

การสำรวจความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษาต่างชาติต่อการใช้ แอปพลิเคชัน LINE ในการฝึกฝนทักษะการฟังและการพูดภาษาไทย Exploring Foreign Students' Perception of LINE Application Assisted Listening and Speaking Skills Practice in Thai Language

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษาต่างชาติต่อการใช้แอปพลิเคชัน LINE ในการฝึกฝนทักษะการฟังและการพูดภาษาไทย กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการวิจัย คือนักศึกษาต่างชาติชั้นปีที่หนึ่ง จำนวน 24 คน ศึกษาในรายวิชาภาษาและวัฒนธรรมไทย ในภาคการศึกษาที่ 1 ปีการศึกษา 2560 ตอบแบบสอบถามหลังจากการใช้แอปพลิเคชัน LINE ในการฝึกฝนทักษะการฟังและการพูดภาษาไทยนอกห้องเรียน สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล คือ สถิติพรรณนา ผลการวิจัยพบว่า นักศึกษามีความคิดเห็นเชิงบวกต่อประโยชน์ของการใช้แอปพลิเคชัน LINE ในการฝึกฝนทักษะการฟังและการพูดภาษาไทยนอกห้องเรียน นอกจากนี้นักศึกษาได้เสนอข้อคิดเห็นต่อการพัฒนารูปแบบกิจกรรมสำหรับการฝึกฝนทักษะการฟังและการพูดภาษาไทยผ่านการใช้แอปพลิเคชัน LINE โดยการสร้างกิจกรรมในรูปแบบของแบบทดสอบ สร้างกิจกรรมในรูปแบบของคำตอบที่มีหลายตัวเลือกให้ผู้เรียนได้เลือกตอบระหว่างการฝึกฝน และสร้างกิจกรรมในรูปแบบของโครงร่างบทสนทนา

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Abstract

This study addresses the foreign students' perceptions on LINE application usefulness after using it to do activities and practice their listening and speaking skills in Thai language out-of-class. The participants (n=24) of the study were first-year foreign undergraduate students who studied in the course of Thai language and culture in the first semester of the academic year 2017. The participants completed a questionnaire which included demographic information, ten close-ended questions, and five open-ended questions. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and content analysis. The results revealed that participants had positive perception on the usefulness of LINE application assisted Thai listening and speaking skills practice out-of-class. In addition, participants gave the suggestions for further LINE activities. They suggested for more words and sentences in form of quizzes and multiple choices, and conversation dialogues.

Keywords: LINE, mobile-assisted language learning, language skills,

1. Introduction

Since the movement towards the use of mobile technology in education is on the rise and the new generation of smartphones offers opportunities for language learning (Godwin-Jones, 2005; 2011; Khaddage & Latteman, 2013), mobile assisted language learning (MALL) has become ever more common (Kukulka-Hulme & Shield, 2007) in language classes with the unique features and functionalities that are helpful for learners (Facer, 2004; Miangah & Nezarat, 2012). Mobile applications are rapidly developed to support language learning. There are various mobile applications available for learning a language such as Busuu, Babbel, Duolingo, Memrise, and other online dictionaries. However, most of mobile applications are claimed that they exist a lack of adequate interaction and immediate feedback as well as sufficient opportunities for language learning and practice which make students seem to learn from canned product (Jabeen

& Thomas, 2015) because those mobile applications are asynchronous. The instant messenger applications which respond simultaneously then have become significance in language learning. LINE application is one of instant messenger applications that the author of this paper utilized in this study for participants to practice their listening and speaking skills in Thai language out-of-class with the practice activities that the author provided them in LINE application.

So far, there have been studies conducted on the topic of mobile applications assisted language learning which especially concerned with the students' use. The previous studies revealed that students were willing to use mobile devices for their learning instructions (Watanabe, 2012) and they have a variety of language applications installed on their mobile devices (Steel, 2012). These points to the benefit of mobile applications that are useful for language learning. Students therefore tend to use mobile applications to assist their language learning. However, there has still been scarcity of research papers that explore students' perceptions of mobile applications assisted language learning in the areas of listening and speaking skills. LINE application, which is a free instant messenger app provides the features and functions support language learning such as text and voice chat that will make MALL more efficient (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012) was therefore employed in this study. The purpose of the study was to examine students' perceptions of LINE usefulness after using LINE activities to practice listening and speaking skills in Thai language out-of-class. The conceptual framework is described in Diagram 1.

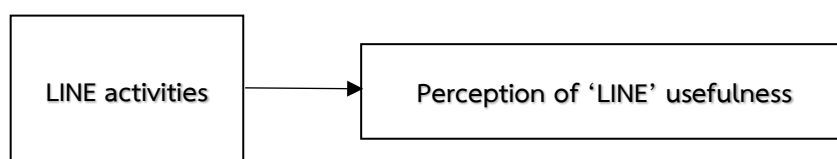


Diagram 1: The conceptual framework of the study

2. Research Question

To what extent do students perceive ‘LINE’ usefulness after using LINE activities?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

Twenty-four first-year foreign undergraduate students who were studying in Thai language and culture course at the first semester of 2017 academic year in an international university in Bangkok, Thailand. The participants attended in LINE activities on voluntary basis.

