

An Investigation and Analysis of 7th Grade Thai Students' Levels of English Sociolinguistic Knowledge, Ability, and Etiquette

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Abstract

The goal of English language teaching is to help students become competent communicators; therefore it is necessary to investigate and develop methods of teaching and assessing language competencies. Sociolinguistic competence is a key part of communicative competence. It is necessary to define, measure, and analyze the individual components of sociolinguistic competence, in order to more accurately understand students' needs and develop effective teaching methods. The objectives of this study are as follows: 1. To investigate the English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette levels of 7th Grade Thai students. 2. To analyze the effects of scenario-based learning on the English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette levels of 7th Grade Thai students. This study focuses on the analysis of the students' test results data as sorted into three key categories: items testing for sociolinguistic knowledge, sociolinguistic ability, and sociolinguistic etiquette. The results showed a significant increase in students' English sociolinguistic knowledge (less than the .05 significance threshold), but no significant changes in the ability and etiquette levels. The results of this study reveal a need for more complex analysis of students' English test results, and a need for more data collection on 7th Grade Thai students' English language competencies.

Keywords: *English Teaching, Sociolinguistic Competence, 7th Grade Students*

1. Introduction

Presently, the English language remains the dominant global language due to its important role in social media, technology, entertainment, and global commerce. (Obi, 2020; Taladngoen, 2019). For many countries, study of the English language is an important part of standard education, and being able to proficiently communicate in English is seen as a valuable life and career skill. (Coleman, 2011; Seargeant and Erling, 2011). Thailand is no exception to this. English language is a compulsory subject for Thai students in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Throughout their education, Thai students take several standardized English language tests including the National Education Test (O-NET) at the 6th and the 9th grades, the Thai General Aptitude Test (TGAT) during 12th Grade, and university-level English proficiency tests, such as Chulalongkorn University's CU-TEP. Other English language tests, for example the TOEIC and IELTS tests, are also

required for many study-abroad and career opportunities. Besides the standardized tests, English language skills are also valuable in Thailand due to the country's prominence as an international tourist destination and its position in international trade. All this being stated, it is clear that English language skills are important and necessary for Thai students and therefore an important part of the Thai education system.

For primary and secondary education, the 2008 Thai National Curriculum gives clear goals and standards for English language learning. For secondary students, these goals and standards include, not only vocabulary acquisition, syntax, grammar, and standard productive/receptive skills, but also the ability to use English "appropriately" in communication. This implies that one should be able to conform their language to fit the expectations, cultural norms, and other circumstances present in a communicative situation (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008). In the fields of language acquisition and teaching, this skill of adjusting one's language to be appropriate to the context of a situation is often called sociolinguistic competence (Mede and Dikilitaş, 2015; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995), which is one part of overall communicative competence. The inclusion of sociolinguistic competence in the curriculum, sets a higher standard for the type of English language education which Thai students need, and therefore also sets a higher standard for the how English teachers in Thailand should teach. Students need knowledge of vocabulary and language patterns appropriate to a situation, the ability to appropriately use the vocabulary and language patterns in original communicative acts, and awareness of the sensitive social circumstances present in a communicative situation.

Methods used for teaching English should prepare students to be able to use English in the real world, through life-like situations where they can exercise and develop sociolinguistic competence along with the other language competencies. Competencies can be learnt and practiced through experience, actual or supposed (University at Buffalo, 2023; Bratianu et al., 2020; Prasertsin et al., 2021; Clark, 2013). Although there are many types of experiential learning, some methods may be better suited for certain subjects than others. Though not all types of experiential learning are possible or practicable for teaching English, scenario-based learning (SBL) could realistically be applied in ordinary classroom situations. In an SBL class, teachers set up and teach a lesson within the context of a supposed scene or scenario which directs the students' actions and learning (Weston, 2018). Students can act, interact, make choices, and try things out safely within the scene, which allows them to have an active role in their own learning (Budhai and Skipwith, 2021) and draw conclusions from their experiences.

