without notice and instead provide preparation time before speaking tasks, such as using think-pair-share activities or small group discussions. Second, instructors should avoid correcting every mistake during speaking, especially in front of the whole class, and instead use selective error correction that focuses on errors affecting meaning. Third, since nearly one-third of the participants experienced high anxiety, instructors should consider offering gradual exposure to speaking tasks — starting from pair work, then small groups, before moving to whole-class presentations. Finally, instructors should build a supportive classroom culture where mistakes are treated as a normal part of learning, as peer relationships and fear of being laughed at were also cited as sources of anxiety.

7. Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the sample size of 66 participants was relatively small and drawn from a single course at one university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings beyond this specific context. Second, data collection was confined to a limited timeframe, which may not fully capture the range of anxiety experiences among non-English major students more broadly. Third, the study relied solely on questionnaire data, without supplementary observations or interviews, which may have restricted the depth of insight into students' psychological and emotional responses during speaking activities. Fourth, reliability statistics such as Cronbach's alpha were not computed for the adapted questionnaire, which means that the internal consistency of the instrument in the present context has not been confirmed.

These limitations point to several directions for future research. The scope of investigation should be broadened to include students from diverse majors and academic years at multiple institutions to enable more representative findings. Employing additional qualitative methods, such as interviews or classroom observations, would provide richer and more nuanced accounts of students' anxiety experiences. Future studies using adapted instruments should also report reliability evidence to strengthen the validity of the findings. Further studies examining the influence of teaching styles, online learning environments, and emotional intervention strategies on speaking anxiety would also contribute meaningfully to this area. In addition, future research could explore the relationship between speaking anxiety and positive emotions such as foreign language enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), as understanding both negative and positive emotions may lead to more effective strategies for supporting EFL learners in the classroom.

Authors

John Jaroenbowornkit A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University.

Yanisa Pengklai A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University.

Thananya Sochara A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University.

Phattharaphon Kocharoen A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University.

Suphatra Sucharitrak Assistant Professor at Department of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University.

Wisut Jarunthawatchai Assistant Professor at Department of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University.

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An Analysis of Translation Procedures of Thai Cultural Terms in English Subtitles: A Case Study of *Mae Yua* (*The Empress of Ayodhya*)

Shutikan Bansong¹, Weena Aiamsukha¹, Suwatcharaphon Thapthim¹,
Orawan Manimit¹, Nida Jumpathip¹, Wisut Jarunthawatchai^{1*}

Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the translation procedures used in translating cultural terms in the subtitles of *Mae Yua* (*The Empress of Ayodhya*). The analysis of cultural categories and the translation procedures used in this study was based on Newmark (1988). A total of 338 cultural terms were identified. *Material culture* was the most frequently found with 33.14%, followed by *Social culture* with 30.18%, *Organization*, etc. with 27.22%, *Gestures and habits* with 6.8%, and *Ecology* with 2.66%, respectively. The results of the analysis of translation procedures showed that the *Literal Translation* procedure was the most frequently used with 44.97%, followed by *Neutralization* with 22.19%, *Transference* with 16.27%, *Couplet* with 9.76%, *Deletion* with 2.37%, *Paraphrase* with 2.37%, *Cultural Equivalent* with 1.48%, and others with 0.59%, respectively. In addition, the analysis of the overall translation tendency is based on the concepts of *Foreignization* and *Domestication* as proposed by Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016). The study found that *Foreignization* at 69.50% was the most used strategy, followed by *Domestication* at 28.40%. This suggests that the translator was more inclined toward *Foreignization* than *Domestication* to preserve the foreignness of the cultural terms in the drama.

Keywords: Translation, Translation procedures, Cultural terms, *Mae Yua*

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* Corresponding Author
E-mail: faaswsj@ku.ac.th

¹ Kasetsart University

1. Introduction

Translation has been part of human society from the past to the present. In the past, translation was usually connected with the spread of religion and trade across countries. However, translation is not only beneficial for religion and trade (Kelly, 1988, p. 8), but also plays a major role in daily life. In scientific and technological contexts, it is applied to translating international research to develop products and innovation. Translation is also used in entertainment such as in novels, TV programs, films, and series through subtitles. Beyond that, translation not only serves as a tool of general communication but also serves as a tool for cross-cultural communication.

Among various forms of translation, subtitling has become increasingly important, especially with the growth of global streaming platforms. Subtitling translation is particularly remarkable because it is not only concerned with translating across significantly different cultures but is also concerned with space and time limitations. Subtitling translators need to translate in order to make audiences understand the context, storyline, characters' feelings, and cultural terms of the media under the limitations of time and space. Consequently, when translators translate subtitles containing cultural terms, the difficulty arises when some cultural terms are not available in the target language.

Cultural terms are related to the ways of living, beliefs, customs, politics, and geography of each society and are used within specific groups. When cultural concepts or objects are unfamiliar or have never appeared in the target language, there are no exact terms to describe their particular meanings in the same way as the source language (Pinmanee, 2003, p. 297). Translating cultural terms, therefore, is a challenge for translators since each culture carries different concepts that may not exist in other societies. *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhaya)* is a Thai drama that contains notable Thai cultural terms that are worth noticing, such as job title terms, royal terms, foods, political terms, religious terms, and beliefs and customs in the middle Ayodhaya era, which are difficult to understand even for Thai audiences. Furthermore, *Mae Yua* received the 16th Nataraja Award and the 39th TV Gold Awards 2024, reflecting its cultural significance and wide audience.

Therefore, this study investigates the translation procedures used to transfer Thai cultural terms in *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhaya)* into English, taking into account the limitations of time and space in subtitles.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the most frequently used translation procedures in the English subtitles of *Mae Yua*
2. To examine the use of Domestication and Foreignization strategies in translating Thai cultural terms in the Thai–English subtitles of *Mae Yua*

2. Literature review

2.1 Translation

In general, translation is the activity of converting a word or text from one language into another language. Several academics who specialize in this field have defined the term "translation" in various ways. Munday (2016, p. 8) stated that translation is the process between two languages that involves shifting the source text in the source language into the target text in the target language. Similarly, Newmark (1988, p. 5) pointed out that translation is the process of transferring the meaning in the source text to another language with concern for the intention of the text. He also noted that the original text cannot be perfectly translated into another language; hence the translator must face various challenges such as word ordering and grammatical structuring. In short, translation involves transforming a source language text into the target language while preserving the equivalence and intended meaning of the original.

2.2 Subtitling

Subtitling refers to adding words or text to media to represent a message that is being spoken or displayed on the screen. Díaz Cintas & Remael (2014, pp. 8-9) described subtitling as a form of translation that presents a written text, typically at the bottom of the screen, conveying the message of the source language along with the dialogue and other discursive elements. Subtitled content generally consists of three components — speech, image, and subtitles — which work together.

Díaz Cintas (2012) highlighted that translators must consider three primary factors when translating subtitles. In terms of spatial considerations, subtitles are displayed horizontally at the bottom of the screen with a maximum of two lines. In terms of temporal considerations, subtitles should synchronize with speech, with a maximum duration of six seconds for two-line subtitles. In terms of linguistic considerations, reduction strategies such as condensation and deletion are commonly applied since speech is often too fast for audiences to read in full. Non-standard or emotionally charged language is also adjusted or removed. Díaz Cintas & Remael (2014) also noted that strategies for subtitling cultural-specific terms range from literal translation to complete recreation. In summary, translators must carefully balance space, time, and language demands to help audiences process the conveyed message within a short time.

