

NIDA Journal of Language and Communication

Volume 28 • Issue 43 • January – June 2023

Research Articles

Effects of Online Instruction Using the ASSURE Model with
Scenario-based Learning on Listening Skill in English for
Airline Business of Undergraduate Students

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Gender Visibility in Health and Physical Education Textbooks

■ *Songwut Bhattarachaiyakorn, Ratchanikorn Pimprajit*

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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

As the heat of summer gives way to the coolness of Bangkok rainy season, the Jan-Jun issue of *NIDA Journal of Language and Communication* is released. Greetings to all!

As always, this issue offers an eclectic range of investigations into a wide array of areas related to language and communication. This issue presents four research articles and a book review.

Two articles explore English language teaching in a Thai undergraduate setting. The first article by Kitjanat investigates the effect of and student's perception toward online instruction, which has become a part of virtually every program of study around the world since the outbreak of Covid-19. The focus is on the undergraduate program in an airline business listening course. The study yields useful insights for anyone interested in adopting ASSURE model and scenario-based learning (SBL) in online listening classes. The second article is developed based on the assumption that there is a positive correlation between self-efficacy and success in language learning. This assumption leads Montha, Akadet, and Charinee to test the construct validity of the Thai version of the Questionnaire of English Self-efficacy (QESE) scale as a tool used to measure and to understand learners' self-efficacy.

Another paper shifts our attention to textbooks. Songwut and Ratchanikorn's study analyse pictorial illustrations of men and women in health and physical education textbooks with the aim of ascertaining how the two genders are represented and what kind of gender ideology is being potentially instilled.

Intercultural communication is a topic of a paper by Bao and Pattrawut. Emails of American customers addressing Chinese sales managers were collected as a representatives of Business English as Lingua Franca (BELF). The findings reveal the nature of the writing style of American customers in intercultural correspondence.

For those interested in new developments in academic writing, Kiattipong has given a thorough review of a recent book titled *Demystifying Academic Writing: Genres, Moves, Skills and Strategies* (2021). The review and the book itself can also be beneficial for anyone looking for a way to improve skills in academic writing.

Stay healthy, stay happy, and enjoy your reading!

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Effects of Online Instruction Using the ASSURE Model with Scenario-Based Learning on Listening Skill in English for Airline Business of Undergraduate Students

Received : 18 May, 2022

Revised : 3 Aug, 2022

Accepted : 6 Jun, 2023

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Abstract

This study aimed 1) to investigate the effects of online instruction using the ASSURE model with scenario-based learning (SBL) on the English listening skill for the airline business and 2) to explore students' attitudes towards online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL on the English listening skill for the airline business. The sample consisted of 15 undergraduate students enrolling in English for Airline Business at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna Nan in the first semester of 2021. The instruments involved the English listening skill for airline business pre-test and post-test, instructional plans, and interview questions. The data obtained from the pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation. In addition, the results from the interview were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank illustrated the post-test scores increase with statistical significance ($p \leq .0005$) regarding the first objective. For the second objective, it was found that online instruction, the ASSURE model, and SBL could enhance English listening skills for the airline business.

Keywords: online instruction, ASSURE model, scenario-based learning, listening skill, English for airline business

Introduction

Language acquisition is one of the essential abilities for students of any age group. Acquiring one language is significant for each student to learn its structures and rules, but it is vital to learn another language alongside. English as a foreign language is taught in schools and universities through various programs and curricula in Thailand. The students must develop and improve their English abilities and skills in four main areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Unfortunately, the most recent Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI, 2022) revealed that Thai students' English ability is ranked at a very low-proficient rank, the 97th in the world out of 111 and the 22nd in Asia out of 24.

Despite the failure of language proficiency, pedagogical management in Thailand is worth discussing. English language instruction mainly focuses on structures and rules for examinations at any educational level, primary, secondary, and higher education. Moreover, Thai learners rarely produce language for authentic communication in real-life situations. Such poor conditions result in communication-related problems and issues with language skills, including listening skills (Charumanee, & Klaichim, 2009; Noom-ura, 2013).

For developing English communicative skills, various educational institutes, including Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna Nan (RMUTL Nan), aim to establish programs to enhance their learners' language abilities. The English for International Communication (EIC) program at RMUTL Nan has provided learners various courses covering academic and professional topics. Additionally, English for Airline Business is one of the elective courses aiming to develop and equip students with the ability to use communicative English language significant for the airline industry. Interviews with previous airline-related staff and a review of the literature on the airline business field revealed that listening is a prominent and highly-needed skill in airline-related careers, both for on-ground and in-flight services (Phitakphongphan, 2016; Uraipan, 2011). Hence, it is crucial to equip learners with listening skills for the airline business.

Moreover, the English for Airline Business course aims to develop students understanding of the airline industry's language use and professional skills. However, there is a lack of authentic environments, and the students must be exposed to airline business situations. In solving the encountered problem, it is significant to bridge the gap by employing scenario-based learning (SBL) since it encourages learners to face real-life situations, solve problems, and create opportunities for self-learning (Massy University, n.d.).

Though pedagogical approaches recently have been manifold and available on diverse platforms, the emergence of COVID-19 has changed the roles of teachers and students and the methods of instructional management. Over 91% of students across the globe, including in Thailand, have encountered schools' temporary closures (Grah, 2022), resulting in a shift from traditional classroom or blended-learning-based environments to full-scale online learning. An initial observation with the students yielded positive results regarding online learning readiness – access to the Internet and online devices. As a result, online learning is highly relevant to this study.

Developing online instruction using SBL to enhance the English listening skill is a core objective of the study; however, it is noteworthy to consider and determine the most suitable instructional design model for the course. The ASSURE model drew most attention from this study. The letters of the acronym relate to its six stages: Analyzing learners, Stating objectives, Selecting media and materials, Utilizing media and materials, Requiring learner participation, and Evaluating and revising with the ability

to develop more effective instruction with integrated technology and media (Heinich et al., 1999).

In this study, the core emphasis of development is the English listening skill for the airline business industry with SBL in which the ASSURE model plays a significant role in instructional design. Additionally, online technologies are employed to support learning activities. This paper addresses two research questions:

1) To what extent does online instruction using the ASSURE model with scenario-based learning enhance the English listening skill for the airline business?

2) What are the students' attitudes after participating in online instruction using the ASSURE model with scenario-based learning to enhance the English listening skill for the airline business?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Online Instruction

Online instruction has played an essential role in the educational system worldwide, including in Thailand, especially when the COVID-19 pandemic has forced educational institutes to change from an in-class to an online setting. Crawford-Ferre and Wiest (2012) reviewed the approaches to effective online instruction in higher education, including course design, participant interaction, and instructor preparation and support. Students are at the center regarding course design as they should provide meaningful information for a course design, such as technological needs and supports, accessibility to the Internet, and online course features. Additionally, the course should include synchronous and asynchronous activities and a communicative channel for participants to discuss. Regarding interactions, the instructor needs to maintain involvement in online courses to facilitate and respond to information given by the students, especially in synchronous methods. For the latter approach, the instructor must be familiar with appropriate online technologies and solve unprecedented difficulties.

Though the growth of online instruction has been apparent for decades, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were various significant components of online instruction. Wayo et al. (2020) reported that the pandemic inevitably resulted in a social-distancing measure; hence, online instruction must be employed to maintain academic affairs. They also asserted that the instruction must include the human factors, instructors and students, as well as other components, including contents, a pedagogical process, materials, communication technologies, and measurements and evaluations. In light of human factors, teachers must simultaneously be guides, mentors, coaches, and facilitators to cover all significant classroom procedures. In contrast, students must be autonomous learners, adaptive to situations, prompt in arriving to classes, and equipped with digital literacy and emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, it seems most significant to scrutinize the content, that is, it must correlate to the learning objectives and be precise, brief, understandable, contemporary, and in a sequenced order. Regarding instructional media, tools must be state-of-the-art, related to the content, and a range of activities to attract and arouse learners' attention. Another critical factor is to manage classes in the learning process by contemplating analysis, design, implementation, development, and evaluation by supporting authentic learning environments. Also, it is significant to consider communication and network systems. Learners should have opportunities to participate in one-way and two-way communication through instructional tools. At the same time, the network system – intranet and Internet – must be considered, especially the readiness to access the network and the broadband speed of teachers and learners. In addition to the last factor, measurement and evaluation refer to various formative and summative assessments to verify learners' proficiency. Moreover, teachers should enhance and maintain ethics and morality in online testing to avoid cheating.

Various results confirm the significance of employing online instruction. Weiner (2003) stated that students can go online after receiving appropriate support and guidance. In the same way, Rojabi (2020) mentioned that online learning with Microsoft Teams was new for the students; however, the interaction and learning environment motivated them to participate, resulting in their comprehension of the learning materials. Moreover, Debski (2003) reported that using ICT enables social interaction and increases awareness and agency; furthermore, they can create a learning community through various channels (Swan, 2003). Bovermann et al. (2018) revealed that students with the readiness to learn online tend to have the autonomous motivation that helps improve communication skills (Lee, 2002).

2.2 ASSURE Model

Due to online learning, lecturers should design and plan media use and target content. The ASSURE model is one of the instructional approaches suitable for teachers to develop more effective learning activities with integrated technology (Şimşek et al., 2009). The ASSURE model, developed by Heinich et al. (1999), consists of six stages: Analyzing learners, Stating objectives, Selecting media and materials, Utilizing media and materials, Requiring learner participation, and Evaluating and revising.

A number of studies have employed the ASSURE model in instruction. Teachers in Islamic kindergartens in Bengkulu, Indonesia encountered difficulties in selecting appropriate media to enhance students' learning; however, the ASSURE model received positive feedback from both teachers and students and proved to be useful. These Indonesian teachers encountered difficulties in selecting appropriate media to enhance students' learning; however, the ASSURE model received positive feedback from both teachers and students and proved to be useful (Zubaedi et al., 2020). Similarly, Kazanci et al. (2020) looked at how an ASSURE-compliant lesson affected participants' perceptions of the lesson, their levels of critical thinking, and their

academic achievement. They found that the lesson had a statistically significant positive impact on students' levels of technology literacy. To help students become more tech-literate, they also suggested that teachers create lessons that fit the ASSURE model.

According to the studies discussed above, the use of the ASSURE model in instruction development produces had positive results by allowing students to select the most appropriate media and gain technology literacy.

A brief descriptions of each stage of the model are as follows (Faryadi, 2007; Şimşek et al., 2009). First, teachers must understand the characteristics of their students. Hence, they must **analyze** learners in terms of general information: prior knowledge, attitude, age, grade, and learning styles to determine the starting point for further development. After understanding the learners' characteristics, another significant factor of the ASSURE model is to **state** objectives, including targeted audience, learning behaviors, learning conditions, and the degree of proficiency. In addition, the course developer needs to observe learners' behavior at the end of the lesson. Then the instructor or a course developer must **select** the most appropriate media and materials: sound, graphics, text animations, and videos, and bridge them with the objectives. Next, after selecting the media, the instructor has to **utilize** them to determine whether or not the selected ones are suitable for a specific environment: classroom conditions and equipment, lights and other facilities. Another critical step is the learners' participation, that is, the learners must be involved throughout the lesson for the most effective learning. Also, the instructor needs to give feedback for further improvements. Finally, after completing the lesson, the course developer must **evaluate** the learners' accomplishments, materials, and activities and revise and reorganize the course design when necessary.

As mentioned above, the ASSURE model is essential for lecturers and course developers to design and plan lessons for learners. In addition, it supports the use of technology, which is crucial for students to have more opportunities to explore a broader range of knowledge and play an essential role in the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, in this study, the ASSURE model is significant for supporting the course preparation in selecting online media suitable for the sample's needs and correlating with the SBL approach.

2.3 Scenario-Based Learning

Before delving into the significance of using the SBL approach, it is worth illustrating the link between the ASSURE model and the learning approach. Since the steps in the ASSURE model allow the course developer or a teacher to acknowledge the needs of learners in detail, the results from the ASSURE model can entail what scenarios learners require in the course, especially a specific one such as English for Airline Business.

SBL is a contemporary pedagogical approach based on the Lave and Wenger (1991, as cited in Massy University, n.d.) principles that learning is most effective in authentic situations. Furthermore, the approach helps bridge between theories in a classroom and practices in real-world situations – applications in professional lives (Sheridan & Kelly, 2012). Likewise, Massy University (n.d.) asserted that SBL could broaden students' knowledge by allowing opportunities to explore situations that are difficult to explore in the classroom.

In addition to combining SBL with the course, teachers or course developers must concern themselves with significant steps to help develop the course. Gutierrez (2021) suggested five steps for developing effective online SBL as follows:

- 1) The teacher **identifies students' needs** regarding who they are and what they expect from the course.
- 2) The teacher **identifies learning needs and outcomes**, including what students will achieve after completing the course and what situations students will be expected to apply their knowledge.
- 3) The teacher **chooses a situation for the scenario**. Selecting challenging situations that allow students to apply their knowledge is advisable.
- 4) The teacher **chooses the types of scenario**: skill-based – learners are expected to have prior knowledge; problem-based – learners integrate their theoretical and practical knowledge to investigate a problem; issue-based – learners are involved in issues of humanitarian perspectives and explore how these affect decision-making in professional environments; speculative – learners predict the goal of an event in the future based on their knowledge and deductions; and gaming – learners use games as learning instruments.
- 5) The teacher designs the scenario after gathering crucial information from steps 1-4.

Furthermore, the teacher must decide how to launch the scenario, face-to-face or online; moreover, they must determine visual and audio media types and other resources and activities. After that, teachers must balance the critical and challenging scenarios with amusing and pleasing topics in the subject area, such as situations or dilemmas students may encounter on a daily basis and in the future. Finally, they should develop a storyboard and ask colleagues to give feedback (Sorin, 2013; Massy University, n.d.).

2.4 Listening Skills Instruction

Human communication consists of four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing; listening and reading are perceived as receptive skills, whereas the other two are productive skills. Regarding the fundamental language skill of listening, Nunan (1999) referred to it as Cinderella since it is ignored by the 'elder sister' – speaking – since it requires time to learn, language teachers often ignore it (Oxford, 2013). However, listening skills are fundamental in businesses because it is the most crucial skill in communicating, gaining productivity, boosting confidence, and reducing errors

(Toledo, 2018), especially in the airline business (Setyaningsih, 2015; Niamsuwan, 2017; Maliwan, 2019) which is the target course in this study.

Theoretically, listening refers to focusing and concentrating on both the mental and physical processes of someone or somebody – a sender (Hornby, 2020). In the airline business, rather than listening to general information, listening scopes into a more specific environment, such as finding specific details and the main idea, summarizing importance, inference or comment, and predicting information (Maliwan, 2019). Hence, to improve and develop their listening skill for the most benefit in the airline business, learners should balance their background knowledge and knowledge of the world based on their experience and the target language and content knowledge. In addition, the materials are vital in developing listening skills, that is, they must be varied and authentic while considering listening inputs, such as fast speed of delivery, new terminology, concepts and length of the listening texts, and unfamiliarity of accents and pronunciations (Helgesen & Brown, 2007; Suwannasit, 2018).

Listening skill is essential in the airline industry and is a significant concern for course design; the instructional materials should be in vogue and focus on dialogues for dynamicity and interactive nature (Maftoon et al., 2016). Several educators mentioned classifications of listening skill development; however, Rost's classification (Rost, 2013) is contemporary for the English for Airline Business course. Rost mentioned six types of listening performances and how to deliver each one in the classroom as described in Table 1.

Table 1

Types of Listening (Rost, 2013)

Types	Definition	Course Integration
intensive listening	decoding information by listening closely to most linguistic aspects: phonology, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics	using activities such as dictation, elicited repetition, error spotting, and simultaneous interpretation
selective listening	listening with the target purpose in mind	listening to people's names, dates, specific facts and events, and main ideas
interactive listening	interactions between speakers and listeners	Using collaborative tasks such as negotiation and meaning clarification to achieve the goal of this performance
extensive listening	listening to meaning-focused activities for an extended time, such as listening to lengthy	listening to radio programs, podcasts, songs, interviews and watching movies

	lectures, conversations, and broadcasts	
responsive listening	listening for immediate response	asking questions, giving commands, seeking clarification, and checking comprehension
autonomous listening	independent and self-directed listening with no rules	listening and acquiring information in real contexts

To sum up, regarding online instruction, Khoiriyah (2020) reviewed Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) related to the use of web-based resources in teaching English listening skills. The researcher mentioned that online materials effectively teach and learn listening skills. Similarly, Abdulrahman et al. (2018) investigated students' listening comprehension through podcasts in the EFL classroom. They revealed that online media use significantly impacted the students' listening comprehension. Likewise, Rizkan et al. (2019) compared YouTube and standard audio in teaching listening skills. The results showed that YouTube was more effective than audio in developing students' listening skills. Furthermore, they suggested the use of YouTube in teaching listening. Hence, it can be concluded that online instruction and online media are significant and beneficial for listening skill instruction to increase the student's academic achievement. Accordingly, Al Jawad and Mansour (2021) insisted that YouTube videos could promote students' motivation and participation in the EFL classroom.

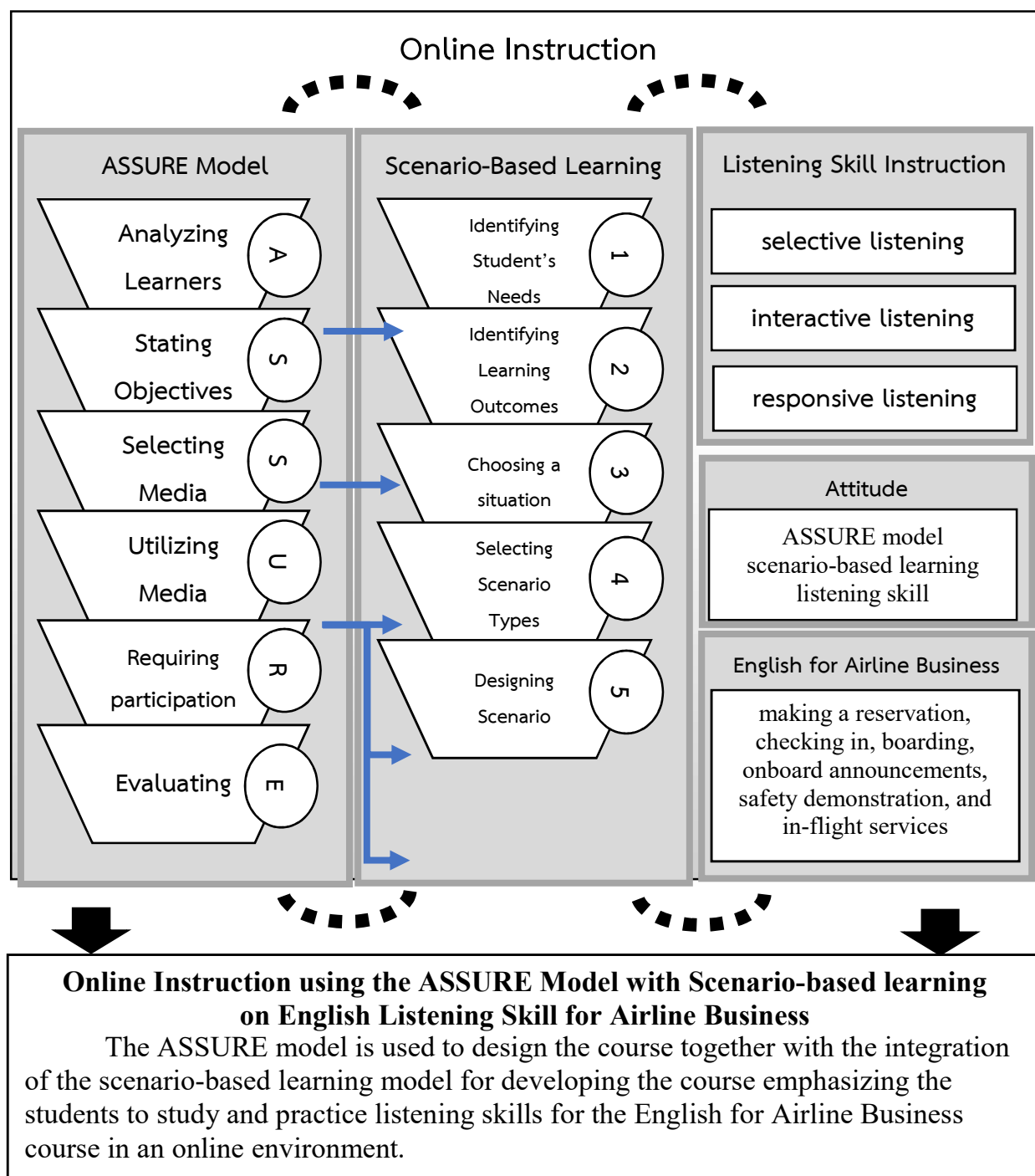
Regarding integrating SBL in the course to enhance listening skills, Hassani et al. (2013) employed SBL in teaching architecture to improve speaking and listening skills. The results showed that, after the course implementation, the students increased their proficiency level and communication complexity accordingly. Moreover, Taslibeyaz (2018) found that the experimental group's post-test scores were higher than the control group after participating in SBL using videos. Though few studies touched upon SBL effectiveness on listening skills, several studies revealed significant and positive results of integrating SBL in the academic process and can improve undergraduate students' learning ability (Elliott-Kingston et al., 2016), and there was the efficacy of using SBL in higher education (Almazova et al., 2021).