Though there have been several recent studies investigating and analyzing different English language competencies and teaching methodologies in Thailand, many are focused on tertiary or upper secondary levels. Studies focused on lower secondary students' English language competencies, and in particular sociolinguistic competence, are less common. If being a competent communicator is indeed the goal of English education, then it is crucial to study and develop methods of teaching and assessing the necessary

language competencies at all levels of secondary education. As 7th Grade marks the beginning of secondary education in Thailand, it seems an appropriate starting point for this research.

This study focused primarily on investigating 7th Grade Thai students' levels of English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette and analyzing the effects of SBL on those levels. Assessments were taken before and after SBL treatment in a pretest-posttest scheme. Both tests contained thirty multiple-choice items which tested students' English sociolinguistic competence. Each of the test items was designed to test specifically one of the three parts of English sociolinguistic competence: knowledge, ability, or etiquette. The goal being to compare and analyze the results, and to record any significant effects which the SBL treatment had on the sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and/or etiquette of the research sample group. This study was performed at a secondary school in Bangkok, Thailand with a group of thirty 7th Grade students acting as the research sample group.

2. Research Objectives

2.1 To investigate the English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette levels of 7th Grade Thai students.

2.2 To analyze the effects of scenario-based learning on the English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette levels of 7th Grade Thai students.

3. Research Hypotheses

3.1 Treatment with SBL will have a significant effect on 7th Grade students' English sociolinguistic knowledge of appropriate vocabulary and language patterns at a .05 level of significance.

3.2 Treatment with SBL will have a significant effect on 7th Grade students' levels of English sociolinguistic ability to use vocabulary and language patterns appropriately at a .05 level of significance.

3.3 Treatment with SBL will have a significant effect on 7th Grade students' levels of English sociolinguistic etiquette at a .05 level of significance.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic competence holds a prominent place within the theoretical framework of communicative competence. At its most basic, communicative competence is, according to Gleeson and Long (2014), "the ability to communicate effectively." It is the combination of a set of more specific or specialized language competencies which all contribute to the success of communication. While there are various models of

communicative competence most of them include sociolinguistic competence, or a similarly named component performing the same function as sociolinguistic competence.

Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to communicate appropriately in social situations. Sociolinguistic competence contributes to the success of a communicative instance by adjusting the method and manner of delivery and communication to best suit the circumstances (Johnson, 2018). Sociolinguistic competence is a critical part of effective communication (DuFon and Churchill, 2016). Communication which follows all the rules of correct grammar can still be “incorrect” or “inappropriate” for the situation (Hymes, 1972). For second language English users, the acquisition and development of sociolinguistic competence is crucial (Durham, 2014). It could determine the difference between communicative success and failure, and sets competent or proficient language users apart from novice or developing users.

4.2 The Components of Sociolinguistic Competence

In order to accurately teach and assess a language learner’s English sociolinguistic competence, the measurable components of it must be clearly defined. This also protects educators from falling into the trap of believing one’s own English speaking preferences, or the type of English one was raised or educated with, are the de facto “appropriate” English. It is critical to the accuracy of this study to be able to identify, define, teach, and test for the essential components which make up English sociolinguistic competence.

Most academic texts on sociolinguistic competence will highlight the types of “knowledge” and “awarenesses” which speakers of a language need to communicate effectively within social contexts. Both Canale and Swain (1980) and Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) describe sociolinguistic competence as a type of “knowledge;” knowing what to say and how to say it within a specific cultural or societal setting. Other academics such as Bachman (1990) and Geeslin and Long (2014) describe the “abilities” of a sociolinguistic competent language user. Thus defining the components of sociolinguistic competence as sets of social, linguistic, and cultural “abilities” that a language user can develop and use. Baker (2006) and Bachman (1990) also describe “awarenesses” or “sensitivities” as part of sociolinguistic competence, such as awareness to levels of formality used in communication or sensitivity to the “naturalness” of speech. Coelho’s (2004) writing lists three main components of sociolinguistic competence which include the following: ability to use appropriate levels of formality and types of language for a situation, awareness of cultural differences in regards to ways of speaking, manners, and gestures, and knowledge of the varieties and/or dialects of English.

