Family Communication Patterns and English Communicative Skills in Thai University Students

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Abstract

Family is an important institution of a society. It is said that the way an individual behaves is influenced by the characteristics of his or her family. Family communication patterns can be seen as representation of the characteristics of a specific family. Previous studies have indicated that family communication patterns influence success and failure of students in terms of academic achievement. This quantitative research aimed to study the family communication patterns in the Thai context and how they influence Thai university students' English communicative skills. The total number of 331 participants was used as group sampling. Revised Family Communication Patterns and modified English Communicative Skills Questionnaires were used as the research instruments. It was found that the consensual type best represented the type of the family communication pattern of the participants. Statistical analysis indicated there were significant differences in the level of English communicative skills of the participants in different groups. Discussions and implications for English language teaching are offered in this research article.

Keywords: *English communicative skills, Family communication patterns, English language teaching, Thai family, Thai university students*

Background of the study

Family plays an important role as a fundamental institution agent in a society. It is considered a social system and the earliest institution of the society (Rousta, Bayat & Nia, 2014). In fact, family is believed to be one of the main parameters that directly influences the functioning of a society (Mazaheri, 2008). Education is another important aspect that drives the efficient functioning of the society. Turkkahraman (2012) stated that society and education complement each other especially in terms of communication in the society, and that without education the society is affected starting from the family institution. Therefore, it can be inferred that the concepts related to society, family, education and communication are intertwined.

Regardless of different upbringing styles, an individual is raised in a family. Charoenthaweesub & Hale (2011) supported this statement by claiming that every human being holds some kind of membership in a family. To better understand how a family functions in a society as a means to supplement human communication, one possible way to do so is through the study of family communication patterns. This is because family serves as an inception point where a person learns how to communicate since childhood. In other words, the way people learn to communicate are influenced by their family communication patterns (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Whilst this may be a phenomenon that occurs at home, it links to what may take place at educational institutions as proven by scholars in the relevant field (Ullrich & Kreppner, 1997; Jowkar, Kohoulat & Zakeri, 2011).

Objective of the study

    1.To examine family communication patterns among by Thai university students; and,

    2.To examine how family communication patterns influence English communicative skills of Thai university students.

Research questions

    1.What are the family communication patterns among Thai university students?

    2.How do family communication patterns influence English communicative skills of Thai university students?

Theoretical framework

    This research was based on the Family Communication Patterns Theory (Chaffee, McLeod, & Wackman, 1973). The foundation of this theory is based on the Co-orientation Theory, a cognitive theory, which suggests that "two or more persons focusing on and evaluating the same object in their social and material environment" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 52). Essentially, this means that cognition and perception of a person may be influenced by cognition or perception of another person in the same group. In other words, their focus and evaluation of a given object are shared through a degree of agreement. This is because "[W]ithout a sufficient degree of agreement as to what the situation is all about, it is not possible to begin to formulate a perception of how the other party sees the issue" (Ajieh & Uzokwe, 2014, p. 220). However, Chaffee, McLeod, & Wackman (1973) elaborated on the fact that members of a family may not always share the same agreement in a given social setting. In fact, family members often hold different ideas about something particularly in this age of globalisation as a result of easy access to media and other resources that may have an influential impact upon how an individual may focus and evaluate something. Therefore, Family Communication Patterns Theory introduces an alternative model of communication in which its founders claimed that, according to Family Communication Patterns, there existed two dimensions of family communication patterns namely social-oriented and concept-oriented patterns (Chaffee, McLeod, & Wackman, 1973).

    The social-oriented pattern refers to the authoritative and controlling nature of communication on the part of parents. This means children are subject to the authority of their parents, maintenance of harmonious relationships, and avoidance of conflicts with their parents as well as other people. In contradiction to the first type, the concept-oriented pattern focuses on the promotion of being independent in the ideas, beliefs and feelings on the part of children. In other words, parents in this type of family communication patterns tend to deviate from the traditional authoritative and controlling style.