2.3 Translation Procedures

Baker (1992) discussed the translation of cultural terms translation by providing eight translation strategies to overcome non-equivalence at the word level. However, Newmark (1988, p. 81) also discussed how to solve non-equivalence in a similar way to Baker, but specifically for cultural terms. Newmark distinguished between translation methods and translation procedures. The translation methods are used to translate the whole text, while the

translation procedures are applied to translate sentences and smaller units such as words or phrases. In this study, the term translation procedure refers to the specific technique applied to translate individual cultural terms at the word or phrase level, following Newmark (1988). The term translation strategy refers to the broader approach to translation, namely Foreignization and Domestication, as proposed by Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016). The term translation tendency refers to the overall direction or inclination of the translator toward either Foreignization or Domestication as observed from the frequency of translation procedures used. To translate cultural terms, Newmark (1988, p. 103) suggested twelve translation procedures as follows:

1. Transference is done by using loan words or transliteration.
2. Cultural Equivalent is used to translate a cultural term in the source language using a cultural term in the target language that has an approximate meaning.
3. Neutralization is used to translate the cultural terms by using more neutral terms through adding culture-free words that are related to the overall meanings of the terms.
4. Literal Translation is used to translate the corresponding terms that share the same or similar meanings.
5. Label is used specifically for the new institutional terms and should be indicated using commas.
6. Naturalization is used to transfer the cultural terms from the source language to the target language using the normal pronunciation of the target language.
7. Componential Analysis is used to translate the cultural terms from the source language by utilizing one of the meaning features of the terms.
8. Deletion is used to remove the cultural terms from the source language when they carry insignificant meaning.
9. Couplet is the use of more than one translation procedure to translate a single cultural term.
10. Accepted Standard Translation is used to translate the cultural terms that are officially well-known worldwide, especially in institutional terms.
11. Paraphrase, Gloss, and Notes are used to translate the cultural terms by explaining their meanings or by using footnotes.
12. Classifier is used when translating more specific cultural terms from the source text to a superordinate term in the target language.

2.4 Cultural Categories

According to Newmark (1988, p. 94), culture is defined as the ways of living and actions that are distinct in each society that uses a specific language. Specific terms used in particular societies, known as cultural terms, are the terms with cultural features that are problematic in

translation, such as *monsoon* and *steppe*, whereas universal or general terms are the terms recognized by all communities, such as *die*, *love*, and *star*. In addition, Newmark (1988) segmented cultural terms into five cultural categories as listed below:

2.4.1 *Ecology* — this category includes the cultural terms that refer to the local ecology and geography that are significant in each society, such as *prairies* and *tundras*.

2.4.2 *Material culture* — this category refers to the culturally significant concrete items of each society, such as foods, clothes, and transport.

2.4.3 *Social culture* — this category refers to cultural works, sports, and leisure activities, such as *charcuterie* and *patisserie*.

2.4.4 *Organization, customs, activities, procedures, and concepts* — this category refers to the terms that indicate a sense of organization, ideas, or concepts related to the political, artistic, or religious aspects of a society, such as *The Age of Enlightenment* and *Riksdag* (Sweden's parliament).

2.4.5 *Gestures and habits* — this category refers to the actions or gestures that are significant in one society but have different meanings in other societies, such as the thumbs-up sign and the OK sign.

2.5 Foreignization and Domestication

The concept of foreignization and domestication was proposed by Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016, pp. 225-229) as strategies for examining how cultural terms are translated into the target text. Domestication reduces the foreignness of the source language by using a fluent tone, focusing on the target culture, and making the translated text easy to understand for target readers. In contrast, foreignization preserves the foreignness of the source language by highlighting the source culture and making target readers aware of the foreign nature of the translated text. These strategies also reflect translators' ethical choices about how much cultural understanding they wish to offer target readers. The textual effect of domestication is fluency, allowing readers to engage with the text as if it were originally written in the target language, while the textual effect of foreignization is resistancy, where the foreignness of the source text is retained and challenges the target readers' comprehension.

2.6 Related Studies

Several studies have examined the translation of cultural terms in subtitles and other text types using Newmark's framework. Studies that found literal translation as the dominant procedure include Subrata and Jumanto (2023), who studied cultura-specific term translation in subtitle of the Disney animation movie *Coco* from English-Spanish into Indonesian. Wang (2024) similarly found literal translation to be dominant in the Chinese novella *The Song of King Gesar*, though the overall tendency leaned toward domestication. In the Thai context, Chaleegul (2017) also found literal translation to be most frequently used in the translation of

cultural words in the novella *Jan Dara* during the Rattanakosin period, using Newmark's (1988) framework.

However, some studies have shown different results. Khan (2021) explored translation of cultural expressions in the Urdu short story *Ten Rupees* and found that descriptive equivalent was most frequently used, as the narrative text type allowed more space for explanation rather than literal translation. Likewise, Mettraipan (2023) found that the translator prioritized target audience comprehension in translating cultural words related to beliefs and the supernatural in the Thai film *The Medium*.

From the related studies, it is evident that different text types and cultural contexts influence the choice of translation procedures. In Thai-related studies, cultural terms have been examined mainly within the Rattanakosin period. However, cultural terms specific to the middle Ayodhya period, which has distinct cultural words compared to other Thai periods, remain largely overlooked. Moreover, the concept of Foreignization and Domestication given by Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016, pp. 225-229) has been neglected in Thai cultural-specific studies. Beyond the gap in historical period, there is also a broader conceptual gap worth noting. As Thai historical dramas reach global audiences through streaming platforms like Netflix, the question of how translators balance cultural authenticity with readability for foreign audiences becomes increasingly important. In this sense, the subtitle translator plays a role not only as a language converter but also as a cultural representative who decides how much of the source culture to preserve or reduce for target audiences. Therefore, this study selects *The Empress of Ayodhya* to examine the cultural terms of the Ayodhya period and applies the concept of Foreignization and Domestication to analyze the overall translation tendency.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate translation procedures and their tendency. Qualitatively, the cultural terms were identified, categorized, and analyzed based on Newmark's (1988) framework. Quantitatively, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency, and percentages in order to determine the tendency of Foreignization and Domestication, and translation procedures in translating cultural terms in *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhya)*.

3.2 Data

The data were purposively chosen based on the following criteria. First, the audiovisual media, particularly a Thai drama or a Thai TV series, had to contain diverse Thai cultural terms following Newmark's cultural classification (1988). Second, the audiovisual media had to contain English subtitles. Third, the chosen audiovisual media had to have received a

recognition award in the Thai entertainment industry or have been recognized among Thai audiences. Finally, the chosen audiovisual media had to be tested with a pilot study to confirm its feasibility by examining the first four episodes. Each episode was required to contain at least 15 cultural terms worth examining in order to ensure sufficient data for exploring the translation procedures used.

Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhya), directed by Sant Srikaewlaw, was selected as the data source for this study, which focuses on analyzing translation procedures following Newmark (1988) and the tendency between Foreignization and Domestication following Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016), as applied to the Thai-English subtitles of the drama. The drama was officially broadcast on One HD 31 and released in 2024 on the Netflix platform with subtitles. It is based on the historical events of the middle Ayutthaya period and contains a great number of cultural terms. The storyline is inspired by the life of Thao Srisudachan, a queen of Ayutthaya, in her attempt to reclaim her dynasty's throne. The drama has also received recognition from prestigious Thai entertainment awards, winning the 16th Nataraj Award for Best Drama in the Short Form Series category (less than 13 episodes) and the 39th TV Gold Awards for Best Art Composition.