Though each of the explanations of sociolinguistic competence contain different numbers and types of components, the researchers propose that most explanations can be summarized in three simple components which were used for this study. These are:

1. Knowledge of the vocabulary and language patterns necessary for appropriate communication in the context of a given social situation.
2. Ability to use the appropriate vocabulary and language patterns to communicate effectively and appropriately in the context of a given social situation.
3. Etiquette to communicate in a manner appropriate to the sensitive sociocultural issues present in a given situation such as differences in age, class, culture, and ability.

These three main components, as developed by the researchers (Dugas and Sathaphong, 2024), were used as the main guideline for teaching and assessing students' English sociolinguistic competence in this study. They will also be the focus of the data analysis, results, and discussion of this study.

4.3 Scenario-based Learning (SBL)

Scenario-based learning (SBL) is a constructivist method of teaching and learning based in situated cognition, which claims that learning occurs through active, social experiences which are relatable to the learner's current situation. SBL shares some similarities to problem-based learning, case-based learning, and inquiry-based learning all of which are also based in constructivism (Mery and Blakiston, 2010; University at Buffalo, 2023). It is speculated that SBL as we know it today, likely developed from Lave and Wenger's (1991) model of Situated Learning. Situated learning recommends the acquiring of new knowledge through active social experiences in a method similar to an apprenticeship. The learner being initiated into and trained by communities of professional experts in their field of work.

SBL lessons use a staged situation (or scenario) to expose students to necessary knowledge, and encourage the practice of skills needed to build competence in a subject or field. According to Naruponjirakul (2019), SBL allows learners to use and develop their knowledge and skills in order to navigate situations which will help them prepare for use in the real world. Clark (2013) describes SBL as an inductive method in which learners play as actors in a preplanned guided scene that will allow them to develop skills through simulated experience. According to Jimenez (2009), SBL lessons teach students thinking and problem-solving skills by placing them in charge of the direction of the scene.

The learning in SBL doesn't happen by taking in information passively, like in traditional classes, but the emphasis is placed on learning through the experience. Learners take in new knowledge from their own experiences or encounters and add them to their existing base of knowledge.

As sociolinguistic competence is a set of knowledge, abilities, and rules of etiquette which cannot be separated from social communicative situations, SBL is an appropriate method for teaching and learning it. The learning objectives can be integrated

into the story, characters, and premise of scene. By acting within the scene, students can expand their knowledge, practice their skills, and increase their awareness of the rules of etiquette when using English language in various situations.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 The population and research sample group

1. The population was one hundred forty-four 7th Grade students at a secondary school in Bangkok, Thailand.

2. The research sample group were thirty 7th Grade students from the population. The research sample group was chosen through random cluster sampling.

5.2 The Research Tools

Two types of research tools were used for this study:

1. Four SBL English subject lesson plans
2. English sociolinguistic competence pretest and posttest

The SBL lesson plans:

The researchers designed the SBL lesson plans based on reliable academic literature and the needs of the 7th Grade students as outlined in their curriculum.

The lesson plans contained classroom SBL activities which promoted understanding and development of English sociolinguistic competence. Each lesson plan contained sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette objectives.

The lessons plans were inspected by qualified experts (IOC), and tested in a try-out before being used with the research sample group.

The details of the SBL lesson plans used for this study, including their contents, objectives, and classroom activities were explained in a separate study publication, which compared the use of SBL to traditional teaching methods (Dugas and Sathaphong, 2025).

The English sociolinguistic competence pretest and posttest:

The researchers designed a thirty-item multiple-choice English sociolinguistic competence test to take measurements of the research sample groups levels of English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette, both before and after treatment with the SBL lesson plans.

Example item testing sociolinguistic etiquette	<p>4. Hans is a student who really hates to wear his school uniform. One day, a parent meets him at a school event and asks Hans: “<i>What do you think of the school uniform?</i>” What’s the best way for Hans to answer honestly but not rudely?</p> <p>A. “I can’t stand the uniform.” B. “I quite like the school uniform.” C. Don’t answer the question. D. “I don’t quite like the uniform.”</p>
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The thirty-item test contained twelve items testing English sociolinguistic knowledge, nine items testing English sociolinguistic ability, and nine items testing English sociolinguistic etiquette. A full list of the test items as sorted by the component of English sociolinguistic competence they tested for, and the reference to the SBL lesson plans is as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Items of the English sociolinguistic competence test as grouped by items’ testing objective and SBL lesson plan reference

