

Factors Affecting Thai Taxi Drivers' English Competence

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the factors affecting Thai taxi drivers' English competence. Altogether, 342 taxi drivers answered questionnaires and performed tasks that measured their English language competency; aiming to find out what the factors are that affect their English competency. The taxi drivers were all Thais sampled from three zones in the Bangkok metropolis. The instruments included the test and the questionnaires. The data collection was carried out during January to May 2016. The structural equation model, based on relevant theories and research findings, was constructed to explain the factors affecting their English language competence. The exogenous factors were their educational background and previous English language training, attitudes towards non-Thai passengers, motivation, and their independent language learning behavior. The results showed that the model was supported by the empirical evidence. The model was fitted with the Chi-square of 53.821, CFI of 0.996, NFI of 0.972, GFI of 0.977, and RMSEA of 0.022. The majority of Thai taxi drivers' English language competence was at the low level (Mean = 2.50). It was also found that their educational background and English language training significantly affected their English competence directly and indirectly.

Key words: Taxi Drivers, English Language Competence, Structural Equation Model

INTRODUCTION

Previous research reported that many Thai taxi drivers had difficulties expressing themselves and understanding the English spoken by the foreign visitors, leading to their inability to take those passengers to their destinations and complaints as well as dissatisfaction from the passengers (Salathong, 2011; Thadphoothon, 2014; TripAdvisor, 2016). This situation contributes to their perceived service quality, affecting Thailand's image as one of the world's top tourist destinations and its plan to move the country out of the middle-income trap (The Government Public Relation Department, 2016).

Previous studies showed the problems associated with taxi drivers. It was reported that for some, travelling by taxis in Bangkok may involve some elements of risks, especially women (Danuvasin, 2015), 47% of the people in Bangkok were not confident in the safety of taxis (ABAC Poll 2005, quoted in Seesan, Runkasiri, and Cooharajanone, 2012). At the same time, the same poll found that travelling by taxi is the most convenient type of transport. Taxi drivers are among the most neglected workers in Thai society, despite being a part of the 'stakeholders' for the growth of Thai economy. Little research has been done to look closely into their lives, plights, challenges, and opportunities.

Previous studies pointed out that Thai taxi drivers' English skills were humble (Salathong, 2011; Thadphoothon,

2014; TripAdvisor, 2016). Their language use was found to be limited to chunks or simple words. The language challenge has also been recognized, and sometimes directly experienced, by foreign visitors to Thailand.

Previous research showed that up to 70% of Thai taxi drivers in Bangkok had to service foreign customers per day (Thadphoothon, 2014). They were not, however, equipped with language and cross-cultural communication skills. Despite having to deal with English use challenges on a daily basis, Thai taxi drivers' language competence and factors affecting their language competence have not been properly studied and reported. This study is significant as it probes into their English language competence as well as the factors affecting their competence.

Objective

The objective of this study was to investigate the key factors determining Thai taxi drivers' English language competence.

Factors Affecting Language Competence

Attitudes - In the context of second language acquisition, the notion of attitude is not a new construct (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1988). It has been cited as a factor contributing to the language learning variables such as persistence and achievement. Burstall (1975) reported that

primary and secondary school students' attitudes to learning French were significantly related to their success in the language. Zeinivand, Azizifar, and Gowhary (2015) investigated the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward English and their speaking skills. They found a significant relationship between the learners' attitudes and their speaking skills. In measurement of attitudes, multicomponent models have been regarded as the most influential model. Where attitudes are evaluations of an object or event that has three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Brown 1992). In addition, Brown (1992) has pointed out that another influence was one's attitude toward speakers of the target language, noting that students with a positive attitude toward the people speaking or using the target language are more likely to produce better pronunciation.

Motivation - Motivation is what drives people toward a certain direction, one of the factors affecting learners' language ability (Gardner, 1988; Dornyei, & Schmidt, 2001). Traditionally, motivation has been perceived as having two dimensions: intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external) motivations. Intrinsic motivation is hypothesized to show itself when learners want to do something from within themselves, which is their internal desire to perform a particular task such as speaking English. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is when learners are moved by someone else or something tries to make them do something. Benson (1991) investigated the attitudes and motivation of over 300 Japanese university freshmen and found that the majority of the subjects rated their English skills as low. Moreover, intrinsic and personal reasons for learning English were more salient than the external extrinsic ones. The students perceived English as being useful for some limited modern functions in the Japanese society. Li and Pan (2009) investigated the relationship between motivation and achievement among 65 university students in China. They found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations significantly influenced the students' language achievement. However, they reported that only intrinsic motivation could significantly influence the high achievers.