3.2 Instruments

1) LINE application: a freeware chat application which was used to assist language practice of listening and speaking skills in Thai language out-of-class in this study.

2) LINE activities: practice tasks of Thai listening and speaking skills which were provided for participants through LINE application in two practice tasks per week. The activities processed one semester. The contents of activities derived from the lesson in Thai language and culture course that the participants were studying in face-to-face class. The activities presented in form of basic Thai vocabularies, and the basic Thai conversations. Participants were assigned the practice tasks through LINE activities after they studied in face-to-face class and then they practiced with a facilitator and peers. Participants sent the facilitator their practices as voice message in each person and then they received their own feedback and comment from the facilitator instantly.

3) An online questionnaire: a questionnaire which was used to survey students’ perceptions of ‘LINE’ usefulness after using LINE activities. It comprised three main sections: demographic information and ten closed-ended questions, and five open-ended questions.

3.3 Data Collection

This study proceeded 3 steps of data collection as shown in Diagram 2.

1) The purpose, advantage, and process of this study was explained to foreign undergraduate students who studied in Thai language and culture course and then the participants who volunteered to take part in this study were grouped into LINE activities.

2) LINE activities were provided to participants through group chats of LINE application for participants to practice their Thai listening and speaking skills out-of-class under the same topics they had learned in face-to-face class.

3) Questionnaire was administered at the end of the class after participants used LINE application assisted listening and speaking skills practice in Thai language out-of-class for one semester.

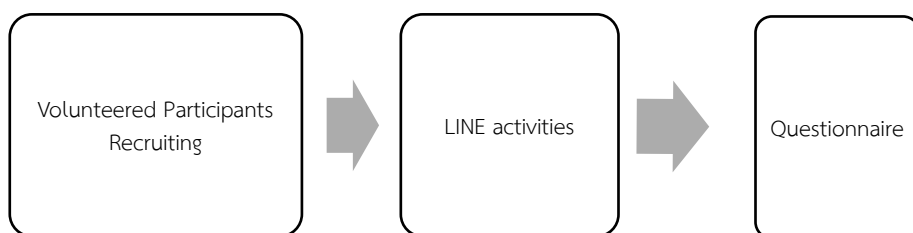


Diagram 2: Data Collection Steps

3.4 Data Analysis

The procedure of data analysis involved the qualitative and quantitative measures. Participants' demographic information and perception of LINE usefulness in close-ended questions were analyzed by descriptive statistics. The respond to open-ended questions were analyzed by content analysis.

4. Results

The descriptive statistics were used to analyze participants' demographics and their personal information. Participants were diverse in races. Most of them were Chinese (41.60%) and the others were American (25%), Burmese (12.50%), French (4.16%), Cambodian (4.16%), Korean

(4.16%), Russian (4.16%), and Danish (4.16%). They were in the age range of 17-20 at 83.33% while the age range of 21-24 at 16.66%, and they were female (66.66%) rather male (33.33%). Participants were from diversified academic departments including School of Management and Economics (58.30%), school of Arts (12.50%), School of Architecture and Design (8.30%), School of Communication Arts (4.16%), School of Music (4.16%), and the first-year exchange students (12.50%). All of them were first-year foreign undergraduate students and they had just arrived in Thailand before the first semester in the academic year of 2017 began. According to their responses in this part of questionnaire, participants did not know about Thai language before they came to Thailand. They then tried to communicate Thai language every day while they are living in this country. Also, participants gave the information that they chose to study in Thailand because they were interested in this country where the environment and culture are different from their own countries and they want to obtain new experiences from abroad.

Data collected from ten closed-ended questions were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics. Mean of participants' perceptions of LINE usefulness was 3.83 as shown in Table 1. This value indicated the positive perceptions following the Arbitrary Level of five-point Likert scale questions which were used in this study. In these five levels of measurement, higher numbers mean "more" of perception and frequency, and lower numbers signify "less". The finding therefore showed that the overall of participants' perception of LINE usefulness in assisting Thai listening and speaking skills practice out-of-class is positive.

Table 1: Students' perception of LINE usefulness ($n=24$)

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Perception	24	3.83	0.81

The participants' perceptions reported in five open-ended questions were analyzed by means of content analysis to specify what they perceived and considered the usefulness of LINE application assisted to practice

listening and speaking skills in Thai language out-of-class. The findings were presented into five themes.

1) LINE activities and the improvement of Thai listening and speaking skills

The results revealed that participants perceived LINE activities and agreed that LINE activities helped them much more to practice their listening skill (87.50%) and speaking skill (95.83%) in Thai language out-of-class. Participants gave the information that they could communicate in basic conversations with Thai people such as Thai friends, taxi drivers and shopkeepers because they could understand the basic Thai words they listened and could reply back appropriately and correctly.

“...It was helpful to hear the word and listen to it multiple times because the Thai words do not always sound like they are spelled...”

“...I can understand and speak many daily conversations...”