The Figure 1 summarizes the conceptual framework in this study. In brief, the ASSURE model and SBL were used to assess the students' listening ability in English for Airline Business. The first three steps in the model were matched with the steps in SBL, which involves identifying the learners' needs and the learning outcomes. The researcher selected the media employed and chose scenarios, and the students were required to participate in the lesson and received feedback. After completing the course,

the students explored their attitude toward blending the two methods and explored their listening abilities in the online setting.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



3. Research Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample

The population consisted of English for International Communication (EIC) students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna Nan in 2021.

The sample was 15 third-year undergraduate students majoring in EIC and enrolled in English for Airline Business (BOAEC135) in the academic year 1/2021. They were selected through purposive sampling since the course is operated only for third-year EIC students.

3.2. Research Instruments

The researcher developed the instruments which was then validated by experts. The detail of each is as follows.

3.2.1 English listening skill for airline business test

To assess the students' English listening skills for airline business abilities it is crucial to employ pre-test and post-test instruments. The tests were designed as an online achievement test on Google Forms with the core objective of discovering the sample's listening ability before and after completing the course. The tests consisted of 30 question items aiming to explore the English for airline business listening ability in six listening scenarios: making a reservation five items, checking in five items, boarding five items, on-board announcements five items, safety demonstration five items, and in-flight services five items. The test's evaluation emphasizes three types of listening performance: selective, interactive, and responsive listening, focusing on finding specific details and the main idea, summarizing importance, inference or comment, and predicting information. The interval between the pre- and post-test was six weeks; the pre-test was administered during the midterm period, and the post-test was administered at the end of the semester.

A panel of three experts consisting of two Thai English teachers and one native English teacher validated the test using a 3-rank IOC checklist (-1, 0, +1) consisting of eight criteria adapted from Bachman and Palmer's (1996) framework to gain validity and reliability. The results revealed that the experts rated 0.67-1.00 in all benchmarks, representing the high face and content validity and test-retest reliability in the developed test.

3.2.2 Online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL on English listening skill for Airline Business instructional plans

This study developed six instructional online-based plans to support the research and learning objectives based on the ASSURE model analysis, the course description, and the literature review. Each lesson plan consisted of three stages of listening for a 2-

hour lecture: 30 minutes for pre-listening, 60 minutes for while-listening, and 30 minutes for post-listening. In the pre-listening stage, students were to activate vocabulary and predict content related to one of the six scenarios through pictures and short video clips, small talks, discussions, and guided questions. Then, in the while-listening stage, the teacher started by playing a listening material, a video, following the scenario introduced in a prior step and having a discussion. Subsequently, the teacher uploaded a worksheet containing more difficult questions consisting of three types of listening: selective, interactive, and responsive listening for the students and let them read the questions before listening again. Also, the teacher emphasized essential points in the video to arouse the students to pay more attention. After completing the worksheet, the teacher asked the students for their opinions. In the post-listening stage, the teacher explained the grammatical points and asked the students to practice the language found in the listening activity. Finally, the teacher gave the task for students to practice as an external activity.

3.2.3 Interview questions

Since one of the research objective was to explore the samples' attitudes toward online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL on English listening skills for the airline business, it was significant to develop the interview questions to reveal the findings. The interview questions were used because the number of participants was 15, so it was plausible to gain insight from them. In addition, the researcher could control the questions by limiting them to specific goals.

The questions entailed this study's four main components: online instruction, ASSURE model, SBL, and English listening skills. The questions were 10 in total divided into four parts as follows.

In the first part, three questions emphasized the sample's satisfaction with the effectiveness of the online instruction, including the use of the online video conferencing platform and instructional activities. The second part involved two questions to explore how relevant the ASSURE model is in supporting students' learning. Another section comprised two questions to discover how useful and relevant SBL can be in supporting the students' airline business knowledge. Finally, the fourth part included three questions to explore how useful and relevant online instruction, the ASSURE model, and SBL can be for improving listening skills.

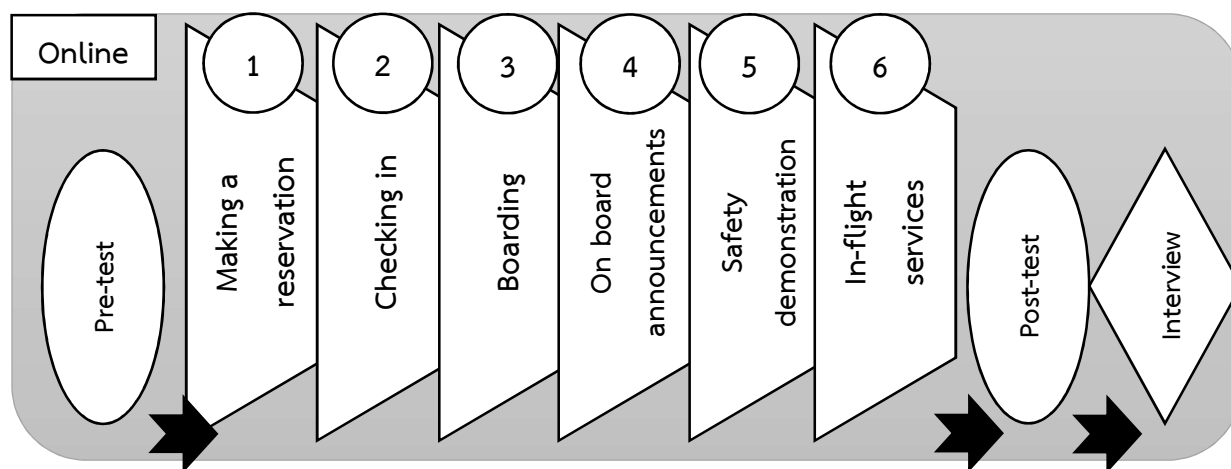
To gain the validity of the interview questions, a panel of three experts consisting of two Thai English teachers and one native English teacher validated the questions using a 3-rank IOC checklist (-1, 0, +1) consisting of 8 criteria adapted from Bachman and Palmer (1996). The experts rated 0.67-1.00 in all benchmarks, representing high face validity and reliability in the developed interview questions. The questions were in Thai to avoid misinterpretation and overcome the students' language barriers. The list of questions can be seen in Appendix A.

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection was from August 17 to October 8, 2021. The collection process started with the learner analysis following the six steps of the ASSURE model. After analysis, the researcher divided the course into six units following the scenarios. Then the sample undertook the pre-test and participated in six lessons, followed by the post-test. Finally, the researcher conducted individual interviews in which the information was recorded for later transcribing. Figure 2 illustrates the process.

Figure 2

Data Collection



3.4 Data Analysis

This research employed a mixed method. The quantitative data retrieved from the pre- and post-test results were explained by descriptive statistics: mean and standard deviation, and non-parametric statistics using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. In addition, the reason for employing non-parametric statistics non-parametric statistics, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test, outweighs a dependent *t*-test since the sample means are not of interest. Put another way, the number of participants is less than 30, so using a dependent *t*-test seems inappropriate and unfit. Moreover, this study aimed to explore and compare the pre- and post-test scores of the same sample group, so it is suitable for employing non-parametric statistics since it can serve the purpose.

The qualitative data, on the other hand, was collected from the interviews using content analysis. To explain, the type of content analysis employed in this study is a conceptual analysis in which the researcher focused on the selected responses related to four main topics: online instruction, ASSURE model, SBL, and listening skills. Then the researcher transcribed the recorded data and coded words, phrases, and sentences related to the questions on each topic. In addition, to avoid coding errors and human

bias, the researcher considered the reliability of content analysis in terms of stability and accuracy.

4. Findings

The findings of research question 1 were analyzed and explained by descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test presented in Table 1.

4.1 Findings from research question 1

Table 1

Quantitative result for online instruction using the ASSURE model with scenario-based learning on English listening skills for the airline business

	Min (30)	Max (30)	Mean	SD.	Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test	
					Z	Sig (1-tailed)
Pre-test	5	15	10.60	2.720	-3.458	.0005
Post-test	12	22	16.73	2.815		

According to Table 1, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test results illustrated the score increase with statistical significance ($p \leq .0005$) with the pre- and post-test mean at 10.60 and 16.73 in a total of 30, respectively. The participants improved their English listening skills after implementing the online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL on English listening skills for the airline business. Noticeably, students with low English-proficient ability were still unable to pass half of the post-test; nevertheless, they could significantly improve their English listening ability from an average score of 5 on the pre-test to 12 on the post-test out of 30.

4.2 Findings from research question 2

In addition, to reveal the results of research question 2, open-ended questions were developed to explore the sample's attitudes toward major course components: online instruction, ASSURE model, SBL, and English listening skill. The questions and answers were in Thai, and the researcher translated them into English. The results were grouped into themes and introduced as follows:

4.2.1 Online Instruction Satisfaction

Complex Platform but Maintaining Learning

The sample's attitudes were most satisfied regarding the first part on online instruction. When delving into the use of the online video conferencing platform suggested by the university, the result was that the platform was quite intricate at first; however, after being introduced and explained, they became familiar with the platform and maintained their learning. Interesting answers can be seen in the following excerpts.

Student A: *"At first, I had no idea what [name of the platform] is. It was quite tough for me since I had never used it. However, soon after the teacher and my friends explained how to use the program, I could easily learn and participate in activities."*

Student B: *"[Name of the platform] is suitable for online learning though it was difficult to use some menus, especially connecting to a camera and a speaker, at the beginning of the course."*

The More Going Online, The More Willingness to Learn

In another question regarded the instructional process, the findings revealed that online learning increased students' participation and learning readiness. Some answers are illustrated in the excerpts of students C and D.

Student C: *"I am very frustrated when being asked in a normal classroom with smart students because I struggle in English. However, online, I felt relaxed and dared to answer questions."*

Student D: *"Online learning helped me learn better. I could prepare myself before each class since I could look at the teacher's documents to [Name of the platform]. I am lazy to read from the book before class."*

Online Learning Creating Autonomous Learners

At the end of the first part, the question explored the activities during online learning. The results were that online learning could enhance and maintain autonomous learning behavior; some activities helped improve communication skills. The following excerpts confirm the results.

Student E: *“If I did not understand the topics, I could search for information to help me. Alternatively, I could send messages with an instant communication application to ask my friends.”*

Student F: *“I liked the discussion activity because I could share ideas and exchange information with the teacher and friends.”*

4.2.2 Attitudes towards the ASSURE model

Suitable Materials Reduce Learning Difficulties

The second part of the interview asked how the ASSURE model can enhance students' learning in instructional material selection. Most participants revealed that the selection of materials supported the needs of learners. It also helped reduce the learning difficulties of some students with Internet and technology access. Some of the students' responses were as follows:

Student G: *“I was quite bored with learning online. Many teachers only showed slides or wrote something on a whiteboard. However, the teacher asked us what materials we needed for this course. I enjoyed watching videos very much.”*

Student H: *“I always had Internet problems because of the limited signal around my village. So, I sometimes could not watch the videos or clips simultaneously. However, I had chances to watch them before and after class because the teacher uploaded them online when I was in town.”*

4.2.3 Attitudes toward scenario-based learning

SBL Increasing Preparedness but Alleviating Fears of Learning

The third section explored the sample's attitudes towards SBL. Most participants revealed interesting results in that SBL allowed students to prepare before and review after class. In addition, it could help students better understand specific topics and decrease concerns about the target profession. The following excerpts confirm the results.

Student I: *“I was surprised that the teacher asked us what topics we needed to learn. Other teachers rarely asked like this. So we could prepare to find information about the selected*

topics before class. Moreover, after class, we could review what we had learned."

Student J: *"I was frustrated that I might not have the opportunity to practice on topics hardly exposed in real life, such as safety demonstrations and in-flight services, due to online learning. However, the videos that were shown during learning supported my needs. I could do self-practice at home."*

Student K: *"I like this course very much because I want to be a flight attendant. The seniors told me that this course allowed us to learn many interesting topics and practice using equipment such as a life vest and a seatbelt. However, my friends and I were upset that we could not use the same equipment as seniors because of online learning. However, I could repeat practicing with similar or imitative stuff suggested by the teacher and friends following the videos."*

4.2.4 Attitudes toward Listening Skills

All Elements Boosting Listening Skills

The final part of the interview explored the participants' attitudes toward English listening skills after completing the online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL. The results showed that the English listening skills developed in every course component: online instruction, ASSURE model, and SBL. The following excerpts confirmed this results.

Student L: *"I believe my listening ability improved after participating in the course. I could listen to lectures, videos, and sounds through earphones that were clearer than the speakers in a classroom. I was happy when I could listen to the target words or phrases and answer the questions correctly."*

Student M: *"I was not a good learner of English and had no chance to practice the language in daily life. Nevertheless, when the teacher allowed me to state the needs of what situations I wanted to learn in this course, I could focus more on those topics."*

Student N: *"Thank you, the teacher, for asking my friends and me what media types I want to learn. Besides, I could mention the topics I want to learn for my future career. I believe my*

listening skills improved because I had learned through the chosen topics.”

In summary, after implementing the online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL to enhance the English listening skills for the airline business, the sample showed positive attitudes in all aspects, although the course proceeded online. The online platform used as a medium of instruction seemed complex initially, but it could maintain the students' learning throughout the course. Furthermore, it increased participation and promptness, leading to improving listening skills. Regarding the ASSURE model and SBL, the students were fond of analyzing their needs before the beginning of the course since they could provide the teacher with what they wanted to learn and what types of media that could be employed during learning to achieve their learning goals.

5. Discussion

The discovery in the study of online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL to enhance the English listening skills for the airline business yields positive student development. The discussions are divided into two aspects following the research questions.

The findings from the first research question, which aimed to explore the effects of online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL to enhance the English listening skill of the airline business, affirm previous results. The following statements center around three components since they significantly enhance English listening skills.

The results from the second research question, which aimed to explore the students' attitudes after participating in online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL to enhance the airline business's English listening skills, are linear with several research studies.

In addition to the first section of the interview results, the sample was satisfied with online instruction by employing an online video conferencing platform since they could maintain their learning. Though they seemed confused at the beginning of the course, they could solve any difficulties with the teacher's and friends' support. Weiner (2003) found that students are ready to go online after receiving appropriate support and guidance. Similarly, Rojabi (2020) stated that online learning with Microsoft Teams was new for the students; however, the interaction and learning environment motivated them to participate, resulting in their comprehension of the learning materials. Then, the finding that online learning increased students' participation and readiness to learn confirms Debski's (2003) research that ICT facilitates social interaction and increases awareness and agency. They also build a learning community through various channels (Swan, 2003). Bovermann et al. (2018) revealed that online learning could improve and

sustain students' autonomous learning behavior, and imbue students with readiness to learn. The finding that some activities can help increase communication skills is in agreement with Lee (2002) who found that online activities can help students improve their communication skills.

In the second part of the interview, the result illustrated that the material selection stage in the ASSURE model supported the learners' needs, confirming Aziz's (2003) study (as cited in Georgiou, 2014) that the appropriate media selection helped facilitate the learners' progress. Likewise, Ghonivita et al. (2021) mentioned that improving students' listening skills was crucial due to creatively selecting, developing, and manipulating materials. Moreover, the ASSURE model in this study appeared to reduce learning difficulties regarding the Internet and technology access. The result relates to Prihatmi et al. (2021) who found that it was essential to give reminders to use the Internet technology with synchronous and asynchronous systems in an online classroom. Concerning the ASSURE model, it is challenging for researchers to conduct further studies since no explicit research results mention the use of the model with listening skill instruction; nevertheless, various studies confirm that the ASSURE model can improve students' academic achievement in general. Altin (2021) studied integrating the ASSURE model in English language instruction and found positive results, finding that the model could help the students achieve their learning objectives. In addition, the stage of material selection in the model also supported the achievement of learning (Hakim et al., 2020), and the use of technological materials is crucial to support student learning (Kim & Downey, 2016).

For the third part, the results from the interview revealed that SBL allowed students to be prepared, help better understand specific topics, and decreased concerns about the target profession. The outcome of this study supports Ahmed (2019) who stated that SBL helped achieve students' learning objectives, gave them knowledge applicable to real-life, and encouraged them to participate in the learning process. Similarly, Klassen et al. (2021) found that SBL activity increased confidence and preparedness for subsequent professional practice.

In brief, the online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL to enhance the English listening skills for the airline business consists of three academic factors, which amalgamate with one another to increase the effectiveness and achievement of the students. The positive results from research questions one and two confirm the previous studies of scholars. In addition, comments from the sample support the integration of online instruction, the ASSURE model, and SBL in English courses.

6. Implications and Recommendations

The online instruction using the ASSURE model with SBL to enhance the English listening skills for the airline business comprises various components to

enhance the English listening skills of undergraduate students. Based on the findings and the discussion, this study can provide advantages in pedagogical approaches.

As mentioned earlier, this study employs various components, of which online instruction is one of the main parts. The results from the post-implementation questionnaire revealed that online learning increased students' participation and readiness to learn, enhanced and maintained autonomous learning behavior, and improved communication skills. To explain, some students may struggle in a typical classroom environment, so using online learning as an instructional platform can reinforce those apprehensive students to participate more with the teacher and classmates. Furthermore, the students can learn to use online technologies to support their learning needs, including before, during, and after class. Furthermore, a suitably designed or modified course can help improve the students' target language skills. That is, a teacher or a course developer can include activities arousing the use of language in the instructional plans for students to practice and manipulate the language in authentic situations.

For the ASSURE model, the interview results revealed that the model supported the learners' needs and reduced their learning difficulties. In detail, the ASSURE model provides a crucial opportunity for students to help design the most suitable course. Each stage of the model allows students to introduce what they want and need; hence, it can reduce the problems which may occur in an unforeseen class. For example, the teacher may require students to watch the videos or clips online; however, some students may encounter Internet problems making them unable to watch during class. Hence, in analyzing learners and selecting media stages, the students can inform such difficulties to the teacher. As a result, the teacher can design a course with the awareness of allowing students to watch the media offline.

Regarding SBL, the responses from the sample revealed that students could prepare themselves before attending class and review lessons after class. To explain, similar to ASSURE model, SBL allows students to mention the learning topics significant for their studies and future career. As a result, a teacher can contemplate the learning goals and set the most appropriate scenarios to fulfil the students' needs.

The interview results for the final component revealed that combining online instruction, the ASSURE model, and SBL could improve their listening skills. In other words, online learning can highlight shadow students by allowing them to participate more in class and support their autonomous learning. As a result, students with poor listening skills can practice and study at their own pace. The ASSURE model and SBL also help students improve their listening skills by allowing them to help design a course that is tailored to their specific needs. It also could reduce or even eliminate the learning difficulties that students may face in class.