Research showed that students who were intrinsically motivated are bound to do much better in classroom activities since they are willing and eager to learn (Li and Pan, 2009). It is also noted that both kinds of motivation are embraced by the learners. According to Brown (2000), intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are related. Learners are often motivated by both when they learn a second language. In formal schooling context, students are often found to possess both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for their learning (Harter and Jackson, 1992). Despite many conflicting research results, one thing is for sure, that is, motivated students are more successful in second language acquisition than those who are not motivated or less motivated.

Education and training - Education and training play a significant role in language skill development. A report by center for Applied Second Language Studies (2010), University of Oregon, sponsored by the US Department of Education found that a total number of instructional hours

significantly affected the language proficiency level of the students.

In English language learning, the students' proficiency depends on the length of their education, evidenced by the hours of instruction received. Education Testing Service (ETS) (2015) reported that 80 percent of those taking Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) had spent more than 6 years studying English. ETS also reported that the test takers with higher educational levels scored on average higher than those with lower educational ones. Previous research conducted by Thadphoothon (2014) also found a strong correlation between Thai taxi drivers' educational background and their English language skills.

Learning Habits - Research has revealed that test performance is closely related to the students' learning habits. Estes and Richards (1985, p. 11), for example, suggested that test performance was related to the study behaviors of the students. Students who performed well were those who were inquisitive. Furthermore, it was also found that the inquisitive students appear to approach their study with "an attitude of questioning, constantly thinking of ways to make what they are learning their own (p. 11)." The two researchers believed that such the behavior made the students successful learners.

How students learn the second language has been found to significantly influence the outcome of their learning. Six major groups of second language learning strategies were proposed by Oxford (1990). One of them is the social strategies, e.g. asking questions, asking for help, talking to native speakers). According to Oxford (2013) social strategies were significantly related to L2 proficiency in two contexts: (1) a study on South African EFL students by Dreyer and Oxford (1996, cited by Oxford, p. 14) and (2) an investigation of native-English speakers learning a foreign language by Oxford and Ehrman (1995, cited by Oxford, 1990, p. 14). Sabah Salman Sabbah (2016) investigated the effects of study habits on English language achievement among 160 college students in Doha, Qatar. The results showed that the students' learning habits significantly affected their tests' results or achievement. Research has also reported the effect of note-taking, a desirable learning trait, on learning achievement. Previous studies reported relationship between note-taking and academic performance. In sum, the reviewed factors were based on both research findings and language learning theories. They are in the scope of what Gardner (1988) referred to as the big four: aptitude, personality, attitudes, and motivation.

Definitions of Key Terms

English Language Competence (ELC) refers the English language ability and skills of a person or language learner. In English language learning, learners' language competence entails their grammatical knowledge as well as their ability to use the language or pragmatics (Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). In this study, taxi drivers' English Language Competence (ELC) refers to the Thai taxi drivers' English language skills and ability in general. This competence is measured by two factors, namely, (1) their self-assessment

referred to as English competence self-evaluation (ECSE), (2) the test-based English competence (TBC), which is the taxi drivers' test performance based on the tests designed by the researcher. Their self-evaluation is based on the taxi drivers' responses to a set of six self-evaluative statements with five levels of competence in speaking, reading, writing, overall ability, grammar and vocabulary, and knowledge of foreign culture. The English performance of the taxi drivers is a set of three measures: (1) reading aloud test, (2) oral interaction test, and (3) the 12-scenario test.

Attitudes toward Foreign Passengers (ATF) are the feelings and thoughts of individuals about or towards something, someone, or some phenomena. Those thoughts and feelings are the results of their past experiences, directly, indirectly, or the combination of both. In this study, the attitudes toward the foreign passengers refer to the perceptions of Thai taxi drivers toward the foreign customers or passengers. Following Brown (1992), these attitudes are classified into three foci: affective, behavioral, and cognitive focus. The first focus is called the Affection-oriented attitudes toward foreign passengers (AOA), the second focus is called the Behavior-oriented attitudes toward foreign passengers (BOA), and the third is called the Cognitive-oriented attitudes toward foreign passengers (COA). The scales are all the Likert's scales.

Independent English Language Learning Behavior (ILB) refers to Thai taxi drivers' responses to a set of items asking about their English language learning behavior. The construct has four components: (1) Learning from Experts (LFE), (2) Learning from Media (LFM), (3) Learning from reading and taking notes (LBR), and (4) Learning through using the language (LBU). This tool measured the frequency of their behavior. The samples respond to the set of Likert's type scale asking them to rate their frequency of learning English independently.