2) LINE activities and the adequate responses/feedback to Thai listening and speaking skills practice

Participants accepted that using LINE application assisted to practice listening and speaking skills in Thai language out-of-class is a good idea. Also, 95.83% of participants agreed that the facilitator was greatly helpful for them in encouraging them to practice and answering every question they had about Thai language within a timely manner.

“...We were given quick responses, and if there were ever any mistakes, we would be asked to try again to make sure we really understood the pronunciation. Questions were always encouraged and answered within a timely manner as well...”

“...The facilitator was always available to answer any questions we may have had about the Thai language and often gave us helpful phrases and words to practice outside of the classroom...”

3) LINE activities and the facilitator

Most of the participants (54.16%) perceived that the facilitator was great and helpful enough for them to practice their listening and speaking

skills in Thai language and made them more understand Thai words and sentences in order to communicate easier.

“...I think it’s so good need to maintain like this...”

“...No other suggestions. She was great!”

4) Suggestions for further LINE activities

There were participants (25%) gave the meaningful suggestions for how the facilitator could have been more helpful with the practices offered through LINE activities. They suggested the facilitator provides them for more words, sentences, and dialogues which will be helping them much more to create sentences easier in the interesting form of practices such as quizzes and multiple choices.

“...I hope teacher can teach and send more sentence and dialogue to LINE...”

“...Multiple choice quizzes...”

5) Usefulness of LINE activities

Most of participants (95.83%) had positive perceptions on the usefulness of LINE application assisted Thai listening and speaking skills practice out-of-class since LINE application has the multi-functions that support language learning out-of-class and save more time to learn and practice whenever and wherever they want.

“...We can practice whenever we want...”

“...We can learn Thai and ask questions about Thai free outside the class...”

And when they had questions about Thai language usages, they can ask the facilitator out-of-class that the traditional classroom cannot afford them.

5. Discussion

To answer the research question of this study, the result revealed that participants had positive perceptions towards the usefulness of LINE application assisted Thai listening and speaking skills practice out-of-class

after they took part in LINE activities. Participants agreed that LINE activities were helpful for them to practice and improve their Thai listening and speaking skills beyond the classroom activities. The ease of use of LINE application is one of the factors influencing the participants' acceptance of LINE application assisted Thai listening and speaking skills practice out-of-class. The more they perceived that it was easy to use, the more they perceived the usefulness of LINE application assisted language learning.

The finding of this study was found to be consistent with the previous study by Van De Bogart & Wichadee (2015) who employed Technology Acceptance Model to investigate students' intention to use LINE for academic purposes. This previous study exposed the positive relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of LINE application. The finding indicated that students' communication skills will improve through the offered tasks if they recognized that LINE application can support their language skills practice. In accordance with Ajzen and Fishbein (2005) mentioned that individuals who hold desirable attitudes are likely to respond an object positively while individuals with undesirable attitudes are likely to ignore an object. Participants' responses to open-ended questions showed that they were satisfied with LINE activities assisted Thai listening and speaking skills practice out-of-class and they recognized its usefulness. Participants accepted that their Thai listening and speaking skills really improve after using LINE activities. Likewise, the previous studies concerning mobile application assisted language learning (e.g. Steel, 2012; Khaddage & Latteman, 2013; Mindog, 2016) and students' intention to use LINE application for academic purposes (Van De Bogart & Wichadee, 2015) which had the same findings that students perceived that mobile application can be supported their language learning.

6. Conclusion and Implications

Based on the findings, the response data from questionnaire confirmed that participants had positive perception on the usefulness of LINE application assisted Thai listening and speaking skills practice out-of-class after they took part in LINE activities and found that their Thai listening

and speaking skills were improved. LINE application assisted Thai listening and speaking skills practice out-of-class appears the strong potential since participants found that LINE application is not only used for personal purposes but it is also used for academic purposes. Participants were satisfied with LINE activities and the assistance from facilitator that quickly responded and always was active to give them feedback and comment. Participants agreed that LINE activities that the facilitator provided were helpful enough for them to practice their listening and speaking skills in Thai language. In addition, participants gave some suggestions for the further LINE activities of Thai listening and speaking skills practice. They suggested for more multiple choices, quizzes, and conversations.

LINE application is an effectively alternative tool for improving language skills out-of-class. It is an instant messenger application that has easy-to-use features suits for learning and practicing language skills (Tudini, 2003; Jebson, 2005; Jabeen & Thomas, 2015). Students then can do a lot of LINE-based activities assisted language learning. The finding from this study could be utilized for further studies in the future to provide a better in using mobile applications assisted language learning.

7. Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study could form further questions for future research in the area of mobile app assisted language learning. The recommendations for further investigation are addressed as the follows.

1). Future research could employ other instant messenger applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook messenger, Skype, and WeChat to assist in language learning and practice out-of-class besides LINE which was used in this study in order to examine whether other instant messenger applications are effectively enough for assisting students to improve their language skills and to investigate whether students are satisfied and perceive the usefulness of those instant messenger applications.

2). Future research could study the relationship of students' perception of mobile application assisted language learning with other related fields such as language learning strategies, language learning

motivation, and the interaction styles in order to get the research results in different dimensions.

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