

Abstract

An Evaluation of the English Skills Programme for Liberal Arts Students, Chiang Mai University

by

Asst. Prof. Sirinart Leelawat

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The purpose of the study is to evaluate the English skills programme for liberal arts students at Chiang Mai University. This study will be useful in revising the English programme for general students at Chiang Mai University and it might be useful for any educational institutes in setting up an English programme.

The results of the evaluation are as follows:

(1) The four fundamental English courses now offered, which have an emphasis on the integrated skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, are relevant and correlate with the students' needs and wants, and with social conditions and expectations. They enable the students to use English in communication in everyday life, for further studies, and in their careers.

(2) The other courses related to these four fundamental courses need some improvement and adaptation so that all courses maintain continuity and correlation with each other.

(3) The presentation, pedagogy and evaluation of each course are appropriate and relevant to the course objectives.

Some general points for consideration when improving the English skills programme for non-English major students:

(1) Aims, objectives, content, pedagogy and evaluation must be correlated and should depend on the students' ability, needs and wants and on social conditions and needs.

(2) The university entrance examination influences the teaching/learning process and assessment system. As it is a written examination with the multiple choice questions, the teachers tend to help the students by mainly giving assessment using multiple choice questions to serve the students' immediate needs. Therefore, skills like listening, speaking and writing are ignored or are not fully practiced. When the students get to the universities, it seems that they need a great deal of practice in all skills. Even though the students have a similar background of English, they have different abilities. Consequently, the fundamental English courses should aim at bringing the students' abilities in English up to a certain level and at the same time give the students practice in the skills they lack. Because of these reasons, science students and liberal arts students, especially the first year students, should study the same fundamental courses. If the students need specialization of English in their field, it can be done in the second year.

One way to reduce the problem about the difference in the students' abilities is to provide a self-access language learning center. From this center, the students can get more practice to improve the skills they lack and gifted students can also develop their skills.

(3) The four skills are still necessary and should be integrated. Forms and functions of the language should not be taught separately. Moreover, the students must be made aware of how to apply the rules and techniques in different or new situations.

(4) As all students are required to study English at the university level, it is a good opportunity to make full use of the English programme to produce graduates who have good knowledge and skills as well as suitable morals and etiquette. This can be done effectively in the English programme by choosing content and teaching/learning methods that encourage the students to think and use language accurately and appropriately to communicate in real-life situations and at the same time broaden their outlook and make them aware of social conditions. As a result, good and useful members of society will be produced to serve the needs of Thailand, which is becoming more international. Graduates will be able to make use of the English language in their everyday life and in their careers, and to enhance relations with members of different nations.