    Family communication patterns are further sub-divided into four types: protective, pluralistic, laissez-faire and consensual (Chaffee, McLeod, & Wackman, 1973). According to the explanation by the founding theorists, the family communication of the protective type contains characteristics of being low on concept-orientation whereas high on social-orientation. This first type is the most traditional pattern. The pluralistic type is in reverse. It is low on social-orientation and high on concept-orientation, which means children in this type of family are free to express their ideas, beliefs and feelings. As for the laissez-faire type, it is both social-orientedly and concept-orientedly low. This is totally opposite to the consensual type in which the social-oriented and concept-oriented patterns are both high. For this last type of family communication patterns, while parents may be strict in their authority, they seem to be

open to discussions initiated by their children at the same time. Charoenthaweesub & Hale (2011) reported that this type of family communication pattern best represented the situation in Thailand.

The original ideas of family communication patterns have been criticised due to their limited framework around socialisation; therefore, the ideas were advanced by Richie and Fitzpatrick (1990), who perceived the socio-orientation as conformity orientation (measured by parents' control) and the concept-orientation as conversation orientation (measured by communication control).

Application of the theory for this research

According to the Family Communication Patterns Theory, based on the cultural value in Thailand, the research assumes that the family communication patterns of Thai family fall under the social-oriented category/conformity orientation. If this is the case, children in the Thai families should be limited to how they can express their own ideas, beliefs and feelings. Rather, they are expected to defer their parents and seniors in which it is detrimental to the children in terms of self-confidence and independent skills. In this type of families, it should be difficult for children to learn new knowledge by themselves. This is because they lack the confidence to initiate discussions and the ability to acquire active learning skills. Some scholars (Ullrich & Kreppner, 1997; Jowkar, Kohoulat & Zakeri, 2011) studied how family communication patters are connected with academic achievements. The study by Ullrich & Kreppner (1997), which examined the quality of family communication and academic achievement in early adolescence found that relaxed family communication patterns created positive impact upon children. A more recent study of Jowkar, Kohoulat & Zakeri (2011) who studied family communication patterns and academic resilience of 606 school students and found that family communication patterns had significant impact upon students' academic resilience.

When it comes to the factor associated with language, communication apprehension, which is an "individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78) plays an important role in how a person learns language. According to McCroskey (1977) people who experience communication apprehension were found to be negatively affected academically. To link family communication patterns with second or foreign language learning, it was found by Richmond, Beatty & Dyba (1982) that people who were affected by communication apprehension in their first language, were also affected by communication apprehension in their second or foreign language learning. Therefore, it could be assumed that Thai children who experience strict social-orientation/conformity orientation family communication patterns may not display characteristics of English communicative skills.

Based on the theoretical framework of this research that family communication patterns of a specific family type affect English communicative skills, the following hypotheses were put forward:

H1: Students from consensual families have significantly higher scores on English communicative skills than those from protective families:

H2: Students from consensual families have significantly higher scores on English communicative skills than those from laissez-faire families;

H3: Students from pluralistic families have significantly higher scores on English communicative skills than those from protective families; and,

H4: Students from pluralistic families have significantly higher scores on English communicative skills than those from laissez-faire families.

Thai family characteristics

Thailand is part of Asia; therefore, the Thai culture is part of an Asian culture. Pongsapich (1990) stated that in a Thai family, males were dominant and juniors had to defer to their seniors. This is confirmed by Hofstede (1991) who stated that Thai families were high context in nature. To elaborate on this, children are expected to obey commands of their parents. This means when they communicate with their parents, they are not supposed to question their parents. They are expected to accept and follow their parents' teaching. This notion is supported by the National Child and Youth Development Plan during 2002 to 2011, which encouraged the moral and ethical values on teenagers to lead their lives (National Youth Bureau, 2002). Taking moral and ethical values into consideration, it would be fair to assume that traditional thinking is still firmly embedded in the Thai society.

