

FACTORS INFLUENCING ENGLISH COMMUNICATION CONFIDENCE IN VARIOUS SITUATIONS AMONG FIRST-YEAR PHYSICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS AT THAILAND NATIONAL SPORTS UNIVERSITY, SUKHOTHAI CAMPUS

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Abstract:

This research aimed to investigate the factors affecting English communication confidence and to examine the relationship between these factors and students' confidence levels. The participants consisted of 60 first-year physical education students at Thailand National Sports University, Sukhothai Campus, selected through multi-stage and purposive sampling. Data were collected using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Statistical analysis included percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation. The results revealed that students exhibited the highest levels of confidence when speaking English within the classroom ($\bar{x} = 4.87$) and in familiar extracurricular situations ($\bar{x} = 4.88$). Conversely, confidence significantly decreased when students were required to explain complex topics ($\bar{x} = 3.83$) or respond to sudden questions. Correlation analysis indicated that learner-related and instructional factors had no significant relationship with communication confidence. However, family-related factors showed a statistically significant negative correlation with English communication confidence ($r = -0.329$, $p < .05$). This suggests that high family expectations or pressures may contribute to diminished confidence in students' language use. The findings suggest that enhancing students' confidence requires not only pedagogical improvements but also a supportive social environment. Educational institutions should focus on creating a low-pressure learning atmosphere and fostering family understanding to effectively support students' linguistic development.

Keywords: English Communication Confidence, Physical Education Students and Family Factors

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Introduction

In the current globalized era, English has become a vital communication tool, particularly in higher education where students are required to achieve proficiency levels equivalent to B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). According to the Policy on Elevating English Language Standards in Higher Education Institutions B.E. 2567, students must undergo English proficiency testing before graduation to ensure their readiness for the professional world. For students at Thailand National Sports University, English is essential for international sports participation, internships, and networking with global industry experts.

However, a significant barrier to language development among physical education students is a lack of confidence and motivation. Many students perceive English as a difficult and unnecessary skill for their field, leading to "Language Anxiety," which manifests as fear of making mistakes or being judged on their accent. This is consistent with the Self-Efficacy Theory by Albert Bandura, which suggests that a person's belief in their own ability directly influences their behavior and persistence in achieving goals. Smith (1961) further defines self-confidence as self-acceptance and the courage to face various situations, noting that a lack of it often results in dependency on others and high anxiety.

In the context of the Sukhothai Campus, most students currently possess an average English proficiency at the B1 level, which does not yet meet the national target. Previous research, such as the study by Thanaphat Sonthirak (2021), indicates that students feel particularly anxious when communicating with foreigners or when they are unprepared. Moreover, Piyanuch Udomkiatisakul (2016) and Kesanee Makchuay (2018) emphasize that communication confidence is influenced by a combination of internal factors, instructional methods, and family support.

Therefore, this research focuses on identifying the specific factors influencing English communication confidence among first-year physical education students. By understanding the roles of learner-related, pedagogical, and family-related factors, this study seeks to provide a systematic framework for improving English instruction and fostering a supportive environment that prepares students for the international sports industry.

Research objectives

1. To investigate the factors influencing English communication confidence in various situations among first-year physical education students at Thailand National Sports University, Sukhothai Campus.
2. To examine the relationship between these influencing factors and the English communication confidence of the students.

Hypothesis

Based on the research framework, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1 (H₁): Learner-related factors significantly influence English communication confidence.

Hypothesis 2 (H₂): Instructional factors significantly influence English communication confidence.

Hypothesis 3 (H₃): Family-related factors significantly influence English communication confidence.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the factors influencing English communication confidence among sports students. The methodology is structured as follows:

1. Population and Sample

Population: The population consisted of first-year physical education students from four classrooms at the Faculty of Education, Thailand National Sports University, Sukhothai Campus.

Sample: A sample of 60 students was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique.

Selection Process: The students were first categorized into three proficiency levels (high, average, and low) based on their academic records, followed by purposive selection of five students from each level across the four classrooms.

2. Research Instrument

Questionnaire: The primary tool was a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire.

Structure: The instrument was divided into four parts: (1) General demographic information, (2) Factors influencing confidence (Learner, Instructional, and Family factors), (3) Level of English communication confidence, and (4) Additional suggestions.

Development: The questionnaire was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) Horwitz (1986).

3. Validity and Reliability

Content Validity: The instrument was reviewed by three experts to determine the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC).

Criteria: Only items with an IOC score of 0.50 or higher were retained.

4. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using statistical software with the following parameters:

Descriptive Statistics: Percentage, Mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation (S.D.) were used to analyze demographic data and confidence levels.

Inferential Statistics: Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) was applied to examine the relationships between the influencing factors and communication confidence at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

The findings of this study are categorized into three main sections: participant demographics, levels of English communication confidence, and the correlation between influencing factors and confidence.

Table 1 General Information of the Respondents

General Information	Number (Persons)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	34	56.67
Female	22	36.67
Others	4	6.67
Total	60	100.00
Age		
Under 18 years	28	46.67
18 – 22 years	32	53.33
23 years and above	0	0.00
Total	60	100.00
Experience in English Courses		
No experience	0	0.00
Less than 1 year	31	51.67
1 – 2 years	22	36.67
More than 2 years	7	11.67
Total	60	100.00
Self-Perceived English Proficiency		
Unable to communicate	4	6.67
Minimal communication skills	40	66.67
Good communication skills	16	26.67
Excellent communication skills	0	0.00
Total	60	100.00

The demographic analysis of the 60 participants reveals that the majority of the respondents are **male**, representing **56.67%** of the sample, while female students account for **36.67%**. In terms of age distribution, the largest group consists of students aged **18–22 years**, comprising **53.33%**, followed by those under 18 years at **46.67%**. This indicates that the sample primarily represents early-stage undergraduate students.

Regarding their academic background in English, **51.67%** of the students have **less than one year** of experience in university-level English courses, suggesting they are in the initial phase of their higher education language training. Furthermore, the students' self-assessment of their language skills reflects a significant challenge; **66.67%** of the respondents perceive their English proficiency as **"minimal"** (fairly low), while only **26.67%** rate their ability as **"good"**. These results underscore a critical need for further English language development and support for students within this group.

2. **Factors Influencing English Communication Confidence** Based on the 5-point Likert scale, the factors perceived to have the most significant impact were:

Table 2 Factors Affecting English Communication Confidence

No.	Research Items	\bar{x}	S.D.	Interpretation
I.	Learner-related Factors			
1	Intention to develop English speaking skills.	4.75	0.44	Highest
2	Motivation to develop English skills.	4.80	0.40	Highest
3	Interest in practicing English in daily life.	4.78	0.42	Highest
4	Anxiety when speaking English in front of others.	4.37	0.69	High
5	Fear of using English due to potential mistakes.	4.70	0.46	Highest
II.	Instructional Factors (Instructors, Activities, Content, Assessment, Media)			
1	Instructor provides clear guidance on speaking development.	4.52	0.62	Highest
2	Instructor uses diverse methods to promote English practice.	4.55	0.67	Highest
3	Classroom atmosphere is conducive to learning and comfort.	4.12	0.90	High
4	Classroom activities effectively promote speaking practice.	4.10	0.68	High
5	Assessments and exercises are challenging and supportive.	4.18	0.77	High
III.	Family-related Factors			
1	Family supports English skill development.	4.22	0.64	High
2	Family understands and provides encouragement.	4.53	0.81	Highest
3	Family helps create a supportive environment for learning.	3.32	1.33	Moderate

the analysis of factors influencing English communication confidence reveals several key insights:

Learner Factors: Students demonstrate strong internal drive, with the highest mean score found in **motivation to develop English skills** ($\bar{x} = 4.80$). However, significant psychological barriers exist, such as a **fear of making mistakes** ($\bar{x} = 4.70$) and **anxiety when speaking in public** ($\bar{x} = 4.37$), indicating a need for confidence-building strategies.

Instructional Factors: The role of the instructor is highly valued, particularly in **providing diverse methods for practice** ($\bar{x} = 4.55$) and **clear guidance** ($\bar{x} = 4.52$). While classroom activities and atmosphere are rated highly, they are slightly lower than instructor guidance, suggesting room for further engagement in classroom dynamics.

Family Factors: Families play a significant role in providing **encouragement and understanding** ($\bar{x} = 4.53$). Nonetheless, the **creation of a supportive environment at home** received the lowest rating in this category ($\bar{x} = 3.32$), pointing toward a limitation in how family contexts actively facilitate ongoing language use.

Overall, internal motivation and effective instructional guidance serve as the primary foundations for fostering English communication confidence among these students.