3.3 Data Analysis

Thai cultural terms were collected from the Thai-to-English subtitles of *Mae Yua* on the Netflix platform, using the official translation provided by Panupong Baikawon. In this study, a cultural term refers to a word or phrase that carries culture-specific meaning related to the ways of living, beliefs, customs, politics, or geography of a particular society, as defined by Newmark (1988). These terms may consist of a single word (e.g., ไชย론, ทำนุญ) or a multi-word phrase (e.g., กฎมณเฑียรบาล, พระสนมจิตรวดี). A total of 338 cultural terms were gathered from all 10 episodes. The following criteria were applied to sort the cultural terms: 1) Thai cultural terms that were repeated with the same translation were not counted. 2) Cultural terms that were repeated but translated differently were counted. 3) A slightly misspelled cultural term that could still be understood was counted.

3.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the cultural categorization framework by Newmark (1988) was applied as the main framework to classify the cultural terms found in *Mae Yua*. The classified cultural terms were then analyzed using Newmark's (1988) 12 translation procedures: Transference, Cultural Equivalent, Neutralization, Literal Translation, Label, Naturalization, Componential Analysis, Deletion, Couplet, Accepted Standard Translation, Paraphrase, and Classifier.

The findings are demonstrated in the form of descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentages. The frequency of each translation procedure was then used to analyze the

translation tendency between Foreignization and Domestication. The findings are presented in the following section, examining the translation procedures used in translating *Mae Yua* and the overall translation tendency between Foreignization and Domestication.

4. Findings

4.1 Results of Cultural Categories

A total of 338 cultural terms were identified across 10 episodes of *Mae Yua* (*The Empress of Ayodhya*). The cultural terms were categorized using the five categories provided by Newmark (1988), including *Ecology*, *Material culture*, *Social culture*, *Organization, etc.*, and *Gestures and habits*. The results are shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 cultural categories collected in *Mae Yua* (*The Empress of Ayodhya*)

Cultural Categories	Data	Percentage (%)
Ecology	9	2.66
Material culture	112	33.14
Social culture	102	30.18
Organization, customs, activities, procedures, concepts, etc.	92	27.22
Gestures and habit	23	6.8
Total	338	100

The findings showed that the majority of the data were *Material culture* due to the content of the drama being related to places, household items, buildings, and food. On the other hand, the least frequently found category was *Ecology*, as the content does not focus on environmental, geological, or fauna and flora terms.

4.2 Results of Translation Procedures

The 338 Thai cultural terms in *Mae Yua* were analyzed using Newmark's (1988) twelve translation procedures. Only seven procedures were identified: *Transference*, *Cultural Equivalent*, *Neutralization*, *Literal Translation*, *Deletion*, *Couplet*, and *Paraphrase*, while *Naturalization*, *Classifier*, *Label*, *Componential Analysis*, *Gloss and Notes*, and *Accepted Standard Translation* were not found. The results are shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Quantitative analysis parameters for translation procedures in 10 episodes of *Mae Yua* (*The Empress of Ayodhya*)

Translation procedures	Data	Percentage (%)
Transference	55	16.27
Cultural equivalent	5	1.48
Neutralization	75	22.19
Literal translation	152	44.97
Deletion	8	2.37
Couplet	33	9.76
Paraphrase	8	2.37
Others	2	0.59
Total	338	100

As shown in Table 4.2, the findings showed that the translator relied heavily on *Literal Translation*, which was most frequently applied to *Material culture*, *Organization*, *customs*, *activities*, *procedures*, and *concepts*, and *Social culture* terms. These data were mostly related to items, places, royal terms, hierarchical ranks, the Thai political system, and Buddhist concepts. Using *Literal Translation* to transfer cultural terms can convey their meanings to the target language when the visual on the screen provides sufficient context, making further explanation unnecessary. However, some cultural terms require more explanation because their context can evoke additional meanings. The space and time limitations of subtitles also influenced the translator's choice of procedure.

Transference

Transference involves the use of transcription or transliteration. It was used for translating Thai cultural words related to place names, political positions, or species names that do not exist in the target language.

Example 1

Source text ด้วยท้าวศรีจุฬาลักษณ์ลอบมะแขว่น

Target text It was Thao Si Chulalak who secretly added Makwaen.

The translator transferred the pronunciation of มะแขว่น into *Makwaen* using the Romanization of Thai by Kanchanawan (2006). Since *Makwaen* does not significantly affect the story context, the translator chose to transliterate it rather than elaborate on its meaning, due to the space and time constraints of subtitles. The image of *Makwaen* is also shown on the screen, so audiences can understand it from the visual context.

Example 2

Source text พระเมืองเกษเกล้า เมืองเชียงใหม่

Target text The King of Chiang Mai, Phra Muang Ketklao

พระเมืองเกษเกล้า was the king of the kingdom of Chiang Mai. The translator transferred the pronunciation to *Phra Muang Ketklao* in order to keep the original pronunciation, since it is a proper name referring to a specific person. Translating the proper name could fail to convey its meaning as a royal name or official title, potentially confusing the target audience into mistaking it for a common noun.

Cultural Equivalent

Cultural Equivalent is a procedure where a cultural term in the source language is replaced in the target language with a term of comprehensible or similar meaning, even though it may not convey all the features and meaning components of the original term.

Example 3

Source text ท่านเจ้ากรมวังมีอะไร

Target text Lord Chamberlain, what is the matter?

According to the Office of the Royal Society (2011), *กรมวัง* refers to one of the four ministries in the Ayudhaya, Thonburi, and Rattanakosin governments, whose duty was to supervise the palace. The translator rendered *กรมวัง* as *Lord Chamberlain*, which the Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines as a British official responsible for supervising the royal household and managing royal ceremonies. Both terms share the characteristic of overseeing the royal household, but differences arise due to cultural distinctions.

Example 4

Source text ข้าจะหนีตามไปอยู่กับลูกข้าที่สุพรรณ แล้วจะไปบวชให้หมดเรื่อง

Target text I will flee to Suphan to be with my children. Then become a nun to end all this.

บวช refers to the act of ordaining as a Buddhist nun. The word *ชี* is translated as *nun*, which is functionally equivalent in the target language context. While *nun* carries the key feature of the source term, it is not a full equivalent to *ชี* due to cultural differences between Christianity and Buddhism, resulting in partial loss of cultural meaning.

Example 5

Source text คุณพระช่วย ดูนั่น

Target text My goodness, look!

คุณพระช่วย is a Thai exclamation that expresses strong emotion such as surprise or shock. It also contains the cultural word *พระ*, meaning monk. *My goodness* is an English interjection that similarly expresses surprise and mild alarm. Despite the cultural differences in religion, both expressions are interchangeable in meaning.

Neutralization

Neutralization was used to translate cultural terms by replacing them with culture-free terms that contain their overall meanings. This procedure was applied when the visual context was sufficient for audiences to understand the terms from the images shown in the scenes.

Example 6

Source text ม้าเร็วมารออยู่ด้านนอกแล้วเพคะ

Target text A messenger awaits outside.

The translator translated ม้าเร็ว into *messenger* to neutralize its meaning. The term is a metaphor referring to a horse rider assigned by an army to send messages during war, according to the Office of the Royal Society (2011). Since the visual shows a person riding a horse serving as a messenger, audiences can understand the term without further explanation.

Example 7

Source text นายเอ็งทำผิดจึงต้องโทษตามกฎหมายมณเฑียรบาล

Target text Your mistress committed a crime and must be punished according to the law.

The translator translated กฎมณเฑียรบาล into *the law*, using only the key function of the source term to convey its overall meaning, as there is no exact equivalent. กฎมณเฑียรบาล refers to a Thai special law applied in the palace area, according to the Office of the Royal Society (2011). The context indicates a character violating palace law, allowing audiences to understand that *the law* refers specifically to palace law.

