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DEVELOPING MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH FOR FUTURE CAREERS

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Abstract

Arguably, English is now an international language used by more non-native speakers of English than native. *The English for Future Careers* course is taught in many government universities in Thailand by native and non native teachers of English in the hope that students will be armed with the necessary skills to apply for employment, whilst communicating in English appropriately in multi-national communities. However, there seems to be a scarcity of published materials available for use when teaching low-level learners these vital skills.

This paper recounts the process of course and materials development, focusing on the need to create materials that meet the desired outcomes of the course whilst accommodating the generally low language proficiency and motivation level of the learners. The process included the development of materials that were designed initially to be used at a government university in the northeast of Thailand and were then successfully adapted as supplementary worksheets to accompany an existing course book *Get Ready for Business*, designed to be used by college students throughout Asia.

Introduction

In 1999, Thailand passed its Education Act which was designed to spearhead the transition from teacher centered rote learning to a more learner centered communicative approach. Unfortunately, ten years have passed and while the rest of the world embraces globalization, Thailand's education system still seems routed in the past.

The *English for Future Careers* course is one of the core courses taught in many of the government universities in Thailand and comprises of a limited range of objectives over the sixteen week semester. Students have to write a curriculum vitae (CV) accompanied by a covering letter, use Microsoft Word and email to complete the assessment process, as well as take part in a simulated job interview. Some educational commentators would question the value of a course such as this, as many of Thailand's students live in rural areas and would not use these skills to obtain employment after they have graduated. Due to the poor English language skills and motivation that these non English major students possess, it is important that they are stimulated by whatever methods to enhance their chances of successfully completing the course. This is by no means a reflection on the students themselves, more an indictment of the state of English language education in Thailand today.

A detailed description of the evolution of this course has been recounted by Graham (2009) where the use of "creative subversion" and "rapport" were vital in motivating

and engaging mechanical technology majors who in the past, have had a reputation of being under achievers. Baker (2008) reports how Professor Debra Myhill of Exeter University advocated that good teachers should not blindly follow government directives and that they should use a kind of “creative subversion” to adapt these initiatives creatively. Senior (2008) explains the benefits of rapport and how to achieve it in the classroom. Both creative subversion and rapport proved to be of paramount importance in the successful delivery of this course to the mechanical technology students and later with other non English major students of English.

A considerable amount of time and effort was expended to successfully establish a feeling of rapport with this all male class of students, notably by using topics such as football and socializing. Creative subversion was achieved by concentrating on what students “can do” and “have done” in relation to their chosen job targets. Due to this, it was possible to have a substantial period of quality teaching and learning, resulting in students achieving the aims of the course in addition to learning about their own personal qualities and attributes in both English and Thai. This was completed at the same time as achieving the aims and objectives set by the government for successful completion of the course.

This paper concentrates on the development of the materials that were used to teach the initial *English for Future Careers* course and how they were successfully adapted to be used as supplementary worksheets, published on the internet, for use in conjunction with Units 9 and 10 of an existing course book. The title *Get Ready for Business* is designed for use in Asia by Macmillan.

Assistance for the struggling author

Professional authors, who have been in the industry for a considerable period of time, make the process of publishing their work sound so easy. What is encouraging for the novice is that they are prepared to share their experiences on material writers’ forums such as Material Writers Interest Section (MWIS), which is a special interest group of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Having joined a forum such as this, it is possible to read the postings and get an understanding of what has to take place in order to be published. The experienced authors are very helpful and are genuinely interested in assisting all those that are ambitious enough to try to attain their individual goals in the industry. There is also a newsletter which gives advice concerning all the stages of the publication process.

The Japanese Association for Language Teaching (JALT) has a special interest group which publishes a newsletter called *Between the Keys*. This publication has a substantial amount of information for first time and experienced materials developers and was also a useful tool in transforming existing locally produced course materials into something commercially viable.

Riley (2008) explains how to make proposals to ELT publishers. For anyone thinking of undertaking this for the first time, it makes interesting reading. Tips for English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) material writers are provided by the Internet Teachers of English as a Second Language Journal (ITESLJ) which has a webpage that allows material writers to share their ideas. Once again, those teachers and authors that have already published work are prepared to share

their valuable experiences with others. The constraints and realities of ELT publishing from the Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal (TESL-EJ) gives insight into the world of publishing from the perspectives of an editor and a regional sales director. The interviews illustrate what it is like to be on the other side of the fence, allowing potential authors to see what publishers are thinking about and how they conduct their business.

There are many myths concerning the writing of teaching materials. Harrison (2007) has put paid to the commonly thought misconceptions that only experts and experienced teachers can write materials, that the writer is the most important part of any writing team and the more elaborate the design and production, the better. By reviewing and assessing free materials that are available on the internet, it is evident that there are many that are very effective and are comparatively simple in design, which was the basis for the materials that were produced for both the original course as well as the commercial worksheets.

Locally produced materials

There is always the dilemma of whether to adopt or adapt existing materials (Parcon 1995). The vast majority of English language teachers around the world, whether they are native speakers or not, have been placed in the situation where they have had to develop materials that they were going to use in their classrooms at some time in their careers. This can be for many reasons; the course book does not cover the complete syllabus, students need more practice in a particular skill or there are no suitable course materials available for the students. Apart from copying an exercise straight out of a book, most teachers will take an existing exercise from a course book or text book and adapt it to fit the task at hand.

When the materials for this course were being constructed, many books in the marketplace were reviewed with a view to gaining ideas as to developing a set of materials that would be suitable for low level learners with a lack of motivation to learn English. Muñoz (2007) explains that designing effective teaching materials must be goal orientated, so following the outcomes directed by the government would assist in the definition of the course goals for this course. Having reviewed what was on offer, there were no books on the market that could be used as a core course book, so ideas from existing resources were used to create the materials. *The Perfect CV* by Jackson (1995) was used as inspiration to focus the students' attention on their qualities by using lists of what they are capable of and what they have achieved already.

Materials by Careerfinder Ltd; *How to Impress Bosses and Win Interviews* and *How to Impress at Selection and Win the Job* were used to develop the language needed by using action verbs to describe the students' qualities. These materials were supplied by the company after they were contacted via the Institute of Leadership and Management and permission was granted for the material to be used in the initial course book. Further additional material by Roberts (1994), Straw & Shapiro (1996) and Threlfall (1994) helped in the construction of the simulated job interview which takes up to six weeks of the sixteen week semester to administer.

The initial course was designed for English majors. Only much later was it discovered that the course had to be undertaken by non English majors. Over a period of about one year, the course materials were reduced from a course book and workbook to one composite book. Through both product and process approaches, the students were guided in how to complete the CV and covering letter and taken through the various stages of a simulated job interview after having seen their seniors complete their interviews on DVD. Examples of the style and layout of the CV and covering letters, as well as the script for the simulated interview are attached as Appendixes to Graham (2009).

Adapting materials for commercial publication

The idea of publishing materials either as a book or as a resource on the internet for a major English Language Teaching (ELT) publisher is beyond the realms of fantasy for the majority of English language teachers. This process is considerably different if you have already developed your own materials and they need to be adapted to an existing course book. Here, the author has to be prepared to change the format and style of their work to conform to the existing published materials.