Further support may be found in the analysis on Thai families by Pinyuchon & Gray (1997) who agreed that religious beliefs and societal values played significant roles in Thai families. As a result of this policy together with the supporting reasons mentioned in here, it can be construed that not only at the family level do Thai families give importance to hierarchy, conformity, and high distance power, but this is also reflective at the national level. Therefore, in accordance with the present literature review, it would be fair to conclude that Thai families belong to the social-oriented category/conformity orientation. Nevertheless, it does not mean that Thai families do not promote any concepts related to individual belief and self-confidence. As claimed by Charoenthaweesub & Hale (2011), Thai family communication patterns conform to those characteristics of the consensual patterns. This means that despite possessing authoritative and controlling nature, Thai family communication patterns demonstrate some leniency towards individual beliefs, ideas, and feelings.

Communicative learning approach

In a communicative teaching class, in order to successfully learn, learners are required to make real communication, experiment and look for information by themselves (Richards, 2006) in addition to what is provided to them by the teachers. This is a combination of deductive learning as well as inductive learning. To enunciate this point, in language learning, the learners learn deductively by receiving language rules provided to them in class. However, in communicative language learning, after being exposed to the language rules, the learners have to search for more information to experiment and expand their knowledge further (Richards, 206). Similar to the environment at home for the parents, the communicative approach requires that the teachers open up to errors made by learners in order to allow the learners to acquire their communicative competence. This way builds up self-confidence in the learners and encourages them to actively seek out for knowledge and try to learn by themselves.

The trend of English language teaching in Thailand is also in line with the communicative language teaching. In fact communicative language teaching has been the required method by the Thai Ministry of Education since the education reform in 1990 (Darasawang, 2007). Saengboon (2002, p. 37) confirmed this by explaining that "[C]ommunicative Language Teaching in Thailand will have the goal of producing reasonably fluent communicative skills appropriate to the local setting". The statement clearly indicates that communicative teaching has been established in Thailand. Confirmation may be found in the statement by Punthumasen (2007) who reported that communicative teaching had been incorporated into Thai English curriculum since 1996. However, Saengboon (2002, p. 37) also suggested that "towards this goal, the teacher will retain conventional authority in the classroom while

conducting activities that encourage interactions among students". This latter statement somehow contradicts a modern approach to teaching as well as the communicative teaching approach in which the focus is placed upon the learners not the teachers.

Since a contradiction exists between what it should be and how it is practiced in Thailand, it may be the reason why communicative teaching is problematic in Thailand. This is because communicative teaching poses "several problems as is evidenced in the results of the English language evaluation of our students as a whole" (Punthumasen, 2007, p. 2). As Khamkhien (2010) reported that performance of Thai students in English was low in the ASEAN countries.

It is not only the teachers who play a role in rendering success of English communicative skills in their students, but also the students themselves who must explore the understanding and advantages of communicative language teaching. These include being active in the classroom as well as out-of-classroom experiences, being collaborative, and being collaborative in the classroom (Sanna, 2013). This is because English communicative skills are built upon both linguistic and social factors (Hedge, 2000; Brown, 2007). Most relevant to this study is being able to use the language appropriately in a given social setting (Hedge, 2000). The rationale behind this lies in the fact that students learn sociolinguistic competence through family communication patterns and from experience they gain from school. Further, based on inductive learning which forms an essential component in English communicative skills, students should also demonstrate strategic competence. This means the students can maintain effective communication in an authentic situation (Canale & Swain, 1980). Family communication patterns especially from consensual and pluralistic families should demonstrate highly in their English communicative skills. The opposite should occur in the protective families.

Methodology

Participant

The participants of the research were set at 400 Thai university students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels studying English and English education majors at Srinakharinwirot University. This is in line with Gay (1996) who stated that when the population size is beyond a certain point, usually more than 5,000 people, the sample size of 400 people is adequate. The technique for the sampling group selection was convenience sampling.

Research instrumentation

There were two research instruments. The first was adopted from the Revised Family Pattern Questionnaire (Ritchie and Fitzpatrick, 1990). It was used to identify family communication patterns as perceived by participants. It was a 26-item questionnaire. Questions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24 and 26 assessed the conversation-orientation whereas Questions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 18, 20, 23, and 25 assessed the conformity-orientation. The 7-point Likert type scale was the format of the questionnaire – 1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Somewhat Disagree, 4 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5: Somewhat Agree, 6: Agree, and 7: Strongly Agree.