Item No.	Sociolinguistic Competence Objective (as used in this study)	Reference to SBL Lesson Plans
7	Knowledge of vocab	LP 1: Greetings & small talk
29	Knowledge of vocab	LP 3: Giving opinions
2	Knowledge of language patterns	LP 1: Greetings & small talk
9	Knowledge of language patterns	LP 2: Giving home tours
10	Knowledge of language patterns	LP 2: Giving home tours
14	Knowledge of language patterns	LP 4: Ordering Food
16	Knowledge of language patterns	LP 4: Ordering Food
17	Knowledge of language patterns	LP 4: Ordering Food
18	Knowledge of language patterns	LP 4: Ordering Food
21	Knowledge of language patterns	LP 1: Greetings & small talk
23	Knowledge of language patterns	LP 1: Greetings & small talk
24	Knowledge of language patterns	LP 1: Greetings & small talk
28	Ability to use vocab	LP 1: Greetings & small talk
12	Ability to use vocab	LP 4: Ordering Food
1	Ability to use language patterns	LP 1: Greetings & small talk
5	Ability to use language patterns	LP 2: Giving home tours
6	Ability to use language patterns	LP 2: Giving home tours
13	Ability to use language patterns	LP 4: Ordering Food
15	Ability to use language patterns	LP 4: Ordering Food
19	Ability to use language patterns	LP 4: Ordering Food
20	Ability to use language patterns	LP 4: Ordering Food
3	Etiquette	LP 1: Greetings & small talk
4	Etiquette	LP 1: Greetings & small talk
8	Etiquette	LP 3: Giving opinions

Item No.	Sociolinguistic Competence Objective (as used in this study)	Reference to SBL Lesson Plans
11	Etiquette	LP 4: Ordering Food
22	Etiquette	LP 3: Giving opinions
25	Etiquette	LP 3: Giving opinions
26	Etiquette	LP 3: Giving opinions
27	Etiquette	LP 3: Giving opinions
30	Etiquette	LP 1: Greetings & small talk

Total items testing sociolinguistic knowledge:	12
Total items testing sociolinguistic ability:	9
Total items testing sociolinguistic etiquette:	9
Total English sociolinguistic competence test items:	30

5.3 Testing and Treatment

The pretest was administered the week before the start of the treatment with the SBL lesson plans. The results of the pretest were recorded and stored by the researchers.

Treatment with the SBL lesson plans was conducted over a period of eight weeks.

The posttest was administered the week after treatment ended. The posttest scores were recorded and used with the pretest results for making comparisons, analyses, and drawing conclusions.

5.4 Research Analysis

The pretest and posttest results were separated by test item and sorted into one of three data sets according to the competent of English sociolinguistic competence each item tested for: knowledge, ability, or etiquette.

A paired samples t-test was used to find the t-values and levels of significance for each set. The resulting significance level was compared to the .05 level of significance used for this study.

6. Research Results

6.1 Research Findings

The analysis of the pretest and posttest data for English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability and etiquette revealed results as follows:

English sociolinguistic knowledge: Of the twelve items testing English sociolinguistic knowledge the research sample group answered correctly at an average of 7.13 before treatment with SBL lessons and 8.97 after treatment. The paired samples t-test between pretest and posttest results revealed that the treatment with SBL caused significant change in the research sample group's levels of English sociolinguistic knowledge. The resulting level of significance was .001 which was less than the .05 significance threshold used for this study. The details of the data results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of the data analysis comparing English sociolinguistic knowledge before and after treatment with SBL lessons.

Research Sample Group	Full Score	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)	t-value	Sig
Pretest	12	7.13	2.12	2.07	.001
Posttest	12	8.97	0.00		

*p≤.05

English sociolinguistic ability: Of the nine items testing English sociolinguistic ability the research sample group answered correctly at an average of 8.07 before treatment with SBL lessons and 7.93 after treatment. The paired samples t-test between pretest and posttest results revealed that the treatment with SBL did not cause significant change in the research sample group's levels of English sociolinguistic ability. The resulting level of significance was .695 which was greater than the .05 significance threshold used for this study. The details of the data results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of the data analysis comparing English sociolinguistic ability before and after treatment with SBL lessons.