Sometimes it takes a series of coincidences and good fortune for the opportunity for this to happen; however, what does remain constant is that there is always an element of hard work, even more so when a teacher is attempting to do this for the first time. Whilst giving the presentation, “English for Future Careers: Globalization for Mechanical Technology Students” in Cambodia earlier this year, a representative from Macmillan approached asking whether there was the possibility that materials developed for the *English for Future Careers* course could be adapted and used as on-line supplementary worksheets for one of their existing two level titles preparing Asian students to use English for work. Colebrook (1996) explains the problem behind “mono cultural” textbooks produced by native speakers of English for a target audience of teachers who are also native speakers of English, often overlooking the “practical constraints” of these materials being used in different educational settings. So the opportunity to contribute Asian focused material to textbooks designed for the Asian market had extra appeal.

Once back in Thailand, contact was made by email, deadlines set for five worksheets with teachers’ notes and within a matter of weeks it was all over, with the finished product on the internet for the world to see. What took place over this relatively short period of time was an adaptation of the original *English for Future Careers* materials to fit the style and layout of the *Get Ready for Business* publications. This involved making the materials more Asian specific rather than the original Thai specific, as well as sequencing the worksheets in a way that ran parallel to the commercial course book. Macmillan were very supportive in this area as they are experienced in this field and obviously have expert knowledge of the language, structure, layout and design of their own commercial titles.

The first worksheet was an adaptation of an exercise from the classroom where students would review two job advertisements and discuss whether it matched their personal job target. They then looked through the classifieds section of the Bangkok Post and cut out a job advertisement that interested them and that fitted their job target. They would stick this onto a piece of blank A4 paper and highlight the

qualifications and skills that were needed. Finally they would reflect on the skills that they “can do” and those they “have done”, comparing them to the job vacancy they had previously selected. Rather than have a blank piece of paper, the adaptation involved constructing a worksheet that had all the information on it already except for the newspaper advertisement from a local or national paper. This would still have to be selected by the student and then stuck onto the worksheet.

The second worksheet followed on from the first by identifying capabilities and achievements. The use of lists of action verbs helped the students describe what they “can do” (capabilities) and what they “have done” (achievements). They then wrote sentences using the correct form of the action verb to confirm their understanding.

For example:

I can coordinate new work practices.

I have coordinated new work practices.

A targeted CV was selected as the most appropriate for this exercise as it had a focus on specific personal and skill areas, which would benefit the students when it came to their personal reflection about themselves and their teacher’s use of creative subversion in the classroom. The third worksheet was the most difficult to adapt as the layout of the CV in the *English for Future Careers* course differed considerably from that which was to be used for the Macmillan commercial publication.

The American style of CV that was to be produced necessitated the changing of the order of how the CV had been initially laid out. Some authors may have difficulties with this as it does infringe on their feeling of ownership of the original piece of work; however, the choice is quite simple, if you are not flexible, then you will not have your work published. Commercial publishers are looking for specific content and when your contribution is to be used as supplementary material for an existing commercial success, there is only one outcome if you wish to publish your work. The areas covered in this worksheet consist of the name and address block and then the job target, followed by education, work history, skills and achievements. Students are required to refer to previous worksheets in order to complete the tasks, with attention given to the correct form of action verbs as they are adapted to fit into the CV layout.

The penultimate worksheet contains the three paragraph covering letter. It involves completing a number of gap fill exercises before students write their own letter using the grid provided. Guidance and support is given by instructions in the margin and students also need to refer to the previous gap fill exercises.

Finally, the simulated interview has students explore their personal qualities before encouraging them to state something about themselves. This has been accomplished by choosing two personal qualities and referring them back to their “can do” and “have done” statements. This has to be completed five times as part of the simulated interview.

For example:

I am an honest person.

I can be trusted.

I worked in a store and took care of the cash and stock on my own.

The simulated interview consists of a script which encompasses the above exercise as well as certain grammar and pronunciation elements such as use of the past tense and plural 's'.

All worksheets have accompanying teachers' notes which clearly detail the aims, timings, preparation and procedure for each worksheet, allowing the teacher the opportunity to fine-tune the lesson for their own class or use the materials as they stand.

Conclusion

With information technology leading the tide of English language usage around the world, it is possible, with some imagination, for native and non native teachers of English to adapt their existing coursework for publication with major publishers in the ELT field. This is not an exact science; it is not possible just to rely on research because successful materials are "shaped by many factors and constraints" (Richards 2006). The internet provides a showcase for potential authors demonstrating what can be achieved when an individual is prepared to sometimes compromise the style, layout or format of their original product in order to contribute to an existing book or series of books.

It is important for aspiring material developers to realize that writing materials can be used as an effective way to conduct teacher development as taking into account the approach, design and procedure of a course (Kennedy 1987) will help the teacher with the design of the syllabus, materials and future modifications after further periods of reflection. Materials development has been used for a long time as a tool for in-service professional development for teachers, Kiely (1996) also argues that it applies equally to the professional development of teacher trainers. So the process of constructing course materials and their development for commercial publication has ramifications for a teacher's professional development, whether they are experienced teachers or new to the profession.

The idea of writing a whole book may seem a daunting task to the vast majority of English language teachers; however, a small step in that direction can be taken by adapting an existing piece of work and transforming it into a published piece, which can be used, copied and adapted to assist in the teaching of English to another class of English language learners, maybe on the other side of the world. To do this, there needs to be collaboration between teachers and publishing houses to encourage the many potential commercial authors in our educational institutions to take the first steps in what could possibly be a new career. For those who only want to test the water or to see if they are up to the challenge, they can contribute to the ever increasing amount of resources that are available worldwide on the internet for use in schools everywhere around the globe.

Useful websites

The Macmillan worksheets and teachers' notes discussed in this article for *Get Ready for Business* can be downloaded from:

<http://www.macmillanenglish.com/GetReadyforBusiness/Teachers/TA-Worksheets.htm>

Tips for ESL/EFL materials writers provided by ITESLJ can be downloaded from:

<http://iteslj.org/c/materials.html>

The constraints and realities of ELT publishing from TESL-EJ can be downloaded from:

<http://tesl-ej.org/pdf/ej41/f1.pdf>

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EMPOWERING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS WITH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

Computers have been used in education for at least 3 decades. The purpose of this presentation is to assist teachers to use computers and understand some benefits that can enhance and improve the use of information technology as an eclectic approach. In addition, this paper demonstrates how the Web can be used as a vehicle for English language learning. This paper points out some of the pitfalls in using computers and discusses how and what an attractive and appealing lesson consists of. English language teachers and learners would be more empowered. Hence, English language teachers would have a more effective and meaningful teaching tool to exploit in their teaching.

Empowering English Language Teachers with Information Technology

In this age of globalization—English has become the language most used. It is the language of business, education, and so on. English is also used widely in the Internet. Therefore, it is essential for teachers and students to keep up with the pace of globalization (Kajornboon, 2009). The use of IT in ELT is an eclectic approach.