3. Levels of English Communication Confidence

Table 3 Results of English Communication Confidence Levels

<i>No.</i>	<i>Research Items</i>	<i>\bar{x}</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Confidence Level</i>
1	Students are confident in speaking English in the classroom.	4.87	0.34	Highest
2	Students are confident in speaking English with classmates.	4.63	0.49	Highest
3	Students are confident in using English to express opinions.	4.63	0.55	Highest
4	Students are confident in answering questions in English.	4.65	0.55	Highest
5	Students are confident in using English to converse with native speakers.	4.12	0.32	High
6	Students are confident in using English for general communication.	4.13	0.34	High
7	Students feel comfortable speaking English in extracurricular situations.	4.88	0.32	Highest
8	Students feel confident when explaining complex topics in English.	3.83	0.69	High
9	Students have the courage to ask questions in English.	4.78	0.42	Highest
10	Students feel confident in using English to speak about familiar topics.	4.67	0.48	Highest
11	Students feel confident in using English for classroom presentations.	4.63	0.78	Highest

The assessment of confidence in various situations showed that:

Highest Confidence: Students felt most confident speaking English within the classroom ($\bar{x} = 4.87$) and in familiar extracurricular environments ($\bar{x} = 4.88$).

Lowest Confidence: Confidence levels dropped significantly when students were required to explain complex topics ($\bar{x} = 3.83$) or respond to spontaneous questions ($\bar{x} = 4.12$).

4. Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis (r) was conducted to test the relationship between the three factors and communication confidence at a 0.05 significance level:
Learner and Instructional

Table 4 Correlation between Influencing Factors and English Communication Confidence

Influencing Factors on English Communication Confidence	R (Pearson correlation)	Sig.	Correlation Level
1. Learner-related Factors	-.051	.701	Very Low
2. Instructional Factors	.019	.883	Very Low
3. Family-related Factors	-.329*	.010	Low (Negative)

Factors: No significant correlation was found between these factors and English communication confidence ($r = -0.051$, $p = .701$ and $r = 0.019$, $p = .883$, respectively).

Family Factors: This was the only factor that showed a statistically significant relationship. Specifically, it exhibited a negative correlation ($r = -0.329$, $p = .010$) with English communication confidence

According to Table 4, the study found that **learner-related factors** ($r = -0.051$, Sig. = .701) and **instructional factors** ($r = .019$, Sig. = .883) have a very low correlation coefficient and are not statistically significant at the .05 level. This indicates that these two factors do not significantly influence the English communication confidence of first-year students.

In contrast, **family-related factors** yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.329$ with a Sig. value of .010, which is less than .05. This demonstrates that family-related factors are the only variables with a **statistically significant negative correlation** with English communication confidence. In other words, as students face more burdens or limitations within their family context, their confidence in communicating in English tends to significantly decrease.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight that first-year physical education students at Thailand National Sports University, Sukhothai Campus, generally maintain a high level of confidence when communicating in English within familiar environments, such as classroom settings and daily interactions with peers. However, this confidence significantly diminishes when students are faced with complex academic tasks or required to provide spontaneous responses.

A pivotal discovery in this research is that while internal learner factors and instructional methods are theoretically vital, they did not show a statistically significant relationship with communication confidence during this initial stage of higher education. Instead, family-related factors emerged as the sole variable with a statistically significant negative correlation with students' confidence. This suggests that high family expectations or perceived pressures may act as a psychological barrier, inadvertently increasing anxiety and reducing a student's willingness to speak.

These results align with the conceptual framework of Smith (1961), which posits that self-confidence is deeply rooted in a sense of self-worth; an environment filled with comparison or excessive pressure can lead to inadequacy and heightened anxiety. Therefore, enhancing English proficiency for sports-major students should go beyond pedagogical shifts

in the classroom. It is essential to cultivate a "Safe Zone" and foster emotional support from the students' immediate social circles. By reducing external pressures and building a supportive foundation, educational institutions can better prepare these future sports professionals to communicate effectively and confidently on the global stage.

Discussion

The finding that family factors have a negative correlation with confidence suggests that while family support is generally intended to be positive, it can manifest as high expectations or pressure. This aligns with Smith's (1961) concept, where external pressures can lead to feelings of inadequacy and increased anxiety. Furthermore, the lack of significant correlation for learner and instructional factors may be attributed to the "transitional phase" of first-year students who share similar educational backgrounds and have had limited exposure to diverse university-level teaching methods at the time of data collection. This contrasts with studies of English majors, such as Phramaha Somchai et al. (2023), whose confidence is more sensitive to instructional quality. For sports students, social and emotional support from their immediate environment—specifically family—appears to be a more dominant influence on their psychological readiness to communicate.

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