Example 8

Source text ขุนท้าวลองถามพวกโซลนดูเผื่อมีใครพบเห็นมันบ้าง

Target text Madame, you can ask the guards if anyone has seen her.

The translator translated โซลน into *guards*, which refers to women who served as guards in a palace area. Translating the term into *guards* — meaning a group of people who protect people or places, according to the Cambridge Dictionary — omits the feminine gender component. However, since the visual clearly shows female guards, audiences can understand the term from the image without explanation.

Literal Translation

Literal Translation is a procedure where a cultural term is translated with a direct meaning that preserves the original meaning of the source language.

Example 9

Source text พอลูกขอกลับลพบุรีมาเยี่ยมพ่อแลทำบุญ...

Target text so when I requested to return to Lopburi to visit my father and make merit...

ทำบุญ is a Buddhist practice encompassing several activities. It was directly translated as *make merit*, where *make* corresponds to *ทำ* and *merit* to *บุญ*. The target text preserves the meaning of the source text.

Example 10

Source text พี่ก็ไม่ขอขึ้นสวรรค์อีกแล้ว

Target text I will no longer wish to ascend to heaven.

ขึ้นสวรรค์ is a Buddhist concept referring to reaching heaven through good deeds in life. The term was translated word-for-word, where ขึ้น was translated as *ascend to* and *สวรรค์* as *heaven*, retaining the meaning of the original term.

Example 11

Source text ให้พิจารณาเลขสังกัดสมพันธ์ โดยให้ปลุกจวนเป็นที่ว่าราชการ...

Target text To review the assigned ranks and affiliations and establish an administrative residence...

According to the Office of the Royal Society (2011), *จวน* refers to an accommodation of a high-level government official. *จวน* was translated as *an administrative residence*, which corresponds with the meaning of the source term.

Deletion

Deletion removes cultural terms from the target text when their meanings are considered insignificant to the overall context.

Example 12

Source text ตรงกับวันเสาร์ขึ้น 12 ค่ำ เดือน 11 เพลาสามเริงหน้าบาทพระเจ้าค่ะ

Target text It will be on Saturday, the 12th day of the waxing moon in the eleventh

month, at the third hour.

ห้าบาท is a Thai unit of time in which one *Baht* equals six minutes; therefore, ห้าบาท means 30 minutes. As the characters are discussing an auspicious time for a battle plan, translating ห้าบาท would be overly detailed given the space and time constraints of subtitles. Therefore, the translator chose deletion to manage these constraints.

Example 13

Source text เมื่อทรงสดับแล้วพระทัยสงบ พ้นจากความทรมาน

Target text He found peace, free from suffering,

สดับ, a Thai royal term defined by the Office of the Royal Society (2011) as *listening carefully*, was omitted from the target text because the previous context had already explained that the King had ordered a character to recite chants. Therefore, audiences could interpret that the King had listened to them from the earlier dialogue.

Paraphrase

Paraphrase is used to explain cultural terms with important or complex meanings when no exact equivalent exists in the target language.

Example 14

Source text ในวังหลวงมีเทวดาอารักษ์คอยรักษาเศวตฉัตรจะกระทำย่ำยีไม่ได้

Target text In the Royal Palace, guardian spirits protect the white umbrella of state. We cannot defile it.

According to the Office of the Royal Society (2011), เศวตฉัตร refers to a white umbrella associated with the monarch. The translator paraphrased it as *the white umbrella of state* to convey that เศวตฉัตร belongs to the King who rules the state. Since the actual image is not shown on screen, and the term carries significant symbolic meaning, Paraphrase was necessary to help audiences understand its cultural significance.

Example 15

Source text เขากันว่าพญาฉัททันต์ท่านร้องเตือนภัย

Target text They say the Lord of the White Elephant is warning us.

The translator paraphrased พญาฉัททันต์ as *the Lord of the White Elephant* to explain that it refers to the King of the white elephant in Thai mythical belief. Since the term carries

important meaning in the context and no visual of it appeared in the scene, Paraphrase was used to explain its key aspects to help audiences understand that it was the white elephant warning the characters.

Example 16

Source text พระปรางค์องค์นี้เสมือนตัวแทนของข้า อยู่เป็นมิ่งขวัญชาวอยุธยาสืบไป

Target text This prang stands as a symbol of myself, a beacon of hope and prosperity for the people of Ayodhaya, for generations to come.

มิ่งขวัญ was paraphrased as *a beacon of hope and prosperity* to explain its sense of being a symbol of hope and prosperity for the people of Ayodhaya. This was necessary because there is no specific equivalent term in English to capture the same feeling.

Couplet

Couplet involves the use of two translation procedures combined to translate a single cultural term. Three types of Couplet were found: *Literal Translation* and *Transference*, *Cultural Equivalent* and *Transference*, and *Neutralization* and *Transference*.

Example 17

Source text ใช่ ข้าได้ยินว่ามีเห็ดไคขึ้นที่นี่ ข้าเลยใคร่อยากกิน

Target text Yes, I heard Kai mushrooms grow here, so I wanted to try some.

เห็ดไค is a type of mushroom that grows in tropical rainforests and is found in northern and northeastern Thailand. The name ไค was transcribed as *Kai*, while เห็ด was literally translated as *mushrooms*. Although the two procedures do not provide the full cultural meaning, the term does not affect the main content of the drama. The combination allows audiences to quickly understand it as a type of mushroom.

Example 18

Source text ไปเข้าเฝ้าพระสนมจิตรวดี

Target text to meet Lady Chitrawadee

พระสนมจิตรวดี is one of the main concubines of King Chairachathirat. พระสนม — an appointed high-ranking woman and concubine of the King — was translated as *Lady*, which the Cambridge Dictionary defines as a title given to high social rank women in British usage. The name จิตรวดี was transcribed as *Chitrawadee*. Although *Lady* cannot convey the exact meaning of พระสนม, the audience can understand the social status from the word *Lady* since it conveys the same concept of upper class.

Example 19

Source text ให้เด็ดสายธูร่า

Target text Cut the Thuram necklace

สายธูร่า is a sacred thread symbolizing Brahmins that is worn across the chest. The name ธูร่า was transcribed as *Thuram*, while *necklace* — an accessory worn around the neck with a similar functional meaning — was used as a Cultural Equivalent to help the audience visualize it as something worn across the body. The image of สายธูร่า is also shown on screen, so audiences have no difficulty understanding the term.

Others

This section covers cultural terms that could not be identified by any of Newmark's translation procedures.

Example 20

Source text ในกลั๊กนี่คือผงที่บดมาจากเมล็ดโกฐกัลลิ่ง

Target text This powder is ground from gok galangal seeds

เมล็ดโกฐกัลลิ่ง refers to poisonous seeds from the Nux-vomica Tree. While เม็ด was correctly translated as *seeds*, the term โกฐกัลลิ่ง was adjusted to *Gok Galangal*, which does not correspond to the meaning or pronunciation of the source term. The Cambridge Dictionary defines *Galangal* as a tropical plant's root used in spice seasoning, which is different in function and characteristics from เม็ดโกฐกัลลิ่ง. Furthermore, โกฐ was not romanized correctly; according to the Sanskrit romanization guide by Kanchanawan (2006), 'ฐ' equals *t* as a final consonant, making the correct form *Kot*. As a result, the translation cannot be identified by any of Newmark's procedures.