Hence, this research paper has been designed for English language teachers as well as to assist them in English language teaching. It is a ‘minute recipe’ for teachers. The ‘minute recipe’ is a menu or best practice for teachers teaching English with IT or planning to use IT. This research paper is to develop teachers’ knowledge and skills in IT. The aims of this paper are to support teachers in educational technology and provide ideas to empower teachers and students.

The empowerment of teachers with IT is a lengthy process and numerous factors are involved. However, only a few are mentioned in this paper. -The use of IT has been a focus for educational institutions and there has been an appeal to use IT. It is not only attractively alluring, but also intimidating with pitfalls. The use of IT not only has benefits or attractions but also drawbacks or pitfalls.

This paper examines both the attractions and pitfalls of IT. Then suggestions or solutions are made. Next, examples of students' usage are given. Finally, a few useful Websites are given.

Using IT in ELT is an eclectic approach (Kajornboon, 2008). First, the attractions of IT are presented. This includes the empowerment of teachers with IT, the effectiveness and usefulness of the tool, how it can be extended into teaching and IT trends (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Lee-CALLbarriers.html>).

Empowerment of teachers is a desirable ingredient of school improvement (http://www.curriculum.edu.au/leader/empowering_teachers,9982.html?issueID=9779). According to Hargraves (2004, cited in Sparks, 2004), teacher empowerment is to attract, develop, and retain quality teachers. Teacher empowerment provides teachers with working conditions that would inspire and offer them a chance to soar.

In addition, educational administrators have encouraged the use of IT in ELT. The use of IT is seen as empowering teachers; hence, it is seen as a motivational force. Students like to play computer games which have helped them in learning English (Kajornboon, 2009). It is a tool in which students are fairly familiar and it motivates them. The belief is when students are motivated their learning and achievement are enhanced.

Teachers are able to contact, give assignments and feedback to their students. IT is a tool that provides individualization. Shy students are able to communicate with their teachers (Kajornboon, 2004). In addition, students can communicate via the Internet with their friends and make new friends; they can use Skype, Yahoo messenger and so on.

Another attraction is the amount of information or materials on the Internet. It presents numerous sources of information. The Internet can retrieve authentic material. The World Wide Web (WWW) is borderless. IT provides unlimited information and materials to both teachers and students from unlimited sources.

On the other hand, IT is not only a bed of roses but is also has thorns. They are:

- Preparation of IT is crucial and some teachers and students need to be prepared to use it.
- IT technical support—IT technical support is slow when the problem is immediate.
- Management of IT—Equipment and software are unmanageable because they have not been appropriately set up.

- Teachers and students knowledge of IT--Some teachers have knowledge of IT and some are not computer literate. Similarly, not all students are computer literate or have access to IT.
- Refusal of use or acceptance by teachers. Some teachers have refused refusing to use IT. They prefer face-to-face teaching and students do too (Kajornboon 2004). Some teachers are afraid of IT because it can be unpredictable. There can be technical problems which teachers cannot solve.
- Financial cost—IT is costly because of hardware, software, and professional support. They become obsolete at a fast pace.
- Accessibility of IT—There are enough computers for students to use and students may not have access to IT.

Although there are drawbacks in IT, it is still a tool for teaching and learning English. Hence, some suggestions and solutions to IT problems need to be made. How can teachers be empowered?

One important step towards empowering teachers for IT is to prepare them. Preparation for online courses “means educating and training the faculty members and students to be computer literate and to assist them to realize that online teaching is different from onsite teaching. Funding must be allocated for training of online teachers” (Kajornboon, 2004, p.151-152). This step should be taken before the course begins.

Furthermore, assessment and feedback can help to empower teachers for IT. Assessment and feedback “means that the assessment modifies a student’s thinking or behavior for the purpose of learning in the course. Summative feedback assesses how well a student accomplishes a task or achieves a result for the purpose of a grade” (Kajornboon, 2004, p.152).

Another drawback of IT is the break down of the hardware or infrastructure. This needs to be avoided and can be remedied by examining and inspecting the hardware—computers, servers, and network connection. This has to be done by capable computer technicians.

Also, “the bandwidth of the network must be able to handle high levels of data transfers. This means substantial investments must be made in infrastructure including communication systems, software and hardware. Backup networks and high-speed modems should be available” (Kajornboon, 2004, p. 155).

The last suggestion is technical assistance and administrative support. This is crucial. It “means a person or persons with knowledge of hardware and software must serve as technical assistance. Technical support is required to ease the load of teachers. This applies in particular to teachers who are not technically oriented” (Kajornboon, 2004, p. 156).

In addition, a good rapport between teachers and technical members is essential. Without a good rapport or communication, problems that arise from the use of computers may not be resolved. Their expertise is essential for most teachers. The supporting staff or technical team has to be kept updated. They must have professional development as well as keep in touch with others in the same field.

Some solutions to empowering teachers with IT include preparing teachers and students for the course. Moreover, assessment and providing students with feedback is recommended. Equally important is hardware and the infrastructure. The last suggestion made is to have good technical and administrative support.

Next, examples of students using computers in learning English are given. The pictures were made by first year students in the Faculty of Political Science. The pictures were taken without the teacher’s knowledge. They used the computer to express their feelings toward their teacher.

Example 1: Students’ use of Computers



The last part of this paper provides useful Websites. Example 2: English Grammar Review. It is a grammar quiz.

Beginning English Grammar Review Quiz - 1

Choose the correct word or phrase to complete the English grammar question. Each question has only one correct answer. When you are finished click on the "Next Question" button. There are 45 questions to this quiz. Try to use only 1 minute per question. At the end of the quiz, you will receive quiz feedback.

Q: Are there _____ apples in the kitchen?

- much
- any
- some
- a

Next Question >>

Beginning English Grammar Review Quiz - 1

Choose the correct word or phrase to complete the English grammar question. Each question has only one correct answer. When you are finished click on the "Next Question" button. There are 45 questions to this quiz. Try to use only 1 minute per question. At the end of the quiz, you will receive quiz feedback.

Correct!

Q: That is _____ interesting book.

- the
- a
- an
-

Next Question >>

Beginning English Grammar Review Quiz - 1

Choose the correct word or phrase to complete the English grammar question. Each question has only one correct answer. When you are finished click on the "Next Question" button. There are 45 questions to this quiz. Try to use only 1 minute per question. At the end of the quiz, you will receive quiz feedback.

That answer was not correct.

The correct answer to:

_____ 'The Sting'?

is:

Have you ever seen

You answered 32 items out of 36 correctly.

Your score is 89%. Great!

http://esl.about.com/library/quiz/bl_beginnerreview.htm?lastQuestion=2&answers=2&submit=Next+Question+%3E%3E&ccount=2

This is a useful Website on grammar review. After students have completed the exercise their scores will be shown. However, there is no explanation for incorrect answers.

Example 2: Pronunciation

This is an example of English pronunciation.