Motivation to Learn English (MLE) refers the reasons why people do something or why they behave in certain manners or ways. In English language learning, the reasons are classified into two categories: extrinsic (external such as monetary rewards) and intrinsic (internal such as having a sense of belonging) motivations (Gardner, 1988). In this study, motivation is determined from Thai taxi drivers' responses to a set of item addressing their motivation to learn English. Their motivation is categorized into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivation refers to the behavior driven by internal rewards such as pride, belongingness, and acceptance. Extrinsic motivation refers to the behavior driven by external rewards such as tips, money, promotion, income, or prizes. In this study, the terms intrinsic motivation and integrative motivation are used interchangeably.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) refers to a statistical method to analyze latent variables, those that are referred by others (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1996). Under SEM, the proposed relationship between the latent variables are proposed based on relevant theories. Then the proposed relationship, aka model, is tested against the empirical data.

Education and Training (EAT) refers to the Thai taxi drivers' level of educational background and their English

language training they have received. The samples respond to two items probing into their educational background and English language training received.

METHODS

Unlike previous studies (Salathong, 2011; Thadphoothon, 2014), this study utilized an advanced statistical technique (SEM) to investigate the factors that would affect the taxi drivers' English ability, which was complex and multi-faceted. Such the aim would require the investigation of various factors that may directly and indirectly affect other factors, and would only be possible, at present, statistically through the utilization of SEM method. Relevant theories were reviewed and the model was tested against the empirical data through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as well as the exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

Sampling and Population

This study employed two sampling techniques: the stratified sampling and quota sampling techniques. First of all, the number of taxis was classified based on two taxi types: cooperative and personal taxis. The population and samples were calculated from the data from the Department of Land Transport (July 2015).

The population of this study is the Thai taxi cab drivers in Bangkok. Based on the statistics from the Department of Land Transport, there are 100,936 registered taxi cab drivers in Bangkok. The samples are to be drawn of the population using stratified sampling technique. Based on Yamane's sample size formula (1967), it is found that 315 taxi cab drivers are needed to represent that population with 5 percent random error.

Secondly, the quota sampling technique was employed. The areas where the taxis operated were identified and classified into three zones. Accordingly, the data were collected from these three zones. According to the administrative division of Bangkok, the districts are classified into: (1) the inner zone, (2) the central zone, and (3) the outer zone. The classification was done based on the area-based existing classification adopted by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration's Department of Environment Control and Management (MBA Office of the Permanent Secretary, 2015).

The proposed model (Figure 1) shows the relationship of the variables under the study. The model has been constructed based on the relevant theories and research findings (Gardner, 1988; Brown, 2000; Dornyei, & Schmidt, 2001; Thadphoothon, 2017). Under the model, taxi drivers' educational background and past language training (EAT) is hypothesized to affect their English language competence as well as their independent English language learning behavior (ILB) Their English language competence entails two components: (1) the competence based on self-evaluation and (2) the competence based on the tests.

Previous research showed that Thai taxi drivers employed a variety of communication strategies to achieve their goals. Despite their limited grammatical and lexical ability, many of them managed to provide taxi services successfully. Their