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Appendix A

List of Interview Questions

Online Instruction

1. To what extent did the online instruction using the university-selected platform contribute to your learning?

นักศึกษาคิดว่ากระบวนการเรียนการสอนออนไลน์บนแพลตฟอร์มที่มหาวิทยาลัยกำหนดให้ส่งผลต่อการเรียนอย่างไร

2. What did you think of the online instruction process in this course?

นักศึกษาคิดว่ากระบวนการเรียนการสอนออนไลน์ในรายวิชานี้เป็นอย่างไร

3. What did you think of the online activities in this course?

นักศึกษาคิดว่ากิจกรรมออนไลน์ในรายวิชานี้เป็นอย่างไร

ASSURE Model

1. How useful and relevant was the ASSURE model in supporting your learning?

ASSURE model มีประโยชน์และมีความเกี่ยวข้องกับการส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้ของนักศึกษาอย่างไร

2. Which stage of ASSURE model had the most impact on your learning? Why?

นักศึกษาคิดว่าขั้นตอนใดของ ASSURE model ที่ส่งผลต่อการเรียนรู้มากที่สุด เพราะเหตุใด

Scenario-Based Learning

1. How useful and relevant was Scenario-based Learning in supporting your learning of the Airline Business?

นักศึกษาคิดว่า Scenario-based Learning มีประโยชน์และมีความเกี่ยวข้องกับการส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้ธุรกิจการบินอย่างไร

2. Which stage of Scenario-based Learning had the most impact on your learning? Why?

นักศึกษาคิดว่าขั้นตอนใดของ Scenario-based Learning ที่ส่งผลต่อการเรียนรู้ได้มากที่สุด เพราะเหตุใด

Listening Skills

1. How useful and relevant was the online instruction in supporting your listening skills?

นักศึกษาคิดว่า online instruction มีประโยชน์และมีความเกี่ยวข้องกับการส่งเสริมทักษะการฟังได้อย่างไร

2. How useful and relevant was the ASSURE model in supporting your listening skills?

นักศึกษาคิดว่า ASSURE model มีประโยชน์และมีความเกี่ยวข้องกับการส่งเสริมทักษะการฟังได้อย่างไร

3. How useful and relevant was Scenario-based Learning in supporting your listening skills?

นักศึกษาคิดว่า Scenario-based Learning มีประโยชน์และมีความเกี่ยวข้องกับการส่งเสริมทักษะการฟังได้อย่างไร

Gender Visibility in Health and Physical Education Textbooks

Received : 1 Oct, 2022

Revised : 13 Dec, 2022

Accepted : 14 Feb, 2023

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Abstract

This research aimed at investigating the representations of genders through the pictorial illustrations in health and physical education textbooks. Based on the purposive sampling technique, the textbooks for grade 1 and 2 used at one public elementary school located in a northeastern part of Thailand were the primary source of data. To collect the data, all pictorial illustrations were examined in line with a systematic categorization process that involved classifying and defining themes. Then, the results were presented in tables using descriptive statistics to show the occurrence frequency of both genders, and the ways such representations presented in the textbooks were further discussed in a qualitative manner under cultural and gender perspectives. The results showed that female characters in the first textbook appeared 229 times (53%) compared with male characters, who were represented by 199 images (47%). Similarly, the second textbook included 162 illustrations (57.4%) of female characters and 120 illustrations (42.6%) of male characters. Based on a thorough qualitative analysis, it became clear that the illustrations of the female characters primarily showed traditional female roles and activities, including cooking, and setting a dining table. However, males were mostly shown in more intelligent, competitive, and challenging activities, for example, reading books, playing with Rubik's cubes, and playing football. Moreover, in occupational roles, more males were engaged in highly-paid, intelligent, and challenging careers such as doctors, dentists, and policemen.

Keywords: Gender Visibility, Pictorial Illustrations, Textbook analysis

1. Introduction

A textbook's pictorial illustration is one of the components that helps young pupils with limited literacy skills understand the vivid meanings of learning contents along with increasing their engagement and curiosity in the materials and learning activities. As proposed by Diamond (2008) and Peeck (1993), a pictorial illustration, rather than textual words, tends to be more successful in conveying information to young pupils. Not only does a textbook provide numerous benefits in terms of academic values, but it also

unintentionally inculcates social and cultural values in students. Sharna (2018) supported that textbooks, especially in social studies, languages, and health and physical education, play a crucial role in providing knowledge of work skills, cultural norms, and values to students. Therefore, it cannot be denied that textbooks may be used as a tool to support students in developing a variety of cultural values as well as academic and life skills.

To shed light on the influence of cultures, gender appears to be one of the essential components of culture since it influences how people view themselves and promotes the idea of proper roles to perform in society. For instance, social roles define how men and women should behave in society, including how they should carry out their duties at home, at work, and in other settings. In other words, according to Hofstede et al. (2010), Mcleod (2008), and UNESCO (2018), people perceive masculine traits to be more dominating, brave, strong, and independent, whereas they view feminine characteristics to be more emotional, collaborative, nurturing, and compassionate. Additionally, men were also responsible for managing a home, maintaining a vehicle, and being the breadwinner of a family.

In addition to the important roles of gender and its influence on individuals, there is an effort to examine gender issues in the context of education, particularly via the study of textbooks. To elucidate, it may be traced back to the 1970s, when early research on gender issues in textbooks, particularly in the English subject area, attracted the interest of academics around the world. Moreover, similar results from the past to the present have been published showing fewer women are presented in textbooks and are related to traditional jobs including housework, nursing, and caring employment (Aguilar, 2020; Bahman & Rahimi, 2010; Hall, 2014; Nofal & Qawar, 2015). Not only is an English textbook a popular area of a gender study, but more studies have also been done to examine gender issues in various types of textbooks such as mathematics and social studies. Tsai (2020), for example, investigated gender issues in mathematics textbooks and revealed that women were less visible than men and that men were more commonly portrayed in outstanding social roles compared to women. Similarly, Şahin and Acikalin (2021) found that women are still underrepresented in comparison to men in social science textbooks.

To focus specifically on gender study in health and physical education textbooks around the world, Klomsten et al. (2005) and Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao (2012) similarly showed that men clearly outnumbered women in terms of representation, and were confined in stereotypical roles, such as those that suggested certain sports or hobbies were better suited for one gender rather than the other. For example, females tended to choose feminine activities including dancing and gymnastics, while boys tended to participate in more masculine sports such as soccer, ice hockey, and boxing. Based on the evidence provided, it can be implied that bias against women in textbooks might be one of the causes promoting the exclusion of women as social agents and sustaining male supremacy. Also, the prevalent gender bias in such textbooks may impede girls' life motivation and academic achievement. In fact, the abilities humans are born with must not be bestowed based on sex and gender differences (Sachedva, 2018).

Several studies of gender in textbooks were also conducted in a Thai educational setting as in the work by Kijphonphol et al. (2019) which verified a similar trend of men outnumbering women and professions for women being less diversified. Additionally, Assawasirisilp (2019) maintained that textbooks, particularly those used in senior secondary education, clearly emphasized the differences in views about male and female occupations and showed stereotypical pictures of males in the positions of leaders, intellectuals, and renowned individuals. Due to the impact that gender issues have on students as mentioned above, a few recent gender studies in school-based health and physical education, and the lack of evidence-based research to promote gender equality in Thai educational contexts, as claimed by Szerdahelyi and Robène (2019) and Tansanguanwong (2015), it is crucial to place more emphasis on the study of gender issues in the health and physical education textbooks used in the Thai educational environment.

Thus, the researchers of this study decided to investigate gender issues in the health and physical education textbooks used in Thai educational settings because of the importance of preparing children for a lifetime of physical exercise, giving young people the chance to acquire morals, foster self-esteem, and promote proper gender perceptions and roles. Students may feel misled, confused, irritated, and alienated because of inappropriate pictures and descriptions in textbooks since the sexism in pictures and texts has a great influence on students' behavior and attitudes, and plays a crucial part in the acquisition of sex roles (Na Pattalung, 2008; UNESCO, 2020). Thus, the two main research questions of this study are "What is the occurrence frequency of both genders in the selected textbooks?" and "How are genders presented through pictorial illustrations in the textbooks?" The findings may help encourage students to become more conscious of their physical characteristics and gender views, and help academics, instructors, students, and particularly educators, to learn more about how to develop gender-sensitive materials, classroom management, and curricula design.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Textbooks and Gender

Textbooks serve as a solid and trustworthy source of academic knowledge, with a range of learning alternatives such as modules, handbooks, student workbooks, quizzes, videos, and instruction manuals (Graves, 2000). Furthermore, because of their accessibility and affordability, textbooks are recognized as one of the most valuable tools for teachers and students (Kaur, 2018). In addition to their benefits for facilitating learning, textbooks may be seen as a tool for fostering cultures, particularly the idea of gender among students (Sani, 2022). Furthermore, it is evident that the diverse roles played by the two genders in society have an impact on pupils' beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes (Dean, 2007).

Apart from the positive impacts of textbooks on academic and cultural transmission, Kaur (2018) mentioned that one of the primary sources for the spread of prejudice in society was, however, the school textbook itself. For example, it was

discovered that Hindi and English textbooks contained several hidden messages that implied male superiority. Moreover, several established works by Dalimunthe and Susilo (2021), Darni and Abida (2017), Khanunthong et al. (2021), Klomsten et al. (2005), Suhartono and Kristina (2018), Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao (2012), and Xiong et al. (2017) similarly confirmed that gender issues could be found in different types of textbooks under various dimensions such as language used by authors as in the texts and pictorial illustrations.

As previously stated, gender studies may be undertaken to analyze both written texts and images. Regarding the context of young learners' textbooks, images or pictures seem to be more effective in transferring knowledge than do the written texts due to the limited literacy skills of young learners. Thus, it is necessary to examine pictorial illustrations with the aim of revealing the "visibility" of genders, since it is one of the most essential criteria for assessing gender balance, claimed Amini and Birjandi (2012), whose work focuses on exploring gender visibility in EFL materials used in Iranian high schools and whose results showed the imbalance of gender visibility. For instance, women are typically depicted as moms who oversee home duties, while males are seen engaging in more interesting and intellectual activities including playing football, reading newspapers, fixing cars, and being the breadwinner of the family.

2.2. Gender Stereotyping

According to Oakley (2015), gender is linked to the biological sex of men and women, which is subsequently referred to as the division and social assessment of masculinity and femininity. This was the first attempt to separate the concepts of sex and gender. According to Aprilianti et al. (2021), "gender" refers to the distinctions between men and women based on social and cultural views. People's perceptions of gender therefore developed beyond its biological components, and the gender roles of men and women vary in terms of knowledge, decision-making processes, and work responsibilities (Norem et al., 1990). Moreover, Hofstede et al. (2010) supported that one of the key factors describing masculine and feminine behaviors of people is through different occupations they performed.

Furthermore, domestic roles are defined as gender roles in domestic duties that are essential to human life and well-being. In addition, according to Ejderyan and Tuor (2008), girls and boys naturally maintain and absorb domestic responsibilities from a very young age through the role models they pick up from their social and home environments. Males' domestic roles also covered a variety of responsibilities, including making financial decisions, supervising children's education, and fixing the house. Women's domestic responsibilities, on the other hand, included raising and caring for their children, cooking, and gardening.

Based on such definitions of gender and some examples of its roles in society, the term "gender stereotyping" should be further discussed here. To its definitions, gender stereotyping refers to perceptions, fixed and oversimplified images and ideas regarding the roles and functions between the two genders (i.e., the traits or qualities that are or should be held, the duties that should be performed). Additionally, there are both positive

and negative sides of the gender stereotype. In terms of positive traits, males are competent, confident, and assertive whereas women are friendly, kind, and caring. However, when it comes to the situation when individuals make judgements based on negative stereotyping, it seems to be problematic. For instance, men are stereotyped as being impatient, aggressive, and lacking in empathy, while women are seen as being overly emotional, irrational, and incompetent (Casad & Wexler, 2017; Kiaušienė et al., 2011; Tsai, 2020).

Stereotypes between the sexes eventually develop because of the contrasting perceptions of gender roles. Martin and Dinella (2002) assert that gender stereotypes change over time depending on a society. The gender roles that are prevalent in a society have an impact on the expectations toward both genders. Additionally, gender stereotypes were expressed in a variety of ways, including through emotions, physical characteristics, hobbies, and careers. Consider the situation of the conventional female social roles, which was restricted to the idea of housewives taking care of family members and children (Eagly & Diekmann, 2000). Males, on the other hand, were seen as the family's breadwinner or leader, typically in charge of outside tasks including house maintenance, and they also had the physical power to serve as the home's protector. Due to the imbalance, both genders' chances to grow as members of society were affected. According to Pm and Parameswari (2019), as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) was performed mostly by men and was seen as a high-status career that females were not encouraged to pursue, women tended to have less opportunities to engage in the field. Gender stereotypes therefore served as the foundation for this social perception and orientation.

Moreover, the various biological and physical variations may influence the differences in views of the two genders as well as the inequity between them in a variety of dimensions. Fewer women were presented in English secondary school textbooks, according to Ena (2013), who investigated the visual presentation of the e-textbooks used in Indonesia. Males were typically portrayed in significant roles (62.4% compared to 37.2% of female representations). The imbalance in the number of male and female characters, 1,098 (77%) against 321 (23%), made it clear that gender stereotypes were predominant. Moreover, other studies looked at elementary school textbooks and found that there were similar tendencies of gender inequality, with 60% of the stories being told by men and 76% of all characters being men (Jabeen & Ilyas, 2012; Jabeen et al., 2014). Thus, based on those previous studies, it could be said that gender inequality might be a problematic issue in most textbooks.

From the background and evidence mentioned above, this research concentrates on Thai education contexts and the textbooks used, for example, The Health and Physical Education Grade 1 and The Health and Physical Education Grade 2, in accordance with the 2008 basic core curriculum. Furthermore, health education and physical education is considered the field that fosters health learning, development of self-perceptions, and life skills including the development of students' bodies via physical exercises, which may have had an impact on how gender is perceived among pupils.

2.3. Gender and Early Child Development

According to Aprilianti et al. (2021), gender roles have significantly influenced how young children at the age of 3 years (a pre-school period) perceive their gender through various means of communication, activities, and in-group socialization (e.g., same-sex friends). Children of different ages showed diverse behaviors, such as a definite preference for toys that corresponded to their gender. This situation appeared to have several causes, one of which was the educators' encouragement of the students to participate in activities based on their gender differences. In a similar vein, Martin and Dinella (2002) claimed that children as young as 1 to 3 years old begin to develop specific gender perceptions and acquire a foundational understanding of the activities and things associated with each gender throughout this time. Likewise, during the preschool years, children's conceptions of their sexual actions and prospective professions develop quickly, and finally reach a very high level in kindergarten.

As a result of these findings, an effort is being made to promote gender equality in early education. According to Vendrell et al. (2014), the European project "Gender Loops" applied gender mainstreaming strategies for teachers at educational institutions (e.g., schools, colleges, and universities), as well as early childhood education institutions. The aforementioned project reported that partners from Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Spain, and Turkey worked together to develop a curriculum for training toward the vital role of gender equity in early childhood education.

In addition to early childhood education, it seems that gender stereotypes in schools are being shaped through health and physical education courses at the elementary level through various sports and personality attributes. Boys are likely to be interested in the entertaining aspects of sports, yet girls often show more technical learning abilities through skills and gaming strategies. In addition, male students showed higher levels of desire for task completion as well as global physical, endurance, strength, appearance, and body fat indexes (Mesa & Ries, 2013). Therefore, early childhood education is necessary to assist growth and encourage early learning with continuity from birth to the age of three. Furthermore, educators did not underestimate the value of socialization in the context of early childhood education.

2.4. Gender Issues in Thai Social and Educational Contexts

Due to the fact that males continue to be promoted to higher social positions while the number of female leaders is still low, gender equality has recently been the focus of social movement in Thai culture. Despite women's higher levels of education, they do not seem to be the majority in the country's management at the highest levels (Hansatit, 2014). In addition, there are some examples of gender discrimination in Thai culture, including unfair pay, gender-based violence, sexual abuse, exploitation, forced labor, and even human trafficking (Chulalongkorn University, 2018).

Numerous works about gender issues in Thai educational contexts were based on English textbooks. Khanunthong et al. (2021) showed that males were more frequently represented than females in social roles. With regard to both linguistic (e.g., words,

phrases) and non-linguistic units (e.g., pictures), several studies similarly implied an inferior status for women compared with male counterparts in many areas, for instance, men were more frequently represented in positions of leaders, intellectuals, and famous individuals, whereas women were stereotyped with household responsibilities (Assawasirisilp, 2019; Bhattarachaiyakorn & Boonthong, 2017; Kijponphol et al., 2019).

In the same vein, Na Pattalung (2008) also confirmed that the language used in ESL textbooks by Thai authors sometimes supported a patriarchal system in society as seen from several facets including sexist language, double-binds, and hegemonic masculinity. The study revealed that textbooks portray men as more powerful, successful, and having control over women. For instance, when it comes to the usage of specific terms such as generic pronouns (e.g., he, his, and his) and occupational words as in chairman and businessman, male-related words are generally used as the norm to refer to both genders. Additionally, it was also highlighted that several instances in EFL textbooks reinforce the idea of hegemonic masculinity (i.e., men having the right to use physical force to dominate others and be successful in stereotypically masculine occupations such as highly-paid jobs). Moreover, it appears that men are the family's breadwinner, which could imply that women are excluded from participating in the economic life of the family. This idea reflects the deeply-held perception of patriarchal societies where men have greater authority to govern women since they are permitted to occupy certain high-profile professions while their female counterparts are solely limited to domestic work.

With respect to gender issues in Thai schools, according to Tansanguanwong (2015), it was found that several school policies and curricula have undoubtedly contributed to the growth of gender bias and discrimination. The societal values associated with maleness and femaleness were conveyed and may be observed through teachers' attitudes and beliefs, which are further reinforced by textbooks, schools, and family behaviors. These attitudes and beliefs are neither conscious nor purposeful. Moreover, Thai teachers require girls to behave "properly", to agree, and to be "good" as this is what Thai society expects of Thai women, whereas boys can occasionally be naughty and aggressive.

Despite the unpleasant reality of gender inequalities in Thai society and education, there has recently been an increase in optimism that the Thai government would tackle this problem. To elaborate, the Gender Equality Act of 2015, which was the first case of its type in Thai legal history, aims to protect all Thai citizens from gender-based discrimination. This could be seen as a positive sign of the increased awareness of gender equality in Thai society. Thailand is also eager to confront gender issues in a plethora of ways such as promoting knowledge and information to change parental, student, and teacher attitudes toward gender roles through the restructuring of curriculum design and educational media (UN Women, n.d.).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

The Health and Physical Education Primary Grade 1 and The Health and Physical Education Primary Grade 2 have been used for some time as teaching materials in both public and private schools in Thailand after receiving approval from the Ministry of Education under the country's basic education core curriculum. After a preliminary investigation of the textbooks used in the northeastern region of Thailand, it was found that some public elementary schools employed the health and physical education textbooks developed by Aksorn Charoen Tat Co., Ltd. as the primary material to teach their pupils from grades 1 to 6. This study used purposive and convenience sampling techniques, so finally the study was restricted to the textbooks used in Grades 1 and 2 in one public elementary school in a northeastern province of Thailand and the main reasons for choosing these two levels were due to the fact that at these grades (i.e., first and second grades) children start studying systematically with the aid of textbooks and it is, therefore, a crucial stage for the development of distinct gender perceptions and a fundamental comprehension of activities and things associated with their genders. Although Aprilianti et al. (2021) together with Martin and Dinella (2002) claimed that the critical age range to develop such gender perceptions was from 1-3 years old (i.e., pre-school level), it appeared that students in this age range have little opportunity to engage with textbooks due to their lack of reading ability. Thus, the two textbooks used in Grades 1 and 2 serve as the primary data source for this study. More importantly, the frequency of occurrence of gender representation through pictorial illustrations in these selected textbooks only represent gender issues based solely on a single publisher, rather than drawing generalizations from other Thai health and physical education textbooks written by different authors and publishers.