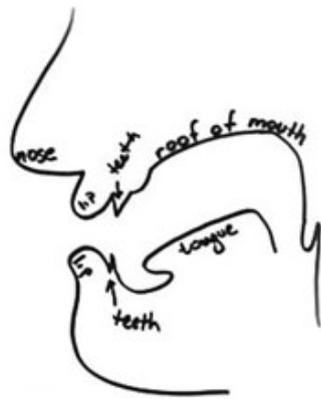


Pronouncing English Sounds

[about](#) [** links](#) [** handouts](#) [** pronunciation](#) [** activities & exercises](#) [** tips for teachers](#) [** home](#)

heat / hit	<p>The purpose of this section is to help learners of English with the pronunciation of specific sounds. On these pages you will find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pictures of how your mouth looks when you say sounds.• A description of how to make the sound.• Audio recordings of some words with that sound (real media).• Video recordings of someone saying words with that sound. (coming soon!)
head / hate	
hat / hot	
hoot / hood	
hoot / hut	
hood / hoot	

The activities section of this website has several exercises that you can use to practice these sounds.



First, here is a picture of the inside of your mouth and the important *articulators*, the parts of your mouth that help you to make the sounds.

Your lips, teeth, tongue, nose, and roof of your mouth are all important for pronunciation. The epiglottis is also important. That is the thing that you use to

hold your breath and to swallow. It closes your windpipe so the air cannot come out.

(<http://www.soundsofenglish.org/pronunciation/sounds.htm>)

Example 2 illustrates pronunciation practice. It gives useful explanation about specific pronunciation. Teachers will have to find additional practice for pronunciation.

Example 3: Doctor Secrets

This Website is about different illnesses.

Search Site: **DoctorSecrets!**

I'm looking for...

Google Friend Connect

Amazing Medical Stories	Emergency 911	Insider Medical Secrets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Father of Sherlock Holmes Did you know that Sherlock Holmes was invented by a doctor! Learn about the creator of the world's most famous detective. History of the Stethoscope Where did this doctor instrument come from and why. Learn here. The Elephant Man Full history and pictures of this enigma of medical science, the amazing "Elephant Man". How to get more Medical Question Answers Where can you find in-depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bee Stings How to ease that sting and danger signs to look out for. Snake Bites Quick glance facts that might someday save your life in the wilderness. Urinary Tract Infections spotting and treating. Hypothyroidism tired all the time? Could your thyroid be responsible? Hyperthyroidism / Graves Disease Bell's Palsy Headache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to Read a Prescription : Just why do those hieroglyphics mean. Why do Doctors Write so Badly? : Jus why do doctors write so badly. How to become a Doctor?: What you need to get into medical school. How Much does a Doctor Know? : Ju: how many books will you need to read to become a doctor. What's Life like for a Doctor? : Here's a look into the daily life of a doctor. How does a Doctor Visit Work? What...

(<http://www.doctorsecrets.com/>)

The third example is about certain illnesses. Students can use this Website to help them with simple illnesses, such as How to ease bee stings? How to read a medical

prescription? or What is the elephant man? Students are able to make an oral presentation or write a summary about the topic they have selected.

Example 4: Present Simple Tense

This is an example on present simple tense.

Present Simple

By [Kenneth Beare](#), About.com

See More About: [present simple](#) [sentence structure](#) [english tenses](#)

Present Simple

Listed below are uses with examples, and the structure of the present simple tense.

Permanent or long-lasting situations

Where do you work?
The store opens at 9 o'clock.
She lives in New York.

<h5>Sponsored Links</h5> <hr/> <p>Tensioned Membrane Sails Tension membrane structures & sails We design and build worldwide www.profileshadestructures.com.au</p>	<h5>Regular habits and daily routines</h5> <p>I usually get up at 7 o'clock. She doesn't often go to the cinema. When do they usually have lunch?</p>
--	---

(http://esl.about.com/od/grammarstructures/a/pres_simple.htm)

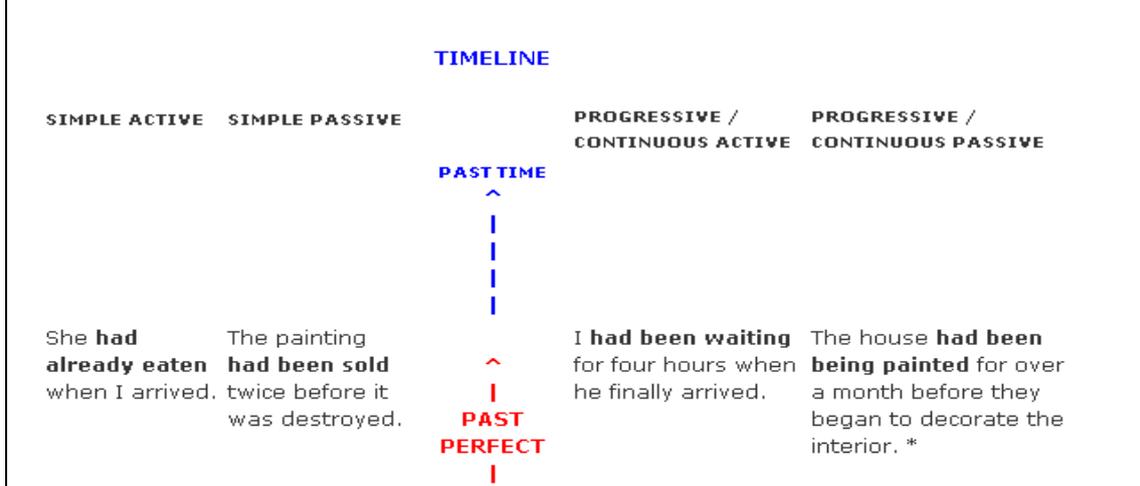
Example 4 is a Website, which gives explanation of the present simple tense. The explanation is not complicated and students can use it. More exercises can be provided by teachers.

Example 5: English Tense Timeline Chart

This example provides the timeline for English tenses.

English Tenses Timeline Chart

This timeline tenses chart provides a handy reference sheet to English tenses and their relationship to one another and the past, present and future. Conjugated verbs are highlighted in **bold**. Tenses which are rarely used in everyday conversation are marked by an asterik (*).



(http://esl.about.com/od/grammarstructures/a/pres_simple.htm)

Example 5 is useful for teachers to use in explaining tenses. It is a timeline chart.

Example 6: Song

The last example is a song from Youtube.com by Michael Jackson, *We are the World*. It is a listening activity.



We are the World Michael Jackson



Choose the correct word to complete the blanks.

