



Teaching English Pronunciation among Thai Engineering EFL Learners: Perceptions, Problems and Solutions

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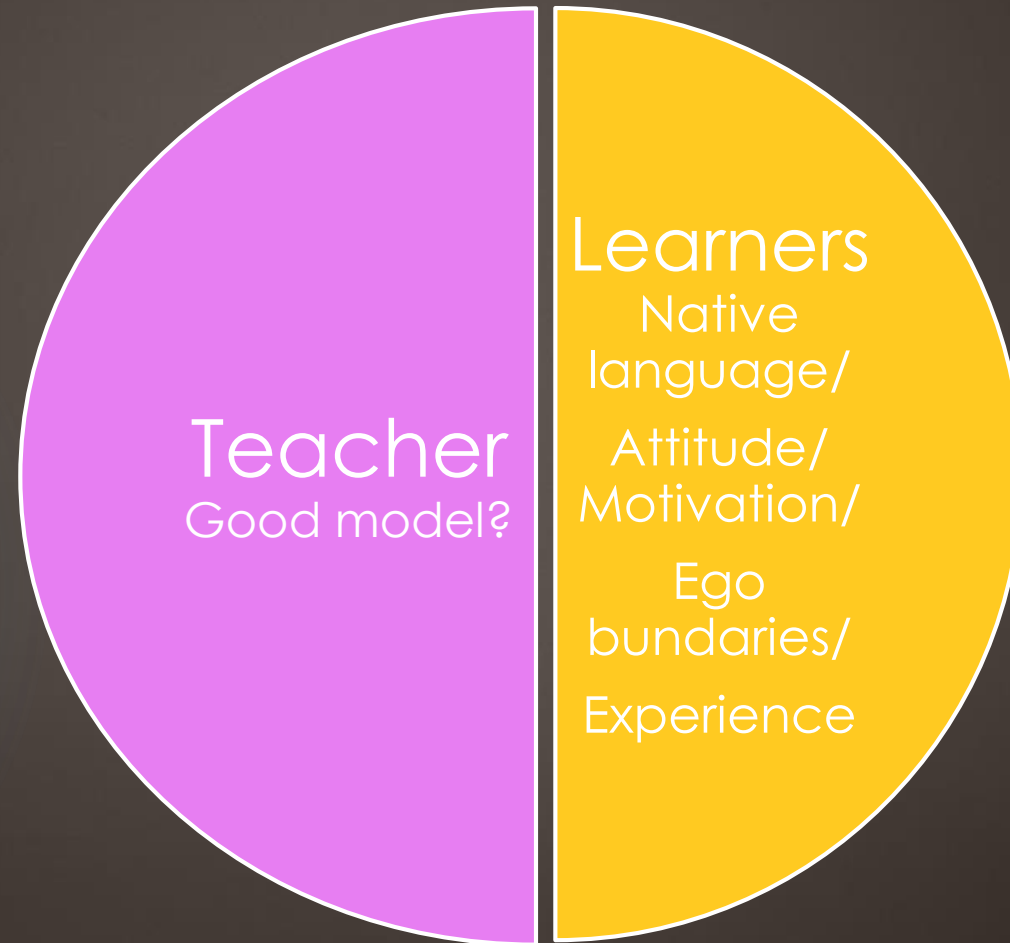
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Why study on pronunciation problems?

- ▶ Incomprehensibility of students' talk caused by their poor pronunciation.
- ▶ Students are too shy to speak out since they are not confident with their pronunciation.
- ▶ Problems and solutions to solve those problems



Previous studies



The teaching of English pronunciation among EFL learners



Teacher
Good model?

According to Khamkhien (2010: 763),
*English teachers themselves should initially be aware of the expertise expected of teachers. That is, they should possess knowledge of instruction, knowledge of context, and expertise related to the subject matter, word stress assignment because **the teachers' pronunciation is the major input that the learners are exposed to.***

Kanoksilapatham (2014) found that **Thai teachers have difficulty identifying stressed syllables in English.**

What are the problems?