Research Sample Group	Full Score	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)	t-value	Sig
Pretest	9	8.07	0.00	2.14	.695
Posttest	9	7.93	0.70		

*p≤.05

English sociolinguistic etiquette: Of the nine items testing English sociolinguistic etiquette the research sample group answered correctly at an average of 6.60 before treatment with SBL lessons and 7.27 after treatment. The paired samples t-test between pretest and posttest results revealed that the treatment with SBL did not cause significant change in the research sample group's levels of English sociolinguistic etiquette. The resulting level of significance was .061 which was slightly greater than the .05 significance threshold used for this study. The details of the data results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Results of the data analysis comparing English sociolinguistic etiquette before and after treatment with SBL lessons.

Research Sample Group	Full Score	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)	t-value	Sig
Pretest	9	6.60	1.41	2.14	.061
Posttest	9	7.27	0.71		

* $p \leq .05$

Research hypotheses: If we compare the study results to the research hypotheses, as stated in section 3 of this paper, we can conclude as follows:

Concerning hypothesis 1, treatment with SBL showed a significant effect on 7th Grade students' English sociolinguistic knowledge of appropriate vocabulary and language patterns at a .05 level of significance.

Concerning hypothesis 2, treatment with SBL did not show a significant effect on 7th Grade students' levels of English sociolinguistic ability to use vocabulary and language patterns appropriately at a .05 level of significance. These results are contrary to the hypothesis as stated at the beginning of this study, which theorized that SBL would have a significant effect on students' English sociolinguistic ability.

Concerning hypothesis 3, treatment with SBL did not show a significant effect on 7th Grade students' levels of English sociolinguistic etiquette at a .05 level of significance. The resulting significance level was .061 which shows that there was improvement in the students' English sociolinguistic etiquette after treatment with SBL, but not at a level great enough to meet the threshold of significance chosen for this study.

As the objectives of this study were to investigate and analyze 7th Grade students' levels of English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette, it's important to study the resulting data and discuss possible reasons for them. For this study, sociolinguistic knowledge scores improved significantly; sociolinguistic etiquette scores improved, but not enough to be considered significant; and sociolinguistic ability scores slightly decreased after treatment. In the following sections, the researchers will provide more details of the results and give possible explanations for them.

English sociolinguistic knowledge results: Sociolinguistic knowledge was the only component of sociolinguistic competence which significantly improved for 7th Grade students after treatment with SBL lessons. Of the twelve items testing sociolinguistic knowledge, there were ten items which more students answered correctly on the posttest than the pretest. These were items 7, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24, and 29. As for the remaining two items, students scored equally on item 2 for both the pre and posttests, and for item 18, there were less correct answers on the posttest than the pretest. A visual of these statistics is presented in Figure 1 below.

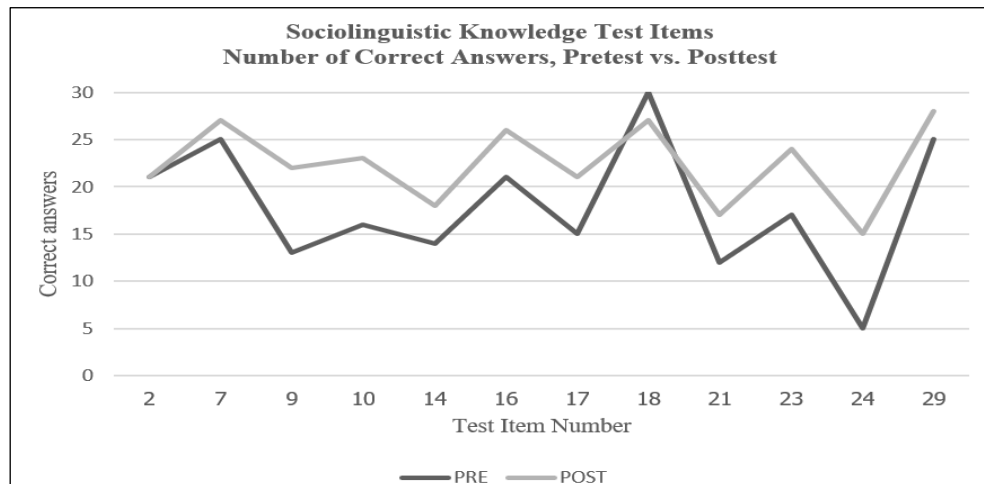


Figure 1: Line chart showing comparison of pretest vs. posttest correct answers to items testing sociolinguistic knowledge.