There 1. _____ a time	1. come	comes
When we 2. _____ a certain call	2. heed	head
When the 3. _____ must come together as 4. _____	3. world	war
	4. one	won
There are people 5. _____	5. lying	dying
And it's time to lend a 6. _____ to life	6. hand	land
The 7. _____ gift of all	7. greatest	biggest
We 8. _____ go on	8. can	can't
Pretending day by day		
That someone, somewhere will soon 9. _____ a change	9. bring	make
We are all a 10. _____ of God's great big family	10. path	part
And the 11. _____, you know love is all we need	11. true	truth
[Chorus] * *		
We are the world	12. children	chilling
We are the 12. _____	13. brighter	lighter
We are the ones who make a 13. _____ day	14. giving	living
So let's start 14. _____	15. choice	chorus
There's a 15. _____ we're making	16. lives	knives
We're saving our own 16. _____	17. true	truth
It's 17. _____ we'll make a better day		
Just you and me		
Send them your 18. _____	18. hard	heart
So they'll know that someone 19. _____	19. dares	cares
And their lives will be 20. _____ and free	20. greater	stronger
As God has shown us by 21. _____ stone to bread	21. churning	turning
So we all must 22. _____ a helping hand	22. blend	lend
[Chorus]*		
When you're down and 23. _____	23. out	up
There 24. _____ no hope at all	24. seems	seem
But if you just 25. _____	25. believe	belief
There's no 26. _____ we can fall	26. way	wave
Well, well, well, well, let us realize		
That a 27. _____ will only come	27. crave	change
When we 28. _____ together as one	28. stay	stand
[Chorus]* *		

The song is sung by Michael Jackson. It can be downloaded from Youtube.com. Students have been interested in his mystery for years. Students are eager to know about him and want to listen to his song. The worksheet has been made by the author of this paper for students learning Experiential English I –first semester.

In the classroom, there is a computer and students watched Michael Jackson. Many exercises can be conducted from this YouTube.com segment, such as listening activities to listen to the song and complete the words.

Moreover, vocabulary can be taught from the song. Students can also describe his appearance, clothing, dancing etc. They can search the Internet to find out more about the singer's life. Students were fascinated about what happened to Michael Jackson. It was a popular exercise. Many songs can be used in the English class using computers and the Internet.

As stated there are numerous uses of IT. This paper has discussed the advantages and drawbacks of ELT teachers using IT. However, for the pitfalls described, suggestions or solutions have been provided. In addition, examples of Websites have been given and teachers are able to adapt or adopt them as they see appropriate.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN INDEPENDENT LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY

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Abstract

Many universities around Thailand face the problem in preparing their graduates with adequate English proficiency for their prospect employers. Many learning strategies have been attempted, one of which is the independent language learning. This study investigated the effectiveness of an independent language learning strategy as a component of the main English foundation course during the first semester of the academic year 2009 at Khon Kaen University. The course components studied were reading and listening in the center for independent language learning and language laboratories, respectively. The research tools included questionnaire, interviewing, and observation for quantitative data and teacher discussion for qualitative data. The overall results confirm and support the investigated approach of English language teaching in terms of its effectiveness and better results. On average, the majority of the students agreed that independent language learning should be integrated into foundation English courses. The management system, however, should be planned more carefully to obtain optimum outcomes.

The Effectiveness of an Independent Language Learning Strategy

Thai university graduates' low proficiency in English is due to many reasons. First, students entering universities on average are of poor language proficiency, and it is not always possible to enroll only the students whose proficiency of English is high. Second, the compulsory English courses are limited. Elective English courses may be offered only when program administrators see the importance. The third and most important problem is that the number of students in English classes is high, resulting in teaching and learning inefficiency. On administrative and management grounds, English language units are not officially and financially permitted to reduce the number of students in a class. Therefore, English language teaching institutions across the country have attempted many teaching approaches in order to improve the English proficiency of their students. In the 1980s and before that, the communicative approach was the most popular method adopted. According to Hall and Hewings (2000), the communicative approach includes the concept of individualization, which has led to another approach, the independent language learning. Another autonomous learning is the task-based approach proposed by Jane Willis (1996.) Skehan (in Willis and Willis, 1996) comments that the learning process in which the students have to solve a problem by means of communication should be effective in the natural use of English. However, Skehan himself still sees remaining problems in language acquisition via this approach (in Willis and Willis, 1996) due mainly to their level of

language proficiency. Self-access learning is another mostly used approach which promotes the concept of individualization and autonomy of the learners. There has been an argument on this approach (Hurd, 2003, cited in <http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/1573>.) for the demands of self-instruction and the absence of the teacher's control can be overwhelming, and students may not be adequately motivated. Nevertheless, Hurd (2003) went on to say that material designs and management can help prevent problems that may occur. At the same time, teachers need to be aware of the different types of motivational orientation (Skehan, 2003.) A number of research studies have been conducted on independent learning, however, within the various contexts of the institutions wishing to use it. A study by Intrarat (2000) evaluating the listening proficiency of students learning in the self-access learning center at King Mongkut's University of technology Thonburi revealed that the subjects' listening proficiency level increased significantly after they practiced in the center. Sojisirikul and Intrarat (2006) conducted a study on the initial step of autonomous learning to investigate the students' attitude and self-estimation after they had been trained in a self-directed learning style. The results of the study showed that they were confident in developing their potential as self-directed learners.

In the context of Khon Kaen University, an experimental English receptive skills were to be learned by the students individually and independently using commercial and standardized text and media. In this study, we attempted to investigate the effectiveness of an independent language learning strategy as a component of the first English foundation course during the first semester of academic year 2009, with an aim to determine whether the strategy would be applicable in the context of Khon Kaen University. The course components studied were the reading and listening skills in the center for independent language learning (CILL) using SRA reading series and the Set-4 English laboratory. The results should support the investigated approach of English language teaching in terms of its effectiveness and usefulness. If the results were positive, then the strategy could be introduced as one component of the syllabus in which the students will learn receptive skills in the appropriate places provided for them with appropriate materials.

Design and Procedure

The course under study was designed with the four major skills taught separately and in rotation patterns. Four blocks of schedules were planned through the semester, consisting of three to four weeks each. The listening and reading skills which were arranged in the independent language learning center and the sound laboratories were the two components investigated. The students received orientation during the first week of classes so that they understood the new system. They were directed to reserve their time for the 9 hours independent learning for each of the perceptive skills under study. In this study, a questionnaire, an interview, and observation were used as the research instruments in order to obtain quantitative results. The total number of students enrolled into this course was 3,986. Different sample groups chosen for the three interventions were derived from random sampling. The questionnaire was distributed to 450 students and 438 copies returned. The period of data collection from the questionnaire was during block three of the course. Interviewing was carried out with 360 students during blocks three and four. The interviewers were trained in interviewing techniques by the researchers before the intervention. Observation was also conducted during block three and four on two sample groups, the first comprising 640 students who were learning the reading skill in CILL during 17 observation

hours, and the second comprising 373 students learning the listening skill in the language laboratories during 19 observation hours. In addition, qualitative data were obtained from group discussions conducted with two groups of teachers responsible for and teaching the course.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of the integration of individual independent language learning into the course had to be conducted with consideration of all aspects concerned. We also looked at the pre-situation and post-situation. The emphasis was on the intervention period, i.e., during the lessons and the activities that accompanied the lessons, including exercises. The points to be evaluated for both the listening and reading skills included: 1) Pre-intervention: course orientation and understanding of course details, reservation of time and room, sufficiency of support from the teacher assistant; 2) Intervention: (1) Content: understanding of the objectives and instructions, appropriateness and usefulness of the contents, levels of difficulty, sufficiency of practices and materials (2)Time: sufficiency of time for the lesson and practices (3) Place: sufficiency and appropriateness of rooms and equipment (4) Support: sufficiency and appropriateness of support from the teacher assistant; 3) Post-intervention: satisfaction of the approach and the outcomes, benefits obtained, and confidence in the use of the skills.