Learners

Native language/
Attitude/
Motivation/
Ego boundaries/
Experience

Kanokpermpoon (2007), and Wei & Zhou (2002) revealed in their findings that there are differences when it comes **to consonants and vowels sounds** of the native language compared with English.

Wei & Zhou's (2002) also revealed that aside from consonants and vowels as problems for Thai learners, **intonation and stress are also among the difficulties of the students to deliver.**

Factors affecting pronunciation features

Dornyei (2001)
High or Low

Motivation

Age

Lenneberg
(1967)
Puberty

Haymes (2000) and
Senel (2006)
Sufficient or scarce

Experience

Ego
boundaries

Ehrman
(1999)
Thick vs
Thin

Senel (2006)
Introvert vs Extrovert

Attitude

Etc.

Why is this research called upon?

While a number of the previous studies have dealt with Thai students' pronunciation problems, **none of them concentrated on looking at the reasons behind the commission of these errors, and none of them have proposed a solution to the problem.**

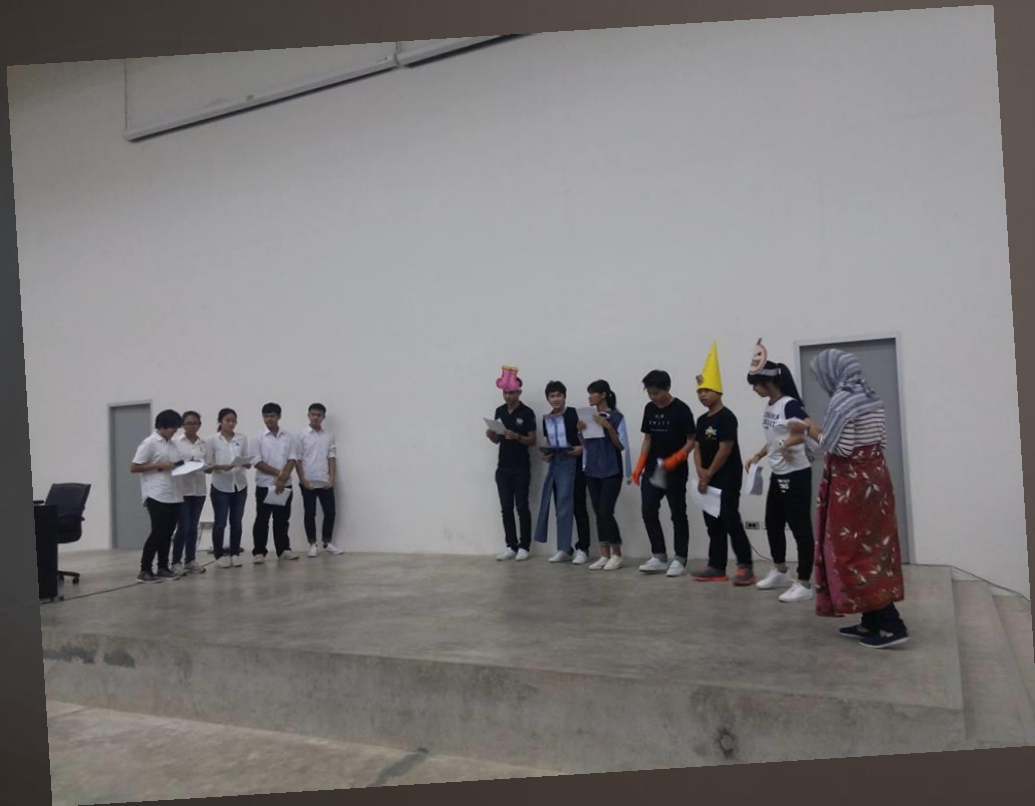
Research Questions



- ▶ What pronunciation problems are found common among Thai engineering students of the Residential College, KMUTT?
- ▶ What can be attributed to the commission of these pronunciation problems?
- ▶ What training program can be proposed to address the problem?