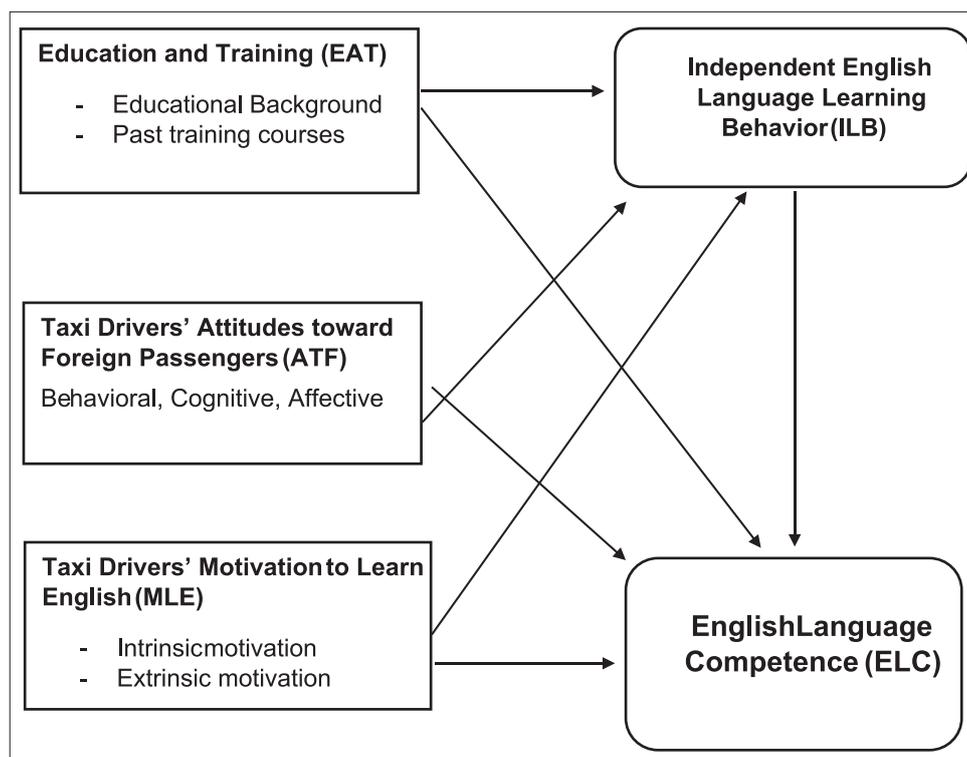


Figure 1: The proposed model

language learning behavior is thus crucial for the development of their language competence. It is thus hypothesized that their learning behavior (ILB) affects their competence (ELC). Based on the model, the direct variables are the following (1) the taxi drivers' educational background and past training (EAT), their attitudes towards foreigners (ATF), and their motivation to learn English (MLE). The indirect variable is their independent English language learning behavior (ILB). Their attitudes and motivation are hypothesized as salient in the prediction of their English language competence.

In summary, it is hypothesized that the taxi drivers' English competence (ELC) is influenced by four factors: their attitudes towards the foreign visitors (non-Thai customers) (ATF), their motivation to learn English (MLE), their educational and training background (EAT), and their independent English language learning behavior (ILB). To test the hypotheses, the researcher relied on the analysis of data that was collected from the Thai taxi drivers through the use of tests and questionnaires.

Research Instruments

The instruments are questionnaires and tests. All of the statements are developed by the researcher. They are made up of the following:

Survey of Taxi Drivers' Background– Questions will elicit responses from the taxi drivers. They will be asked about their experience, age, educational background, past training courses, socio-economic status (income per month), and their workload (hours of work per week).

Test of Thai Taxi Drivers' English Competence– This is a set of tests developed by the researcher entailing the taxi drivers' self-assessment of their English ability in four skills,

their overall assessment of their English ability. They were also asked to assess their grammatical and lexical abilities, in addition to their perceived knowledge of the culture of the non-Thai passengers. They were also asked to read aloud a short passage, answer two questions, and respond to twelve situations. All constituted the measures of their English competence with the focus on communication. The test is constructed based on the notion of communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983) who propose that the construct 'communicative competence' has four components, namely, grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. It is also based on the notion of communicative competence posited by Bachman and Palmer (1996), conceptualizing communicative competence as having both language knowledge and pragmatic knowledge. In this study, the test has both the linguistic and pragmatic components. The correlation coefficient value of 0.51 between the taxi drivers' self-evaluation of their own English language competence and their actual language performance was also significant at 0.01.

Reliability of the Instruments

Three instruments, Attitudes toward Foreign Passengers (ATF), Motivation to Learn English (MLE), and Independent Language Learning Behavior (ILB) underwent a reliability determination process. They were put on a trial with samples of 30 taxi drivers. The results were as follows (Table 1):

Overall, the reliability index of each scale was found to be satisfactory, except for the LBU scale ($\alpha = .62$). One explanation is the fact that the scale has only two items. The low number of items in the scale is recognized as a main

Table 1. Reliability of scales

Scale	Trialed alfa (N=30)
Affection-oriented attitudes toward foreign passengers (AOA)	0.78
Behavior-oriented attitudes toward foreign passengers (BOA)	0.73
Cognition-oriented attitudes toward foreign passengers (COA)	0.71
Intrinsic Motivation to learn English (IMO)	0.77
Extrinsic Motivation to learn English (EMO)	0.72
Learning from experts (LFE)	0.75
Learning from Media (LFM)	0.76
Learning by Reading and Note-taking (LBR)	0.72
Learning by Using the language (LBU)	0.62

factor affecting the reliability of the scale (Grondlund, 1976, pp. 117-122; Mehrens and Lehmann, 1975, pp. 100-103, cited in Sukamonsan, 1999, p. 97). Despite the limitation, the LBU scale was included in the latent variable.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed in two statistical techniques: descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling technique.

The taxi drivers' answers to the tests and the questionnaires were analyzed to identify their driving experience, attitudes towards foreign passengers (ATF), their motivation to learn English (MLE), their educational background and previous English language training (EAT), their independent English language learning behavior (ILB), and their English language competence (ELC).

After that, the data were analyzed using the structural modeling analysis to test the hypotheses using the statistical package LISREL 8.72.