Example 21

Source text ตั้งแต่วันที่ปล่อยโคมขึ้น

Target text Since the day we release the sky lanterns

The Office of the Royal Society (2011) defines โคม as an object with wind shields that provides light, which was translated as *lanterns*. The translator also added *sky* to describe their functions. However, the image shown on screen depicts a lantern floating on the water, not the sky. Since the translation does not correspond to the visual, it cannot be explained by any of Newmark's procedures.

The procedures not found in this drama include *Naturalization*, *Classifier*, *Label*, *Accepted Standard Translation*, *Gloss and Notes*, and *Componential Analysis*. *Naturalization* was not identified, as most cultural terms retained their original pronunciations without adaptation. *Classifier* was not identified in the data. *Label* was not found as the drama's content does not involve new institutional terms. *Accepted Standard Translation* was not found as the drama does not correspond to any institutional terms. *Gloss and Notes*, which are paired with *Paraphrase*, are not suitable for subtitles due to space and time limitations. *Componential Analysis* was excluded as it was not possible to determine whether the translator was selecting one specific meaning component from the cultural terms.

4.3 Results of Foreignization and Domestication

The translation strategies of *Foreignization* and *Domestication* were used to examine the overall translation tendency in the drama. *Foreignization* refers to translating cultural terms in a way that preserves their foreignness rather than adapting them for audiences from different cultures. Therefore, *Literal Translation*, *Transference*, and *Couplet* were grouped under *Foreignization*, resulting in 69.53%. *Domestication* refers to translating cultural terms in a way that reduces their foreignness for audiences from different cultures. Therefore, *Cultural Equivalent*, *Neutralization*, *Paraphrase*, *Deletion*, *Couplet*, and *Classifier* were grouped under *Domestication*, resulting in 28.40%. The Couplet pairs of *Cultural Equivalent* and *Transference*, and *Neutralization* and *Transference* were not grouped under either strategy, as they overlap both *Foreignization* and *Domestication*, making classification unclear.

Table 4.3 quantitative analysis parameters for *Foreignization* and *Domestication* in 10 episodes of Mae Yua (*The Empress of Ayodhya*)

Translation Strategies	Translation Procedure	Ecology	Material Culture	Social Culture	Organizations, etc.	Gesture and habits	totaling	Percentage (%)
Domestication	Cultural Equivalent	-	1	1	2	1	5	28.40
	Neutralization	-	27	22	24	2	75	
	Paraphrase	1	1	-	5	1	8	
	Deletion	-	1	2	4	1	8	
Foreignization	Literal Translation	2	48	36	48	18	152	69.53
	Transference	2	22	27	4	-	55	
	Couplet	4	9	10	5	-	28	

	(Literal translation + Transference)							
Couplet (Domestication and Foreignization)	-	1	4	-	-	5	1.48	
Other	-	2	-	-	-	2	0.59	
Total	9	112	102	92	23	338		
Percentage (%)	2.66	33.17	30.18	27.22	6.8		100	

As shown in Table 4.3, the English subtitles of *Mae Yua* showed a tendency toward *Foreignization* through the use of *Literal Translation*, *Transference*, and *Couplet*, which retain Thai cultural linguistic features in the target text.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The findings revealed that *Literal Translation* was the most frequently used translation procedure for transferring cultural terms, especially in subtitle translation which is highly restricted in space and time. This is closely connected to the fact that *Material culture* was the most frequently found category, as most cultural terms in this category can be visually identified on screen, meaning audiences can understand them from the images without needing further explanation. The space and time constraints of subtitles further reinforced the use of *Literal Translation*, as it allows the translator to maintain a manageable number of characters while preserving the original meaning of the terms. This suggests that *Literal Translation* in subtitle translation does not work alone — it relies on the visuals on screen to carry part of the meaning. In other words, the images function as a complementary layer that supports the translated text, allowing the translator to keep the terms close to the source language without needing to explain them further.

This finding is consistent with Subrata and Jumanto (2023) and Wang (2024), both of whom found *Literal Translation* to be the dominant procedure in their respective studies. However, it contrasts with Khan (2021), who found *Descriptive Equivalent* to be the most frequently used procedure in translating the Urdu short story *Ten Rupees*. This difference may be attributed to the nature of the text type; narrative texts allow more space for explanation, whereas subtitles are constrained by time and space, making *Literal Translation* a more practical choice. Similarly, Mettraipan (2023) found that the translator of the Thai film *The Medium* prioritized target audience comprehension, which led to a greater reliance on domesticating procedures. This suggests that the genre and content of the source material, as well as the translator's purpose, play a significant role in determining which translation procedures are employed.

The overall tendency toward *Foreignization* suggests that subtitle translation allows cultural differences to be retained rather than adapted. This is consistent with Khan (2021), whose study also found that *Foreignization* was used to handle the difficulties in translating cultural terms, despite involving a different text type. This aligns with Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016), who stated that the most favorable strategy for rendering cultural elements from one culture to another while preserving both linguistic and cultural differences is *Foreignization*. In the context of this drama, Foreignization appears to be enabled by the visual redundancy of the medium — because the images on screen already show what the cultural terms refer to, the translator could afford to preserve the foreignness of the terms without risking the audience's comprehension. In terms of the cultural implications, the heavy use of Foreignization suggests that international audiences are exposed to Thai cultural terms in a form that retains their original linguistic and cultural features. This approach allows the target audience to encounter the distinctiveness of Thai culture, particularly the cultural elements specific to the middle Ayodhya period, rather than receiving a fully adapted version that conforms to Western cultural norms. As a result, the translator functions not merely as a language converter but also as a cultural mediator who introduces foreign cultural elements to the global audience. However, this approach may also present challenges for audiences who are unfamiliar with Thai culture, as the preserved foreignness of the terms may require additional effort to comprehend. The findings therefore confirm that the translator of *Mae Yua* was more inclined toward *Foreignization* than *Domestication* when handling Thai cultural terms in the English subtitles.

5.2 Conclusion

This study investigated the translation procedures applied to cultural terms in the subtitling translation of *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhya)*. The most frequently found cultural category was *Material culture*, reflecting the drama's content, which is largely centered on concrete, visible cultural items. The most frequently used translation procedure was *Literal Translation*, which was appropriate because most cultural terms could be understood through the visual context on screen, making further explanation, neutralization, or deletion unnecessary. The overall translation tendency leaned toward *Foreignization*, indicating that the translator chose to preserve the foreignness of the cultural terms rather than adapting them to the target culture. This approach was appropriate given that the visuals in the drama provided sufficient context for audiences to understand the terms as foreign cultural elements.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

It should be noted that this study has certain limitations. The analysis was based on a single drama series, *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhya)*, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other Thai historical dramas or other audiovisual media. The cultural terms

examined were also specific to the middle Ayodhya period, and the translation procedures identified may not fully represent how translators handle cultural terms from other historical periods or cultural contexts. These limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this study.

This study focused on the translation of Thai cultural terms in the middle Ayodhya era as found in *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhya)*. Several directions remain open for future research, and the following recommendations are offered for researchers who are interested in pursuing related topics.

First, future studies can expand the scope by examining cultural terms in other contexts, such as Thai cultural terms from different regions of Thailand, Thai cultural terms in the modern era, or cultural terms in other languages. Each cultural context carries its own unique vocabulary and translation challenges that may lead to different findings in terms of translation procedures and overall translation tendencies. Comparing results across different cultural periods or text types could also provide a broader understanding of how translators handle culture-specific items.

Second, another direction would be to examine the translation of idioms in *Mae Yua*, as idioms present a different kind of translation challenge that was not covered in this study. Unlike cultural terms, idioms often carry figurative meanings that cannot be understood from their individual words alone, as they may require different translation procedures and strategies. Examining how idioms in a historical Thai drama are translated into English could offer additional insights into the challenges of cross-cultural translation in audiovisual media.