Aside from these data sources, the analysis of all pictorial illustrations fell under the area of representational functions, which shows the main narrative acts conveying the same story (Levin et al., 1987). For content analysis, the researchers performed a systematic classification procedure of categorizing and identifying themes or patterns of the pictorial illustrations, and the process consisted of three main stages: 1) coding the meaning of each pictorial illustration, 2) grouping the codes that share identical or similar meanings, and 3) theming. In the first stage, each textbook chapter was carefully examined to determine which acts were carried out by both genders in each picture. The actions seen in each pictorial illustration were categorized in accordance with the broad definitions of such narrative acts (e.g., ironing, doing the laundry, and cooking), and they were recorded on an observation sheet. During the coding phase, the list of activities from the observation sheet were grouped according to common properties and similar code meanings, which ultimately resulted in four categories in the theming stage which were: 1) domestic roles, 2) outdoor activities, 3) leisure activities, and 4) occupational roles. Then, tables containing the total representations of both genders were presented under descriptive statistics indicating the frequency and percentage of occurrence. The researchers then qualitatively discussed the characteristics of each thematic unit to explore how both genders are portrayed in the textbooks.

4. Findings

To answer the first research question “What is the frequency of occurrence of both genders in the selected textbooks?”, the data are presented in Table 1.

4.1. Representation of Genders in Pictorial Illustrations

Table 1

Frequency of occurrence between two genders

Data Sources	Frequency & Percentage		
	Males	Females	Total (each)
Textbook: Grade 1	199 (47%)	229 (53%)	428
Textbook: Grade 2	120 (42.6%)	162 (57.4%)	282
Total (two textbooks)	319 (45%)	391 (55%)	710 (100%)

The two selected textbooks include 710 pictures of both genders in total, with 428 of those images appearing in the first textbook and 282 in the second. Additionally, fewer males were depicted in both textbooks, with 319 (45%) for males and 391 (55%) for female counterparts. In the first-grade textbook, there were 299 (53%) female representations compared to 199 (47%) male representations. Similarly, the Grade 2 textbook had 120 (42.6%) male characters and 162 (57.4%) female characters in its pictorial illustrations. Unlike several previous related studies by Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao (2012) and Klomsten et al. (2005), the findings unexpectedly showed a different trend since women clearly outnumbered men in terms of gender visibility through pictorial illustrations. The possible reasons behind this will be further discussed in the next section.





4.2. Analysis of Gender Issues in Pictorial Illustrations

To answer the second research question “How are genders presented through the pictorial illustrations in the textbooks”, the collected data was critically discussed in qualitative and descriptive ways to reveal the phenomena of gender visibility through pictorial illustrations in the textbooks. From this investigation, there were four main thematic units of gender representations namely: 1) domestic roles, 2) leisure activities, 3) outdoor activities, and 4) occupational roles. Furthermore, there were examples that reflected gender issues in each thematic unit.

4.2.1. Domestic roles

Domestic roles refer to the tasks performed by both genders inside a household to ensure that the basic needs of the family members are met such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children or elders and other family members.

Figure 1*Examples of pictorial illustrations regarding domestic roles*





Textbook Grade 1		Textbook Grade 2	
<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
			

The data shown in Figure 1 reveal that females were more closely connected to domestic roles than their male counterparts. Examples of female domestic roles portrayed in both selected textbooks included various chores (e.g., sweeping the floor, dusting a showcase, setting up a dinner table, doing the laundry, ironing, and cooking). Moreover, females were also presented in the role of caring for others such as taking care of babies, helping children with their homework, and playing with babies. As for their male counterparts, there were fewer domestic roles presented in both textbooks. However, some of the males performed similar household duties to females such as cleaning windows, helping children with their homework, taking care of babies, and laying the dinner table. Furthermore, only the role of making house repairs was performed by males. In summary, it can be said that, despite efforts to involve men in some domestic roles or household responsibilities, these were limited, and women were still excluded from jobs such as fixing a house that were more difficult and potentially dangerous.

4.2.2. Leisure activities

Leisure activities were the recreational activities performed inside the house such as hobbies and other entertaining activities.

Figure 2*Examples of pictorial illustrations regarding leisure activities*





Textbook Grade 1		Textbook Grade 2	
Male	Female	Male	Female
			

From a holistic view, both genders engaged in a variety of leisure activities in the two textbooks. However, detailed analysis revealed that both genders were depicted in distinct ways. To be explicit, in the same leisure activity known as “playing with toys”, men were shown playing with robots, cars, and Rubik’s cubes, which reflected a sense of intelligence development, while women were restricted to playing with dolls, demonstrating a greater sense of nurturing. However, it was surprising to see that males’ leisure activities were likely to involve the arts, as evidenced by the images of boys drawing and dancing, which contrasted with previous research by Klomsten et al. (2005) that suggested that dancing was a feminine activity.

4.2.3. Outdoor activities

Outdoor activities are the activities performed outside the house such as doing exercises and socializing with friends and other people.

Figure 3*Examples of pictorial illustrations regarding outdoor activities*

Textbook Grade 1		Textbook Grade 2	
Male	Female	Male	Female
			

In both textbooks, it was found that more males than females were likely to engage in outdoor activities. Male outdoor activities included playing football, jogging, cycling, and playing in the playground. However, females were limited to performing light physical activities (e.g., skipping) and were shown to be more relaxing, compared to the males' activities, which tended to involve moderate and heavy physical activities such as playing football, playing cat-and-mouse, and playing on a swing.





This section shows that traditional thoughts about gender roles still influenced what roles women are expected to perform. These results appear similar to those of several previous such as studies by Klomsten et al. (2005) and Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao (2012) that suggested certain sports were more appropriate for one gender than the other, with girls being associated with feminine activities such as dancing and gymnastics and boys participating in more masculine sports such as soccer.

4.2.4. Occupational roles

Occupational roles refer to the professions performed by the two genders in society.

Figure 4

Examples of pictorial illustrations regarding occupational roles

Textbook Grade 1		Textbook Grade 2	
Male	Female	Male	Female
			

The data revealed that males were presented in a variety of occupational roles in the two textbooks, whilst females were only given one job as a teacher. Male occupational roles included an officer, a dentist, a teacher, a policeman, and a firefighter. Similarly, when examining the occupational roles performed by men, it was found that they pursue professions of a more challenging, risky, and dangerous nature such as a firefighter and policeman. Moreover, some male professions implied that they were more intellectual in nature and well-paid compared to those of women. For example, a male dentist was shown in both textbooks, which tends to suggest that men are perceived as having a career which requires a high level of intelligence and represents a higher status. Overall, women's jobs were deemed to be confined to a specific field and were less diversified than those of men. This finding is consistent with the research by Kijphonphol et al. (2019), which demonstrated that males outnumbered women and that female occupations tended to be less diverse than those of men.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Interestingly, this study showed that women were more frequently portrayed than men, in contrast to previous studies by Aguilar (2020), Bahman and Rahimi (2010), Ena (2013), Hall (2014), Nofal and Qawar (2015), Şahin and Acikalin (2021), and Tsai (2020), which assert that textbooks regularly feature more boys than girls at all levels, including linguistic, visual, and social levels. It should be noted that a possible reason for this might be the significant influence of Thailand's basic core curriculum on textbook development. In other words, a higher number of female representations might be due to the fact that the selected textbooks were prepared in accordance with Thailand's basic core curriculum which aims to promote learning standards for health and physical education merged with a focus on proper social beliefs and their self-adjustment to changes in a variety of ways, including physical, mental, emotional, and especially gender aspects. Additionally, it is strictly stated that after the completion of health and physical education in Grades 1 and 2, students should be able to distinguish the different traits of males and females, to define their proper actions depending on their gender, and to perceive pride in being male or female (The Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008).

Furthermore, when observing the learning area "The Life and Family", which attempts to enhance students' life skills, it consequently helps to explain why the authors chose to include more illustrations and texts about domestic responsibilities since doing so was one of the most successful strategies to encourage children to build their life skills (Drummond et al., 2018). In addition, young children are typically required to show their parents gratitude in Thai society, and the proper way to do this is by assisting them with household chores. However, as Na Pattalung (2008) acknowledges, there are firmly held patriarchal beliefs that Thai authors may still hold which may be the reason why more women were still stereotypically associated with domestic roles and activities in the home more so than men, which ultimately led to a greater percentage of females representations overall.

In spite of the increased number of female characters presented in these textbooks, there is still a dilemma that highlights the superficial nature of this effort to advance gender awareness and suggests that it may not actually result in a true gender equality in Thai society. According to the findings, there were still more males than females shown as having a higher status, engaging in different types of activities, and having a highly-paid or skilled profession. Men were still portrayed as being more aggressive, competitive, rough, and engaged in challenging activities such as playing football, repairing homes, and working as police officers and firefighters. This is supported by Shteivi (2003) who states that males tend to fill the majority of the dominating public roles. Furthermore, when the author represented male characters in some activities in these textbooks, they were still connected to knowledge and intelligence such as playing with Rubik's cubes and reading books.

On the contrary, females were still attached to the roles showing a sense of tenderness and nurturing as well as the role of the mother. Moreover, when females were displayed with objects, it was a doll representing babies which implied that females were automatically attached to the more nurturing roles. The results from this study strongly

support the previous research by Assawasirisilp (2019), Bhattarachaiyakorn and Boonthong (2017), Kijphonphol et al. (2019), and Na Pattalung (2008) revealing the supposedly superior status of males in several social roles such as leaders, intellectuals, and famous individuals, whereas women were stereotyped in the roles of household jobs and responsibilities as well as the support of patriarchy in Thai society.

Such factors could be due to language, social structure, and Thai social and cultural norms, all of which continue to have significant effects on how people perceive gender and are possibly linked to the circumstance of having an imbalance of gender in a recently developed textbook in Thai educational contexts. Through the lens of a sociolinguistic perspective, the Thai term “kulasatri”, which refers to a virtuous woman who must be skilled at household chores, graceful, pleasant, yet modest in appearance and social manners, and conservative in her sexuality, tends to mold what a woman should be or do and promotes feminine culture among Thai women (Tantiniranat, 2005). Aside from language influence, women, under a patriarchal culture, are frequently restricted to the role of family caretaker (Sumano, 2020). Therefore, despite increasing access for Thai women to economic, social, political, and educational advancement, there are still certain barriers which prevent them assuming major social roles, such as high-level careers. Kosaikanont (2019) also pointed out that some industries still exhibit gender bias. For example, transportation and construction are known to be male-dominated industries, whereas services and finance are more female-dominated. This may be one of the possible reasons why women today do not seem to fully acquire empowerment and equality in many aspects of Thai society (Hansatit, 2014).

Consequently, it is not surprising that this research confirmed the findings from well-established studies which show that males predominate in textbooks. A thorough analysis of the characters represented in textbooks shows the significance of gender sensitivity, which helps to understand to some extent the social construction of masculine and feminine, to identify the pertinent indicators that bring about social perceptions of gender, and to outline the foundation for a contemporary gender system. Moreover, the results of this study suggest that gender balance goes far beyond solely having an equal number of representations. Instead, it refers to the ideology associated with how boys and girls are depicted in textbooks, particularly the pictorial illustrations that make up most of the material for young students.

As mentioned earlier, the establishment of gender equality requires both quantity and quality of the contents to which students are exposed (Stockdale, 2006). With the awareness of gender equality in textbooks guiding the prospect of equitable treatment of boys and girls, it is crucial for textbook developers of all subjects to adopt pictorial illustrations of characters in a proper and contemporary manner including daily activities, attributes and personality traits, physical attributes, and psychological qualities (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009). Moreover, Yasin et al. (2012) suggested that showing a diversity of jobs and activities with equal focus may encourage women to consider all their professional options and prospects in various facets of society.

To address the limitations and provide recommendations, more textbook categories should be included in future research, along with an analysis of all elements

of the texts' contents at various levels such as words, phrases, discourse, dialogues, reading passages, and a thorough analysis via the lens of critical discourse to provide a more complete picture of how genders are depicted in school textbooks and the potential implications they may have on students' views and attitudes.

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Customer requests and complaints in intercultural BELF emails: The case of American customers and Chinese sales managers

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Received : 11 Mar, 2023

Revised : 15 May, 2023

Accepted : 7 Jun, 2023

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Abstract

This descriptive study investigated requests and complaints in intercultural Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) emails. Sixty emails in English were collected, written by American customers addressed to Chinese sales managers who worked at a parent company in China. The emails were considered for study since the language and culture of the senders and recipients were different (Kecskes, 2014, p. 14). Results show that the American customers normally used bald on-record strategies when making business requests of the Chinese sales managers. The direct and unambiguous nature of these requests were attributed to American cultural values, classified by Hall (1976) as low-context and by Hofstede (2001) as highly individualistic. The American customers made explicit requests using direct language to ensure their requests were understood. Even though their complaints were explicit, the American customers also used negative politeness strategies so that the Chinese sales managers would feel less offended. In addition, the complaints in these BELF emails always co-occurred with other speech acts such as requests, suggestions, and warnings, producing a speech act set (Murphy & Neu, 1996). The aim of their complaints was thus not only to express dissatisfaction, but to seek solutions to problems and compensation for losses.

Keywords: customer requests, customer complaints, politeness strategies, cultural values, Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)

1. Introduction

The global economy is developing rapidly, making intercultural business activities more visible and vital (Xiao, 2012). As international trade and economic globalization develop, English has become a means of international business communication (Liu, 2020). The use of English for business purposes is called Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF). Advances in technology and the Internet have precipitated a new era of computer-mediated communication (CMC), and there has been a proliferation of

forms of intercultural contact such as email, network communication, instant messaging, text messaging, hypertext, distance learning, and especially email writing (Baron, 2010, as cited in Chen, 2015). Business email, for instance, has become an essential means of communication in multicultural and multilingual workplaces, and has become indispensable in modern business activities due to its immediateness, low cost, and convenience (Xiao, 2012).

There has been little research analyzing politeness strategies in BELF emails between English native speakers and speakers of English as a foreign language, and most studies have examined politeness in business emails by focusing on a single speech act. Liu (2020) and Park et al. (2021) examined requests, which are directive speech acts, and also found that it is the most common speech act performed in business emails. De Leon and Parina (2016), Depraetere et al. (2021), and Vasquez (2011) explored customer complaints in business, but their focus was on quality of service. As seen in these studies, the speech acts of request and complaint in business have been studied separately. To thoroughly understand politeness strategies in business emails, this study examined politeness strategies used to perform two distinctive speech acts most commonly found in the business emails written by American customers in mattress companies who are customers of a furniture company in Zhejiang, China and addressed to Chinese sales managers in this company. There are three research questions in this study.

1. How did the American customers perform requests and complaints to the Chinese sales managers?
2. What politeness strategies were normally used when the American customers made requests of the Chinese sales managers?
3. What politeness strategies were normally used when the American customers complained to the Chinese sales managers?

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Definitions of *requests* and *complaints*

According to Searle's (1976, p. 11) classification of illocutionary acts, a request belongs to the directive speech act category. It usually "imposes on the hearer's negative face" by requiring someone to do something. On a continuum of degrees, the request that someone does something is neither very modest nor very fierce. The benefactor is often the requester. In some cases, however, both the speaker and the hearer can be co-beneficiaries. In this study, requests made by the American customers in BELF emails were analyzed. The following is an example of a request in a BELF email.

Extract 1

Please advise when the samples for ISTA and production will be ready to be submitted to the lab for testing.

In Extract 1, an American customer asked a Chinese sales manager to confirm the date samples would be ready for laboratory testing. Asking someone to do something—to check the time when samples will be ready for testing—threatens the recipient's negative face because it induces the recipient to act. In this case, the beneficiary is the email writer because, having been notified as to when the samples would be ready, he could proceed with the work.

On the other hand, a complaint, according to Searle's (1976, pp. 12-13) classification of illocutionary acts, is an expressive speech act aimed at expressing the speaker's disapproval of actions, or lack of action, taken by the complainees or the complainees's company, such that the customers' expectation has not been met. Extract 2 illustrates a complaint.

Extract 2

It is too bad to see your quote price is becoming not competitive and even higher than our current price.

Extract 2 is considered a customer complaint, which threatens the hearer's positive face, while the propositional content, the customer's intention, also tarnishes the recipient's positive face. In this case, the customer was disappointed at receiving an exorbitant quote, higher than the current price. He expressed his disappointment by saying "It is too bad..." and then explained why he was disappointed.

2.2 Goffman's (1955) Face Theory

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory derives from the concept of face proposed by Erving Goffman, who originally coined the term. According to Goffman, "face" is defined as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. The face is a self-delineated image with respect to approved social attributes." (Goffman, 1955, p. 213).

Positive and negative face exist in all competent adults. A person's desire to be regarded and appreciated by others, the urge to be accepted, liked, treated as part of the same group, and to know that his or her desires are shared by others, is referred to as positive face. A negative face, by contrast, refers to a person's desire to avoid being hindered or imposed on. The word 'negative' here does not carry a bad connotation. Every competent adult has both a positive and negative face, which can be 'enhanced', 'maintained', or 'imposed' by the hearer as well as by the speaker during the course of social interaction (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61).

2.3 Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 94-227) identified five politeness strategies: bald, on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and "do not do the face-threatening act." This present study analyzes written emails, so it does not discuss the fifth strategy. Two politeness strategies, on-record and negative politeness, are discussed in detail because they were the most frequently used to perform both types of speech acts by the American customers. In addition, results in the later section showed that the use of positive politeness strategies and off-record strategies was insignificantly found.

2.3.1 Bald On-Record Strategies

Speakers go on-record, in part, because they assume they have authority over the hearer as, for example, in the military. This is referred to as an explicit strategy without any modification. From a syntactic point of view, imperative forms are commonly used when someone performs a bald speech act, without redressive action, as shown in the following extract.

Extract 3

Confirm receipt of PO 696583.

In this extract, the customer asked a Chinese sales manager to make a confirmation for the receipt of a product. This imperative sentence clearly expresses the intended meaning; that the writer wants the recipient to confirm receipt of an item. It is considered bald on-record because it is not mitigated by any modifying device. If, however, the customer prefaces this imperative sentence with a politeness marker (i.e., "please"), or a polite phrase (i.e., "would you please"), or an adverb (i.e., "kindly"), the degree of face-threatening would be lessened and the recipient's positive face would be less damaged. Since this extract was not mitigated, the customer's intention was face-threatening.

2.3.2 Negative politeness strategies

Negative politeness strategies are impersonal and relatively formal, emphasizing the hearer's right to freedom, and an explicit strategy with a redressive action that aims at maintaining the negative face. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 69-71), there are 10 negative politeness sub-strategies, which are listed in Table 1 (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 131-213).

Table 1*Negative politeness sub-strategies*

No	Categories	Definition	Example
1	Be conventionally indirect	Be direct	This is not sufficiently salty.
2	Question, hedge	Don't assume H is able or willing to do the act.	You could perhaps pass the salt?
3	Be pessimistic	Assume H is not likely to do A	You could not watch the baby for me, could you?
4	Minimize the imposition	Make explicit R, P, D values	It's just that I want to get a glimpse of you.
5	Give deference	Make explicit R, P, D values	Mrs./Mr.+ name
6	Apologize	Communicate S's want to not impinge on H	I know you wouldn't like it but can you accompany me to the station?
7	Impersonalize S and H	Dissociate S, H from the particular infringement	Can anyone give me a hand?
8	State the FTA as a general rule	Dissociate S, H from the particular infringement	Smoking is not allowed anywhere onboard.
9	Nominalize	Dissociate S, H from the particular infringement	Your performance impresses us.
10	Go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebted H	Redress other wants of H's derivative from negative face	I will be eternally grateful if you could arrange an appointment for me.

Considering the modifying devices, these 10 sub-strategies can be categorized into two major types: internal modifications and external modifications. For example, the second sub-strategy, the use of questions and hedges is discernibly internal. The insertion of some lexical elements such as an adverb, an auxiliary verb, or even a politeness marker in the propositional content helps reduce the severity of a face-threatening speech act. Under the sixth sub-strategy, the use of apology, the imposition is downgraded by the external modification. The preceding utterance, performing an apology before the propositional content, helps minimize the threat of the speaker's meaning.