FINDINGS

General Characteristics

Most taxi drivers were male (335 or 98.00%). Only 7 of them or 2.05% were female. In total, 333 (97.37%) responded to the survey on their age. The majority of the taxi drivers were between 28-67 years old (95.81%). Twelve of them (3.51%) were 68 years old or above. There were 9 of them or 2.63% who did not answer this question. Almost 60 percent of Thai taxi drivers (197) did not take any day off in a week. This indicates their tough work conditions. One hundred and fifteen taxi drivers had a day off in a week (33.60). About 9% of them had two days off or more.

Taxi drivers worked long hours per week. 48 of them (14.0%) worked 100 hours or more in a week. There were 102 taxi drivers (29.80%) working between 81-100 hours per. It was found that 109 of them (31.92%) worked 61-80 hours in a week. 83 of them (24.20%) worked 60 hours or less per week.

In terms of education, it was found that the majority of the respondents had primary education (115 or 33.63%). 79 of them (23.10%) had lower secondary education. It was found that 101 of them (29.53%) had upper secondary/vocational education. The number of taxi drivers with higher vocational education was 18 (5.26%); 29 (8.48%) had BA or higher education.

It was found that 201 (58.77%) of the taxi drivers said they received no English language training at all. Eighty-five of them (24.85%) said they had undergone only 1 training. Only thirty-six of them (10.53%) had an English training once in 12 months. This table shows that the majority of Thai taxi drivers has very little English language training. Most Thai taxi drivers sampled had attained low level of education. They also received little English language training per year.

Taxi Drivers' English Competence

Table 2 shows the taxi drivers' self-assessment of their English competence. Theirs was found to be at the low level (Mean= 1.96), indicating that, in general, the taxi drivers assessed themselves as having low English competence. The mean for the standard deviation was.82, reflecting the acceptable quality of the mean.

Like the self-assessment, the actual English performance of the taxi drivers, measured through the oral, read aloud, and scenario tests, was found to be humble (Table 3). Their ability to read aloud was low. Their oral interaction skills as measured by their ability to orally answer two questions were considered low. Based on their ability to response to the set scenarios, it was found that theirs was low too. This set of measures showed that their English competence was low.

Structural Equation Modeling Analysis

In social studies, e.g. language, and education where variables are complex and controls are not feasible, SEM

Table 2. Self-assessment of English competence

Area	N	Mean	SD	Meaning
Speaking skills	342	2.05	0.825	Poor
Listening skills	342	2.06	0.838	Poor
Reading skills	342	2.06	0.893	Poor
Writing skills	342	1.94	0.829	Poor
Vocab& gram skills	342	1.80	0.767	Poor
Overall skills	342	2.04	0.840	Poor
Cultural skills	342	1.79	0.815	Poor
Average		1.96	0.82	Poor

Table 3. English language performance of the taxi drivers

Types	n	Mean	SD	Meaning
Reading aloud	342	1.41	0.69	Poor
Oral interaction	342	1.44	0.73	Poor
Scenario	342	1.61	0.74	Poor
Average	342	1.78	0.72	Poor

analysis has been the method of choice in explaining the relationship between the latent factors (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1996; Kenny, 2015). In our study, we analyzed the relationship of the latent variables using the statistical package LISREL 8.72, a viable and reliable tool to investigate the factors as well as their paths. Results were as the following (Figure 2):

The abbreviations for Figure 2 are the following:

- EAT = Educational background and English language training
- EDU = Educational background
- PAT = Past language training
- ATF = Attitudes towards foreigners
- AOA = Affection-oriented attitudes toward foreign passengers
- BOA = Behavior-oriented attitudes toward foreign passengers
- COA = Cognition-oriented attitudes toward foreign passengers
- MLE = Motivation to learn English
- IMO = Intrinsic motivation
- EMO = Extrinsic motivation
- ILB = Independent English Language Behavior
- LFE = Learning from experts
- LFM = Learning from media
- LBR = Learning by reading and note-taking
- LBU = Learning by using the language
- ELC = English language competence
- SEE = Self-evaluation competence
- TBC = Test-based competence.

The proposed model was slightly modified by allowing the latent variables to correlated, and after the adjustment it was supported by the empirical data. The followings indicators show how the data fits the model. The fit indicators include the following: the Chi-square, the Good of Fit Index (GFI), the Adjusted Goodness –Of-Fit Index (AGFI), Confirmatory Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI),

RMR (the Root Mean Square Residual), and RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1996; Kenny, 2015).

