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The utilization of KineMaster application: Mobile-based digital storytelling to improve English speaking skills of Thai EFL undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reevaluation of priorities, including education. In Thailand, social distancing measures have prompted the implementation of online learning policies. The study utilized the KineMaster app for mobile-based digital storytelling to improve Thai undergraduates' English-speaking skills during the pandemic. It enhanced online learning through editing and recording features, fostering active learning and student autonomy. The study evaluated the feasibility of combining multimedia applications and online learning and pinpointed the obstacles. In a recent study, 72.6% of students who received clear instructions on KineMaster usage and 64.5% who received regular app instruction from teachers improved their English-speaking skills through mobile-based digital storytelling using KineMaster. The study found that post-test scores (8.94±0.936) of Thai EFL undergraduate students using the KineMaster app for mobile-based digital storytelling significantly improved compared to pre-test scores (7.39±1.18), with a significance level of .05. In the group interview, students preferred English-speaking instruction using KineMaster, finding it engaging and believing it would improve their abilities. Most (98%) agreed it helped practice English skills and appreciated the design options. Integrating technology, specifically KineMaster, is identified as a potentially effective tool for language instruction. The study findings have implications for instructional designers and language instructors, offering insights into technology-based language teaching and curriculum design in the digital era.

Keywords: KineMaster Application, English Speaking Skills, Mobile-based digital storytelling

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reevaluation of life's meaning, education's purpose, and priorities, emphasizing a shift from competition to prioritizing loved ones and quality of life. In Thailand, the pandemic poses significant challenges, particularly in education. Social distancing measures have prompted the government to implement policies for learning while adhering to health guidelines. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation has allowed online learning, making it essential for sustaining education. However, this creates barriers for students and teachers, including the need for effective teaching materials and students becoming self-directed learners [1].

English plays a crucial role globally, including in the online learning environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. It serves as the lingua franca of the ASEAN Economic Community and is vital for education, job applications, and career advancement. Efforts are being made to enhance English language education and proficiency across ASEAN, recognizing its significance in regional and global contexts [2]. Thai students have studied English in formal education for several years but need help communicating in English. When they need help to think of a term during an English conversation, they can often infer the meaning of unfamiliar words using context cues but rarely resort to compensatory techniques like gestures [3]. Thai students' English proficiency needs to be revised [4]. The Universal European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is now the standard that must be adhered to at all educational levels in Thailand to improve students' overall English competence. English proficiency must align with societal changes to help the global creative expression of

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Thai ideas and cultures and adapt to the digital age.

Undergraduate students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Thailand require assistance developing confidence in speaking the language. Despite English being taught for a significant period, educators and learners face ongoing challenges in teaching and learning. Factors such as the fear of speaking in front of instructors, the fear of making mistakes, and a lack of interest in the subject contribute to the difficulty [5]. Students need to enhance their language proficiency in Thai EFL due to insufficient understanding, limited language usage opportunities, and fear of real-life communication. Teachers are crucial in boosting students' confidence and providing speaking practice opportunities. Designing classroom activities that promote fluent and accurate speech is essential but challenging for teachers.

Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University (NPRU) in Thailand is a recognized coed institution offering various degree programs. English language skills are crucial for NPRU students, but they face difficulties in speaking. Limited practice opportunities, large classrooms, and teaching methods contribute to the issue. To address this issue, using digital storytelling as a teaching strategy with technology is presented as an effective solution. Incorporating smartphones, widely used by the tech-savvy Z generation, can enhance English learning [6]. Because of this, incorporating digital storytelling into the classroom using smartphones can be an effective tool. There are some digital storytelling applications (.apk) available for smartphones.

The study focused on using the KineMaster application (www.kinemaster.com) for mobile-based digital storytelling to improve the English-speaking abilities of Thai undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The KineMaster app offers precision editing, multi-track audio, and multiple layers for text and visuals. It also provides color adjustments and the ability to record voiceovers, among other functions. Creating an enjoyable online learning experience requires more than just different learning tools. To overcome network limitations and maintain engagement in online learning, teachers can create multimedia learning resources and share them on social networking sites or other online learning platforms. One such tool is Kinemaster, a free Android/iOS app with basic features, suggested by A Haryudin and F. Imanullah (2021) [1], that can be used to create learning materials. As consistent findings show, integrating digital storytelling into the classroom significantly improves students' English-speaking abilities. It helps teachers create lesson plans that promote active and independent learning and enhance student engagement and autonomy. Successful students demonstrate greater learner autonomy than unsuccessful students [7,8].