Authors

Shutikan Bansong A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Weena Aiamsukha A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Suwatcharaphon Thapthim A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Orawan Manimit A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Nida Jumpathip A lecturer at Division of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Wisut Jarunthawatchai Assistant Professor at Division of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

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Undergraduate Students' Attitudes and Satisfaction in Choosing English Learning Applications

**Tanyalauk Mahasing¹, Benyapa Boonsu¹, Penpicha Teabpitak¹,
Wasapas Yindeenai¹, Ratchadavan Kongsatt^{1*}**

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate undergraduate students' attitudes and satisfaction toward English learning applications and to examine how these factors influence their application selection. The participants consisted of 67 fourth-year English major students at a university in Thailand. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising Likert-scale items and open-ended questions.

The findings revealed that English structure was the most frequently reported learning difficulty among the participants. Google Translate was the most commonly selected application, followed by Grammarly and other applications. Overall, the participants demonstrated positive attitudes and a high level of satisfaction toward English learning applications. The results further indicated that students' attitudes and satisfaction appeared to play a role in their application selection, although some students selected applications that were not fully aligned with their learning problems. These findings are exploratory in nature, and the relationships between attitudes, satisfaction, and application selection warrant further investigation through inferential analysis.

These findings highlight the role of learners' perceptions and experiences in shaping application selection in technology-enhanced language learning contexts and provide practical implications for the effective use of English learning applications.

Keywords: Attitudes, Satisfaction, English learning applications, Technology-enhanced language learning, Application selection

* Corresponding Author
E-mail: ratchadavan.k@ku.th
¹ Kasetsart University, Thailand

1. Introduction

In recent years, education has undergone a significant transformation as a result of rapid technological advancement. Learning in the digital era is no longer confined to traditional classroom settings, as various forms of educational technology have enabled more flexible and learner-centered approaches. In particular, educational applications have become increasingly important tools that support learning both inside and outside the classroom, allowing learners to access information, practice skills, and engage in self-directed learning according to their individual needs and pace. In Thailand, recent government policies have further emphasized the integration of modern digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) into education in order to enhance digital competencies and promote lifelong learning (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation & Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, 2024). These developments highlight the growing role of technology in shaping contemporary learning environments.

Despite these advancements, English language learning in Thailand continues to present challenges for many learners. Previous research has indicated that Thai learners experience difficulties across all four language skills, including writing, reading, listening, and speaking (Prapphal, 2003). Although technological resources have become more widely available, these learning challenges remain evident and continue to affect learners' English proficiency. In response, educational applications have emerged as supportive tools that can help learners address specific learning problems by providing immediate feedback, diverse learning materials, and opportunities for repeated practice beyond the classroom. As a result, learners increasingly rely on such applications to supplement formal instruction and enhance their language learning outcomes.

However, while a wide range of English learning applications is available, the way learners select these applications remains an important issue that has not been fully explored. Rather than using applications randomly, learners may choose specific applications based on their learning problems, attitudes, and prior experiences. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) suggests that individuals actively select media or technology that they perceive as useful and capable of satisfying their needs, while their level of satisfaction influences continued use. In educational contexts, learners are therefore likely to choose applications that they believe can effectively support their learning goals. In addition, learners' attitudes toward technology play a crucial role in shaping their willingness to adopt and use learning applications (Katz et al., 1974).

Given these considerations, this study aims to investigate undergraduate students' attitudes and satisfaction toward choosing English learning applications and to examine how these factors influence their application selection. Specifically, the study explores students' attitudes toward English learning applications, examines their level of satisfaction with the

applications they select, and investigates whether their application choices are consistent with their English learning problems. It also examines the extent to which students' attitudes and satisfaction significantly influence their selection of English learning applications. By addressing these issues, this study seeks to provide insights into learners' decision-making processes in technology-enhanced language learning and to offer practical implications for the effective use of educational applications in English language education.

Based on the theoretical framework and review of related literature, this study tests the following hypotheses and addresses the following research questions. H1: Undergraduate students demonstrate positive attitudes toward English learning applications. H2: Undergraduate students report a high level of satisfaction with the English learning applications they select. RQ3: To what extent do students' attitudes toward English learning applications influence their application selection behavior? RQ4: To what extent does students' satisfaction with English learning applications influence their continued selection and the use of applications?

2. Literature review

2.1 Applications in English Language Learning

With the rapid development of technology, applications have become increasingly important tools in English language teaching and learning, supporting both formal and informal learning environments. These applications enable learners to access learning materials, practice language skills, and receive immediate feedback beyond the classroom, thereby promoting learner autonomy and continuous learning. Features such as multimedia content, interactive exercises, and real-time feedback allow learners to engage with language learning in flexible and personalized ways, which can enhance motivation and learning effectiveness.

Stockwell (2010) emphasized that mobile technologies provide learners with flexible opportunities to engage in language learning beyond the classroom. However, the effectiveness of such technologies depends on how learners select and use them to support their learning needs. This suggests that learners play an active role in choosing appropriate technological tools, which is highly relevant to the selection of English learning applications in the present study.

Various types of applications have been developed to support different aspects of English language learning. For example, writing support applications such as Grammarly assist learners in improving grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, and sentence structure by providing automated feedback (Fahmi & Rachmijati, 2021). Dictionary-based applications also play an important role in supporting vocabulary development and pronunciation practice. Vocabulary learning has long been recognized as a fundamental component of language

acquisition (Nation, 2001), while mobile technologies enable learners to access learning tools and practice language skills beyond the classroom (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Stockwell, 2010). In addition, mobile applications have been widely used to improve speaking skills, with tools such as video communication platforms, messaging applications, and AI-driven chatbots enabling learners to practice communication in interactive and authentic contexts (Huang et al., 2025). These applications not only support skill development but also encourage learners to take an active role in managing their own learning process.

Empirical studies further demonstrate the effectiveness of such applications in enhancing English language learning. Koowuttayakorn and Taylor (2022) found that learners reported high levels of satisfaction and motivation when using a mobile application for English proficiency test preparation, particularly when the application was perceived as useful and relevant to their learning goals. Similarly, research has shown that learners tend to hold positive attitudes toward mobile-assisted language learning, perceiving applications as convenient, motivating, and effective in supporting independent learning (Thedpitak & Somphong, 2021). However, despite these benefits, challenges such as usability issues, limited access to technology, and distractions may affect learners' experiences and the effectiveness of application use (Huang et al., 2025). These findings suggest that while applications play a significant role in language learning, their effectiveness depends on how learners perceive and utilize them.

2.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), explains how individuals actively select media to satisfy their specific needs. Unlike traditional perspectives that view users as passive recipients, this theory emphasizes that users are active decision-makers who choose media based on their personal goals, expectations, and motivations. In this view, media use is purposive and driven by individuals' needs to obtain information, solve problems, or achieve personal satisfaction.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of satisfaction and perceived usefulness in technology adoption and continued usage. Rauniar et al. (2014) suggested that factors such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, content quality, and overall user experience significantly influence user satisfaction and sustained engagement with digital applications. In educational contexts, learners tend to select learning technologies that they perceive as effective in addressing their learning needs. Sural and Yazici (2018) found that learners who were able to personalize their learning environments reported higher levels of satisfaction and demonstrated improved learning performance.

These findings indicate that learners' satisfaction and perceptions of usefulness play a crucial role in shaping their technology selection and usage behavior. In the context of English language learning, learners are therefore likely to choose applications that they perceive as

helpful, convenient, and relevant to their learning problems. The Uses and Gratifications Theory is thus appropriate for explaining how learners select English learning applications and how their satisfaction influences continued use (Katz et al., 1974).