The analysis yields the Chi-square of 53.821 with the ratio between the Chi-square and the degree of freedom of 1.170. The P value is as low as .200 with the Good of Fitness Index (GFI) as high as .977. Similarly, the Adjusted Goodness-Of-Fit Index (AGFI) is found to be as high as .954. Other indicators include the Confirmatory Fit Index (CFI), which is as high as .996; the Normed Fit Index (NFI) of .972. The Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) is as low as .021 and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is also at the low level of 0.22, which is below 0.05. All of these indexes indicate the fit between the observed data and the hypothesized relationship among the five latent variables.

Equations in Standardized Values

Two equations in standardized values were obtained as follows:

1. $ILB = 0.168 EAT + 0.025 ATF + 0.372 MLE$
2. $ELC = 0.828 EAT + 0.058 ATF + 0.014 MLE + 0.297 ILB$

ILB

The first equation explains the equation of the taxi drivers’ independent language learning behavior (ILB). Three latent variables predict the variance of ILB, namely, their education and training (EAT) with the standardized regression weight of 0.168, their attitudes toward the foreign passengers (ATF) with the standardized regression weight of 0.025, and their motivation to learn English (MLE) with the standardized regression weight of 0.372. MLE or their motivation to learn English is the most significant contributor to ILB, followed by ATF and EAT.

The second equation directly answers the research question: the factors affecting Thai taxi drivers’ English language competence. The equation tells us that there are four latent

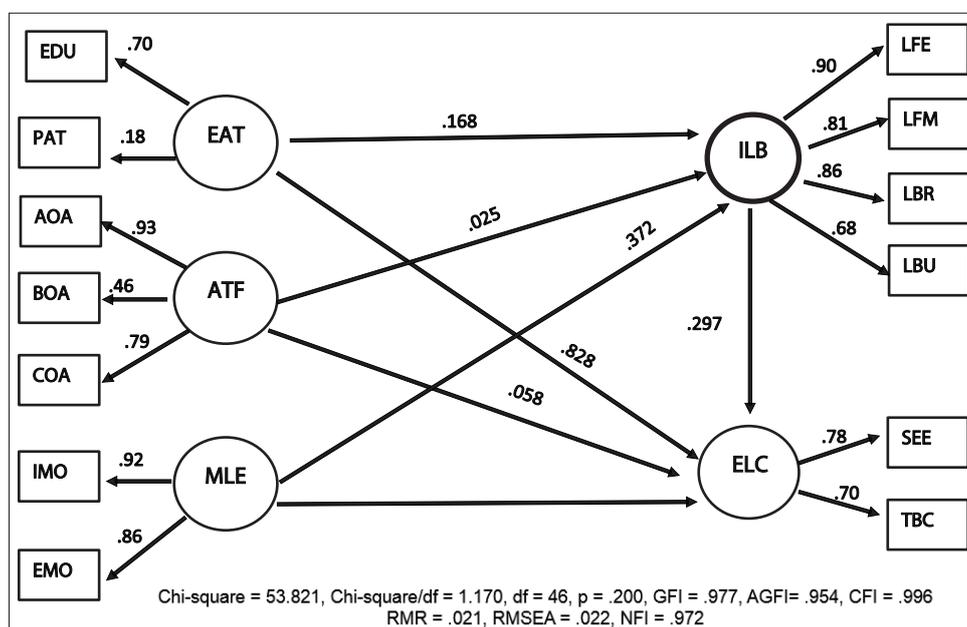


Figure 2: The relationship between five latent variables

factors (variables) contributing to the variance of the predicted variable, their English language competence (ELC). The factors are their past education and training (EAT) with the standardized regression weight of 0.828, their independent language learning behavior (ILB) with the standardized regression weight of 0.297. Two other significant factors are their attitudes toward the foreign passengers (ATE) with the standardized regression weight of 0.058 and their motivation to learn English (MLE) with the weight of 0.014. EAT is the most significant factor affecting the taxi drivers' English language competence, followed by ILB, ATF, and MLE, respectively.

DISCUSSIONS

English Language Competence of Thai Taxi Drivers

This study investigated the factors affecting Thai taxi drivers' English language competence. Data were collected from the sample of 342 Thai taxi drivers. They did the language tests and answered the questionnaires. This study found that the English language used by the taxi drivers, in general, was limited to a basic level and they focused mainly on communication, not style or grammatical accuracy.

Despite having a low English competence, many taxi drivers managed to get the job done, that is, taking the foreign passenger to his or her destination safe and sound. They compensated their lack of linguistic resources to communicative strategies such as using maps, mobile phones, gestures, and asking for help. They exhibited a high level of problem-solving skills. Another explanation that may explain their success in providing their taxi service is their attitudes toward the foreign passengers and their high level of motivation, intrinsically and extrinsically. Despite their high level of motivation to provide a successful taxi service to customers (in general) and then foreign passengers (in particular), their language skills remain a challenge.