The specific objectives of this research are: 1) To compare the English-speaking achievement of the students before and after learning through mobile-based digital storytelling using KineMaster; 2) To investigate the students' opinions towards learning through mobile-based digital storytelling using KineMaster.

2. Kinemaster

KineMaster, a mobile software available on Android and iOS platforms, allows users to augment the caliber of their video content. The prestigious multinational NexStreaming, based in Seoul, South Korea, founded this groundbreaking application and has offices worldwide as of 2021 [9].

2.1 Interface

The KineMaster designers have a unique take on user interfaces. Because of this, developers would instead focus on valuable features and tools rather than unnecessary interfaces. Therefore, the students will feel reassured if the KineMaster app opens with a large, seemingly overwhelming image and a straightforward display of four buttons.

Figure 1. Kinemaster Interface

The secret to revealing KineMaster's true "inner beauty" lies in the circular red button. Clicking this button takes students to a website where they may view all the necessary video editing tools and start a new project. The settings, help, and shop buttons are the other three buttons. The final menu comprises numerous supplemental materials, such as audio, that can be downloaded later to supplement the current tasks. When students access the settings panel upon launching KineMaster, the application automatically switches their device to landscape mode.

2.2 KineMaster Features

2.2.1 Project Assistant

In KineMaster, students first experience two distinct project types: Empty Project and Project Assistant. Together, the two tools enable the creation of fresh video editing projects. However, Project Assistant stands out since it helps less experienced users by guiding them through ordered video creation steps. The KineMaster project assistant assists users in selecting movies and themes and adding videos, filters, and text, among other things, so that students may produce stunning finished videos.

2.2.3 Multiple Media Support

KineMaster accepts most videos taken on portable devices while supporting only a few video types. Students cannot select, but KineMaster simplifies playing material from internal or external memory. One window shows all content in three separate folders - Background, Favorites, and Cloud Storage. The device stores the remaining data in folders within its memory.

2.2.4 Theme

These four theme options, On-Stage, Serene, and Travel-make this function beneficial for new KineMaster users.

2.2.5 Text

Students may also add text to their videos with KineMaster. Students can customize each sentence by selecting the text style and color best suits their preferences. An introduction and a conclusion are already present in the text choices.

2.2.6 Audio

A video editing program like KineMaster needs more than just background music. KineMaster empowers students to find the perfect soundscape for their projects by offering a symphony of options that surpasses the competition. Whether it is accessing recordings, songs from memory, albums, playlists, imported audio files, or even genres directly from their device, students have a treasure trove of audio at their fingertips. With KineMaster, students are not just editors but sonic storytellers crafting unique soundtracks that amplify their vision. Moreover, they can own their audio narratives with precise volume control and the ability to orchestrate the movie's sonic beginnings and endings.

2.2.7 Complete the Editing Tool

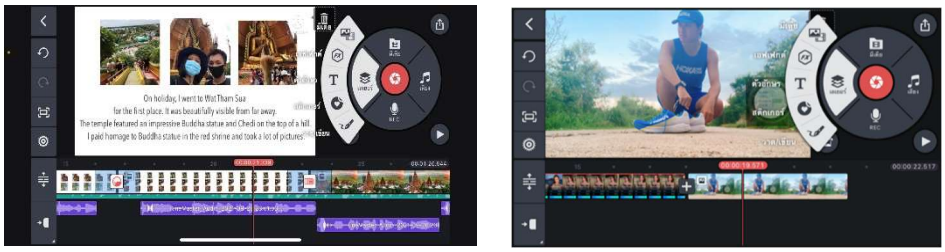

Figure 2. Complete Editing Tool

These elements gather in the main editing window after adding the video, deciding on the music, and typing the text. The window contains several functions, and students may need around 30 minutes to understand and learn the purpose of each button [1]. So, numerous features are present. This only generates an exhaustive list of terms it can comprehend to simplify things. There may be differences in the original language.

