

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

At the present, English is used more widely than other languages as a means of communicating with people from other countries. It has become the language of the world, the international language, and the first truly global language (Dulay & Krashen 1982). English is the most important language to efficiently accomplish communication between people and knowledge of appropriate English is essential (David & Leith 1996).

Thailand has an official language that is Thai while the English language is used as a foreign language. Also, the English language is also related in every aspect of countries in the daily life such as education, economics, government, business, etc. The Thai government also has concerns over the importance of the English language by providing English to be taught as a major core subject in schools across the country. However, the Thai students spent 12 years in primary and secondary, but the results were controversial. (Noom-ura. 2013). Also, when given the chance to communicate with the native speaker, their anxiety often sets in. It is conceptualised as a situation-specific personality trait having two psychological components: emotional arousal and negative self-related cognition (MacIntyre. 1995). Since anxiety can have a debilitating or weakening effect on the acquisition of a foreign language, it is important for language teachers to be able to identify students with high levels of foreign language anxiety (Hortwiz, Hortwiz and Cope. 1986).

Many problems occur in the English Program classroom for example, students may be shy to speak with the foreign teachers. This case happens a lot as they worry they may speak incorrectly. Also, the excitement of trying to speak pushes the students to make mistakes when speaking. They feel speaking anxiety in English classes either all the time or almost all the time. The major causes of student English speaking anxiety belong to three interrelated and intersect groups: psychological, educational, and socio-cultural. With regard to the main psychological cause, the overwhelming majority of first-year students noted they feel reluctant to speak English aloud for fear of not understanding or misunderstanding the teacher's question or task. (Timina. 2015).

Foreign language anxiety is a factor which can cause serious communication problems for non-native speakers. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and Newcombe (2007) suggested that anxiety is a major barrier to speaking another language. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) agreed that anxiety may contribute to insufficient learning and performance. The foreign language anxiety tendency of elementary school EFL students was quite obvious (Chan & Wu. 2004). Thus, communicating with strangers leads to fear across cultures (Wallbott & Scherer. 1986). Furthermore, "there are many kinds of communication fears in diverse situations: fear of talking to authority figures or high-status individuals, fear of speaking to another individual, fear of speaking in a small group, and fear of speaking to an audience" (Pearson & Nelson. 2000). Similarly, McCroskey and Richmond (1995) stated that people who have insufficient language skills may try to avoid situations which require communication.

There had been interesting researches on foreign language anxiety on a study of Thai undergraduate students. There have been factors affecting English major students' anxiety about speaking English (Tasee, 2009) it was found that the subjects of the present investigation reported the fear of negative evaluation as the main cause of speaking anxiety. Significant differences in speaking anxiety were found according to gender, 'perceived' speaking ability, and 'perceived' self-personality. Female students reported being more anxious about speaking English than did male students. The students with lower 'perceived' speaking ability reported being more anxious about speaking English than those with higher 'perceived' speaking ability. In addition, the extrovert students reported being more anxious about speaking ability than the introvert ones. Also, the relationship between learning anxiety in English classroom and the English proficiency of Thai vocational students. (Sa-nguanpong, 2007) the result found that the participants were high anxious learner. The negative effect of anxiety on the English proficiency is verified by the finding of study with significantly negative correlation coefficient  $r = -.259$ ,  $p = .019$ ). The commonest anxiety that the participants feel was negative evaluation by friends and teacher.

The present research therefore, intends to study the nature of speaking English anxiety of three different English Programs that have been studying with the native English speaker. There were many insights to be seen firsthand. Unfortunately, the students encountered difficulties in the classroom. They were afraid to ask the native English teachers to explain when they don't understand the lesson. The reason was fear of speaking English incorrectly; therefore this research attempts to find out English speaking anxiety employed by grade 9 students to compare English speaking anxiety of English programs students in Buriram Province, classified by program

types and to investigate the common causes of English speaking anxiety of those students. It is hope that this study will be helpful for the students, native English teachers to use the results to reduce English speaking anxiety.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The purposes of this study are as follows:

1.2.1 To investigate the common causes of English speaking anxiety employed by English programs students of Burirampittayakom School Buriram Province, classified by program types.

1.2.2 To compare English speaking anxiety employed by English programs students of Burirampittayakom School Buriram Province, classified by program types.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

Based on the purposes of the study above, the following research questions are formulated.