Research participants

- ▶ 69 of 1st year engineering undergraduate students of Residential College, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi.



Research instruments



- ▶ Survey questionnaires (perceptions)
- ▶ Pronunciation identification task (problems)
- ▶ Semi-structured individual interview (solutions)

Data analysis




- ▶ When? : 1st semester of the academic year of 2016.
- ▶ Research nature : qualitative
- ▶ What to find out? : interpret and categorize pronunciation problems of the learners, causes of those problems and possible training programs or supports that the university can provide to enhance students' pronunciation skill.

Findings

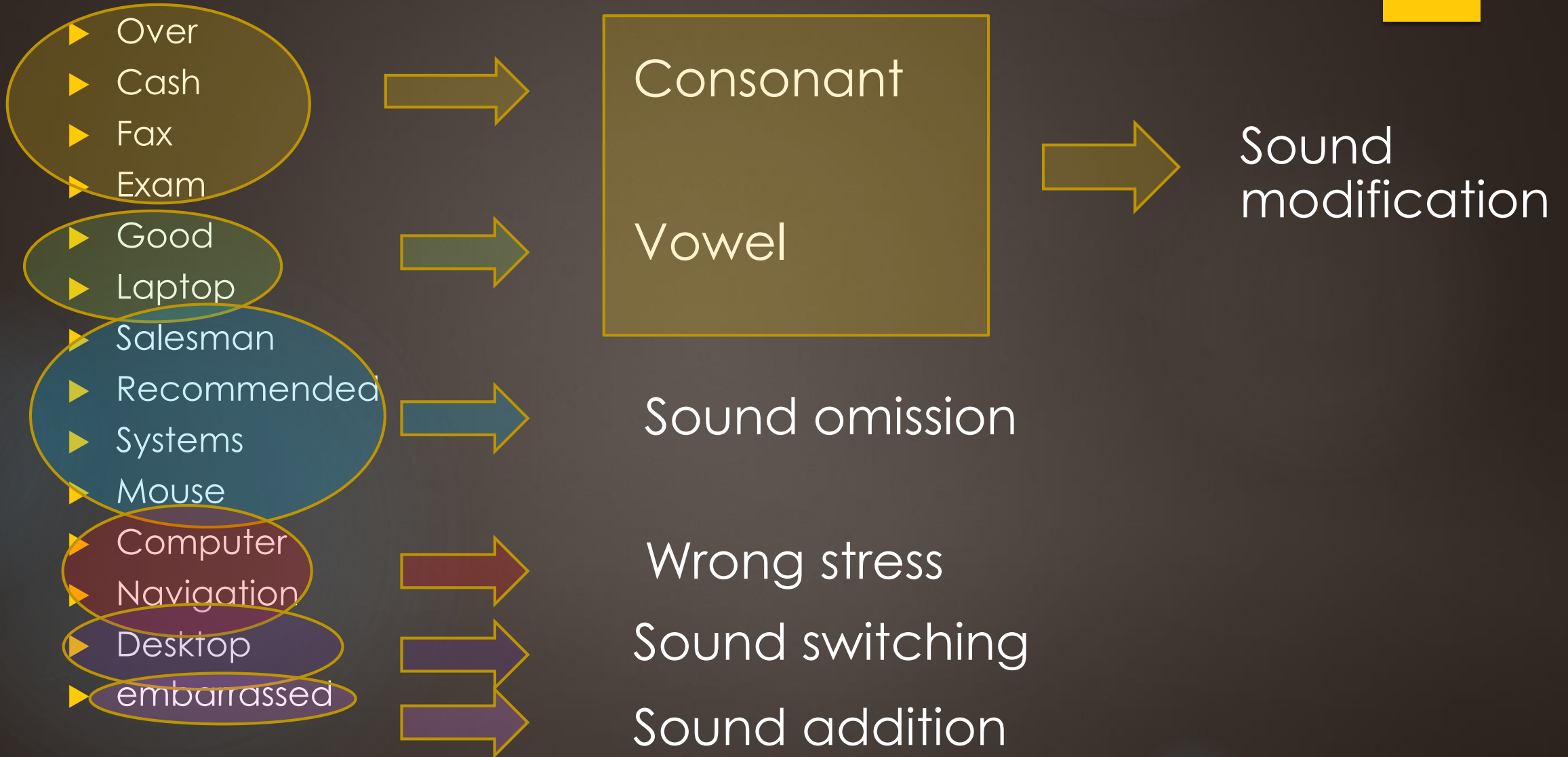


- ▶ The questionnaire which was adapted from Gerhiser & Wrenn (2007) and Mills et al. (2011) was employed for the preliminary survey of the participants' **self-evaluation and self-awareness** on their pronunciation proficiency and problems.

No.	Questions	Percentage of response rates		
		Yes	No	Not sure
1	My voice was loud and clear enough when speaking.	37.93%	20.69%	41.38%
2	I produce clear consonants.	20.69%	41.38%	37.93%
3	I produce clear vowels.	48.28%	6.90%	44.83%
4	I have appropriate word stress.	3.45%	31.03%	65.52%
5	I have appropriate intonation.	24.14%	24.14%	51.72%
6	I make appropriate though groups/ pausing.	17.24%	34.48%	48.28%
7	I address my messages at the appropriate speed.	24.14%	17.24%	58.62%
8	My pronunciation can make audiences	24.14%	10.34%	65.52%

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- ▶ The findings presented in Table 1 shows that learners cannot identify their problems clearly.

Pronunciation Identification Task



Semi-structured interview: reflection from learners

- ▶ The specific pronunciation problems were mispronunciation of vowel and consonant sounds especially /z/, /s/, /ð/, /θ/, /-əd/, /v/, /h/ sounds

Semi-structured interview: reflection from learners

- ▶ They admitted that they did not have enough practice in speaking; they **panic** and were too **nervous** to read the text written in English; they did not know the correct pronunciation of some sounds, could not pronounce the **long words** in a series; and they were not familiar with some English words.