The second research instrument was the English Communicative Skills Questionnaire adapted from Sanaa (2013) to examine the English communicative skills. It was modified to better suit the Thai communicative learning environment. It was a 20-item questionnaire consisting of two parts – likelihood of English communicative skills and non-communicative skills. Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 assessed the likelihood of English communicative skills on the part of students. Questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14 and 20 assessed the likelihood of non-

communicative skills on the part of students. The 7-point Likert type scale was the format of the questionnaire like the first research instrument.

Data collection procedure

The researcher distributed the questionnaires to 400 Thai university students in Bangkok by hand. The participants allowed one week for respondents to complete the questionnaires. After collecting all of the completed questionnaires, the research used SPSS to analyse the data.

Data analysis procedure

The questionnaires that were used in this research produced the data for the research in the form of interval data. Two sets of ratio data were used in order to support or reject hypotheses as well as to respond to the research questions of the study. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was set to be conducted to test all of the hypotheses of the research.

Results

The researcher distributed 400 Family Communication Patterns together with the English Communicative Skills Questionnaires to the participants in this research. Out of the 400 questionnaires, 331 were completed and returned to the researcher within one week. Out of the 331 participants, 121 participants (36%) were male and 210 participants (62.5%) were female.

Reliability of the instruments

To ensure that the research instruments of this research were reliable, the researcher administered the reliability test for both of the research instruments. The Family Communication Patterns Questionnaire rendered the Cronbach alpha's value of 0.93. The English Communicative Skills Questionnaire rendered the Cronbah alpha's value of 0.77. According to Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) as well as Tavakok & Dennick (2011), the acceptable level of Chronbach's alpha value was between 0.70 and 0.95. Therefore, both research instruments in this research met the acceptable level of reliability test.

Family communication patterns and analysis

It was found that consensual family type ranked first (158 out of 331 participants). This means 47% of the participants came from the families who communication patterns were high in the conversation orientation as well as in the conformity orientation. Laissez-faire family type ranked second (92 out of 331 participants). In other words, 27.4% of the participants were raised in the families that were high neither in the conversation nor the conformity orientations. The protective family type ranked third (81 out of 331 participants), which can be interested that 24.1% of the participants belonged to the families where high conformity orientation and low conversation orientation were found in their family communication patterns. Interestingly, the pluralistic family type did not fit into the description as proposed by Chaffee, McLeod & Wackman (1973) according to the data of the participants in this research. This means out of the 331 participants in this research, none of them came from a family who communication patterns were high in the conversation orientation and low in the conformity orientation. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 (Students from pluralistic families have significantly higher scores on English communicative skills than those from protective

families) and Hypothesis 4 (Students from pluralistic families have significantly higher scores on English communicative skills than those from laissez-faire families) 4 were automatically rejected.

However, it was possible to form Hypothesis 5, which compared the differences between the English communicative skills between the participants from the laissez-faire families and the ones from the protective families. Since the laissez-faire families were low on both conversation and conformity orientations, in theory, the members of these families should score low on English communicative skills. In addition, with the pressure from the parents in protective families who want to see their children do well academically, members of these families should score higher than the laissez-faire members despite being low in conversation orientation. Therefore, the final hypothesis was as follow:

H5: Students from protective families have significantly higher scores on English communicative skills than those from laissez-faire families.

Table 1: Family Communication Patterns

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Consensual	158	47.0	47.7	47.7
	Laissez-Faire	92	27.4	27.8	75.5
	Protective	81	24.1	24.5	100.0
	Total	331	98.5	100.0	
Missing	System	5	1.5		
Total		336	100.0		

Test of normaility

In order to ensure that ANOVA was the appropriate statistical tool, it was necessary to test that the data from all types of family communicatiom patterns were normally distributed. Thus, the tests of normality were administered. Originally, Shapiro & Wilk (1965) recommended this test of normality for a sample size of not more than 50. Therefore, the researcher referred to the significance value calculated in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The significance value of the consensual and the protective family types $p = 0.20$ and $p = 0.20$ respectively. This indicated that the normal distribution hypothesis was rejected. Despite the significance value of the laissez-faire family type ($p = 0.010$) , it was not possible to accept the normal distribution hypothesis because the other two sets of data were not normally distributed. Therefore, ANOVA could not be used in the current research. Moore, McCabe & Craig (2016) suggest that when the distribution of data is not normal, non-parametic tests are to be administered. As a consequence, for this research, Kruskal Wallis Test (for three or more variables) was used among the three groups and Mann-Whitney U Test (for one or two variables) was used to find the differences between each group (Green & Salkind, 2008).