2.3 Theoretical Framework: An Integrated Approach

This study draws on two complementary theoretical perspectives to explain how learners select and continue to use English learning applications: the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Rather than applying these frameworks in isolation, the present study proposes an integrated model in which attitude, the central construct of TPB, functions as the mechanism through which learners evaluate whether a given application will satisfy their learning needs, the central concern of UGT.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, originally proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), posits that individuals are active agents who purposefully select media or technology to fulfill specific psychological or functional needs. Applied to English language learning, this framework suggests that learners do not choose applications passively or randomly; rather, they evaluate available tools and select those that they expect will address their particular learning challenges, in this study, primarily difficulties with English grammatical structure. Satisfaction, within this framework, represents post-use confirmation that an application has successfully met the learner's anticipated needs, thereby reinforcing continued selection and use.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) complements this account by explaining the cognitive processes that shape selection behavior before use occurs. According to Ajzen (1991), attitude, defined as an individual's evaluative disposition toward a behavior, is a direct antecedent of behavioral intention and, subsequently, actual behavior. In the context of technology-enhanced language learning, a learner who holds a positive attitude toward English learning applications is more likely to develop the intention to use them and to act on that intention. Attitude thus functions as a pre-selection filter: it determines which applications a learner is motivated to try in the first place.

Taken together, the two frameworks provide a temporally sequenced and theoretically coherent account of learner behavior. Attitude (TPB) shapes the initial decision to engage with an application, while perceived need-satisfaction (UGT) governs continued and repeated selection. This integrated perspective allows the present study to examine not only whether students use English learning applications, but also why they choose specific applications and what sustains their usage behavior over time. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework guiding this study.

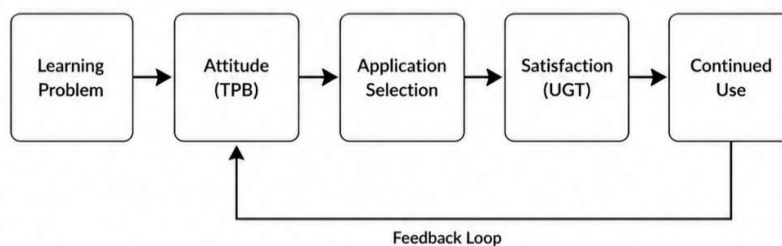


Figure 1 conceptual framework of students' selection and continued use of English learning applications.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate undergraduate students' attitudes and satisfaction toward choosing English learning applications and to examine how these factors influence their application selection. A questionnaire was used as the primary instrument to collect data on students' perceptions, experiences, and application usage. The design was appropriate for examining relationships among variables, including attitudes, satisfaction, and application selection.

3.2 Participants

The participants consisted of 67 fourth-year undergraduate students majoring in English at a university in Western Thailand. These students were selected using a purposive sampling method, as they had prior experience in using English learning applications and were considered capable of providing relevant information for the study. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the research.

3.3 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire developed based on concepts of English learning applications, attitudes, and satisfaction derived from previous studies. The instrument was adapted and refined to ensure its relevance and alignment with the research objectives and hypotheses. The content validity of the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in English language education and educational technology, who evaluated each item for clarity, appropriateness, and alignment with the research objectives. Based on their feedback, items were revised accordingly prior to administration. A pilot administration was not conducted owing to the small population size; the full sample was therefore used for data collection.

The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions and was divided into three main parts. Part 1 collected demographic information and data related to students' English learning problems and application usage. Part 2 measured students' attitudes toward English learning applications, and Part 3 assessed students' satisfaction with

the applications they selected. Parts 2 and 3 employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms, which facilitated efficient data collection and accessibility for participants. The open-ended section also allowed participants to provide additional information regarding their application usage and learning experiences.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected during the academic semester through the distribution of the questionnaire to the participants. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and provided instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. Participants were given sufficient time to respond, and all completed questionnaires were collected for analysis. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of the participants' responses was ensured.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize students' demographic information, English learning problems, patterns of application usage, and responses to the attitude and satisfaction scales.

To address the research questions, the relationships between students' attitudes, satisfaction, and application selection were examined descriptively. Mean scores and frequency distributions were used to identify patterns and tendencies in students' application selection behavior in relation to their reported attitudes and satisfaction levels.

4. Findings

4.1 English Learning Problems

The results indicate that English structure was the most frequently reported learning problem among the participants, accounting for 61.2% of responses, followed by vocabulary (22.4%), writing (10.4%), and pronunciation (6%) (see Table 1). These findings suggest that grammatical and structural aspects of English remain the primary difficulty for undergraduate English majors, which may influence their selection of learning applications.

Table 1 English learning problems among participants ($n = 67$)

Learning Problem	n	%
English structure problems	41	61.2
English vocabulary problems	15	22.4
English writing problems	7	10.4
English pronunciation problems	4	6.0
Total	67	100.0

4.2 Application Selection

The results show that Google Translate was the most commonly selected application, used by 67.2% of participants, followed by Grammarly (19.4%) and other applications (11.9%) (see Table 2). This indicates that students tend to prefer applications that provide immediate support for understanding and translating English, particularly when dealing with structural difficulties.

Table 2 English learning applications selected by participants ($n = 67$)

Applications	n	%
Google Translate	45	67.2
Grammarly	13	19.4
Other applications	8	11.9
U-Dictionary	1	1.5
Total	67	100.0

4.3 Attitudes

Participants demonstrated overall positive attitudes toward English learning applications, with a mean score of 3.94, indicating agreement (see Table 3). The highest-rated item was the belief that applications are essential for learning English ($M = 4.67$), followed by their role in increasing confidence ($M = 4.50$).

Table 3 students' attitudes toward English learning applications ($n = 67$)

Attitude items	M	S.D.
Applications are essential for learning English today	4.67	0.52
Applications can help increase confidence in learning	4.50	0.75
Students can apply knowledge from applications to learning	4.00	1.15
Applications help students become more active in learning	3.32	0.89
Applications can act as a complete human replacement	3.22	0.92
Overall mean	3.94	0.84

This finding is further supported by participants' responses. One participant stated that "*the application is a tool for modern and fast learning that everyone can easily access*" (Participant 11). Another participant noted that "*we can learn English whenever it is convenient for us, which helps improve our language skills*" (Participant 17).

4.4 Satisfaction

The results also revealed a high level of satisfaction, with an overall mean score of 4.26 (see Table 4). The highest-rated factor was convenience and ease of use ($M = 4.61$), suggesting that usability plays a key role in students' continued use.

Table 4 students' satisfaction with English learning applications (n = 67)

Satisfaction Items	M	S.D.
The convenience and ease of use of the applications	4.61	0.59
Students can understand how to use the applications	4.49	0.58
The applications save time	4.47	0.64
The applications meet learners' needs	4.13	0.75
The applications provide accurate results	3.61	0.76
Overall mean	4.26	0.66

This finding is further supported by participants' responses. One participant noted that *"the application helps save time in completing tasks"* (Participant 40), while another stated that *"the application is reliable and helps improve English language skills"* (Participant 27).

5. Discussion

This study aimed to investigate undergraduate students' attitudes and satisfaction toward choosing English learning applications and to examine how these factors influence their application selection. The findings, interpreted through an integrated framework combining the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), provide several important insights into students' English learning behavior in a technology-enhanced learning environment.