The questionnaire consisted of 5 sections of questions on: (1) personal information, (2) 28 questions on attitudes towards the reading lessons, (3) 19 questions on attitudes towards the listening lessons, (4) 15 questions on attitudes towards the speaking and writing contact lessons, and (5) one open-ended question on the overall views of the course.

The interview form was constructed using similar questions as in the questionnaire. The first section included 31 questions on the attitudes towards the reading lessons, and the second section comprised 20 questions on the attitudes towards the listening lessons.

The observation form was also designed for the observation of students' learning behaviors in the two rooms, i.e., the CILL and the listening room with similar questions. The following seven main items were observed on the students: 1) their attention, 2) their appropriate use of time, 3) their enthusiasm (not showing tension, worries or annoyance,) 4) their asking of questions to the teacher assistant on: learning steps, language, vocabulary, etc., 5) their complaints such as on ambiguity, difficulty levels, time, etc., 6) their submission of assignment on the due date, and 7) their success/failure to complete the task in time.

Group discussions were held with two teachers in charge of CILL (reading component) and the language laboratories (listening component) and two teacher assistants. The two major aspects discussed were of the system and the learners.

The analysis of most part of the data was based on descriptive statistics, Chi-square and ANOVA. The qualitative data were categorized and discussed.

Results

The results from the questionnaire and the interview which contained similar question items were averaged. It was found that most of the students believed learning reading

and listening independently was simple; the average percentages were 70.80 and 80.35 per cent respectively. The majority were satisfied with the system of independent language learning, with 87.12 per cent on average agreeing on reading and 88.16 per cent agreeing on listening. The students thought that the level of difficulty of both skills was appropriate, i.e., at 78.55 and 85.55 per cent, respectively. As high as 74.75 per cent and 88.47 per cent respectively, said that the reading and listening texts were suitable for them. The item that should be taken into consideration is the reservation procedure, with 58.61 and 62.62 per cent of the students reporting that it was complicated. As regards the equipment, materials, room atmosphere and location, the average proportions of the students who were satisfied were high, i.e. at over 75 per cent.

The observation was carried out on aspects not totally similar to the questionnaire and the interview. The students were observed if they paid attention to their work and it was found that on average, 84.97 per cent did for both skills. Most of them, 76.03 per cent, used their time appropriately, and a high proportion, 74.26 per cent, were happy learning on their own and did not seem to be frustrated or worried. It should be noted that as high as 82.12 per cent submitted their assignments in time.

Overall the students were happy to learn the two skills independently and found the learning processes simple. They were satisfied that the level of difficulty was appropriate to them. They were happy learning on their own. However, the average percentage for satisfaction of the reservation procedure was not as high as the first three items. This matched the findings from group discussion. It was also found that there was no problem with the equipment, materials, rooms and location.

To conclude, the quantitative data show that the organization of language lessons in CILL and the language laboratories was satisfactory. The independent language learning was effective and most students were satisfied with the lessons. However, a number of drawbacks were found from group discussions. There was a major problem in the overall system arrangement. Many students did not understand the system of rotation and learning in blocks. Many found the reservation procedure very complicated and not efficient. It was also found that many students did not learn, but just waited and copied the answers from the answer keys.

Discussion

The problems could be categorized into two major areas, the system and the students' performance. It should be noted that for some of the problems listed at the end, the proportion of students complaining on them was only a few.

The system

The organization of the teaching and learning of this course in a new approach was complicated and required clear understanding. This was the major concern of the language institute and hence an orientation session was scheduled for all students in their respective faculties. However, since the orientation was at the beginning of the semester, many students were absent. The explanation of all the steps and the pattern of learning was also provided in Thai in the student's handbook. Nevertheless, the explanation that was lengthy to cover every important point was not read by many students. The following part presents the problems and recommendations.

1. The students lacked understanding of block scheduling of the lessons and the rotation pattern.
2. Reservation procedures were complicated and confusing.
3. The Set4 English program does not provide a system of score reporting.
4. The university grade record files were difficult to work with.
5. The number of teacher assistants working in CILL and language laboratories was not enough.

Recommendations for solution of the above problems from group discussions are as follows: 1) It is still necessary for orientation sessions to be scheduled for all students. 2) It is still necessary to publish a student handbook. 3) In order to get a greater number of students to attend the orientation, advertisement should be done at a broader scale, i.e., in posters, banners, on KKU television channel, KKU newsletter, KKU website, KKU LI website, or even a mobile publicizing van. 4) Officers should be available at the front desk of the language institute to answer all questions. 5) It is still necessary to orientate the teachers who are going to orientate the students. 6) It is still necessary to produce an instruction for orientating teachers so that similar information is conveyed to all students. 7) Reservation should be available on the website of Khon Kaen University Language Institute for each student to reserve the time. This will prevent errors of overlapping and chaos of lining at the service desks during the first week. It is necessary to build a computer program that will accommodate reservation. 8) Students should be able to reserve their time with the officers of the language institute working in front of the computer. 9) Students should be allowed to reschedule their reserved time with sound reasons. 10) A programmer should be hired to construct a program for recording the scores of the students. This score file program can be used for both the reading and listening skills. 11) There should be more officers to help the teacher assistants.

Students' performance

The findings show the following problems: 1) A number of students did not do their tasks and copied the answer keys in CILL. 2) Some students did not understand the instructions and could not do their work. 3) Some students did not know the meanings of words. The following solutions were obtained from group discussions: 1) The answer keys should only be provided at the front desk from the teacher assistant. These should be shown to the students to check their work without taking the keys away. The teacher assistant should make sure that the student has finished his or her work before checking the answer. 2) The weight for assignments was too high. This made the students cheat because they wanted to obtain only good scores. Therefore, the proportion should be lowered so that it does not encourage cheating. 3) The instructions could be written in Thai in order to make the students understand what to do. 4) If more teacher assistants or officers can walk around the room, they will be able to help when the students have problems.

There were some respondents who mentioned that the content of both the listening and reading lessons should be increased. When this was looked at more seriously, it was found that it is true. Considering the time of each skill of nine hours, there should be more lessons assigned for the students to do.

Recommendation for further studies

The findings show that many issues still remain to be solved especially in the administration and management of the system. Further studies should therefore be conducted on the following so as to ascertain the use of independent language learning.

1. A study on the management system for reservation of CILL and sound laboratories should be conducted to see if it would be best for students to reserve their time online through KKULI website. The management of CILL should also be investigated in terms of a) giving clear oral instruction in Thai and b) not providing the answer keys before students' finishing the reading.
2. A replication study of the present study during the first semester, academic year 2010, with redesigned procedures in all aspects where problems were located: reservation procedures, lesson instructions, number of teacher assistants, provision of answer keys, addition of reading and listening lessons, and percentage weight of each skill component.
3. A study on separation of the four different skills, reading, listening, speaking, and writing in the three foundation English courses at Khon Kaen University should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of teaching these skills separately, a preparatory step towards modularization in the future.
4. A study should be done on modularization of the four skills in the three foundation English courses at Khon Kaen University based mainly on the design of the whole curriculum of the three foundation English courses.
5. A study on the effectiveness of the new approach designed in number 4 based on a survey method conducted through the use of questionnaire, interview, participatory observation, and discussion.
6. A study on the effectiveness of each modularized skill.