Item number 2 presented a situation in which students would have to choose between “Sorry, and...” and “Excuse me, but...” to match a communicative situation. The fact that students scored the same after treatment as before shows that there is possibly still some confusion as to the meanings and functions of the two terms. As both terms are considered “polite words,” students may still not understand why one term would be more appropriate for a certain situation.

The content of item number 18 was part of a food ordering situation in section 2 of the test in which students answered a series of questions in order to complete a dialogue between a restaurant server and a customer. Item 18 tested students’ knowledge of the terms “dine in” and “take away.” While all thirty students answered correctly on the pretest, twenty-seven students answered correctly on the posttest. This could imply that some students either forgot or second guessed their original answers, or perhaps didn’t read through the dialogue completely before answering. All test items contained choice answers which were grammatically accurate, so careful reading of the context was crucial to answering correctly.

Apart from numbers 2 and 18, there was marked improvement for all other items testing sociolinguistic knowledge. The SBL method of learning helped develop 7th Grade students’ knowledge of vocabulary and language patterns when used in the context of a particular situation.

English sociolinguistic ability results: Sociolinguistic ability was the one component that students showed the least change after treatment with SBL. A careful look at the data collected from the pre and posttests, however, shows that students’ sociolinguistic ability scores were overall very high on the pretest. On two items, numbers 12 and 20, all thirty students answered correctly on the pretest. All nine items testing for

sociolinguistic ability were answered correctly by nineteen or more of the students on the pretest and posttest. An illustration of the pre vs posttest differences is shown in Figure 2.

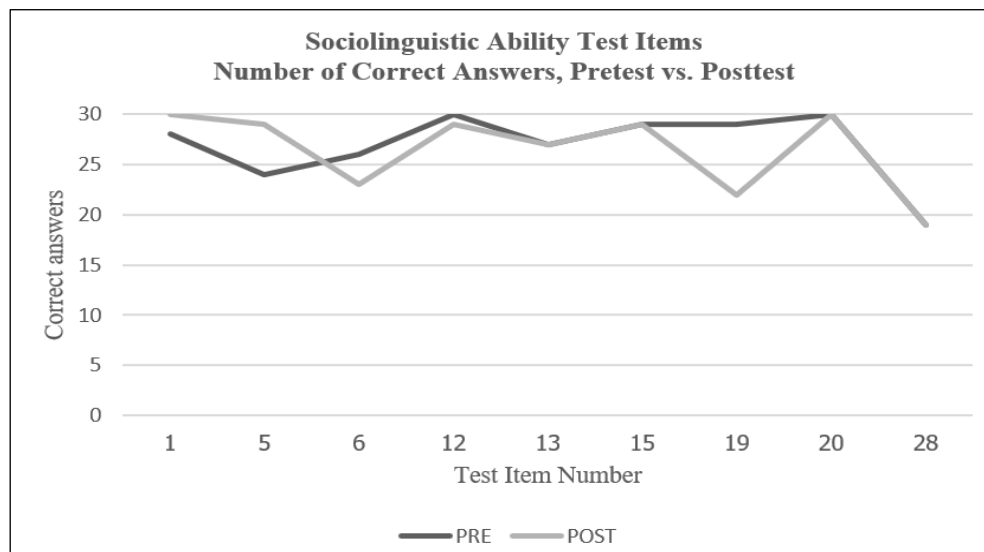


Figure 2: Line chart showing comparison of pretest vs. posttest correct answers to items testing sociolinguistic ability.

Students answered items 13, 15, 20, and 28 correctly the same number of times before and after treatment with SBL. This could mean that students felt confident in their original answers before treatment or that the SBL lessons didn't have a great enough impact on students' sociolinguistic ability.