Evaluation of differences

       Table 2 provides descritive statistics on mean and median for the family communication patterns of the three family types (consensual, lessez-faire and protective) found in this research against the score on English communicative skills. Out of the 331 participants, 158 participants in the consensual family received the highest mean score of 94.24 (median = 94). The 81 participants in the protective families were in the middle rank with 89.86 scores (median = 89). As for the 92 participants from the laissez-faire families, the mean score was 84.13 (median = 82) making it the least mean score out of the three family types.

Table 2: Mean and median of English communicative skills

Family Communication Patterns	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Median
Consensual	94.2468	158	13.78344	94.0000
Laissez-Faire	84.1304	92	17.01080	82.0000
Protective	89.8642	81	12.08072	89.0000
Total	90.3625	331	14.95574	90.0000

Test of differences (Kruskal-Willis test)

       In order to test the differences among the three family communication pattern types (consensual, laissez-faire and protective), the Kruskal Wallis test was administered. Table 3 provides score rank on English communicative skills of each family type. The consensual families received the mean rank of 190.74 (median = 94.00), which was the highest rank comapred the the other two family types. The protective families rendered the mean rank of 163.52 (median = 89.00. For the laissez-faire families, they had the mean rank of 125.70 (median = 82.00) making it the lowest score rank holder compared to all of the family types.

       Table 4 provides the statistics derived by the Kruskal Willis test. The results indicated a significance differentce on the scores of English communicative skills in the participants of the three family types (consensual, laissez-faire and protective). In this case, X^2 (2, N = 331) = 26.94, p = 0.00. These results were for the overall test. The Mann-Whitney U test had to also be administered to evaluate pairwise differences between each group.

Table 3: Ranks (consensual, laissez-faire and protective)

	Family Communication Patterns	N	Mean Rank
Score	Consensual	158	190.74
	Laissez-Faire	92	125.70
	Protective	81	163.52
	Total	331	

Table 4: Test Statistics[a,b] (consensual, laissez-faire and protective)

	Score
Chi-Square	26.949
df	2
Median	90.0000
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Family Communication Patterns

Test of differences (Mann-Whitney U test)

The Mann-Whitney U test was administered three times to find differences between each group of the family communication patterns.

A: Consensual vs laissez-faire families

According to Table 5, for the 158 participants in the consensual family type, the mean rank of the English communicative skills score was 149.91 (median = 94, which was much higher than the mean rank of the 95.61 (median = 82) produced by 92 participants in the laissez-faire family type. Table 6 provides the statistical analysis calculated by the Mann-Whitney U test. The statistics indicated that participants of the consensual family type scored significantly higher on English communicative skills than the participants from the laissez-faire family type (Mann-Whitney U = 4518 (Z = -4.98), n_1 = 158, n_2 = 92, p = 0.00). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Table 5: **Ranks between consensual and laissez-faire families**

	Family Communication Patterns	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Score	Consensual		1	225
	Laissez-Faire			87
	Total			

Table 6: **Test Statistics^a between consensual and laissez-faire families**

	Score
Mann-Whitney U	451
Wilcoxon W	879
Z	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	

a. Grouping Variable: Family Communication Patterns

B: Consensual vs protective families

According to Table 7, 159 participants from the consensual families produced a mean rank score of 127.33 (median = 94) on English communicative skills, which was higher than the mean score rank of 105.70 (median = 89) produced by the participants in the protective families. The Mann-Whitney U statistics in Table 8 indicated that the scores on English communicative skills of the participants from the consensual families were significantly higher than the scores of the participants from the protective families (Mann-Whitney U value = 5240 (Z =-2.29), n_1 = 158, n_2 = 81, p = 0.02). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 7: **Ranks between consensual and protective families**