2.4 Cultural Values Typologies

Studies on intercultural communication often begin by categorizing their research participants based on cultural values formulated by three related aspects: beliefs, values, and behaviors (Samovar et al., 2017, pp. 201-203). If, for example, someone believed that having tan skin represents a strong, sporty, and healthy physical

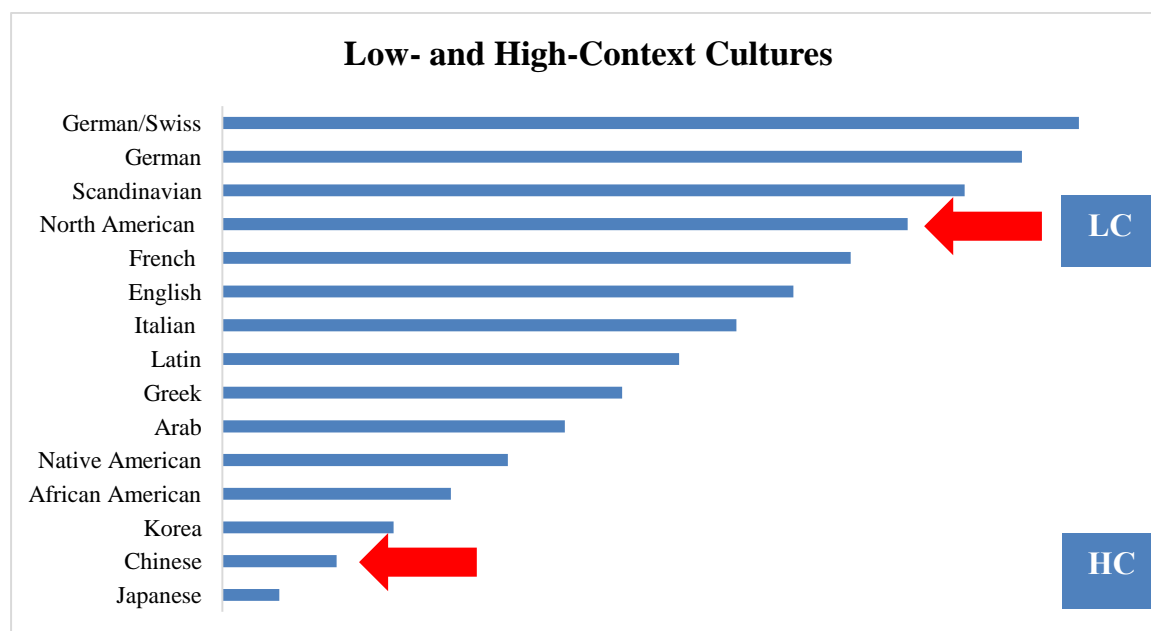
condition, they would lie in the sun to make their skin dark. If, by contrast, someone believed that having white or fair skin is a sign of prestige and luxury, they would apply sunscreen and minimize exposure to the sun. The two situations illustrate the interplay between beliefs, values, and behavior (Samovar et al., 2017). As a result, several typologies of cultural values have been developed, beginning with the beliefs and values that influence people's communicative behaviors. Among many, the two most frequently-cited typologies are Hall's (1976) low- and high-context culture, and Hofstede's (2001) individualist and collectivist culture.

2.4.1 Hall's (1976) low- and high-context culture

Hall (1976) classifies cultures into two types: low-context and high-context. He believes that people from these two opposite types of cultures differ in terms of their communicative behaviors. As cited in Samovar et al. (2017, pp. 220-222), "In low-context cultures, the verbal message contains most of the information and very little is conveyed through the context or the participant's nonverbal displays" and communication tends to be direct and unambiguous. "Americans depend more on spoken words than on nonverbal behavior to convey their messages," according to Hall. On the other hand, those from high-context cultures, particularly Asian cultures, emphasize social hierarchy and relations with others, in contrast to "the expression of self through direct communication." Figure 1 contains a list comparing 15 countries based on their levels of low- and high-context cultures (Hall, 1976, p. 91).

Figure 1

Countries ranging from low- to high-context cultures



According to the list, the American culture is low-context, while the Chinese culture is high-context. In light of this analysis, one would expect email messages from

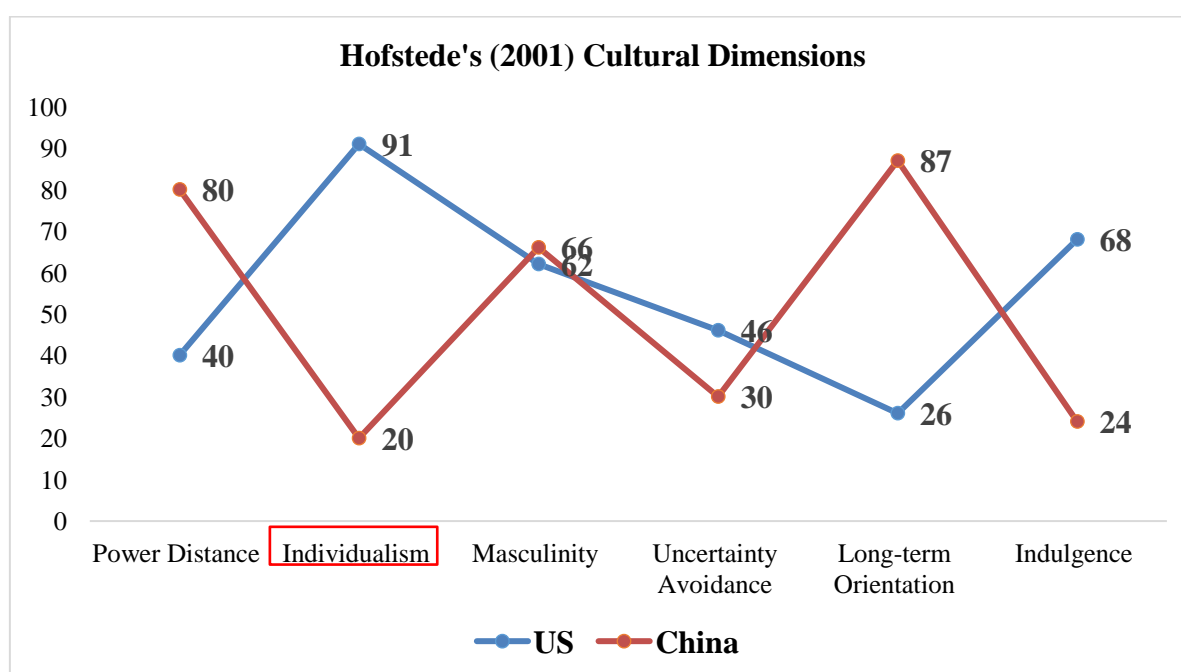
American customers to be direct and unambiguous and serving a social function, either asking Chinese sales managers to do something or to express displeasure. The opposite would be expected if the Chinese sales managers wrote email messages making requests or complaints, but this aspect of the hypothesis is beyond the scope of this study.

2.4.2 Hofstede's (2001) individualism and collectivism

Intercultural communication is generally defined as a situation in which people of different languages and cultural backgrounds communicate. Interactants can be a native speaker of a language and a non-native speaker, or two non-native speakers (Kecskes, 2014, p. 14). In this study, the American customers wrote email messages to make requests or complaints to the Chinese sales managers. The role of the Chinese sales managers in this interaction is to decode the messages and cooperate with the American customers. Not only are their first languages different, but their cultural values are also different. Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions describe such differences in terms of beliefs and values that have an impact on people's communicative behaviors (Samovar et al., 2017, pp. 201-203), as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Cultural dimensions between the US and China



According to Figure 2, the American cultural values are in sharp contrast with the Chinese, especially with respect to individualism, in which Americans measure 91% while the Chinese only 20%. Although these figures based on Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions reflect a somewhat superficial stereotype, they are reliable predictors of communicative behaviors. Highly individualist Americans are expected to be "informal", "direct", and "participative to a degree," and they are "accustomed to doing

business or interacting with people they don't know well" and "are not shy about approaching their prospective counterparts in order to obtain or seek information". By contrast, the Chinese, described as low-individualist, put strong emphasis on "relationships with colleagues," and they can be "cold or even hostile to out-groups" while "personal relationships prevail over task and company".

3. Related Studies

3.1 The Role of English in BELF

As mentioned above, many researchers have investigated BELF emails. Gerritsen and Nickerson (2009) pointed out that English has played an increasingly dominant role in general business affairs worldwide over the last two decades. BELF is a simplified, hybridized, and highly dynamic code (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) used in global business settings, regardless of Kachru's (1992) three concentric circles of English: inner, outer, and expanding (as cited in Roshid et al., 2018). Moreover, Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005, as cited in Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009) pointed out that BELF refers to English as a 'neutral' and shared communication code. For BELF users, their level of language competency was of considerable importance as it ensures successful communication with business partners (Liu et al., 2021). Additionally, Roshid et al. (2018) examined 92 email messages, examined using qualitative and quantitative content analysis, to study how the BELF community practices written discourse in business email. They revealed that unlike ELF academic discourse, or standard business letter writing, email messages are usually stylistically flexible, informal, personalized, and similar to ELF spoken discourse.

3.2 Politeness in Business Emails

Many researchers (e.g., Alafnan, 2014; Fan, 2012; Lindgren, 2014; Pariera, 2006; Xiao, 2012) have investigated politeness theory in email messages. Pariera (2006) compared the politeness strategies used in the email of 29 participants writing to both close friends and strangers. The author also explored the five features of language in the emails with respect to the three taboos of high, medium, and low seriousness. The author assessed these findings using Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, and found that email itself was developing a special set of politeness conventions very different from those used in face-to-face communication, characterized by a decrease in intimacy, and a reduction in the use of negative politeness strategies.

Lindgren (2014) explored politeness strategies in a business setting by analyzing 46 BELF authentic emails, divided into internal and external groups, to determine whether the communication approach varied with different receivers. The author pointed out that the internal and external correspondence was very similar, and that the level of formality and directness seemed to depend on the sender. The results revealed that greetings were mainly informal, closings formal, and requests direct, for both internal and external correspondence.

Alafnan (2014) analyzed emails written in a Malaysian educational institute for the use of politeness as it related to power relations, social distance, and the ethnicity of the communicators. The study showed that these were important considerations in establishing connections and close relationships with the recipients. The Malaysian employees (i.e., Chinese Malaysians, Indian Malaysians, and Malaysians) usually used negative and positive politeness strategies in their emails. Social distance played a more significant role than power in the use of politeness strategies, and the author concluded that Malaysians were more polite to distant colleagues than to close colleagues.

Xiao (2012), using quantitative and qualitative methods, analyzed 100 English business emails for their politeness strategies. He divided the email into four types: competitive, convivial, collaborative, and conflictive. The author found that Brown and Levinson's (1987) face management politeness strategies were practical and widely used in business email, and that the frequency and distribution of politeness strategies varied with the different types.

In addition, Fan (2012) gave examples of the Cooperative Principle and politeness strategies used in business email while analyzing the definition and function of business English email. The author found that, in comparison to daily communication, the language of business email is more elaborate. Business email has carefully crafted phrasing and is typically more professional than face-to-face communication. Partners observe the Cooperative Principle and politeness strategy to a significant degree in the composition of business email.

3.3 Email Requests in a Business Setting

Park et al. (2021) examined 60 cross-cultural emails, 30 from Koreans and 30 from their American employers. The cross-cultural differences between these L1 and L2 request emails were analyzed with respect to move frequency, move sequence, move length, and other related lexical and syntactic characteristics of request email. The findings showed that L2 professionals made requests more concisely using direct language, while L1 professionals used supportive moves such as complimenting the addressee and promising compensation. In addition, Liu (2020) analyzed the request strategies of authentic business English emails, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, including the use of request strategies in email. The researcher found that mood derivable was the most commonly used request strategy in business English email, and that query preparatory, under the non-conventionally indirect request strategy, was the second most common strategy. Moreover, the questionnaires revealed that there was no relationship between the degree of politeness and the degree of directness. Furthermore, Liu et al. (2021) analyzed 236 requests, made by 38 Chinese participants via WeChat. The participants were divided two groups, an older and a younger, in order to determine the effect of social status and age on social media requests. The results showed that both the younger and older group preferred to use direct strategies when making requests in Chinese on WeChat, and that preference was not affected by social status, nor did social status influence their use of modifications when making requests.

Ho (2018) analyzed 659 workplace request emails in Hong Kong, showing how professionals use metadiscourse in email to convince colleagues to comply with requests, using reason, credibility, and emotion. Persuasion through email is unlike that made via other channels in the use of metadiscourse. There may be a preferred pattern of persuasive strategies used in request email in the workplace.

3.4 Complaints on Social Media Platforms

Vasquez (2011) examined 100 CMC complaints taken from the travel website TripAdvisor to compare online complaints with complaints made by elicited means or by regular spoken interactions. The findings showed that complaints were often made in conjunction with advice and recommendations, rather than with warnings or threats. Also, more than one-third of the complaints gave some positive remarks, even in the context of a negative overall assessment. A similar proportion mentioned that the reviewers' expectations were not met. Also, a larger number of the complaints on TripAdvisor were indirect (or third party) complaints.

In addition, Depraetere et al. (2021) selected complaints made via Twitter between two railway companies and their customers. The two companies were SNCF, the French National Railway company, and SNCB, the Belgian National Railway Company. The study concluded that perceived (im)politeness or perceived face-threat had to be separated, and linguistic (in)directness should be analyzed in the context of complete complaint situations. The authors also devised a hypothesis regarding the differences between the two similar linguistic community complaints and the responses of the two companies.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Participants and Research Instruments

The researchers gathered authentic business English emails written by American customers. The data were collected through a contact in a furniture company in Zhejiang, China, from June 2021 to September 2021. Tables 2 and 3 give the details of the American customers who wrote the request and complaint email messages.

Table 2

Details of the American customers who composed business request emails

No	Nickname	Gender	Native language
1	Johanna	Female	English
2	Olivia	Female	English
3	Julie	Female	English

4	Kelvin	Male	English
5	Scott	Male	English
6	Eric	Male	English

Table 2 describes six American customers from different companies who wrote request email messages to the Chinese sales managers. All of them lived in the USA and their native language was English. They worked for Dorel, South Show, IKEA, and CB. Table 3 contains information about the customers who made the complaints.

Table 3

Details of the American customers who composed business complaint emails

No	Nickname	Gender	Native language
1	Johanna	Female	English
2	Olivia	Female	English
3	Julie	Female	English
4	Lucy	Female	English
5	Kelvin	Male	English
6	John	Male	English
7	Eric	Male	English
8	David	Male	English

Table 3 compares eight American customers from four different companies (i.e., Dorel, South Show, IKEA, and CB) who wrote complaint email messages. Half were female and half male and all were native speakers of English.

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

This study took authentic business emails as the research corpus and analyzed politeness strategies used in business requests and complaints. The use of an authentic corpus, rather than oral or written Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs), meant that the researchers could examine naturally-occurring data, replete with pragmatic resources. By contrast, research instruments that allow participants to pre-plan their email messages with email recipients are merely hypothetical. This method allows the researchers to analyze real American customers engaged in real communication with actual sales managers. In addition, the researchers obtained their consent directly

through email, asking for permission to analyze their email correspondence with the Chinese sales managers. Emails written by participants who expressed their intention not to take part in this research project were withdrawn from the analysis.

For reasons of confidentiality, the company did not allow the employees to disclose certain specific details of the emails, such as pricing and business procedures. To protect the company's privacy, real names, locations, and other identifiable information was also removed, replacing them with pseudonyms; however, the content of the emails, including grammatical mistakes, was unmodified to guarantee the authenticity of the data.

The 60 emails were selected and divided into two categories, requests and complaints, according to the definitions given in Section 3.1. The emails were numbered, such as "request email 1," and "complaint email 1," to make the management of the data sets more systematic. Then, the politeness strategies, as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 94-227), were used to codify the data. Table 4 illustrates the coding scheme of the politeness strategies, and gives examples of requests and complaints in each politeness strategy. At each stage, a trained research assistant, classified, categorized, and analyzed the data to ensure the level of reliability.

Table 4

The four politeness strategies

No.	Politeness Strategy	Speech act	Example
1	Bald on record	Request	Rake the leaves (Terkourafi, 2015, p. 345)
		Complaint	There is no value here for the money. (Vasquez, 2011, p. 1711)
2	Negative politeness	Request	Could you please kindly check what you can do for us with the attached order? (Ho, 2018, p. 76)
		Complaint	Sorry to moan about it, but we were paying Euros 145 a night for our double room. (Vasquez, 2011, p. 1711)
3	Positive politeness	Request	How about letting me use your pen?
		Complaint	Your price is more than 50% higher. I believe we need to find out a better solution to it.
4	Off-record politeness	Request	Hmm, I wonder where I put my pen.
		Complaint	I would not recommend staying here if you are looking for a good night's sleep. (Vasquez, 2011, p. 1712)

The four politeness strategies were adopted from Brown and Levinson (1987). In this study, bald on-record strategies refer to those used to perform requests or complaints unambiguously, without any redressive actions. "Rake the leaves" and "There is no value here for the money" are examples of a direct request and a direct complaint, respectively because their locutionary forces explicitly perform

unambiguous illocutionary acts. Negative and positive politeness strategies refer to those used to perform these speech acts unambiguously, while mitigating face-threats. “Could you please kindly check what you can do for us with the attached order?” and “Sorry to moan about it, but we were paying Euros 145 a night for our doble room” are a direct request and a direct complaint, respectively; however, their face-threatening acts were mitigated to save the negative face of the hearers. In addition, “How about letting me use your pen?” and “Your price is more than 50% high. I believe we need to find out a better solution to it.” are a direct request and a direct complaint, respectively. However, their face-threatening acts were redressed in order to save the hearers’ positive face. Off-record strategies refers to those used to perform requests and complaints ambiguously. “Hmm, I wonder where I put my pen.” and “I would not recommend staying here if you are looking for a good night’s sleep.” are an indirect request and an indirect compliant because the act of saying and the speaker’s intended meaning do not correspond to each other.

Based on Brown and Levinson (1987), the least polite strategy is the bald on-record strategy, while the most polite strategy is the off-record strategy. The use of one particular strategy over the others, according to Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 76-84), depends on the weightiness of the face-threatening act, which consists of three variables: power (P), social distance (D), and ranking of imposition (R). In this context, the power relationship between the American customers and the Chinese sales managers is asymmetrical because the customers can make a decision to continue or discontinue the service. Their social distance is wide because they have never met in person. The degree of imposition is not high because the requests and complaints are made in a business context.

The politeness strategies for requests and complaints were taken from various compatible resources to show how the data were codified. As mentioned in section 3.3.2, negative politeness strategies have at least 10 sub-strategies. Thus, the example in Table 4 shows how negative politeness strategies minimize the imposition on the hearer. Of course, the example given is only one way in which the speaker can make a speech act less threatening to the hearer’s negative face. The same holds true for the positive politeness and off-record strategies.

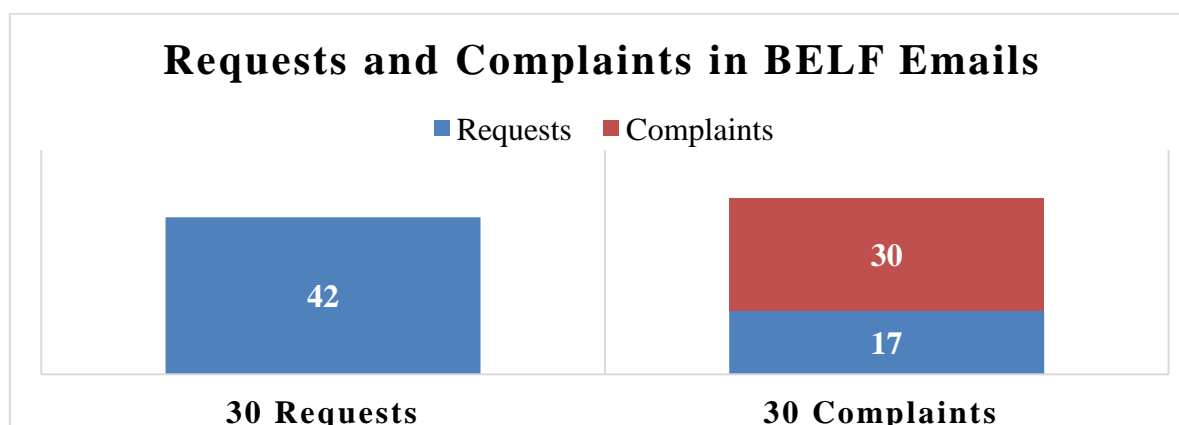
5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Overall Performance of Requests and Complaints

In the 30 BELF emails, in which American customers asked the Chinese sales managers to do something (Searle, 1976, p. 11), more than 30 requests were found. However, there were only 30 complaints in the 30 BELF emails in which the American customers expressed resentment toward the Chinese sales managers. These preliminary findings are compared in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Number of requests and complaints in BELF emails



There were 42 total requests made in the 30 BELF emails, as the American customers sometimes made multiple requests in one email, as illustrated in Extract 4.