In conclusion, this study indicates a positive possibility of integrating independent language learning into the English foundation compulsory courses for first year students at Khon Kaen University. There were certain problems found in the organization of the system of the independent language learning component that have to be solved. Topics of further studies are also recommended in order to lead to the application of modularized patterns of language learning in the future.

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**A STUDY OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SPEAKING
LESSONS OF 000101 ENGLISH FOR COMMUNICATION,
ACADEMIC YEAR 2009**

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Abstract

The teaching of English in Thailand has seen a lot of attempts to improve students' speaking skills, with overall unsatisfactory results. Khon Kaen University is experimenting on separating the four skills so that speaking can be treated on its own. This study was aimed at assessing the students' attitudes towards this approach as one indication for future development of the English course design. The speaking lessons were designed to fit in to 12 hour class meetings as an element of with 4 different chapters in a text, which included conversations, essential vocabulary and expressions, and some cultural aspects of English speaking countries. In this research, students' attitudes toward the speaking class, and the strengths and weaknesses of the speaking lessons are investigated. A questionnaire responded by 693 students. The findings reveal that students enjoyed participating in the speaking classes since they could practice speaking with the teacher and friends. A task-based project, interviewing a foreigner, which was the main part of the speaking component was found to be challenging. However, the students recommended that the proportion of this skill compared to other skills should be increased.

A Study of Students' Attitudes toward the Speaking Lessons of 000101 English for Communication, Academic Year 2009

Speaking is one of four important skills in language learning. Apart from communication, it can also support language acquisition and development. Chaney suggested that speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of context." (Chaney, 1998: p.13)

Over the years, teaching speaking has been underrated although it has many important factors toward language learning. In Thailand in the past, English language teachers have taught speaking only to repeat or memorize the dialogues. In recent year, however, the goal of teaching speaking has been required to improve students' communicative skills so "students could express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rule appropriate in each communicative circumstance." (http://iteslj.org/Articles/Kayi-Teaching_Speaking.html)

One of the techniques used in foreign language classroom for several years is rote drilling. A drill is "a way that teachers teach their students something by making them repeat it many times." (Collins COBUILD Dictionary, 2006)

In the audio lingual approach, drilling is a key feature to language teaching which places an emphasis on repeating structural patterns through oral practice (<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk>)

There are many types of language drills such as repetition drill, expansion drill, sentence formation drill and so on. Brown (2001: p.273) suggested some useful guidelines for a successful drill:

- Keep them short (a few minutes of a class hour only).
- Keep them simple (preferably just one point at a time).
- Keep them “snappy.”
- Make sure students know why they are doing the drill.
- Limit them to phonology or grammar points.
- Make sure they ultimately lead to communicative goals.
- Don’t overuse them.

In the communicative language classroom, drill is a valid resource. Drill provides an opportunity for students to practice speaking. To avoid repeating and memorizing the dialogues, a new course module of speaking lessons, researchers have designed drills for students to practice in class. Brown proposed that “A limited portion of classroom speaking time may legitimately be spent generating “human tape recorder” speech, where, for example, learners practice an intonation contour or try to pinpoint a certain vowel sound”. Imitation of this type is not conduct for the aim of meaningful interaction, but for focusing on some specific component of language form. (2001: p.271)

Numerous studies have been carried out with factors identified as contributing to differential patterns of attitude toward language. In the following, theory on language attitude, authentic text, cultural and language learning and learning through electronic media (e-learning) will be discussed. At the same time, the constraints imposed on these studies will be outlined, as a basis for a theoretical stance behind the present research.

Language Attitude

There are many definitions of the term ‘attitude’. Among them Crystal (1992) claims that language attitude is the feeling people have about their own language or the language of others.

Learners’ attitude becomes an important part of second language learning. Baker (1992) proposed that there are five factors affecting language attitude that are age, gender, school and community, ability and language background. There are 3 components of attitude (Luthans, 1989: 170-171)

1. Emotional component is the learners like or dislike in teacher, textbooks, learning activities and surrounding.
2. Cognitive component is a confident or not confident of learners in applying the new knowledge for appropriate using.
3. Behavioral component is the learners’ interest or bore in learning.

These three elements could affect English language learning in terms of positive or negative aspects. However, learners' attitude could change according to the differences of situation and learning environment concerning textbooks, learning activities and surroundings.

It is very difficult to measure or evaluate attitude because it involves the mind, the feelings and the emotions. Yet, it has been claimed that attitude can be measured by different methods.

Kamolrat Lasuwong (1995:187) had clarified that attitude can be measured by:

1. Evaluate from one self feeling
2. Observed from behaviors are performed
3. Interpreted from reflection of person which respond to stimuli
4. Measured from job assignment

It is clear that learning is assisted by a positive attitude. "Positive attitude learners have different perceptions of their class, teacher and curriculum. Their perceptions are responsible for their attitudes. An individual's perceptions of a class, teacher, group, syllabus and learners awareness for future needs affect their attitude to language learning."

http://147.8.145.43/clear/conference08/doc/handouts/VERMA%20Meenakshi%20H_handout.pdf

Authentic text

An authentic text is a real teaching tool which involves natural language communicates in a native speaker context. This material is normally taken from magazines, newspapers, the radio and so on. In recent years, the issue of the use of an authentic text has been raised by a number of teachers involved in foreign language teaching. Most teachers all over the world agree that authentic texts are beneficial to language learning.

The main advantages of using authentic text or materials are
(<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Kilickaya-AuthenticMaterial.html>)

- They have a positive effect on learner motivation
- They provide authentic cultural information
- They provide exposure to real language
- They relate more closely to learners' needs
- They support a more creative approach to teaching

Although using authentic texts or materials lead to a lot of positive results in language learning, there are also disadvantages of using authentic texts or materials.

Richards (2001: p.253) points out complex language structure, unnecessary vocabulary and language difficulties are contained in authentic materials. Therefore in order to use an authentic text effectively, they should be used in accordance with the learners' ability and level.

Cultural and Language Learning

Culture is “the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group.” (Oxford advanced learner’s Dictionary, 2005).

“The reason for the use of cultural content in the classroom is that it will foster learners’ motivation” (Mackay, 2000: p.7). English is an international language and culture is a helpful tool to motivate learners to use the target language rather than something to be taught. Therefore, teaching culture should aim to develop learners’ intercultural communicative competence and raise their cross-cultural awareness.

In every unit of the speaking book used in 000101 English for Communication course there was a cultural point which allowed students to discuss and compare Thai culture and western culture. The researchers believed that this section of the book would help students to understand and be aware of intercultural communicative differences and similarities before doing their project work in which students have to interview foreigner.

Learning through electronic media (e-learning)

Learning through electronic media or e-learning refers to technology-based learning which is becoming more interesting and important as a learning method. E-learning is a learning method which creates a learning community; education could happen anywhere such as the home, the office, school etc.