1.3.1 What are the most common causes of English speaking anxiety for the three different English Program students?

1.3.2 Which of the three programs have the most speaking anxiety?

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study will provide useful information relating speaking anxiety of three different English Programs that had been studying with the native English speakers. Also, if anxiety decreases, the student would be more comfortable in their ability to learn English in the classroom. The result from this study would help the teachers, students and parents become aware of foreign language anxiety. It could let them know how to reduce their English language anxiety and to increase their English language proficiency by using appropriate learning.

## **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Research**

Some aspects of this study were evaluated and limited as follows.

1.5.1 The participants were a hundred and nineteen students, in grade 9 of Burirampittayakom School. There were 29 English Program students, 40 Intensive Communicative English Program and 50 Communicational English Program students. They were studying in the second semester of the academic year 2015 at Burirampittayakom School. The students had to study English with the native English teachers depending on their programs as follows: English Program (EP) 19 periods per week, Intensive Communicative English Program (ICEP) 5 periods per week and Communication English Program (CEP) 1 period per week in Buriram Province, Thailand.

1.5.2 The results in this study are obtained from the questionnaires. The questionnaire topic is from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope. 1986).

## 1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

Definitions of the terms used this study are the following:

**1.6.1 Speaking** refers to Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Its form and meaning rely on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. However, speech is not always unpredictable. Language functions (or patterns) that tend to recur in certain discourse situations (e.g., declining an invitation or requesting time off from work), can be identified and charted (Burns & Joyce, 1997).

**1.6.2 Anxiety** refers to an abnormal and overwhelming sense of excitement and fear often marked by physiological signs (as sweating, tension, and heart pounding), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's ability to cope with it. The abnormal feeling can last for hours or days depending on the situation.

**1.6.3 Speaking Anxiety** refers to the feeling of unease, worry, nervousness and apprehension experienced when learning or using a second or foreign language. These feelings may stem from any second language context whether associated with the productive skills of speaking and writing, or the receptive skills of reading and listening. Speaking anxiety is a form of what psychologists describe as specific anxiety reaction. Some individuals are more predisposed to anxiety than others, and may feel anxious in a wide variety of situations. Speaking anxiety, however, is

situation specific and so can also affect individuals who are not characteristically anxious in other situations.

#### **1.6.4 The English Program (EP)**

EP is a program refers to primary and secondary students with an academic environment of secondary subjects. The EP Program primarily focuses on Math, Science and Grammar/Literature. Secondary subjects would include Social Studies and Health. This program provides students with a complete English environment refining their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and applying these skills in real-world situations. EP consists of 19 periods per week with native English teachers, the remaining periods are been taught by Thai teachers.

**1.6.5 Intensive Communicative English Program (ICEP)** refers to the students of secondary level aiming to develop and improve their practical and academic English communication skills. ICEP is focused on speaking and listening, and students also spend time on grammar, reading, and writing. It delivers the core curriculum and additional reading and language arts. These programs provide students the opportunity to practice their skills with native English speaking teachers using western resources and technology for instruction. ICEP consists of 5 periods per week, the remaining periods are been taught by Thai teachers.

**1.6.6 Conversational English Program (CEP)** refers to the students English language proficiency, emphasizing speaking and listening skills. CEP is provided to secondary levels. This experiential approach is facilitated by dedicated teachers, encouraging students to be more active participants in their learning. CEP consists of 1 period per week, the remaining periods are been taught by Thai teachers.

### **1.6.7 Bright Future International Training & Services (BFITS)**

Bright Future International Training & Services (BFITS) established in 1996. The company serves 24 private and government schools throughout Thailand. There are 3 main programs: English Program (EP), Intensive communicative English program (ICEP) and conversational English program (CEP). All programs are taught by native English teachers.

**1.6.8 Burirampittayakom School** refers to a secondary school located in downtown Buriram Province, Thailand. It admits secondary students (Mathayom 1–6, equivalent to grade 7–12). Founded in 1904, it then became the first coeducational school in Buriram. The school's former names were "Buriram Witthayalai School" and "Satee Si Buriram School". School is located at 15 Niwas Rd., Muang District, Buriram Province.

**1.6.6 Grade 9** refers to Ninth grade (called Grade 9 in some regions) is the ninth post-kindergarten year of school education in some school systems. Students are usually 14–15 years old. In Thailand it is often called Mathayom 3.

## **1.7 Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter is shown the background, research objective, research questions, significant of the study, scope and limitation and definitions of keys terms, and overview of the research. A brief overview of the existing literature relate to the study will present in the next chapter.