Additionally, their linguistic output, orally or in writing, also supports the natural acquisition hypothesis (Dulay and Burt, 1974; Krashen, 1982, Vainikka and Young-Scholten, 2007; 2011). Taxi drivers with weaker English language skills used bare infinitives without necessary verbal inflection; whereas, more competent speakers used inflected verbs and correct subject-verb agreements. Another characteristic is their inability to sustain and develop a conversation (Thadphothon, 2014). Many taxi drivers could not read English, but their spoken language could help them get the job done.

The finding confirms what has been reported in Thadphothon (2014), which reported that most Thai taxi drivers were poor at English. In the current study, of the 342 taxi drivers surveyed, only 22% of them said their English was sufficient or adequate to cope with the demand of English. The majority of them (78% or 33 taxi drivers) said that their English was poor or very poor.

As for the factors affecting their English language competence, it was found that previous levels of education and training played a significant role in predicting their language competence, as the equation shows (.82). This suggests that Thai taxi drivers with higher levels of education and training

tend to have better English language skills. Other factors included their attitudes toward foreign passengers and their motivation to learning English (.05). It was also found that their independent language learning behavior significantly affected their English language competence (.29). The criteria for determining the fitness of the model include the value of the relative Chi-Square of less than 2, which is not significant, the RMSEA of less than 2, and the standardized RMR of less than 0.05. Significance of education and training.

The study found a significant relationship between Thai taxi drivers' past education and training (EAT) and their English language competence (ELC). The direct effect of EAT on ELC is as high as .83 or 83 percent, which shows how strong the effect of education and training is. Hence, the taxi drivers with high EAT tend to exhibit high levels of ELC. This reveals that education and training matters when it comes to English language ability. EAT also affects their independent language learning behavior and the effect stands at .17 or 17 percent. In addition, ILB functions as a moderating variable, as it influences their English language competence.

The study found that Thai taxi drivers' educational background and their past training (EAT) was a highly significant and potent factor determining the variance of their language competence. The analysis shows that the majority of Thai taxi drivers had a low level of English language training. This variable directly and indirectly affected the taxi drivers' English ability (ELC). Moreover, the variable also influences the taxi drivers' independent language learning behavior (ILB).

Even though, in general, Thai taxi drivers have lower English language skills, there are, still, some of them who possess good language skills. This is perhaps due to the fact that the taxi driving is a relatively open job. Any Thai who has the vehicle and the public driving license can choose to earn a living by driving a taxi.

Attitudes Towards Non-Thai Passengers

Based on the latent variable model, Thai taxi drivers' attitudes toward foreign passengers (ATF) affect their English language competence (ELC). Even though the co-efficient effect is 0.05, it is an integral part of the model. Their attitudes are also related to their motivation to learn the English language (MLE). This shows how important attitudes are in the context of language competence.

The study revealed the link between the English ability of the taxi drivers and attitudes toward foreign passengers. The effect of the attitudes on the English competence was both positive and significant. This finding is consistent with previous studies (e.g. Burstall, 1975, Zeinivand, Azizifar, and Gowhary, 2015).

Effects of Motivation

In this study, the taxi drivers' motivation to learn English is categorized as having two dimensions: extrinsic and intrinsic. Thai taxi drivers' motivation to learn English (MLE) affects their English language competence (ELC). The correlation

between their intrinsic motivation to learning English (IMO) and their extrinsic motivation (EMO) is significant at the 0.01 level of confidence ($r = .789$). Their extrinsic motivation is related to their attitudes and English competence. It was also found that the taxi drivers' English competence is significantly related to their education attainment. This shows that Thai taxi drivers were motivated to learn English and they were motivated internally and externally.

In basic correlational analysis, the correlation between the English language competence of the taxi drivers and their extrinsic motivation stands at .29, significant at 0.05. In SEM analysis, both types of motivation play a crucial part in the taxi drivers' language competence. This finding contributes to the literature on the effects of motivation. This research found that the taxi drivers' motivation to learn English affects their independence language learning behavior (ILB) with the effect size of .37, which suggests that their motivation affects how they learn English on their own. Their motivation also affects their English competence (ELC) with the effect size of .01. The total composite effect is as high as .38. This suggests that taxi drivers with higher motivation tend to exhibit their independent language learning behavior, and this, in turn, helps develop their language competence.

In this study, the taxi drivers' motivation to learn English is categorized as having two dimensions: extrinsic and intrinsic.