Extract 4

Can you please print and sign the attached document and resend it to me overnight and please advise when the samples for ISTA and production will be ready to be submitted to the lab for testing.

In this email, an American customer made two requests: he asked the recipient to print and sign the attached document, and then send it back. The writer also asked when the samples for ISTA and production would be ready for laboratory inspection so he could proceed with his work. As a result, the total number of requests was higher than the total number of request emails. By contrast, only 30 complaints were found in the 30 intercultural BELF emails, meaning that American customers did not make multiple complaints in one email. In line with Vasquez's (2011) major finding, "[user-generated] complaints [in the travel website—TripAdvisor] tended to occur in conjunction with other speech acts, such as requests." Not surprisingly, 17 requests, a modest form of directive speech act according to Searle (1976), were found, amounting to 56.66%. These were not classified as separate requests because the American customers expressed their resentments against the Chinese sales managers and their requests always appeared after the complaints. Briefly, the American customers usually made request in this way because they wanted the Chinese sales managers to tackle the problem, as seen in Extract 5.

Extract 5

As my engineering team is pushing, your samples completion for In-house testing is far behind the DHP expected timeline that we sent before, 01 month behind! Please advise me if you can catch up within the new timeline?

In Extract 5, an American customer expressed his resentment toward a Chinese sales manager regarding a one-month delay in the completion of the sample for in-house testing. The customer referred to the engineering team who had asked for the completed sample, since it had already exceeded the timeline. If this undue delay continued, the email writer would definitely be in trouble. To resolve the problem, a kind request followed the expression of resentment. The customer asked the sales manager whether the manager could meet the new timeline. It is clear that a complaint and a request can co-occur as a speech act set in intercultural BELF email (Murphy & Neu, 1996; Vasquez, 2011).

Apart from complaints co-occurring with a request, as illustrated in Extract 5, two other types of speech acts were found after the customers had made their complaint: a suggestion and a warning. In accordance with Vasquez (2011), other speech acts, apart from the directive requests or advice, can appear after business complaints, such as “suggestions” and “warning [of threats].” There were eight suggestions (26.67%) and five warnings (16.67%) that also appeared in conjunction with the business complaints. Examples are given below.

Extract 6

The sample test fee is a little expensive. I think it is better to have your team trained to do the ISTA 3A test. This will avoid a lot of testing costs.

In Extract 6, an American customer first complained explicitly that the sample test fee was expensive, but the complaint was not the only speech act in this email. The customer continued by offering a suggestion, saying “I think it is better to have your team trained to do the ISTA 3A test.” The writer suggests a comprehensive solution to the problem, reducing the cost for the sample test. The implication is that if this problem-solving strategy is employed, both the customer and the sales manager would enjoy the benefits. The other example is when the customers gave a warning after expressing their resentment toward the sales manager.

Extract 7

Because of your frequent quality problems, we have decided to set a COPQ¹ the target for you. If the COPQ fails to reach the target value by a certain period, then we will UTG² the soft series.

In this extract, an American customer lodged an explicit complaint about frequent problems with the quality of mattresses, and established a ‘COPQ’ target. He then warned the sales manager that if he could not reach the target, they would no longer

¹ COPQ is an acronym for the “cost of poor quality” in a business area.

² UTG is a business term, which means the goods will be eliminated.

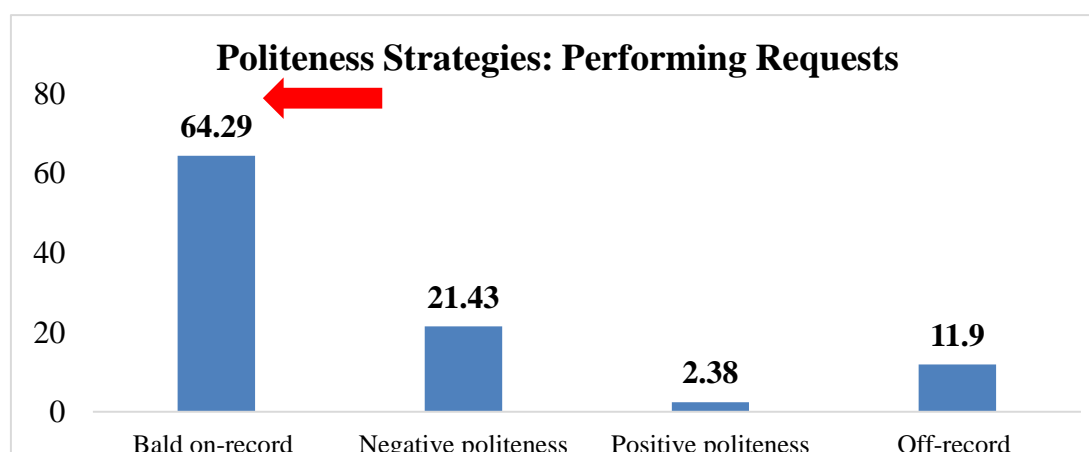
accept the product from this company. Obviously, the complaint conveyed not only strong disapproval, but also warned the sales manager to improve the product quality immediately. The speech act sets (Murphy & Neu, 1996; Vasquez, 2011) used in business email perform multiple actions to solve problems, not only to express customer dissatisfaction.

5.2 Politeness Strategies used to Perform Business Requests

The American customers, when making customer-manager requests, applied various politeness strategies ranging from bald on-record to off-record strategies. Positive politeness strategies were the least frequently used. According to Xiao (2012), this type of email is known as a “collaborative business email.” They are a modest directive speech act, as opposed to ordering, commanding, or prohibiting, which are fiercer than simply making a request (Searle, 1976, p. 11). Figure 4 shows the distribution of politeness strategies used when the American customers asked the Chinese sales managers to do something.

Figure 4

Distributions of politeness strategies used to perform requests



The American customers, when writing BELF emails to request Chinese sales managers to do something, normally used bald on-record strategies (i.e., 64.29%). This confirms the American cultural values prescribed by Hall's (1976) low-context culture and Hofstede's (2001) high individualism. Americans are “accustomed to doing business or interacting with people they don't know well and are not shy about approaching their prospective counterparts in order to obtain or seek information.” In addition, the most common use of bald on-record strategies is facilitated by the fact that “BELF can be characterized as simplified, hybridized,...” (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009). The use of internal or external mitigations, as well as ambiguous strategies, increases the complexity of communication and may cause miscommunication. This

was confirmed by Liu et al. (2021) who stated that “[f]or BELF users, their level of language competency was of considerable importance as it ensures successful communication.” As shown by Park et al. (2021), Korean professionals and American employees usually “make their requests more concise, using direct language.” The American customers, moreover, used negative politeness strategies the second most (21.43%). Discernibly, there was a wide gap between the uses of bald on-record and negative politeness strategies. Extract 8 shows how an American customer used bald on-record strategies to make a request. In Extract 9, an customer used negative politeness strategies.

Extract 8

Advise the completion date of the final sample.

In Extract 8, the American customer asked unambiguously that the Chinese sales manager tell him the exact date for completion of the final sample. Considering the recipient of this email, whose first language is not English, the American customer made the request in English as explicitly as possible so the manager could decode the message accurately. As described by Gerritsen and Nickerson (2009) and Roshid et al. (2018), the role of English in BELF emails is ‘simplified’, ‘flexible’, ‘informal’, and ‘similar to ELF spoken language’. Given American cultural values (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001), American customers can be expected to make their customer-manager requests as unambiguously as possible because direct requests can prevent misunderstandings. Sending a clear message is the primary objective as the Chinese recipients, despite their different language and culture, must for business reasons, cooperate with the customer. Perhaps direct and unambiguous communication in the BELF setting should not automatically be interpreted as impolite or rude.

Although negative politeness strategies were the second most commonly used, the American customers used them only 21.43% of the time. Although these requests were explicit, they were mitigated to lessen the level of face-threat. An example is given in Extract 9.

Extract 9

Could you advise me if you can extend the below rate before the end of this year?

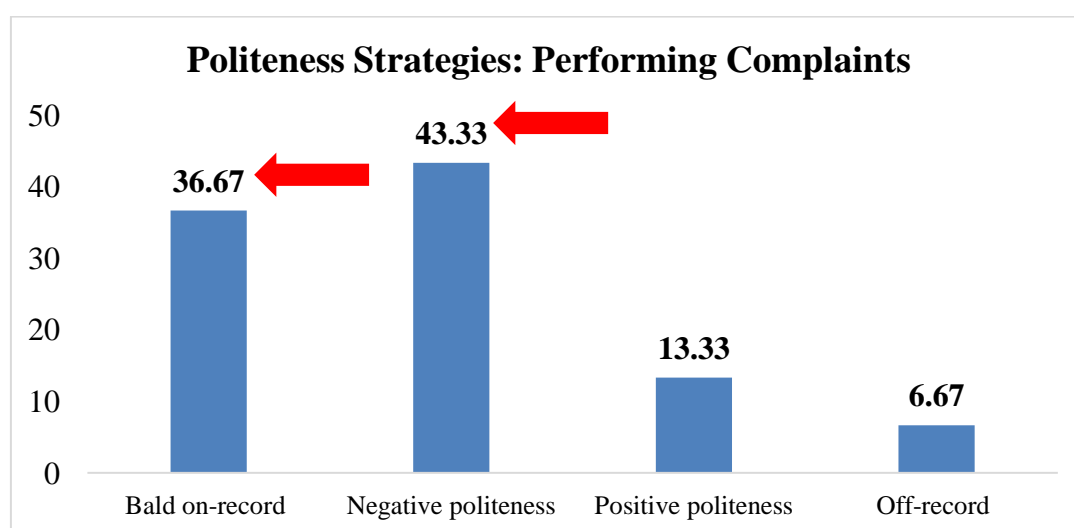
In Extract 9, an American consumer made a customer-manager an unambiguous request; however, its level of face-threat was lessened by the conventionally polite phrase “could you” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 131-213). This gives an option to the recipient, lessening the force of the request. In addition, the presence of a hypothetical lexicon ‘if’ made the request more probable. Despite the direct request, its face-threat was diminished so the decoder of this email would feel less face-threat.

5.3 Politeness Strategies used to Perform Business Complaints

There were four politeness strategies, both explicit and implicit, that the American customers used when making customer-manager complaints. According to Xiao (2012), this is known as “conflictive business email” because the customers felt dissatisfied with business operations, product quality, and/or management systems. Then they expressed their resentment toward the company representatives. Negative politeness strategies were the most frequently used, followed by the bald on-record strategies. The difference between them was only 6.66%, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Distributions of politeness strategies used in complaint emails



When the American customers wrote their BELF emails to express resentments to the Chinese sales managers, the customers normally (80%) used unambiguous politeness strategies. However, they commonly mitigated their complaints with some modifications to lessen the threat of their resentments (i.e., 43.33%). One example of the negative politeness sub-strategies frequently used by the American customers was ‘apology’, which was described as to “communicate the speaker’s want” without wanting “to impinge on the hearer” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 131). The use of apology in front of the complaint is illustrated in Extract 10.

Extract 10

I’m sorry to say this. You may feel offended, however, we couldn’t let NAP be launched under this false quality.

In this extract, an American customer prefaced his complaint with an apology: “I’m sorry to say this”. This sentence marks the writer’s intention not to impinge on the recipient of this email as the recipient may resent the imposition. In the propositional content, the writer also used the modal auxiliary ‘could’ to rule out any possibility of launching the NAP given the low quality of the product. Although this complaint was mitigated by some external and internal modifications (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 131-213), this finding confirms what Alafnan (2014) observed in the literature, that Malaysian personnel utilized negative politeness strategies to develop bonds and closer relationships with their recipients when expressing resentment toward their customers. Lindgren (2014), argued that “the level of formality and directness seemed to depend on the sender [of business email].” This suggests that the American customers when dealing with “conflictive business email” also softened their complaints.

In addition, 36.67% of American customers complained without using any mitigating devices. Their complaints were unambiguous. Extract 11 shows how an American customer expressed his complaint.

Extract 11

The quality of mattress samples is poor.

Extract 11 shows an American customer using a bald on-record strategy to give a negative evaluation of the quality of the mattress samples. The linking verb ‘is’ shows that the subject complement, the predicative adjective ‘poor’, modifies the quality of the mattress samples. The recipient of this email message would have no difficulty understanding the writer’s intent (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009; Roshid et al., 2018). The use of this unambiguous complaint can be attributed to the cultural values of the writer, described by Hall (1976) as low-context, and by Hofstede (2001) as high individualism. In the business sphere, Americans can be expected to be ‘informal’ and “direct to a certain degree”. They are “accustomed to doing business or interacting with people they don’t know well” and they “are not shy about approaching their prospective counterparts in order to obtain or seek information.”

6. Conclusions

The analysis of the intercultural BELF emails shows how customer requests and complaints were made in business emails. Dealing with the directive speech act, the American customers sometimes asked the Chinese sales managers, in one email, to take a few actions. Further analysis showed that the bald on-record strategies were most commonly used, accounting for nearly two-thirds (64.29%). The Americans were most likely to use bald on-record strategies because requests formulated unambiguously are intelligible to Chinese sales managers, whose language and cultural backgrounds are

different from those of the customers. In addition, the lack of ambiguity was attributed to the cultural values of the Americans, described by Hall (1976) and Hofstede (2001) as low-context and high individualism, respectively. Another factor may relate to English used in BELF emails (Roshid et al., 2018). It is usually simplified, flexible, informal, personalized, and similar to ELF spoken discourse. These features of English in business requests help ensure a high level of intelligibility for the message decoders so they would have no difficulty understanding the customers' requests and would therefore cooperate with the customers. Complaints, expressive speech acts, were performed to express resentment toward the Chinese sales managers because they had failed to do something in the first place. In these emails, complaints always occurred in conjunction with requests, suggestions, and warnings, producing what Murphy and Neu (1996) and Vasquez (2011) called "speech act sets". Obviously, when the customers complained, they also looked for comprehensive solutions to problems. Results showed that negative politeness strategies were used most frequently (43.33%). Although the complaints were mitigated, they were performed rather unambiguously.

Although the study was carefully designed, there remain a few aspects that could be explored in more depth. The fact that the data were from a single furniture company is a primary limitation. Therefore, the results from this study cannot be generalized to other fields, even in a comparable context. As a result, rather than focusing on a single company with a particular business type, future researchers might consider gathering data from a variety of companies. In addition, the researchers did not interview the American customers to find out why they preferred the bald on-record politeness strategies when making requests and why they used the negative politeness strategies most frequently when making complaints. Future researchers can investigate the reasons for this choice of politeness strategies.

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Measuring Properties of an English Language Self-Efficacy Scale for EFL Undergraduate Students in Thailand

Received : 16 Mar, 2023

Revised : 15 May, 2023

Accepted : 13 Jun, 2023

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to examine the measurement of the properties of a Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (QESE) among EFL undergraduate students in the Thai setting. The purposive sampling was used to obtain the participant sample which included 421 final-year King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL) undergraduate students who took the English Exit Exam as a requirement before their graduation. The research instruments used is comprised of the QESE and the English Exit Exam. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine the structure of the Thai version of the QESE scale with a second-order four-factor model. The results suggested that the scale had the construct validity, the convergent validity, and the good internal consistency of the four factors of English language self-efficacy. This revealed that the QESE could be used to measure specific English self-efficacy of EFL Thai undergraduate learners with the four competencies of sub-skills of English language.

Keywords: English Self-Efficacy, Properties of an English Self-Efficacy Scale, English Exit Exam, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Undergraduate Students

1. Introduction

In attempts to understand the success of some learners, self-efficacy is one of the significant factors and has been explored for several decades. Self-efficacy can be referred to as learners' beliefs in their capabilities to organize their own learning process to achieve their academic goals (Bandura, 1993). The concept of self-efficacy has emerged on the basis of the Social Cognitive Theory that was developed by Albert Bandura in the 1990s. The theory suggests that people learn from their own experiences as well as by observing others' behavior and experiences. According to Bandura (1986), such a learning process occurs when there are reciprocal interactions among the three influences: environment, behavior, and personal factors which include physiological,

cognitive, and affective aspects. Thus, with regard to the three factors (environmental, behavioral, and personal), learners' self-efficacy, which can be considered their beliefs in their capabilities to accomplish a task, could determine their success with that particular task (Bandura, 1999, Schunk, 2003).

Since self-efficacy was conceptualized as learners' judgement of their capabilities to perform an academic task and achieve an academic goal, a relationship between self-efficacy and success in various disciplines, including language learning, has been explored. In the EFL setting, an association between self-efficacy and language accomplishments has been investigated in many ways. In several research studies, a relationship between self-efficacy and language achievements in sub-skills have been examined, ranging from oral communication abilities (Mohamed Khatib & Mmaarof, 2015) to reading (Naseri, 2012) and writing abilities (Sun & Wang, 2020). Additionally, some researchers investigated an association between self-efficacy and language proficiency in various educational levels, including the university level, as can be seen in research conducted by Magogwe and Oliver (2007), Apridayani and Teo (2021), and Truong and Wang (2019).

To yield an effective probe on a relation between self-efficacy and language proficiency of EFL learners, a validated scale of an English language self-efficacy questionnaire is needed. Among a range of scales aimed to measure learners' self-efficacy, a 32-item-Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (QESE), developed by Wang (2004), can be considered one of the pioneering scales used to measure self-efficacy learners in the ESL/EFL settings in the four English language skills. To obtain the generalizability of the scale, Wang et al. (2013) explored the properties of the questionnaire in the Korean college context. Despite the proof of its reliability, more evidence of its validity is required since the items did not include a wide range of the observed variables. The QESE scale was investigated in terms of its properties once again in another study conducted in the Chinese context at the college level (Wang et al., 2014), and the results were in line with those gained from the previous study implemented in the Korean context. That is, the high reliability of the scale was found. Yet, the items included in the questionnaire did not cover the continuum of the observed variables, and thus more difficult items were needed to be included to be able to measure a sample with a range of English language abilities. To be specific, in exploring the relationship of the participants' English language ability and the item difficulty measures, a good match between students with good language ability and the difficult items could rarely be seen. With an effort to contribute a reliable as well as valid tool to measure self-efficacy of ESL/EFL learners, Wang and Bai (2017) examined the psychometric properties of the QESE scale in the Chinese setting. Based on the results revealed, a high reliability and an acceptable validity of the scale were found among a sample of Chinese secondary school students.

In spite of the satisfactory reliability and validity of the QESE scale in the Chinese context at the secondary level, more research studies in a variety of cultural contexts and educational levels are needed to ensure the generalizability of the scale in the EFL setting. At the university level, few studies were discovered that investigated the properties of the QESE scale. Nguyen and Habók (2022) showed evidence of

reliability and validity of the QESE scale in a sample of Vietnamese university students with the A2 CEFR level. Nonetheless, as far as the researchers are concerned, none of the studies were found to report on reliability and validity of the QESE scale among university students with a wide range of English language abilities in the Thai setting.

In the Thai context, in order to better equip undergraduate students with effective English language proficiency, Thailand's policy about educational reform in a wide range of educational levels, including the tertiary level, was enforced in 2017 (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2016). Since then, Thai universities have had to administer English exit exams for final year undergraduate students before their graduation. This is aimed to reveal their English language abilities on the basis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) or other standards. That is why English exit exams have been organized nationwide in Thailand at the undergraduate level in order to best prepare new graduates who are proficient in English language for the national as well as international job markets.