1. Multiple-layer support
2. Voice over
3. Playback
4. Sharing
5. Cut, Copy, and Crop
6. Color filters
7. Color adjustment
8. Vignette
9. Trimming
10. Split
11. Rotate
12. Records from cameras and camcorders
13. Drag and Drop
14. Capture frame
15. Duplicate
16. Undo/redo

Teaching resources with a multimedia component

Examples of educational materials include text, music, pictures, videos, and other animations. There are numerous methods to use instructional resources to support students' learning. According to some, teaching materials also function as (1) a guide for instructors to straighten their accomplishments in the educational process, (2) a set of instructions for students to make sure they are on track during the learning process, and (3) a tool for evaluating a student's competency [10]. These include news stories, soap operas, commercials, and snippets from periodicals, newspapers, and television programs. To be a helpful teaching tool, it must incorporate particular learning objectives. There are educational resources available to aid in students' learning. The three main types of instructional resources are materials for individual study, presentation materials, and reference materials. Printed teaching materials, such as handouts and modules, can be utilized to instruct students alongside audio and video recordings [11].

Multimedia-based educational resources can be created and produced using ICT technologies. These tools can be used in many ways to gather, organize, and store data to provide high-quality information. Similar to the previous ruling, this decision affirms that instructional materials with audiovisual components are the same [12]. ICT-based educational materials have the following qualities: By utilizing electronic and multimedia technologies to connect teachers and students, students and teachers' learning settings can become more appealing: (a) make use of self-contained learning materials available anywhere, at any time; and (b) use interactive data interchange (information sharing) [13]. The use of ICT-based teaching tools has the following advantages. Using educational resources that are dangerous or hard to find encourages students to participate and shows invisible things to the unaided eye. Learning is possible anywhere, at any time. Thus, educators should adopt the KineMaster app, particularly for remote learning

courses, as forcing students to visit virtual classrooms will only leave them bored—especially in light of the current pandemic. There are various strategies to build instrumental pedagogy, and some of them should be based on the current push to incorporate digital literacy into Education 4.0.

3. Materials and Methods

The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data. A quasi-experimental research design was employed, incorporating questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and pre- and post-speaking tests to assess students' linguistic proficiency using the KineMaster app for mobile-based digital storytelling. The quantitative component focused on descriptive statistics of the questionnaire results and statistical analysis to examine the intervention's impact on student's speaking abilities. The qualitative aspect involved semi-structured interviews with students to explore their perspectives on the intervention. Data triangulation was employed to ensure consistency, reduce bias, and increase the reliability of the study findings. Multiple data sources were used to address the research questions, including oral performance tests, assessments, surveys, and interviews. Qualitative theme analysis was conducted to identify difficulties and capture students' opinions on the intervention, alternative evaluation, and student autonomy. The analysis mainly focused on describing the data by examining its mean, median, modal, lowest, and maximum values. Comparisons between pre-and post-test scores were analyzed by independent t-test, as appropriate. All data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0.1.1.

3.1 Sampling and data collection

This study population consisted of 440 second-year undergraduate students at Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University (NPRU) in Thailand. The population was divided into 20 groups of 22 students each. Following Boonchom Srisa-at's (2010) [14] recommendation, a sample size of 15%, equated to 67 students, was selected for the study. The participants were non-majored English students with varying levels of English proficiency, as determined by "The Gets Placement Test" taken at the beginning of their university studies. Random cluster sampling was used to select three intact groups of students for each research section. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 21, and they were enrolled in the General English Course 1500104 (English for Professional Purposes) during the first semester of the Academic Year 2022-2023. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identities, and they were informed about the objectives of this study.

Two steps involve gathering data: reviewing and analyzing existing literature and documents. Respondents to online questionnaires provided primary data immediately. The phenomena were then gathered, totaled, and examined to make conclusions and recommendations for further study.