	Family Communication Patterns	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Score	Consensual	158	127.33	20118.50
	Protective	81	105.70	8561.50
	Total	239		

Table 8: Test Statisticsᵃ between consensual and protective families

	Score
Mann-Whitney U	5240.500
Wilcoxon W	8561.500
Z	-2.291
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.022

a. Grouping Variable: Family Communication Patterns

C: Laissez-faire vs protective families

According to Table 9, 92 participants from the laissez-faire families had the mean rank of 76.59 (median = 82), which was lower than the mean rank of 98.83 (median = 89) produced by the 81 participants from the protective families. The statistics calculated by the Mann-Whitney U test in Table 10 indicated that the scores on English communicative skills of the participants from the protective families were significantly higher than the scores produced by the participants from the laissez-faire families (Mann-Whitney U value = 2768 (Z = -2.91), n_1 = 92, n_2 = 81, p = .00). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Table 9: Ranks between laissez-faire and protective families

	Family Communication Patterns	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
	Laissez-Faire	92	76.59	7046.00
Score	Protective	81	98.83	8005.00
	Total	173		

Table 10: Test Statisticsᵃ between laissez-faire and protective families

	Score
Mann-Whitney U	2768.000
Wilcoxon W	7046.000
Z	-2.916
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.004

a. Grouping Variable: Family Communication Patterns

Discussion

R1: What are the family communication patterns among Thai university students?

The first point to make here is the comparison between the original proposal on family types of Chaffee, McLeod & Wackman (1973) and the family types that were identified in the findings of the research. The original concept proposes that there are four types of family based on their communication patterns – consensual, pluralistic, protective and laissez-faire. However, the findings of the research showed that only three types of family communication patterns had been identified – consensual (47%), protective (24.1%) and laissez-faire (27.4%). The pluralistic family type, based on the findings of this research, had not been identified by the participants.

In response to the first research question, it was found that the majority of the participants (47%) were identified as members from the consensual type. This means the participants were encouraged to express their ideas as family members while at the same time being under strict control of their parents. Interestingly, the findings were in line a previous study conducted by Charoenthaweesub & Hale (2011). In their study on Thai family communication patterns, it was found that the consensual type was the family communication patterns among Thai adolescents. Consequently, the findings in Charoenthaweesub & Hale (2011) as well as the current study agreed with the family communication patterns as proposed by other scholars including Hofstede (1991); Pinyuchon & Gray (1997); and Pongsapich (1990).

To sum up, the findings of the current research revealed the consensual characteristic of Thai families. This means that the traditional aspect of being highly social oriented of Thai families continues to play a role. Children are still expected to adhere to their parents' belief and instruction. Further, parents remain the model for their children to follow. Yet; the more progressive trait of being liberal and candid on the part of the parents has been integrated into Thai families. In other words, Thai parents do grant permission for their children to express ideas and opinions to the degree that they are willing to hear belief that is against their own.   This direction towards Thai family communication patterns proposes a sound argument to support the findings of this research. As a result of globalisation, it is undeniably difficulty to avoid change. Nevertheless, the identity of being Thai is also subject to uneasy alteration. Thus, Thai families, at this current time and as identified by the majority of the participants in this research, are best presented as possessing the consensual family communication pattern.

Based on the analysis above, it is reasonable to accept the findings whereby the pluralistic type of family communication patterns had not been identified by the participants. This is because the characteristic of this family communication pattern is against the intrinsic trait of being Thai family that is being highly social oriented. Despite the change the world of communication has experienced, it is not possible to deny the root of being Thai family – highly social oriented in terms of how members in a family communicate.

R2: How do family communication patterns influence English communicative skills of Thai university students?