Semi-structured interview: reflection from learners

- ▶ About the area of pronunciation they like to work on most and their goals for the pronunciation training, they disclosed that they wanted to make their audience understand the words they speak, to be **confident** in speaking English, to work more on vowel and consonant sounds and to sound like the native speakers.

Solutions: students' perspective

Activities that can enhance students' pronunciation from their perspective.

- ▶ learning some techniques to practice pronunciation
- ▶ reading aloud
- ▶ listening and repeating the sounds from the video and audio clips
- ▶ attending to training sessions
- ▶ watching English movies
- ▶ setting up English summer camp
- ▶ singing a song
- ▶ playing games

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- ▶ However, they admitted that they did not know **the appropriate materials or strategies** that would lead to effective practice in pronunciation/speaking.

Discussions



- ▶ Native language interference L2 acquisition – misinterpretation of sounds
- ▶ Lack of pronunciation rules knowledge e.g.-ed ending pronunciation
- ▶ Foreign accent somehow makes it hard to pronounce the target language

Discussions



- ▶ Kenworthy (1987), stated that the native language is the most influential factor that affects students' pronunciation especially foreign accents. In fact, this was supported by Busà (2010) who found that Italian language, as a native language, interferes the learning of English vowels since **the phonological systems of both languages are different.**

Suggestions



- ▶ Get students exposed in English speaking contexts
- ▶ English should be made as the medium of instruction in the classroom. Teachers should encourage the students to use the language at all times whenever they are in the English class or even outside of the class.
- ▶ Phonological and articulatory system of the English sounds should be introduced to the students in order to let them have an idea of the different sounds of the English language.