4. Results and Discussion

The researcher collected data from the target group of 62 students using a questionnaire on students' reflections on the KineMaster DST intervention [7, 15], with the following study findings:

Table 1 The number and percentage related to general information of respondents

	General information	Number (n=62)	%
Faculty	Faculty of Education	18	29.04
	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	30	48.38
	Faculty of Science and Technology	14	22.58
Majors	Majoring in Physical Education	18	29.04
	Majoring in Social Studies	30	48.38
	Majoring in Mathematics	14	22.58

From the data above, most respondents (48.38%) studied at the Faculty of Humanities, followed by the Faculty of Education (29.04%). The Faculty of Science and Technology had the most minor proportion of respondents. Social studies was the most popular major (48.38%), followed by physical education (29.04%) and mathematics (22.58%).

Table 2 Percentage of the frequency of the development of English-speaking skills, which is essential to the teaching-learning process

English-speaking skills	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean ± SD
The development of English-speaking skills is essential to the teaching-learning process.	64.5	27.4	6.5	-	1.6	12.4 ± 18.86
Students learning and practicing English: how frequently do students use audio, video, and images that allow them to communicate fluently and meaningfully?	43.5	37.1	19.4	-	-	12.4 ± 15.58
The teacher performed interactive activities *(such as think-pair-share, interactive demonstrations, minute papers, etc.)* that allowed students to use the audio, video, and images.	61.3	37.1	1.6	-	-	12.4 ± 17.35
The teacher employed a mobile-based application, specifically the KineMaster application, to help students improve their English-speaking skills.	64.5	27.4	8.1	-	-	12.4 ± 16.92
The teacher performed meaningful activities *(such as providing engaging videos, leveraging the power of online discussions, providing feedback, increasing learner autonomy, etc.)* not suggested by the textbook that helps students improve speaking skills.	58.1	37.1	4.8	-	-	12.4 ± 16.31
The teacher provided speaking activities *(such as short talks, digital storytelling using the KineMaster application, etc.)* in English, requiring a mobile-based application and program that allowed students to record and listen to their voices.	62.9	30.6	6.5	-	-	12.4 ± 16.41
Using a rubric, the teacher gave information about what the students did well or what they could improve after an oral presentation.	61.3	30.6	8.1	-	-	12.4 ± 16.28
The class activities focus on speaking rather than correctly using English grammar.	61.3	32.3	6.5	-	-	12.4 ± 16.51
The teacher informed students about the criteria that will be evaluated in an oral presentation using a rubric.	72.6	25.8	1.6	-	-	12.4 ± 19.44
The teacher clearly explained the process students should follow before giving an oral presentation in English.	72.6	25.8	1.6	-	-	12.4 ± 19.44

The data presented above indicate that respondents are highly aware of and recognize the importance of developing speaking skills in English language learning and teaching. Of most students, 72.6% stated that their teachers explained how to use the tools effectively, indicating clear instructions on technology usage; 64.5% stated that their teachers regularly instructed them on how to utilize the app for this reason. Since technology is becoming more important in education, more teachers will likely look for creative ways to use it in their lessons, and 61.3% believed that the teacher regularly used interactive teaching methods to aid in teaching and developing language skills.

Analysis of issues obtained from the semi-structured group interview on students' opinions towards KineMaster DST intervention

The researcher collected data from the target group of 40 students by using a semi-structured group interview about students' opinions towards

the KineMaster DST intervention, which is a focus group discussion. The semi-structured group interview revealed that students preferred English-speaking instruction using KineMaster over teacher-centered instruction without technology. They found it more engaging and believed it would improve their English-speaking abilities. Most (98%) agreed that KineMaster helped them practice English language skills. Students appreciated the range of designs and video editing features, which made learning enjoyable. However, some students needed help with the application (5%). Suggestions were provided to enhance the app's suitability for teaching English storytelling. Overall, technology-assisted learning with KineMaster has potential value in enhancing English language proficiency, but it is vital to address initial challenges and consider student feedback for further improvements.