The items which students answered more incorrectly on the posttest than the pretest are items 6, 12, and 19. Items 6 and 19 both tested the ability to make requests appropriately within a particular context. The content of item 6 being the ability to ask to use the toilet when visiting a new house, and the content of item 19 concerning ability to request to pay for a purchase by bank transfer. Both items contained options which were grammatically correct and linguistically possible but only one answer being the most appropriate for the situation. Individual student test results show a tendency of students to answer the longest or most formal option for making these requests. This could indicate that students are more focused on the "most polite" seeming option even though it may not be the most appropriate for the context of the situation. For example in number 19, the answer, "May I please pay by bank transfer?" is overly formal for the transactional situation of paying for a fast food order. The correct answer; "Can I pay by bank transfer?" was chosen more often on the pretest than the posttest. This could implicate that the teaching of sociolinguistic etiquette through SBL caused some students to consider and question the level of politeness when answering, though in this instance it's incorrect for the situation. It's possible that the students thought the "most polite" option was the "most correct" as well, though further studies would be needed to test this theory.

English sociolinguistic etiquette results: The research sample group's sociolinguistic etiquette improved after treatment with SBL but not at a level high enough to be considered significant. Of the nine items testing for sociolinguistic etiquette, six items were answered more correctly after treatment with SBL and only two items, items 4 and 27, were answered less correctly. A visual of this data is presented in Figure 3.

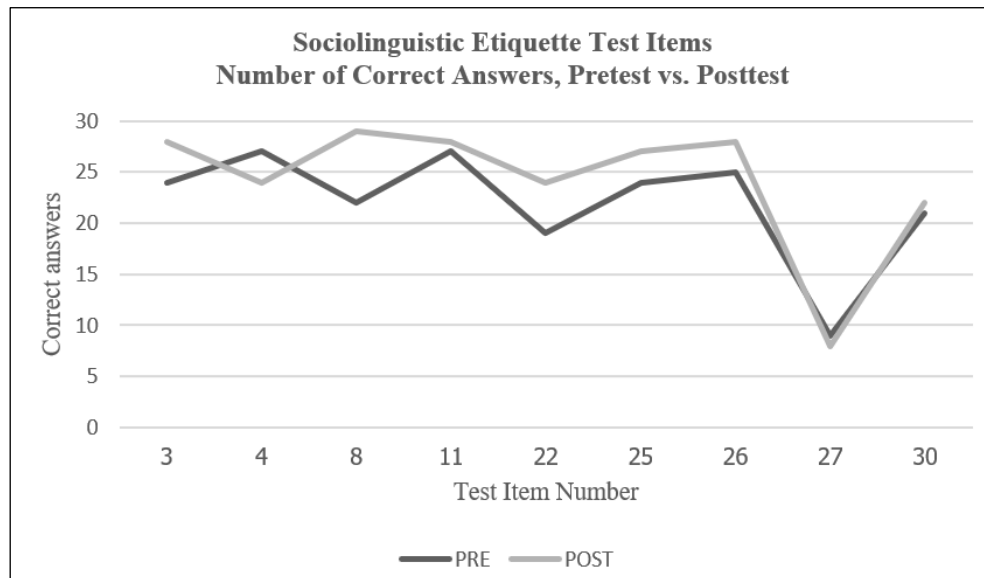


Figure 3: Line chart showing comparison of pretest vs. posttest correct answers to items testing sociolinguistic etiquette.

The content of both test item 8 and 22 contained situations where one was describing a preference in a tactful yet honest manner. For example in number 8: “It’s a little different, but it’s ok.” In number 4: “I don’t usually like [type of item], but I love [specific item].” These two items had the most improvement after SBL treatment. Though it would seem to indicate that students’ understanding of tact and nuance when expressing preferences improved, there is the reverse result in number 4. Item number 4, which was answered less correctly on the posttest than the pretest, also presented a situation where one was expressing a preference. The answer choices included: “I don’t quite like,” “I can’t stand,” and “I quite like.” On the posttest students chose “I don’t quite like” (which was the correct choice) slightly less than on the pretest.

Overall sociolinguistic etiquette test scores were higher after treatment with SBL. This means that SBL effectively helped to raise student awareness of the sociocultural and circumstantial elements which affect what language is considered appropriate or inappropriate for a situation.