When referring to the English Communicative Skills Questionnaire, there were 20 questions with a 7-point Likert scale for each question. This equated to the total score of 140, the more score a participant demonstrated, the better likelihood of English communicative skills the participant tended to have. It was clear from the statistics that participants from the consensual family type demonstrated the best skills of English communication (mean = 94.24, median = 94). This is because it is the only family communication pattern that promotes the conversation orientation whereas the laissez-faire and protective family communication patterns are employed by parents of the families that do not encourage children to express ideas and opinions. The mean score of the protective type was 89.86 (median

= 89) whereas it was 84.13 (median = 82) for the laissez-faire type. Despite being low in conversation orientation for both of these types, members of the families possessing the protective family communication pattern would be under pressure by their parents to achieve a certain academic achievement. This means even though the children are not encouraged to express their ideas and opinions in their families because they are expected to listen to and follow their parents' instruction (especially being competent in English), it would not be surprising that these children perform better at English than members of the laissez-faire type. A rationale behind this is because in the families possessing the laissez-faire communication pattern members of such families would be subject no little to no expectations from their parents to become good at English. Therefore, a certain type of family communication patterns especially the plays a role in success of academic goal, specific to this current research is English communicative skills. The results of the research accord with previous findings of other studies such as Ullrich & Kreppner (1997), Jowkar, Kohoulat & Zakeri, 2011)

To relate family communication patterns with the success of English communication skills on the part of students, it is useful to look at the role of communication apprehension. Based on McCroskey (1977), people who are afraid of using language to communicate suffer low academic achievement. It is clear from the findings of this research that members of families possessing low conversation orientation such as the protective and laissez-faire types received lower scores on English communication skills than the consensual type. Parents of students in the protective and laissez-faire type of families would be strict when it comes to communication within their families. A corollary of these behavioural communication patterns create communication apprehension on the family members, which means their English communicative skills would be negatively affected (see Beatty & Dyba, 1982). This means students in these families would be reluctant to express their ideas and belief because they fear that what they impart might not be as it is expected by their parents. Because Thai students perform lowly in English (see Khamkhien, 2010) and if the phenomena such as these continue to occur, it will always be detrimental to the students' English communicative skills. What happens at home normally influences how students behave in the classroom. Thus, it would be fair to conclude that students who experience communication apprehension because of the nature in their family communication patterns perform unsatisfactory in English communication skills. External to the fear from the family, which plays a contributing role may be attitudes towards approximating native pronunciation. Suksiripakonchai (2015) and Suksiripakonchai (2013) suggested that native speaker pronunciation models were preferred among Thai students. Usually, students are often afraid of the speaking skills because of this reason. The more pressure the students receive from the non-conversation oriented style of upbringing, the more unlikely the students will achieve competent English communicative skills. This is because students' speaking approach would be more deductive rather than inductive. In other words, without being given information about what to say, the students will less likely to produce utterances or initiate a conversation. Basically, this would be against the principles of communicative learning (see Richards, 2006).

Contrary to the above discussion, members from families that support ideas and opinions perform better academically. In this research the pluralistic type of family communication patterns was not found; consequently, consensual type was the only communication pattern with high conversation orientation. Because parents of the consensual type encourage their children to speak up and share ideas and opinions at home, this will influence the children's language performance in the classroom. Since they are able to express themselves at home without communication apprehension, the students would unlikely show any communication apprehension in the classroom either. The consequence of this is the students being able to speak or be willing to speak in class both with the

teachers and their peers. Essentially, these behaviours meet the goal of communicative English skills (Collins & O'Brien, 2003; Richards, 2006). Also, this is expected by the current policy of Thai education (Punthumasen, 2007; Saengboon, 2002).

Conclusion

It can be seen that family communication patterns that promote conversation orientation influence the likelihood of success in English communicative skills in Thai university students. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that it is beneficial for scholars and educators to study and understand the nature of family communication patterns in the Thai context so that they can better prepare themselves when teaching English. This is because of the significance of the current approach to teaching and learning English across the globe that emphasise communicative skills. Although it may not be possible for scholars and educators to change the communicative behaviours of people at home, by understanding family communication patterns scholars and educators may ensure that 1) students who perform competently in their English communicative skills can be pushed further for greater success, and 2) students who may suffer from low English communicative skills because of detrimental family communication patterns may not be disadvantaged academically.

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