In spite of the vital role of English exit exams in reflecting Thai undergraduate students' English language proficiency, as far as the researchers have explored, few studies have been found to examine the relationship between students' English exit exams results and psychological factors, including English self-efficacy, which has played an important part in English language learners' success. Furthermore, few research studies which focus on measuring a scale of an English language self-efficacy questionnaire have been conducted. As aforementioned, among a wide range of English self-efficacy questionnaires, the revised version of a QESE developed by Wang (Wang & Bai, 2017) can be considered one of the promising scales since it aims to measure learners' English language self-efficacy in all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) with satisfactory validity and reliability as its statistical evidence obtained (Wang & Bai, 2017).

To fill such a gap, the present study aims to investigate the measurement of the properties of an English language self-efficacy scale for EFL undergraduate students who participated in an English exit exam before their graduation in Thailand. Specifically, this study examined the two main properties of the QESE: its construct validity (the extent to which a particular scale measures what is supposed to measure [Brown, 2000]) and reliability (the degree of consistency of a scale in respondents' results elicited on a number of replications of the scale [Chapelle, 2013]). Moreover, in order to gain better statistical confirmation of the construct validity found, the present study aimed to explore the two sub-types of the construct validity, namely the convergent validity (the extent to which the scale measures similar characteristics as similar scales do) and the discriminant validity (the degree to which a scale does not correlate with another scales intended to assess constructs unrelated to those which the particular scale aims to assess) (Fink, 2010).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Self-Efficacy

As aforementioned, self-efficacy refers to an individual's beliefs in accomplishing a particular task based on the judgment of their capabilities (Bandura, 2006). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is rooted in four major sources, namely, mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states. First, mastery experiences are associated with previous experiences which can be success or failure, and thus they could raise or lower one's self-efficacy beliefs. Second, vicarious experiences involve opportunities in observing and comparing themselves to highly competent learners that could help transfer knowledge and teach them effective skills. Third, verbal persuasion used by "significant others" (Bandura, 1997: 101) could make a person believe in their capabilities. Lastly, physiological and affective states in a particular situation affect an individual's self-efficacy. That is, positive comments can foster one's self-efficacy, while negative feedback can diminish one's self-efficacy. As can be seen, self-efficacy involves a learner's motivation, affect, and behaviors (Bandura, 2006), and it has become one of the keys to successful learning in many fields of study, including language learning.

2.2 Social Cognitive Theory and Other Concepts Related to Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is intertwined with Social Cognitive Theory and it is associated with other psychological factors such as goals, self-regulation, and motivation. To obtain better understanding about self-efficacy, Social Cognitive Theory and other related concepts will be reviewed as follows.

Social Cognitive Theory was proposed by Bandura in the mid-1980s. The theory involves human functioning in a social environment, and it is based on the belief that people react to stimuli with the responses activated by themselves (self-activated) (Harare, 2016). That is why it differs from how machines react to external stimuli, which is an automatic response. According to Bandura (1997), such reactions are associated with a mechanism that intertwines stimulus and response, and can be considered a cognitive processes. As a result, the theory revolves around human functioning which is initiated by the interaction among the environment, behavior, and psychological functioning (Boeree, 2006).

The central parts of the principles that underlie Social Cognitive Theory consist of the four following aspects.

1) Observational learning

Bandura (1986) noted that people learn through observation. Specifically, observational learning can occur through modeling via four processes comprising attention, retention, production, and motivation. That is, students' attention can be caused by the characteristics of the model, such as unusual size, shape, color, or sound,

which help make the relevant task more distinctive to the students. In the second process, retention relies on cognitively organizing, rehearsing, coding, and transforming modeled information so as to obtain storage in the students' memory. The third process is production, referring to transferring the modeled information stored in their memory into their behaviors. The fourth process is motivation since it helps the students more engaged in the preceding three processes.

2) Outcome expectations

Outcome expectations can be defined as “the believed consequences of a person's behavior” (Fasbender, 2020, p. 3377) and it involves how people anticipate the physical, affective (self-evaluative), and social outcomes of their behavior (Fasbender, 2020). Such beliefs are formed through observation of others over their past experiences. Outcome expectations are a significant aspect of Social Cognitive Theory because they have an influence on the decisions that people make about how to take the actions and to retrain the behavior (Harare, 2016).

3) Perceived self-efficacy

As mentioned above, self-efficacy is associated with people's beliefs in achieving their success for a particular task (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is related to one's motivation. More specifically, self-efficacy, along with other psychological factors, such as goals, has an effect on a student's motivation. Motivation can hence be boosted over time when people have their self-efficacy – the belief that their efforts can lead to the success of a task (Schunk, 2012).

4) Goal setting and self-regulation

Goals represent the outcomes that students anticipated or desired (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1990). As stated, goals are related to perceived self-efficacy as they encompass the outcomes students expect from performing a particular task as well as their self-confidence in accomplishing it. In addition, goals, together with other factors such as self-efficacy, have an influence on students' self-regulation (Schunk, 2012). Self-regulation, which refers to students' learning, results from their thoughts and behaviors, which are generated through the achievements of the goals in such learning (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2013). Thus, self-regulated students with their learning goals lead students to success when performing an academic task.

In summary, self-efficacy has been rooted in Social Cognitive Theory which involves human functioning in a certain social environment. According to the theory, people react to stimuli with the responses activated by themselves via several concepts such as self-efficacy, goals, and self-regulation. Such concept thus function with each other to help yield the input when people learn new particular things.

2.3 Self-Efficacy and English Language Learning

As stated, self-efficacy plays a vital role in one's learning in a variety of disciplines. As for language learning, self-efficacy is very important in learning a first (Wang et al., 2021) as well as a second/foreign (Kim et al., 2020) language. To illustrate,

self-efficacy can be considered as internal motivation which has an influence on learner's behavior for a particular learning activity. Consequently, the way learners overestimate or underestimate their abilities may have an effect on their actions they pursue to accomplish that academic task (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Moreover, learners' self-efficacy beliefs are linked to motivational constructs such as goal setting and self-regulation (Pajares, 1997). As a result, self-efficacy has been reported to have a close relationship with learners' academic performances as evidenced in several research studies as follows.

Naseri (2012) investigated the relationship between reading self-efficacy beliefs and reading comprehension level of EFL learners in the Iranian context. Based on the findings, a strong positive correlation between reading self-efficacy beliefs and reading comprehension was noted among 59 college both senior and junior English-major students. Similarly, in a study conducted by Sun and Wang (2020), a significant relationship was found between self-efficacy and English language test scores in a sample of 200 Chinese and 160 German college students who learned English in China and Germany. The results of the studies mentioned above also corresponded with what Apridayani and Teo (2021) discovered in a study about English self-efficacy and English proficiency of 215 non-English major undergraduate students in Thailand. The findings revealed that students with higher proficiency tended to have higher levels of self-efficacy than those with lower proficiency did. Likewise, in a study implemented among 767 Vietnamese college students, a positive relationship was found between self-efficacy beliefs and English language proficiency of the participants (Truong, & Wang, 2019).

The results gained from the aforementioned studies help show a close association between English self-efficacy and accomplishments in English language sub-skills as well as in overall English language proficiency in tertiary education. That is why an effective scale of an English language self-efficacy questionnaire is required, and properties of such a scale need to be explored in the context of ESL/EFL at the university level.

2.4 Measuring Self-Efficacy in the Second/Foreign Context

Measurement of self-efficacy in the ESL/EFL context can probably be traced back to the development of the two instruments used to measure self-efficacy in reading and writing skills, namely, the Reading Self-Efficacy Instrument and the Writing Self-Efficacy Instrument (Shell et al., 1989). The Reading Self-Efficacy Instrument comprises two subscales which included a task subscale of 18 reading tasks with various levels of difficulty and a skill subscale of nine reading component skills, and the Writing Self-Efficacy Instrument consists of two subscales which cover a task subscale of 16 writing tasks with a variety of levels of difficulty and a skill subscale of eight writing component skills. Each of the two instruments yield the high internal consistency reliability for the two subscales with evidence of criterion-related validity. Yet, the two instruments have not been designed to measure language learners' self-efficacy in four English language skills.

Since then, there has been an attempt to create an instrument to measure learners' self-efficacy in overall language skills, and the Self-Efficacy Subscale in Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) has been developed. The MSLQ was proposed by scholars from the University of Michigan, and it was published in a study conducted by Pintrich and DeGroot (1990). The instrument is comprised of 15 subscales with 56 items, and the 9-item subscale of "Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance" was designed to measure self-efficacy. The high reliability of the self-efficacy subscale was reported, and the factor analysis was conducted to examine the construct validity of this instrument. In spite of its validation as evident in several studies, the MSLQ cannot be claimed to measure self-efficacy in a particular language learning setting. This could be explained by what Bandura (2006) has stated, that measuring self-efficacy needs to be adjusted to the specific context, and this is why it is essential to devise an instrument which can be used to specifically measure self-efficacy of English language learners.

The instruments which have been developed in later years were aimed at measuring self-efficacy of each of the four skills in English, such as the Reader Self-Perception Scales (RSPS) proposed by Henk and Melnick (1995), and the Writing Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Pajares et al. (2000). This was until the QESE by Wang (2004) which was created as part of his dissertation. The scale can be considered one of the milestones in measuring learners' self-efficacy English language learning since it has been designed to measure learners' self-efficacy in all four areas of English in the ESL/EFL context.

However, since the QESE was originally developed to be implemented among young English language learners, the scale has been examined in terms of its properties at the university level in several studies. The exemplar research included a study conducted by Wang et al. (2013) in a Korean context and the one carried out in a Chinese setting (Wang et al., 2014). In the two studies, the relationship between the participants' English language ability and the difficulty of the items were investigated. According to the results, although the high reliability of the revised version of the scale was revealed, the items included in the instrument did not cover a wide range of the observed variable (English language ability). In other words, despite the fact that, mostly, the items were rather well matched to the English language ability of the participants, the gaps could be seen when it came to the distribution of item difficulty estimates. This suggested that more difficult items should be included in the questionnaire so that the difficulty of the items could closely match the levels of the participants' English language ability. Consequently, more items with a high level of difficulty are supposed to be integrated into the scale so as to obtain its validity.

In an attempt to gain both reliability and validity of the revised version of the QESE scale, Wang and Bai (2017) investigated the psychometric properties of the scale at the secondary level in a Chinese setting. To be specific, the QESE was administered twice in the study. The results from both the first assessment and second assessment reveal that the scale had the construct validity and the good internal consistencies for all four aspects: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Nevertheless, despite high reliability and acceptable validity of the scale reported, the results may have to be

carefully interpreted in terms of its generalizability at the university level. Thus, more research about the validity and reliability of the revised version of the QESE scale (Wang et al., 2013) needs to be conducted in tertiary education to gather evidence of the properties of the scale in the ESL/EFL setting.

3. Objective of the Study

The objective of the present study was by using a second-order confirmatory factor analysis measure the properties of the revised version of a QESE developed by Wang (Wang & Bai, 2017) for EFL undergraduate students in Thailand, which are namely: 1) the construct validity; 2) the two sub-types of the construct validity – the convergent validity and the discriminant validity; and 3) the reliability .

4. Research Question

By using a second-order confirmatory factor analysis, what are the properties of the revised version of a QESE, developed by Wang (Wang & Bai, 2017) for EFL undergraduate students in Thailand, which are namely: 1) the construct validity; 2) the two sub-types of the construct validity – the convergent validity and the discriminant validity; and 3) the reliability?

5. Methodology

5.1 Participants

The context of the study was King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL), a public university located in Bangkok, Thailand. The study population comprised approximately 4,800 final-year KMITL undergraduate students who were required to take the English Exit Exam which was administered monthly to reveal their English language abilities and knowledge aligned to the CEFR, as stated by the Office of the Higher Education Commission (2016) in the announcement made in order to promote English language proficiency of university students all over Thailand. In the present study, purposive sampling was utilized to collect the participant sample which included a batch of 421 final-year KMITL undergraduate students who took the exam in October of the Academic Year 2022. Out of the 421 participants surveyed, a gender breakdown showed that 144 students (34.20%) were male, and 277 students (65.80%) were female. The age distribution of the participants was dominated by the 20-21 years old range. The participants' grade point average (GPA) was mainly distributed in the range of 3.01 to 3.50 (44.20%) and 2.51 to 3.00 (37.50%). The Faculty of Science had the highest representation among the participants (38.50%), with 15.90% from the Materials Innovation and Technology College.

5.2 Instrumentation

The instrument used was the QESE developed by Wang (Wang & Bai, 2017). This scale was selected to measure its properties in the present study since it emphasizes reflecting learners' English language self-efficacy in all four skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, together with its satisfactory statistical evidence in terms of validity and reliability as shown by Wang and Bai (2017).

The questionnaire consisted of 32 items aimed at asking the participants to make judgments about their abilities to accomplish particular tasks in English language, as seen in Table 1. The scale used in the questionnaire was a 7-point rating scale, which ranged from (I cannot do it at all) to 7 (I can do it very well) covering four constructs of English language abilities, namely, listening (8 items), speaking (8 items), reading (8 items), and writing (8 items). The questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of experts in English language instruction and English language assessment and evaluation to yield their content validity as well as language appropriateness before its implementation among the study participants. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the QESE developed by Wang (Wang & Bai, 2017) was created to be implemented in the Chinese setting, it was adapted to suit the Thai context at a tertiary level in the six items (Items 4, 5, 10, 15, 22, 29) as can be seen in Table 1 (see Appendix).

Table 1

The Original Questions Included in Wang's QESE (2017) and The Revised Questions included in the QESE in the Present Study

The Original Questions included in Wang's QESE (2017)	The Revised Questions included in the QESE in the Present Study
1. Can you understand stories told in English?	1. Can you understand stories told in English?
2. Can you finish your homework of English reading independently?	2. Can you finish your homework of English reading independently?
3. Can you understand American English TV programs?	3. Can you understand American English TV programs?
4. Can you introduce your school in English?	4. Can you introduce your university in English?
5. Can you compose messages in English on the internet through social network (e.g., WeChat and blogs)?	5. Can you compose messages in English on the internet through social network (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Tiktok)?
6. Can you give directions from your classroom to your home in English?	6. Can you give directions from your classroom to your home in English?
7. Can you write English compositions assigned by your teachers?	7. Can you write English compositions assigned by your teachers?

8. Can you tell a story in English?	8. Can you tell a story in English?
9. Can you understand radio programs in English speaking countries?	9. Can you understand radio programs in English speaking countries?
10. Can you understand English TV programs made in China?	10. Can you understand English TV programs made in Thailand?
11. Can you leave a message to your classmates in English?	11. Can you leave a message to your classmates in English?
12. When you read English articles, can you guess the meaning of unknown words?	12. When you read English articles, can you guess the meaning of unknown words?
13. Can you make new sentences with the words just learned?	13. Can you make new sentences with the words just learned?
14. Can you send email messages in English?	14. Can you send email messages in English?
15. If your teacher gives you a tape-recorded English dialogue about school life, can you understand it?	15. If your teacher plays an audio recording of an English dialogue about university life, can you understand it?
16. Can you understand the English news on the Internet?	16. Can you understand the English news on the Internet?
17. Can you ask questions to your teachers in English?	17. Can you ask questions to your teachers in English?
18. Can you make sentences with English phrases?	18. Can you make sentences with English phrases?
19. Can you introduce your English teacher in English?	19. Can you introduce your English teacher in English?
20. Can you discuss in English with your classmates some topics in which all of you are interested?	20. Can you discuss in English with your classmates some topics in which all of you are interested?
21. Can you read English short novels?	21. Can you read English short novels?
22. Can you understand English movies without Chinese subtitles?	22. Can you understand English movies without Thai subtitles?
23. Can you answer your teachers' questions in English?	23. Can you answer your teachers' questions in English?
24. Can you understand English songs?	24. Can you understand English songs?
25. Can you read English newspapers?	25. Can you read English newspapers?
26. Can you find the meaning of new words by using English-English dictionaries?	26. Can you find the meaning of new words by using English-English dictionaries?

27. Can you understand telephone numbers spoken in English?	27. Can you understand telephone numbers spoken in English?
28. Can you write diaries in English?	28. Can you write diaries in English?
29. Can you understand English articles about Chinese culture?	29. Can you understand English articles about Thai culture?
30. Can you introduce yourself in English?	30. Can you introduce yourself in English?
31. Can you write an article about your English teacher in English?	31. Can you write an article about your English teacher in English?
32. Can you understand new lessons in your English textbook?	32. Can you understand new lessons in your English textbook?

5.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The QESE in a hard-copy version was distributed to the participants who enrolled in the October batch of the English Exit Exam in Academic Year 2022. The administration was conducted with the informed consent process approved by KMITL's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

In the present study, descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation as well as a second-order confirmatory factor analysis performed using LISREL software were used to explore: 1) the construct validity; 2) the two sub-types of the construct validity – the convergent validity and the discriminant validity; and 3) the reliability of the QESE. To be specific, a second-order confirmatory factor analysis was used since this study was aimed at obtaining the data by analyzing English self-efficacy for all four related factors: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which were four aspects of English language abilities (Silpcharu & Boonrattanakul, 2021).

In addition, the model fit was also applied including three categories of fit indices: absolute fit (χ^2 goodness-of-fit and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual [SRMR]), parsimony fit (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation [RMSEA]), and comparative fit index (CFI). A chi-square to degree of freedom ratio of less than 3.00 was considered as an indicator of model fit. As for RMSEA, a value of 0.05 or less was considered acceptable, while a CFI value of 0.95 or higher indicated model fit. Additionally, SRMR was considered to fit the model if the value was 0.08 or less (Hair et al., 2010; Schreiber, 2017). Modification indices were used to identify potential error term covariance in the model to improve model fit, and modification indices higher than 10 were considered for free error term covariance.

The construct validity of the model was assessed through evaluating its convergent validity and discriminant validity. In so doing, high item factor loadings (≥ 0.5) and factor Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values which were greater than or equal to 0.5 were considered as the indicators of the convergent validity (Brown, 2014). Also, the discriminant validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by comparing the factor AVE and its Shared Variance (SV), and the value of AVE, which was lower than

the SV, indicated the discriminant validity. Moreover, the range for the Cronbach alpha test of the reliability of the questionnaire should be equal to or above 0.7 to be considered as acceptable (Cortina, 1993).

6. Findings

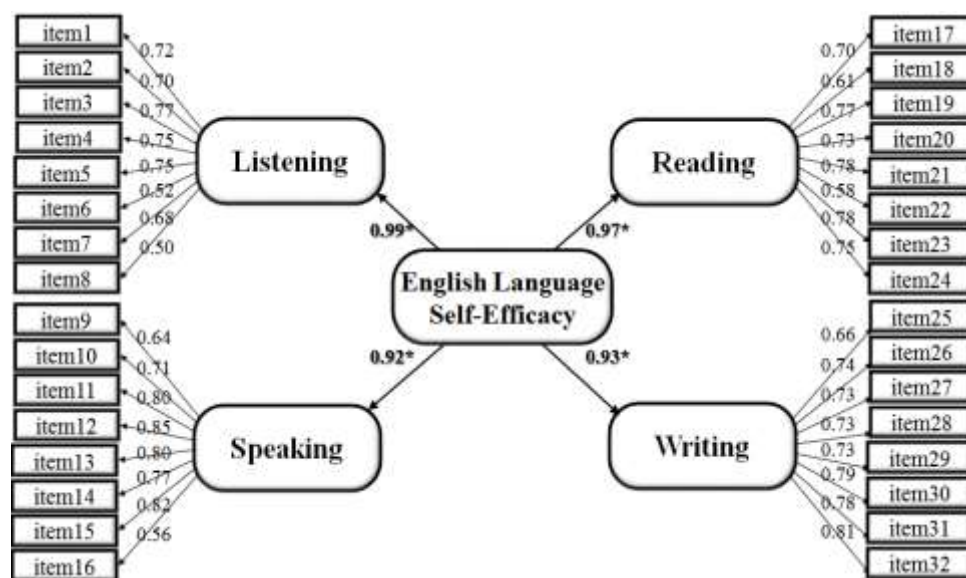
The findings are presented as follows to answer the research question: By using a second-order confirmatory factor analysis, what are the properties of the revised version of a QESE developed by Wang (Wang & Bai, 2017) for EFL undergraduate students in Thailand, which are namely: 1) the construct validity; 2) the two sub-types of the construct validity – the convergent validity and the discriminant validity; and 3) the reliability?