5.1 English Learning Problems and Application Selection

The results revealed that English grammatical structure was the most frequently reported learning problem among the participants, identified by 61.2% of respondents. This finding suggests that structural and grammatical aspects of English remain challenging even for undergraduate students majoring in English, and it has direct implications for understanding how learners approach application selection.

In response to these structural difficulties, students tended to select applications that provide immediate and accessible support. Google Translate was chosen by 67.2% of participants, making it the most commonly used application in this study. This behavior reflects a problem-driven approach to technology use, consistent with the UGT premise that individuals actively select tools they expect will address their specific needs (Katz et al., 1974). Within this framework, the selection of Google Translate can be understood as an attempt to manage the immediate communicative demands posed by structural difficulties, obtaining a translation or paraphrase when faced with an unfamiliar structure, rather than as a deliberate strategy for long-term grammatical development.

5.2 The Attitude-Gratification Misalignment

One of the most theoretically significant findings of this study is the apparent misalignment between participants' primary learning problem and their application selection behavior. Although 61.2% of participants identified English grammatical structure as their

main learning difficulty, only 19.4% selected Grammarly, which is an application specifically designed to support grammatical accuracy, while 67.2% relied on Google Translate, a general-purpose translation tool. This divergence between diagnosed learning needs and actual tool selection warrants careful examination.

From the UGT perspective, this pattern suggests that the gratifications learners seek do not necessarily align with their stated learning objectives. Rather than seeking applications that develop grammatical competence, participants appear to prioritize immediate functional gratification, specifically, fast and accessible translation support when confronted with structural difficulties. This distinction between sought and obtained gratifications is a well-recognized phenomenon in UGT research (Rubin, 1983), and its presence in this educational context suggests that learners may conflate task completion with language learning.

The integrated theoretical framework proposed in this study offers an additional explanatory layer. Within the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), attitude shapes behavioral intention before use occurs. The high satisfaction scores recorded for convenience and ease of use ($M = 4.61$) and time-saving ($M = 4.47$) suggest that participants' attitudes toward Google Translate are shaped primarily by usability perceptions rather than pedagogical effectiveness. This is consistent with prior findings that learners evaluate educational technology primarily on accessibility and interface quality rather than long-term learning outcomes (Rauniar et al., 2014). The implication is that positive attitudes, while predictive of adoption, do not guarantee pedagogically optimal selection.

This finding has important practical implications. If learners consistently select applications based on usability and immediate gratification rather than alignment with their learning needs, educators must play a more active role in guiding application selection. Teachers may need to explicitly address not only how to use English learning applications, but also why certain applications are more appropriate for specific learning goals. Similarly, developers may consider integrating explicit scaffolding features such as guidance linking user-identified learning problems to relevant application functions to redirect engagement toward more pedagogically productive behavior.

5.3 Attitudes toward English Learning Applications

The results demonstrated that students held positive attitudes toward English learning applications overall ($M = 3.94$). Students perceived applications as essential tools for learning English ($M = 4.67$) and as sources of increased confidence in language use ($M = 4.50$). This finding is consistent with the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that attitudes influence individuals' behavioral intentions and decisions. In this context, positive attitudes toward applications likely encouraged students to adopt and actively use these tools as part of their learning process.

These findings also align with previous research indicating that Thai EFL learners generally hold favorable perceptions of mobile-assisted language learning, viewing applications as convenient, motivating, and supportive of independent learning (Thedpitak & Somphong, 2021). However, when considered alongside the misalignment identified in Section 5.2, the present findings suggest a nuance worth noting: positive attitudes predict adoption but do not determine whether the applications selected are well-matched to learners' actual learning needs. Attitude formation, in this study, appears to be driven more by general perceptions of utility and accessibility than by careful evaluation of pedagogical fit.

5.4 Satisfaction and Continued Use

Students reported a high level of satisfaction with English learning applications ($M = 4.26$), particularly in terms of convenience and ease of use ($M = 4.61$). This suggests that usability is a key factor influencing continued engagement with learning technologies. These findings support prior research indicating that perceived usefulness and ease of use contribute significantly to user satisfaction and sustained technology adoption (Rauniar et al., 2014). When applications effectively meet learners' needs, even at the level of immediate functional needs, satisfaction increases and continued use is reinforced.

Within the UGT framework, satisfaction functions as post-use confirmation that an application has met anticipated needs, thereby reinforcing continued selection and use (Katz et al., 1974). The high satisfaction scores observed in this study are therefore consistent with the theoretical prediction that gratification-fulfillment sustains media engagement. Notably, the lowest-rated satisfaction item was the accuracy of results provided by applications ($M = 3.61$), suggesting that while learners are satisfied with the convenience and speed of available applications, they remain aware of limitations in output quality. This awareness, however, does not appear to significantly reduce overall satisfaction or continued use, which underscores the dominant role that convenience plays in shaping learners' application behavior.

5.5 Overall Summary

Taken together, the descriptive findings suggest that attitudes and satisfaction are associated with students' selection and continued use of English learning applications, supporting the integrated theoretical framework proposed in this study. However, as this study is exploratory in nature, the direction and strength of these relationships require confirmation through inferential statistical analysis in future research.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated undergraduate students' attitudes and satisfaction toward choosing English learning applications and examined how these factors influence their application selection. The findings revealed that students experienced various English

learning problems, with English structure identified as the most prominent difficulty. In response to these challenges, students tended to select applications that provided immediate and practical support, particularly Google Translate.

The results further demonstrated that students held positive attitudes toward English learning applications and reported a high level of satisfaction, especially in terms of convenience and ease of use. These findings indicate that applications play an important role in supporting English language learning beyond the classroom. Moreover, the study suggested that both attitudes and satisfaction appeared to be associated with students' selection and continued use of English learning applications. Overall, the findings highlight that learners actively and purposefully choose applications based on their learning needs, perceptions, and experiences.

6.1 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study offer several important implications for English language learning and teaching.

For students, the results suggest that selecting applications that align with specific learning problems can enhance learning effectiveness. Learners should be encouraged to critically evaluate and choose applications that best support their individual needs rather than relying solely on convenience.

For teachers, the findings indicate that English learning applications can be effectively integrated into teaching practices as supplementary learning tools. Teachers may guide students in selecting appropriate applications, particularly for addressing common difficulties such as English structure and vocabulary. Providing recommendations and training on effective application use can further enhance learning outcomes.

For application developers, the results emphasize the importance of designing applications that are user-friendly, reliable, and responsive to learners' needs. Features such as ease of use, accuracy, and immediate feedback are essential in increasing user satisfaction and sustained engagement.

6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the participants were drawn from a single university and a specific academic program, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could include a larger and more diverse sample from different institutions and academic backgrounds.

Second, this study relied primarily on self-reported data obtained through questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias. Future studies may incorporate additional data collection methods, such as interviews or experimental designs, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of learners' behaviors.

Additionally, formal reliability testing, such as Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was not conducted in this study. Future research should incorporate reliability and validity indices to strengthen the psychometric properties of the instrument.

Finally, this study focused on attitudes and satisfaction as key factors influencing application selection. Future research could examine other variables, such as learning performance, motivation, or digital literacy, to further explore the effectiveness of English learning applications.

Authors

Tanyalauk Mahasing A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Faculty of Liberal and Science, Kasetsart University.

Benyapa Boonsu A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Faculty of Liberal and Science, Kasetsart University.

Penpicha Teabpitak A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Faculty of Liberal and Science, Kasetsart University.

Wasapas Yindeenai A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Faculty of Liberal and Science, Kasetsart University.

Ratchadavan Kongsatt Assistant Professor at Department English, Faculty of Liberal and Science, Kasetsart University.

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