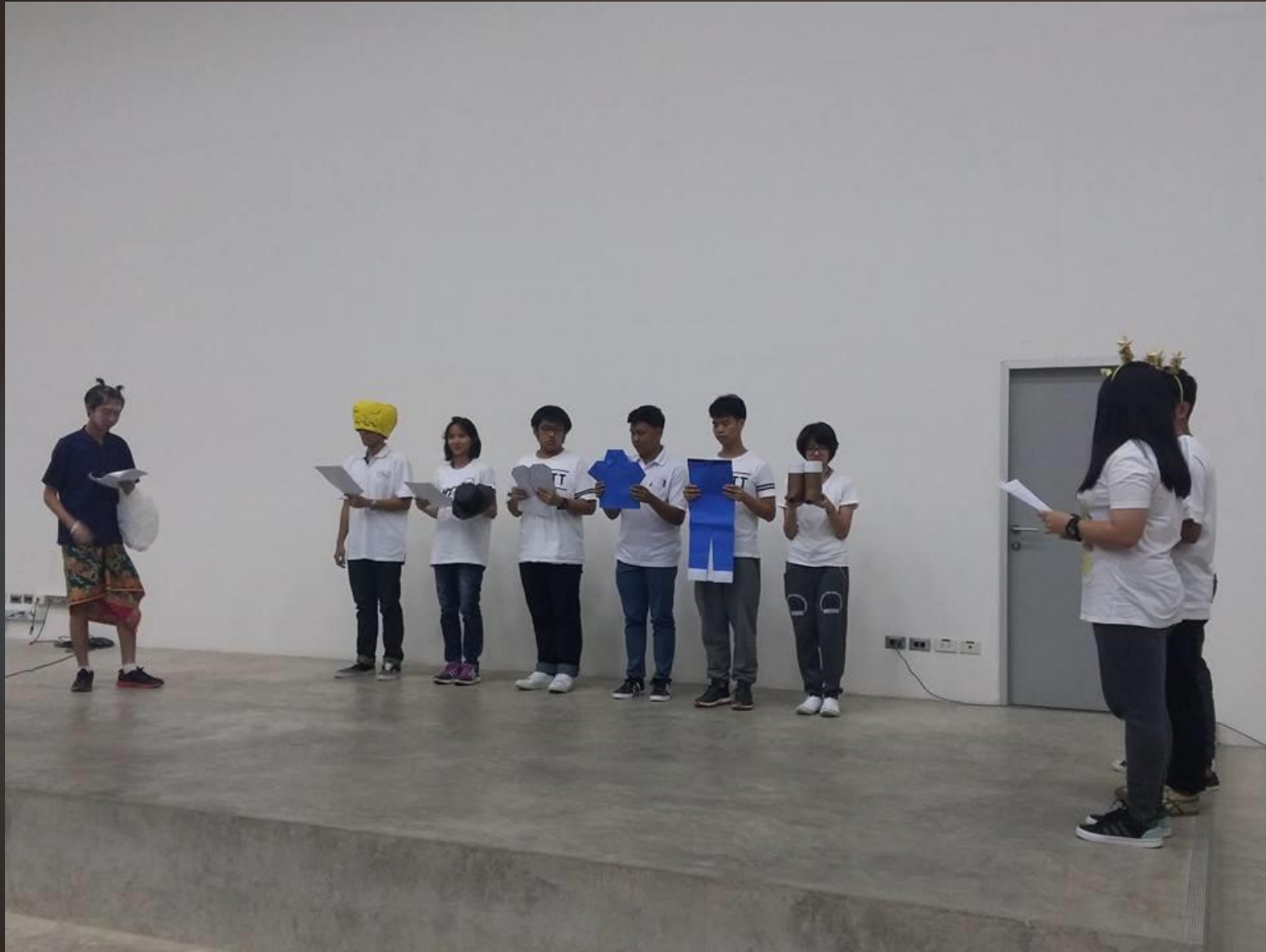
Training programs

1. Speech and communication training





2. Tongue twister
3. Reading aloud



4. Readers theater



5. Excursion & Presentation

Q & A