Our findings suggest that motivation to learn English does not mean that they have to choose either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. They can choose both types. This finding is in line with what Brown (2000) has discovered, that is, extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are related. It is also supported by the research finding by Harter and Jackson (1992) on the co-occurrence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and the study by Lemos and Verissimob (2014) reporting that the two types could co-exist and are not necessarily contradictory.

Independent English Language Learning Behavior (ILB)

Most Thai taxi drivers develop their English language skills on their own (Thadphoothon, 2014). In this study, Thai taxi drivers' independent English language learning behavior (ILB) positively affects their English language competence (ELC). Moreover, independent English learning behavior (ILB) contributes significantly to motivation to learn English (MLE). These findings point to the importance of the variable.

Indeed, one of the major findings of this study is the role of the taxi drivers' independent English language learning behavior (ILB). This latent variable is found to significantly affect the taxi drivers' English language competence (ELC) with the effect size of .37. This linear relationship reveals the significance of their self-learning behavior. The structural model also reveals that the variable is also functioned as a moderating factor of the taxi drivers' English competence (ELC).

After the adjustment of the model, ILB has two functions: (1) as a factor affecting the taxi drivers' language competence (ELC) and (2) as the predicted variables explained by

three other latent variables. In other words, ILB is influenced by other latent variables, namely, the taxi drivers' previous education attainment and training factor (EAT), motivation to learn English (MLE), and attitudes toward foreign passengers (ATF).

In the educational literature, it is acknowledged that students' habits influence their learning outcomes. Odiri (2015) found that there was significant relationship between students' study habits and mathematics achievement. Thadphoothon (2017) also reported that the students' frequency of note-taking was related to their learning outcome as measured by the test.

Taxi drivers' ILB is crucial for them because it affects their language ability. Past research revealed that Thai taxi drivers with good English took notes and often used English with foreigners (Thadphoothon, 2014). Given the fact that most taxi drivers have to work long hours and have little time to relax, their ability to 'independently' develop themselves is detrimental to their service quality and, subsequently, their own quality of life.

Work Conditions and Language Development

The motivation to learn English among Thai taxi drivers was found to be at a high level (Mean=3.52/5.00). Both types of their motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic, were found to be at the high level and they were closely related as discussed earlier. This shows that Thai taxi drivers were very motivated to learn English, which is in line with the past research (Thadphoothon, 2014). However, their motivation was hindered by their work conditions. Previous research showed that the majority of Thai taxi drivers worked long hours and they hardly had time to relax (Thadphoothon, 2014). This finding was supported by previous research conducted by Salathong (2011), reporting that taxi drivers receive very few training opportunities. Most of them did not receive any on-the-job training. Their job security and safety were low. A recent study by Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) discusses the poor quality of life of Thai taxi drivers and has suggested to the Thai government a taxi fare increase by the end of 2018 (Hongtong, 2018).

Under the above conditions, Thai taxi drivers were under severe constraints in terms of their ability to improve their English. Any effort to help develop their English language skills would benefit from being cognizant of those constraints. In addition to language development and in consideration of the number of complaints from customers regarding their taxi service; it would be useful to provide training for them based on manners and cross-cultural communication. Previous research has found that the manners of taxi drivers affected customer satisfaction with their service (Assawapattanakul and Tunwanichakul, 2012).

Their motivation to learn English is high, which implies that most taxi drivers would like to improve their English. However, the kind of English language they preferred learning is for communication, not for examination. Given the condition of their work, the majority of Thai taxi drivers prefer to learn English on their job and for practical purposes.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate Thai taxi drivers' English language competence and the key factors affecting their competence. The total of 342 Thai taxi drivers were sampled and were asked to answer the questionnaires and each was asked to do the language tests aiming to determine their English language ability. Structural Equation Modeling was used. The study found several behavioral and attitudinal factors influenced the taxi drivers' English language competence.

The study, through the evidence of SEM analysis, revealed that the following factors: educational background and English language training, the taxi drivers' motivation to learn English, their attitudes toward foreign passengers, and their independent English language learning behavior influenced Thai taxi drivers' English competence. The highlights of the study entail the discovery of the significant relationship between their motivation to learn English and attitudes towards foreign (non-Thai) passengers. The taxi drivers were intrinsically and extrinsically motivated; their learning of English would bring both financial rewards and sense of pride. In addition, their motivation to learn English influenced their self-learning behavior as well as their English competence.

The findings were significant for many stakeholders wishing to improve the language skills of Thai taxi drivers. Considering the fact that as many as 70% of them encounter foreign customers per day, it is essential that they are equipped with language and cross-cultural communication skills. It was obvious that the taxi drivers under this study had problems when they serviced foreign customers, and the two major causes of those were their language skills, cultural knowledge and awareness, and their attitudes toward foreign passengers.

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