Pre and post-test results from using KineMaster Application: Mobile-based digital storytelling to improve English Speaking Skills of Thai EFL undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic

The researchers collected data from the target group of 67 students by conducting an online pre- and post-test on "Authentic digital storytelling through informative narratives" [7]. The data were analyzed by a computer program adopting paired samples T-Test). The results of the data analysis were classified into two correlated groups of samples based on the following hypotheses:

H_0: The mean score of the post-test was not different from the mean score of the pre-test.

H_1: The mean post-test score was higher than the mean pre-test score.

Table 3 Comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores for authentic digital storytelling through informative narratives

Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	SD of mean difference	t	df	Sig.	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference
7.39	1.18	1.55	1.158	10.968*	66	<0.001	7.39	1.18	1.55
8.94	0.94						8.94	0.94	

*Statistical significance of 0.05 (paired samples T-Test)

Table 16 shows that the mean pre-test score of students was 7.39, and the mean post-test score was 8.94. When the two tests were compared, it was discovered that post-test scores were statistically significantly higher than the pre-test, at a level of .05. According to this, the online course held a focus group discussion based on the semi-structured interview about how students learn English using mobile-based digital storytelling with KineMaster. The results of the semi-structured focus group show that students can learn English with the help of the KineMaster program.

5. Conclusion

The research highlights the importance of prioritizing speaking skills in English language learning and teaching, as it supports students in personal and educational contexts and contributes to global competence. Initiatives like KineMaster should focus on improving speaking skills by providing more opportunities for students to engage in conversation sessions and language exchange programs. Using multimedia resources, such as audio, video, and graphics, is crucial in English language training to offer engaging and dynamic learning opportunities. Table 5 demonstrates that many respondents recognize the value of incorporating multimedia components into language learning and teaching. This approach enables teachers to cater to students' needs and preferences, leading to more effective

language instruction. Traditional passive instruction methods should give way to considering learners' needs and preferences, as teachers already use interactive activities to enhance students' language abilities, increasing their involvement and skills. Most students' favorable opinions of KineMaster as a helpful teaching tool demonstrate their dedication to honing their speaking skills and active participation in language learning. The study emphasizes the importance and benefits of implementing interactive teaching strategies in English language classes. These strategies make learning more exciting and compelling, promoting student interest and learning outcomes. Teachers who still need to incorporate interactive approaches can use the study findings as a roadmap to enhance their lessons and student performance. Implementing conversation sessions, debates, problem-solving exercises, and other interactive techniques can create an engaging and productive learning environment, further increasing student involvement and language skills.

The research demonstrates that teachers play a crucial role in developing students' language skills by offering exciting activities and promoting student ownership of learning. Teachers significantly impact their academic progress by going beyond the textbook requirements and actively engaging students. The study also highlights the potential of technology-based language learning strategies, urging educators to explore innovative ways of using tools like KineMaster in the classroom. Integrating the KineMaster app into language acquisition instruction is a successful tactic, as indicated by a significant percentage of students reporting its frequent use by their teachers. Teachers employ motivating activities, online discussions, feedback, and learner autonomy to assist students in practicing and improving their speaking talents. Technology tools like KineMaster and other digital media tools enable students to practice their language abilities and receive prompt feedback. This suggests that technology integration in language instruction can effectively enhance student attitudes and performance. Teachers dedicated to their student's success and willing to go beyond traditional methods can positively influence their language development. Even if some students participate occasionally, regular engagement in these exercises demonstrates the teacher's commitment to fostering a supportive and encouraging learning atmosphere through feedback. The study reveals that most students perceive their teachers as encouraging and training them to practice practical speaking skills, highlighting the importance of developing students' confidence in effective English communication. Teachers should not solely focus on grammar rules but also emphasize practical speaking skills to enable confident and assertive communication in English, aligning with students' needs and aspirations.