1) Construct validity of the QESE

The construct validity of the QESE was explored as shown in Figure 1 and Table 2.

Figure 1

Result of Second Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the QESE with Standardized Coefficients and Covariance between Errors Omitted for Model Simplification



Based on Figure 1, a second order model of the QESE was specified based on the model used by its original authors (Wang & Bai, 2017), and the model tested showed a poor fit to the data: $\chi^2(460) = 2,307$; $p < .01$, CFI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.09 (90% CI 0.09 to 0.10; $p < 0.01$) and SRMR = 0.06. To improve the model, MI was then examined and it was revealed that there were potential error term covariances added to the model. After model modification, the modified model (Figure 1) showed a good fit based on all fit index $\chi^2(404) = 806$; $p < .01$, χ^2/df ratio = 2.01, CFI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.04 (90% CI 0.04 to 0.05; $p = 0.60$) and SRMR = 0.04.

Table 2

The Result of Second Order Model of Questionnaire of English Self- Efficacy (QESE) Including Factor Loading (L), Standard Error (SE), t-test statistics (t), Standardized Factor Loading (λ), and Reliability (R^2)

Variables	L	SE	t	λ	R^2	Variables	L	SE	t	λ	R^2
Listening						Reading					
Item1	0.72	--	--	0.72	0.52	item17	0.81	--	--	0.70	0.49
Item2	0.77	0.05	15.73	0.70	0.49	item18	0.66	0.06	11.84	0.61	0.37
Item3	0.87	0.06	15.37	0.77	0.59	item19	0.77	0.05	14.83	0.77	0.59
Item4	0.83	0.063	15.01	0.75	0.56	item20	0.91	0.06	14.12	0.73	0.53
Item5	0.75	0.05	15.00	0.75	0.56	item21	0.91	0.06	15.08	0.78	0.62
Item6	0.77	0.07	10.34	0.52	0.27	item22	0.79	0.07	11.33	0.58	0.34
Item7	0.72	0.05	13.49	0.68	0.46	item23	0.88	0.06	15.05	0.78	0.61
Item8	0.58	0.06	10.03	0.50	0.25	item24	0.88	0.05	16.23	0.75	0.56
Speaking						Writing					
Item9	0.70	--	--	0.64	0.41	item25	0.72	--	--	0.66	0.43
Item10	0.78	0.06	12.79	0.71	0.51	item26	0.93	0.07	13.70	0.74	0.55
Item11	0.94	0.07	13.99	0.80	0.64	item27	0.77	0.05	16.39	0.73	0.53
Item12	0.96	0.07	13.44	0.85	0.72	item28	0.83	0.06	13.49	0.73	0.53
Item13	0.91	0.07	14.03	0.80	0.65	item29	0.87	0.06	13.51	0.73	0.53
Item14	0.90	0.07	13.64	0.77	0.60	item30	0.95	0.07	14.41	0.79	0.62
Item15	0.90	0.07	12.96	0.82	0.67	item31	0.93	0.07	14.24	0.78	0.60
Item16	0.57	0.05	10.57	0.56	0.32	item32	0.92	0.06	14.70	0.81	0.65
Second-order											
Listening	0.99	0.06	16.46	0.99	0.98	Reading	0.97	0.06	15.46	0.97	0.93
Speaking	0.92	0.07	13.65	0.92	0.85	Writing	0.93	0.07	14.24	0.93	0.87

$\chi^2=814$, $df=404$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$, $\chi^2/df\text{ ratio}=2.01$, $CFI=0.99$, $RMSEA=0.04$, $SRMR=0.04$

Table 2 shows that the factor loadings (L) of all measures were significant ($p<0.01$) within the acceptable limits ranging from 0.57 to 0.96. That is to say, the first factor (Listening) revealed the standardized factor loadings (λ) from 0.50 to 0.77, with those from 0.56 to 0.85 for the second factor (Speaking), those from 0.58 to 0.78 for the third factor (Reading), and those from 0.66 to 0.81 for the last factor (Writing). That is to say, the construct validity of the QESE in the four aspects of English self-efficacy could be found in the present study. In addition, it was found that the second-order

factor loadings of the English self-efficacy were the highest on Listening (0.99), followed by Reading (0.97), Writing (0.93), and Speaking (0.92), respectively.

2) The two sub-types of the construct validity – the convergent validity and the discriminant validity, and 3) the reliability of the QESE

The two sub-types of the construct validity – the convergent validity and the discriminant validity – and the reliability of the QESE were investigated as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

The Summary of Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Shared Variances among Factors (Bold above the Diagonal), and Cronbach's α

Variables	1. Listening	2. Speaking	3. Reading	4. Writing	CR	AVE
1. Listening		0.62	0.70	0.59	0.91	0.46
2. Speaking	0.79*		0.62	0.77	0.94	0.56
3. Reading	0.84*	0.79*		0.67	0.93	0.51
4. Writing	0.77*	0.88*	0.82*		0.94	0.56
Cronbach's α	0.89	0.90	0.90	0.89		

According to Table 3, the results of the AVEs, shared variances, and factor correlations could be seen. Specifically, the construct validity of a second-order four-factor model was evaluated by examining its convergent validity and discriminant validity. The convergent validity was demonstrated by the presence of significant and high item standardized factor loadings for each proposed factor, as well as AVE values, which was greater than 0.5 for all factors except for the Listening factor that was slightly below the cut-off value of 0.5 (0.46). However, the model showed insufficient discriminant validity for all factors, as the shared variance between all factors (ranging from 0.62 to 0.77) was higher than the AVEs of each factor. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha showed that all factors were reliable; that is, they ranged from 0.89 to 0.90 among all of the factors. Simply put, based on the findings, the convergent validity and the reliability of the QESE could be discovered in the study despite the insufficient discriminant validity of the scale.

7. Discussion

In this study, confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine the structure of the Thai version of the QESE scale with a second-order four-factor model. The results suggest that the scale had the construct validity as well as the convergent validity in the sample of final-year Thai university students who participated in the English Exit Exam before their graduation as well as their career launch in the workforce. In spite of the insufficient discriminant validity, such findings imply that the QESE used in the study accurately measures what it is supposed to measure (construct validity) (Brown, 2000), and it correlates with measures of similar characteristics (convergent validity) (Fink, 2010). Based on the findings, the QESE implemented in the tertiary educational Thai context also contained the good internal consistency for the four competencies: listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as shown by the Cronbach's alpha value. The findings on the construct validity found on the four factors of the model correspond with those found in Wang and Bai (2017). Furthermore, the good internal consistencies of the scale for the four competencies discovered in the study are consistent with what previous QESE literature reflected at a secondary level (Wang & Bai, 2017) as well as at the university level (Wang et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014). This shows the similarities of the properties of the QESE scale found in the present study and those revealed in prior research as documented.

The correspondence of the findings of the present study, the two properties (the construct validity and the reliability) found, with those of the previous studies, could be explained by the learning context of the study being quite similar to that mentioned in each of the aforementioned studies. To illustrate, this study was implemented in Thailand which is an Asian country, which corresponds with the contexts of the studies conducted by Wang et al. (2014) and Wang and Bai (2017) which were Korea and China, respectively. Like Korean and Chinese students, Thai students start to learn English language at a very young age (approximately 4-5 years old), and English language has been announced as a compulsory subject integrated into the core curriculum of entire basic education (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2022). Apart from that, English language was included in Section 2 of the General Aptitude Test (GAT), which Thai students are required to take in order to be accepted to study in a university. Moreover, good proficiency in English language has become one of the keys for their exit from the program of study at an undergraduate level (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2016), and it has been a vital factor for the admission to as well as the exit from the study program of Thai students at a graduate level. From the research documented, we can also see such a scenario in Asian countries such as Korea and China.

As for the four competencies of the QESE scale, the results disclosed that the internal consistencies for Speaking (0.90) and Reading (0.90) were slightly higher than those for Listening (0.89) and Writing (0.89). The findings regarding Speaking were in line with those revealed by Wang et al. (2014). The reason behind this might involve students' exposure to English language via social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok (Nasution, 2019; Saeed et al., 2021; Zhai & Razali, 2021). The familiarity with the language they perceive may help them increase their positive belief in their

speaking skills, and this could bring about their accomplishments when they have to perform a speaking task. Unlike Speaking, the strong internal consistency for Reading found in the present study was not found in previous research. However, this is probably associated with what Krashen (1985) mentioned in the Input Hypothesis about reading, a receptive skill, as the stem of productive skills including speaking and writing. To be specific, when it comes to reading, since language learners are meant to receive as well as to understand the language, they are not required to produce it. Thus, this might lead to their strong self-efficacy in this particular competency when were about to perform an academic English task. Apart from the nature of the skill, students' learning styles in an information technology age, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which highly emphasized online teaching and computerized tests (Ockey, 2021; Ockey et. al., 2021; Wagner & Krylova, 2021), may result in students' confidence in the success of a reading task.

To probe more on the construct validity of the QESE, the two sub-types (convergent validity and discriminant validity) of it were explored. In this study, the convergent validity could be found, and it shows that the scale measures the similar characteristics (self-efficacy in all four skills of English) as similar measures do (Fink, 2010). Hence, to some extent, it could be claimed that the scale could be used to measure English self-efficacy of undergraduate students in the Thai setting. Nonetheless, the discriminant validity found in the present study was insufficient. Thus, this probably suggests that some of the items of the questionnaire were measuring similar factors. In other words, in the participants' view, the scale might contain some items which were overlapping with each other (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). For example, the participants probably found some similarities between Item 9, 'Can you understand radio programs in English speaking countries?' and Item 16, 'Can you understand the English news on the Internet?'. That is, although the former (Item 9) aims to measure the English self-efficacy in their listening skills, and the latter (Item 16) focuses on the English self-efficacy in the participants' reading skills, the focal point of the two items are on understanding messages delivered via social media platforms. This might cause some confusion for some participants. Consequently, in order to increase the generalizability of the study results to a larger extent, the study might have to be replicated among other groups of samples as well as in various contexts.

8. Implications of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the following pedagogical implications can be proposed. As can be seen from the findings, the three properties of the QESE could be found. That is, the scale contained the construct validity, together with the convergent validity as the one of the sub-types of the construct validity, and the good internal consistencies of the four factors of English self-efficacy (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This reveals that, with some adjustments of the items to suit the Thai context, the questionnaire can be implemented to measure undergraduate students' English language self-efficacy in the Thai setting, particularly those who will become new graduates to start their career path in national as well as international job markets.

Such a validated and reliable tool plays a significant part for English language instructors, course/curriculum developers, and administrators, who aim to measure English language self-efficacy, which is one of psychological factors determining success of English language learners. Apart from this, so as to yield the optimum implementation of the scale, the results concerning English self-efficacy obtained from the QESE can be used to show the English language instructors, course/curriculum developers, and administrators what aspects of English language self-efficacy of this particular group of students should be promoted. As a consequence, the findings obtained from such an accurate English self-efficacy scale could be used by the aforementioned stakeholders when developing guidelines on what aspects of English self-efficacy should be highlighted and integrated into English language courses.

9. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Studies

Since the present study provides valuable insights into English self-efficacy in the Thai university context and EFL classroom, there may be limitations to the findings, such as the lack of discriminant validity of the scale or potential biases among the measurement covariances. Further research could explore additional factors that impact English self-efficacy and language learning outcomes.

10. Conclusion

When considering the results gained, the QESE had the construct validity, as well as the convergent validity, and the good internal consistencies for the four competencies: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. This helps provide additional evidence for the structure of the QESE scale and contributes to more understanding of English language self-efficacy among university students. With statistical confirmation of the multi-factor structure of the scale, the results showed that the QESE measured specific English self-efficacy, with the four competencies which could be considered one of the crucial factors for successful English language learning at various levels of education, including at tertiary education. Based on such findings, the QESE can be used to measure English language self-efficacy in Thailand. The validated and reliable questionnaire could then help advance the four aspects of English language self-efficacy and guide instructors regarding what aspects should be emphasized and integrated into particular English language courses.

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Appendix

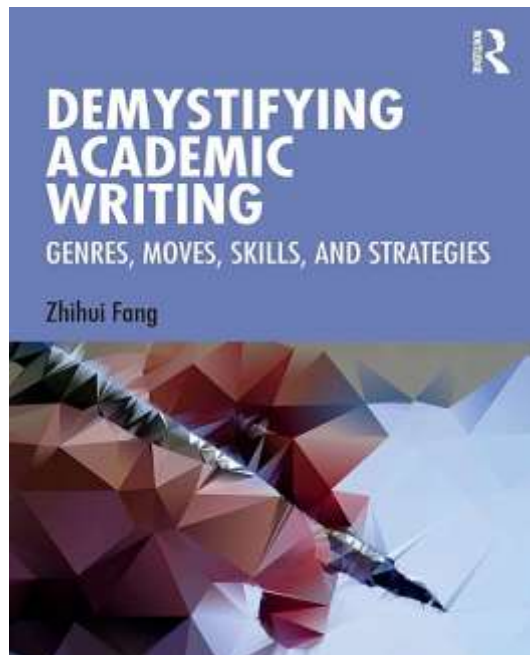
Questionnaire of English Language Self-Efficacy (QESE)

Notes: Please read the following questions carefully and make an accurate evaluation of your current command of English no matter whether you are doing it or not. These questions are designed to measure your judgment of your capabilities, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Please use the following scales to answer these questions accordingly. Please choose the number accurately representing your capabilities.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I cannot do it at all.	I cannot do it.	Maybe I cannot do it.	Maybe I can do it.	I basically can do it.	I can do it.	I can do it well.

1. Can you understand stories told in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Can you finish your homework of English reading independently?							
3. Can you understand American English TV programs?							
4. Can you introduce your university in English?							
5. Can you compose messages in English on the internet through social network (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Tiktok)?							
6. Can you give directions from your classroom to your home in English?							
7. Can you write English compositions assigned by your teachers?							
8. Can you tell a story in English?							
9. Can you understand radio programs in English speaking countries?							
10. Can you understand English TV programs made in Thailand?							
11. Can you leave a message to your classmates in English?							
12. When you read English articles, can you guess the meaning of unknown words?							
13. Can you make new sentences with the words just learned?							
14. Can you send email messages in English?							
15. If your teacher plays an audio recording of an English dialogue about university life, can you understand it?							

16. Can you understand the English news on the Internet?								
17. Can you ask questions to your teachers in English?								
18. Can you make sentences with English phrases?								
19. Can you introduce your English teacher in English?								
20. Can you discuss in English with your classmates some topics in which all of you are interested?								
21. Can you read English short novels?								
22. Can you understand English movies without Thai subtitles?								
23. Can you answer your teachers' questions in English?								
24. Can you understand English songs?								
25. Can you read English newspapers?								
26. Can you find the meaning of new words by using English-English dictionaries?								
27. Can you understand telephone numbers spoken in English?								
28. Can you write diaries in English?								
29. Can you understand English articles about Thai culture?								
30. Can you introduce yourself in English?								
31. Can you write an article about your English teacher in English?								
32. Can you understand new lessons in your English textbook?								



Book Review

Fang, Z. (2021). *Demystifying academic writing: Genres, moves, skills, and strategies*. Routledge.

by **Kiatipong Rerkwanchai**

Writing academic articles, theses, and dissertations is a daunting task, often intimidating novices and sometimes veterans alike. Laying bare rhetorical moves, skills, linguistic strategies and resources, while offering concrete guidelines, Fang's book *Demystifying Academic Writing* will therefore prove beneficial for aspiring academic writers.

Following the premise of Systematic Functional Linguistics, the author points out early that this book conceives of language "as an interlocking system of lexical and grammatical options for making meaning" (p. xiiv) instead of rigid sets of grammar rules to be followed. Hence, readers will be provided with ready-to-use sentences and phrases that will help them express their intentions more effectively, without being overwhelmed with linguistic jargon, an aspect that will appeal to those with little or no linguistic backgrounds.

Demystifying Academic Writing is divided into three sections, with each containing between 2-6 chapters. At the end of each chapter are a brief synopsis of key points, reflection and application activities, and references that will direct readers to other valuable resources.

The first section, "Unpacking Academic Writing," offers an overview of academic writing, highlighting the advanced linguistic features and literacy skills required for academic writing purposes. As many novice writers may consider academic writing monolithic, having experience in only a few types (usually academic essays and empirical research articles), Fang is quick to remind them in Chapter 1 that there are many genres of academic writing, and each genre has its own purposes and requires different approaches and linguistic moves. Therefore, some rhetorical moves effective in one instance may not be applicable to others.

In Chapter 2, Fang provides a discussion of common characteristics of academic writing such as density, abstraction, and rigor in order to distinguish academic writing from everyday writing. Chapters 3 and 4 delve into literacy skills and writing strategies such as

contextualizing, quoting, summarizing, disagreeing and agreeing, defining, referencing visuals, and entertaining opposing views. Readers, especially less experienced writers, may find concrete and ready-to-use templates, which are drawn from various academic disciplines, extremely useful.

The next section, “Writing Academic Genres,” consists of 6 chapters, all devoted to discussing six types of common academic writing genres, including reading response, book review, literature review, argumentative essay, empirical research article, and grant proposal. Each chapter begins with a definition of the genre being discussed, followed by rhetorical moves and writing samples. The analyses that accompany the samples help shed light on how to read them.

Two aspects, in my opinion, deserve recognition here. Firstly, while a detailed discussion of all the six types of writing genres is commendable, many readers will appreciate a discussion of grant proposals—an important genre that is often missing in many academic writing books. Secondly, Chapter 9, which discusses “Writing Empirical Articles,” is relatively comprehensive compared to the other six chapters in this section. Graduate students will find this chapter especially valuable, as the author breaks down and discusses each section of the research article (e.g., introduction, literature review, and methods) in light of rhetorical moves.

“Maximizing Success in Writing and Publishing,” which is the final section, provides tips, strategies, and guidance for success in academic writing, while assisting readers in navigating the complex process of writing for publication. The penultimate chapter in particular provides tips on how to cultivate good academic writing habits. While the author provides general guidelines which can be found in many texts of this kind such as reading widely, he stresses the importance of choosing the right language for the right purpose—“Equipping yourself with different ways of saying essentially the same thing gives you choices that serve your needs and intentions, enabling you to demonstrate your own stylistic and rhetorical competence in academic writing,” (p. 224), a theme running through the book. What is also noteworthy is that, as a second language writer himself, Fang discusses the cultural barriers in academic writing. Being educated in China and trained to write in a specific way, he understands the challenges writers from non-Western backgrounds face. Therefore, his advice on how to cope with this issue can be of immense help for students who share a similar background with him.

The final chapter, where he discusses the publication process ranging from submitting a manuscript to responding to reviewers, is highly informative. In addition to providing an overview of the whole process, the chapter includes correspondence samples (such as email responses to editors or sample letters requesting minor revisions) which could be advantageous for graduate students who may find the whole process a mystery.

As this book aims to discuss various kinds of academic writing, there are many writing aspects that are not covered. Master's and doctoral students, for example, may find the literature review section lacking. Thus, at some point, his guidance may prove inadequate, and readers are advised to consult other sources as well.

Despite these limitations, this text will greatly benefit academic writers at all levels. Readers will appreciate the numerous user-friendly templates and copious examples presented as they can be tools to help them communicate their ideas more effectively and purposefully.

Affiliation

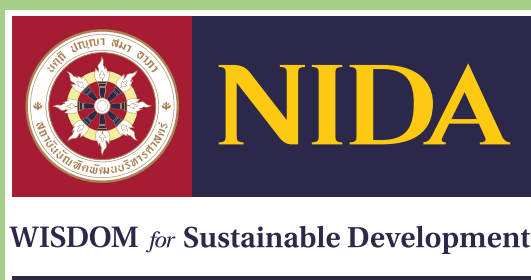
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- Authors must openly disclose the source of all data and third party material, including previously unpublished work by the authors themselves. Anything that could compromise the originality of the submission should be expressly avoided.
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