6.2 Discussion

The use of SBL successfully increased the English sociolinguistic knowledge and etiquette of the 7th Grade students in the research sample group. This matches with other studies in which SBL had significant effects on learners' English language competencies. Such as Narueprempree et al.'s (2023) study using dilemma scenarios to develop undergraduate students' critical thinking and linguistic competence, and El-Naggar et al.'s (2019) success in significantly improving secondary students' English oral expression skills. Tupe (2015) reported significant development in primary school students' knowledge of English vocabulary after treatment with multimedia SBL. This study likewise proves that SBL can have a positive effect on learning outcomes.

The lack of significant change in the research sample group's sociolinguistic ability and etiquette could be due to the type of test used for assessment as much as the method of teaching and learning. Multiple-choice tests have many advantages, such as clear and unbiased grading and the possibility to test both lower-order and higher-order thinking skills if designed correctly (Zaidi et al., 2018). There are, however, some drawbacks to multiple-choice tests, such as the possibility that students guess answers (either correctly or incorrectly) and that the options for answers are limited (Polat, 2020). If other types of questions were used the results may have been different or given a different perspective of the students' sociolinguistic ability and etiquette.

Looking at the comparisons in Figures 1-3 it's clear that the research sample group had the most development in sociolinguistic knowledge. As the knowledge scores from the pretest were quite low when compared to ability and etiquette. This could imply that students had the most to gain in regards to knowledge. Comparison of the pretest vs. posttest results for both sociolinguistic ability and etiquette, however, show little development. This could imply that the ability and etiquette questions were not challenging enough for the research sample group. It is also possible that the students in the research sample group were unable to develop their sociolinguistic ability and etiquette at the same rate as their knowledge. It could be theorized that the students needed to build their knowledge bases before they could develop their other sociolinguistic skills and awarenesses. If this view point is taken, then the results of this study show a developmental step in the right direction. More research is needed to test such a theory.

The objectives of this study were to investigate and analyze 7th Grade Thai students' levels of English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette. There has been little research on the English sociolinguistic competence of Thai high school students, much less on the separate components of sociolinguistic competence. This study was successful in studying and collecting data on something relatively new and progressive in the field of English language teaching for Thai high school students. As the education trend in Thailand shifts more toward being competencies-based, it is important to research, test, and analyze methods of teaching and assessing these competencies at all levels of education.

6.3 Limitations

When drawing conclusions about the results of this study, it's important to keep in mind the following limitations:

1. The research sample group was relatively small. Tests on much larger and more diverse sample groups are necessary in order to draw more general conclusions about the Thai students' levels of English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette.
2. The time to conduct this research was limited. Schedules in Thai secondary schools, can change frequently and there are many school activities, special events, field trips, and public holidays which can interrupt regular teaching and learning times. Use of SBL for a longer period of time or with less interruptions could yield different results.
3. This study used a multiple-choice pretest/posttest design. Tests using other assessment methods, such as short written answers or a rubric scoring system could yield very different results.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Conclusions of the Study

The results prove that English sociolinguistic knowledge, ability, and etiquette can be measured and assessed, and the assessment results can be used to produce useful information for educators and point to areas where further research and development are needed.

The results proved that SBL learning can have a positive impact on 7th Grade students' levels of English sociolinguistic knowledge and awareness of etiquette. However, there was no marked improvement or development in students' English sociolinguistic ability. Therefore, while SBL can be useful for developing some components of English communicative competence for 7th Grade students, it may not work for all.

7.2 Opportunities for Further Research

The results of this research point to a need for teachers and researchers to not only look at overall results when testing the efficacy of a treatment, but to further distinguish the more detailed or specialized components (or facets) of what is being tested for. Using this study as an example: analyzing the results as separate components of English sociolinguistic competence, indicated specific areas where SBL may have been more effective or ineffective, and pointed to other possibilities worth further investigation.

Therefore, the researchers suggest further studies testing methods to improve Thai students' English language competencies. The researchers also recommend the results be analyzed both overall and separated by their specific contents or objectives in order to find

the possible strengths and weaknesses of the treatment used, or discover other factors which may have affected the results.

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