The findings indicate that digital storytelling with KineMaster has the potential to be an effective teaching tool for English language competency. Compared to traditional teacher-centered instruction, technology-assisted training using KineMaster is more engaging and effective in improving students' English language proficiency. Students' interest in learning noticeably increased when using KineMaster, emphasizing its potential as a valuable teaching tool. English-language video editing techniques contribute to enhanced proficiency. Adapting instructional materials based on initial issues and incorporating student input is essential. The study conclusions have significant implications for instructional designers and language instructors seeking to integrate technology and innovative teaching techniques to enhance language learning outcomes in the digital era. Using digital storytelling to teach language skills can be successful and enjoyable, benefiting language education. The study limitations are that it examined the proficiency of English-speaking skills, focusing on linguistic and pragmatic aspects such as word choice, fluency, and natural speech in daily life. This study focused on 440 second-year undergraduate students at Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University, ranging from

elementary to pre-intermediate English proficiency. The sample size was 6 7 , with a gender disparity in enrollment. The participants were non-English majors, and the study did not include other levels or majors. The results should be cautiously interpreted when applying them to teaching speaking proficiency to EFL students, as the proportion of male and female students was unequal.

6. Recommendation for Further Research

The present study examines the possible advantages of utilizing technology in language instruction; nevertheless, additional investigation is necessary to ascertain the applicability of these results to diverse demographics and situations. The study findings demonstrate the potential advantages of utilizing technology in language instruction. Further research is required to completely comprehend and utilize digital media technologies for language learning in various circumstances. The study findings demonstrate the potential advantages of utilizing technology in language instruction. Still, more research is needed to fully understand and use digital media tools for learning languages. Based on the research findings and what they mean, the following suggestions and recommendations for future research could help us learn more about how to teach and learn English, especially when it comes to speaking skills:

Although the research results presented in this paper are encouraging, it is essential to keep in mind that they are only applicable to the context of this particular study and that additional research is required to determine whether or not these results can be generalized to other populations and contexts given the numerous unanswered questions. Research examining the connection between speaking abilities and other linguistic skills appears fully justified because future work that builds on these findings may help create more efficient language teaching strategies, educational materials, and treatments that prioritize speaking skill development. This could demonstrate the value of speaking skills in language learning and encourage more teachers and students to support speaking practice sessions. Overall, the research findings highlight how crucial speaking abilities are to the study and instruction of the English language. This could mean looking into task-based learning or communicative language instruction emphasizing speaking practice. This could make it easier to understand how a person's speaking skills fit into their overall language skills. The study results emphasize how crucial it is to integrate multimedia resources into language training to give students a dynamic and exciting learning environment. This study highlights the value of including multimedia materials in language training to build a more active and engaging learning environment.

Further research into the connection between student motivation and involvement and the usage of multimedia resources in language training is desirable to extend our knowledge of interactive teaching strategies that can be successful in English language classes. Still, more research is required to pinpoint the most successful method. It examines the effects of interactive teaching techniques on various age groups and levels of language proficiency.

Further, combining technology-based methods and interactive teaching strategies into language instruction can improve language acquisition and growth. Teachers prioritize speaking skills while utilizing interactive teaching strategies and multimedia resources to make learning fun and effective for their students. This is a significant finding because it shows that participants in the study were driven to enhance their spoken English to succeed personally and professionally. Interactive teaching techniques and the use of multimedia resources can create dynamic learning environments that are tailored to the requirements and preferences of the students. Technology in language teaching, like the KineMaster app, can improve language learning and proficiency, mainly speaking abilities. The study emphasizes the significance of incorporating cutting-edge and successful teaching techniques to support language learning and development. This presents significant ramifications for the field of language education, particularly in the context of English instruction, where oral communication abilities are prioritized, and instructional techniques involving multimedia and interactive approaches are employed to augment language acquisition. The results highlight the importance of considering students' requirements and interests and incorporating technology into language teaching to create engaging and successful learning experiences. These results emphasize the value of teachers using interactive teaching methods to include students and encourage

language learning and growth. To improve their students' English language skills, teachers should frequently demonstrate how to utilize the KineMaster app to create digital stories on mobile devices. Teachers should provide students with resources to hone their communication skills, such as engaging films, online dialogues, feedback, and learner autonomy. This study has shed light on "The Utilization of KineMaster Application: Mobile-Based Digital Storytelling to Improve English Speaking Skills of Thai EFL Undergraduate Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic." The researcher hopes that it will act as a catalyst for further research and advancement in this field.

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