In developed countries, e-learning has already expanded into the education system, but in Thailand, learning through electronic media is very new. However, the world is changing rapidly; Thailand needs to prepare the population to support changes in the future. E-learning is a solution that is appropriate to the human resource development of this country to compete in the modern world.

The speaking course which was taught to the class of 000101 English for Communication has been designed to have a technology based learning or so- called e-learning. The purpose of this was learners could practice by themselves in their free time. Therefore, in the present study, researchers examine to what extent language learners used e-learning to practice speaking skills outside the classroom.

In conclusion, to study students’ needs, satisfaction and problems during learning the speaking lessons of a new course module of 000101 English for Communication, study of students’ attitudes toward speaking lessons has been taken up.

The study proposed here breaks new ground as concern speaking lessons of a new module of 000101 English for Communication in several ways. First, it focuses on students’ attitudes toward speaking lessons among undergraduate students in Khon Kaen University. The reason we focus on students’ attitudes is mainly because this is the first year that we have used a new curriculum for the course so we need to know students’ needs, opinions and concerns, in order to design the most suitable course for students. Secondly, researchers here investigate advantages and disadvantages of the speaking lessons to find solutions to the problems and also to utilize the data as a source for further improvement.

Design and Procedures

The speaking course, as a part of the four-skill component of 000101 English for Communication course for Khon Kaen University Academic year 2009, was designed to offer training sessions for students to practice their speaking activities with peers and teachers during class hours. There was a total number of 3,986 students enrolled in this course. Questionnaires were given to teachers who were responsible for teaching speaking lessons for 28 sections and finally got 693 completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire consisted of 4 sections: (1) personal information, (2) questions about speaking lessons (in-class) divided into two parts of 7 questions about attitudes toward the content and activities in class; and 2 questions (including ranking and open-ended questions) about cultural points in each lesson, (3) 3 questions about the attitudes toward group project activity, and (4) 5 other questions related to speaking lessons and one open ended question in this part.

The questionnaires were given randomly to teachers who were responsible for teaching speaking lessons during the second and third week periods of the rotation schedule. Students took this questionnaire after they had finished the last lesson in the speaking class.

Results

The sample group consisted of students in different faculties, totaling approximately 17.41 percent of the whole population, effectively representing of the population. 60.7 percent of the respondents were female while 38.84 percent of them were male. The students were from eleven faculties: Engineering, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Associated Medical Sciences, Science, Management Sciences, Technology, Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Agriculture, Public Health, and Medicine. Students studying with Thai teachers and foreign teachers were 82.16 percent and 12.37 percent respectively

For the first part concerning students' attitudes toward speaking lessons' contents and class activity, it was found that approximately half of the students practiced speaking much more and were able to make use of the speaking lesson in the real situation. 56.1 percent of the students were able to practice speaking from conversations in class; 55.5 percent of them used sentences in the conversations in each situation appropriately; 48 percent of them could select phrases, sentences or other words in the class to communicate in their real life; 50.9 percent gained knowledge and understanding of the cultures in English speaking countries better from the Cultural Points; 54.3 percent could adapt the knowledge and speaking skills in the activities to interview a foreigner; and 58.4 percent of the students believed that the situations in the lessons were interesting. However, 43.3 percent of the students can moderately practice listening and speaking with the conversation records in E-learning outside class.

In terms of cultural points, the textbook provided short cultural points of the English speaking countries in nine topics for students to practice reading and practice using the appropriate phrases in each situation. The nine cultural topics in the textbook

were: *Shaking hands, The Initials, Thai names and English names, eating out, be on time, Bargaining, Money currency, Telephone etiquette, and Texting language*. The first question asked students to rate from 1 as the most favorite to 5 as the least favorite. The first five favorite topics were *Thai names and English names, Texting Language, Eating Out, Telephone Etiquette, and Money currency* with the percentage of 20.8, 17.3, 15.2, 14.3, and 13.2 respectively.

The second part of cultural points is the open-ended question asking about students' opinions toward learning culture. There are some interesting points raised here for example: *"The lesson could help me to understand more about social manners in English conversation"*, *"I can get more knowledge and can use it accurately."*, *"I learned that while accepting the new culture, we can still keep treasuring our Thai culture which is good."*, *"I know the Dos and Don'ts"*. However, some students replied that some of the subjects taught in cultural points are quite the same as they already know which is quite unattractive to them.

In the third part about the group project, students were assigned to work corporately in groups of 5-8 people (due to the number of students in each section being varied from 25-45 students) to form the lists of general questions to interview with the foreigners (regardless of their nationalities) and shoot the short VDO clips. Finally CDs or movie files had to be submitted to teachers who were responsible for teaching speaking lessons for those certain sections. Students were graded in groups for their English speaking performances in the VDO clips. In this part of the questionnaire, 60 percent of students agreed that the group activity to interview a foreigner helped to improve their speaking skills; 59.1 percent fully participated in this activity; 52.5 percent felt confident when they did this activity in a group.

The last part of the questionnaire concerns questions about other related issues of the speaking lessons. 36.8 percent of students agreed that the length of the speaking lessons were appropriate; 52.2 percent of them could fully practice English speaking skills in class; 58.1 percent could make use of class practice in their speaking skills development; 54.2 percent stated that the textbook is interesting; and 55.1 percent of students were satisfied overall with the speaking lesson class.

Also, there is one open-ended question asking for suggestions. Students replied for this question as follows: *"The proportion of speaking skills should be increased."*, *"Should have more in and outside class activities such as playing games and interviewing foreigners."*, *"The book is too easy. The contents are not enough."*, *"Teachers should speak English in class and be more patient if students can't understand."*, *"Need more homework for practicing."*. Some students also mentioned that they needed to have Thai translation in the book in order to help them learn better.

Discussion

Speaking lessons in the new teaching modules rated at a satisfied level by the students who were respondents to the questionnaire. In the class activities, approximately half of the students could practice speaking and were able to make use of the speaking lesson in the real situation. They also could select phrases, sentences or other words in the class to communicate in certain situations. Outside class, the group work to

interview foreigners, students found that the activity could help them to be more confident when they communicate in English.

To sum up, the overall result of the questionnaire revealed that a great number of students were satisfied with speaking lessons. The content in the textbook was interesting as well as the class activities and the group project was helpful to improve their speaking skills. Students also wanted to learn more about culture and realized how it was important to language learning. However, it was also found that the conversation records in E-learning could moderately help students practice listening and speaking and a number of students did not like the length of the class; it was too short.

It is interesting that students had something to say about the teacher's role in class. These comments reflected that apart from the lesson and activities, teachers can influence students speaking proficiency. However, the questions in the questionnaire mostly concentrated on the content and activities in the textbook, not the teacher. Hence, further study in speaking skills classes should include the teacher's role in class, so that students can improve speaking skill effectively in the future.

The findings of the study are useful for the future improvement in terms of course design and class management. Appropriate timing and effective activities in class should be reconsidered in the context of Khon Kaen University. Besides, the conversation records in E-learning should be rearranged to suit students' learning styles and teachers should promote and encourage students to listen to the listening media autonomously. Finally, more interesting cultural points should be added in the textbook in order to attract students. This can help enhance students' motivation in language learning as well.

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