

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Purposes

The purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To study the problems in learning the foundation English course of students at Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University concerning the following areas:
 - Instructors,
 - Learners,
 - Curriculum and Course book,
 - Administration.
2. To compare the problems of the students across faculties.
3. To find ways to solve the problems.

Population and Sample Group

1. The population in this study consists of 10 instructors, who participated in an interview. And 434 undergraduate students, from Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, who studied the foundation English course in semester 2/2007.
2. The sample group of students consisted of 244 undergraduate students who were selected from the population by way of cluster random sampling. Ten students were further selected to participate in an interview.

Instruments for Data Collection

There are two types of instruments for data collection:

1. The questionnaire. This is a two-part questionnaire.

Part 1 deals with personal information. The subjects were asked to put a tick (✓) in the in front of their own faculties.

Part 2 is concerned with problems in learning the foundation English course. These problems were concerned with the 4 areas: teacher, students, curriculum and textbook, and administration. Here, the subjects were asked to rate the levels of the problems on the scale of 1 to 5 as follows:

1	=	very low
2	=	low
3	=	moderate
4	=	high
5	=	very high

2. The interview. The content of the interview questions are concerned with ways to solve the problems.

Data Collection

1. The researcher contacted the sample group of students, asked them for cooperation in answering the questionnaires. A brief explanation was needed for the students to understand that their answers would be treated with confidence and none of the participants would be identified in this study. As a result, the students were happy to answer the questionnaires voluntarily. Then, the questionnaires were collected for further analyses.

2. To collect the data on ways to solve the problems, the researcher approached 10 students in the sample group, asking them to act as interviewees. Like the above situation, they were willing to answer all questions as the interview took only a short time (approximately 15 minutes). In addition, the researcher also approached 10 teachers of English, asking them to participate in a group interview. Like the student participants, they were assured that their names would not be identified, and they were willing to share valuable ideas.

Data Analyses

1. The questionnaires were counted and sorted according to faculties.
2. The data were then analysed to find out the arithmetic means (\bar{X}) and the standard deviation (*S.D.*). The arithmetic means derived from this scale was interpreted based on the following range:

4.21 – 5.00	=	very high
3.41 – 4.20	=	high
2.61 – 3.40	=	moderate
1.81 – 2.60	=	low
1.00 – 1.80	=	very low

3. Further analyses were made to compare the means by using One-way Analysis of Variance.

Results

The problems in learning the foundation English course

1. The students from Humanities and Social Sciences and those from Science and Technology have instructor problems at low level. Whereas, the students from Education and Management Science faculties have instructor problems at moderate level. Following are the problems from moderate to very high levels classified by faculties:

1.1 The students from Humanities and Social Sciences have moderate instructor problems - lack of punctuality, proceeding too fast to follow, full of over-explanation, speaking English too much, failure to take care of individual students, and lack of encouragement.

1.2 The students from Education have moderate instructor problems - failure to explain the objectives and course outline at the beginning stage, lack of promoting

self-access learning, lack of expressive activities, lack of punctuality, lack of teaching preparation, and using inappropriate activities.

1.3 The students from Science and Technology have moderate instructor problems - lack of promoting self-access learning, lack of teaching preparation, proceeding too fast to follow, speaking English too much, and failure to take care of individual students.

1.4 The students from Management have moderate instructor problems - failure to explain the objectives and course outline at the beginning stage, lack of punctuality, lack of teaching preparation, using inappropriate activities, failure to accept criticism, failure to take care of individual students, lack of encouragement, showing little interest in students' homework, and using inappropriate assessment.

2. The students from Science and Technology have learner problems at low level. While those from the other faculties have learning problems at moderate level. Following are the problems from moderate to very high levels classified by faculties:

2.1 The students from Humanities and Social Sciences have moderate learner problems - I do not like to learn English, I do not like the English textbook, I do not have good basic knowledge of English, and I do not have time to review my English lessons; and high level problem - I do not understand spoken English.

2.2 The students from Education have moderate learner problems - I do not understand spoken English, I cannot speak English, I cannot understand when I read in English, I do not have good basic knowledge of English, and I am afraid to ask questions.

2.3 The students from Science and Technology have moderate learner problems - I do not like to learn English, I cannot speak English, I do not have good basic knowledge of English, and I am afraid to ask questions.

2.4 The students from Management have high level problems - I cannot speak English, and I cannot write in English; and very high level problems - I do not like to learn English, I do not understand spoken English, I cannot understand when I

read in English, I do not have good basic knowledge of English, and I am afraid to ask questions.

3. The students from Humanities and Social Sciences, Education, and Management Science have curriculum and textbook problems at moderate level. While the students from Science and Technology have the same problems at low level. Following are the problems from moderate to very high levels classified by faculties:

3.1 The students from Humanities and Social Sciences have moderate curriculum and textbook problems - the content is boring, there is too much content to learn, the textbooks lack interesting pictures, the textbooks are too expensive; and high level problem - there are too many English classes.

3.2 The students from Education have moderate learner problems – English is too difficult, there is too much content to learn, the content is *not* related to my major subject, the textbooks are poorly designed, and students are not given opportunities to choose textbooks of their own interest.

3.3 The students from Science and Technology have high level problems - English is too difficult, the textbooks are poorly designed, and students are not given opportunities to choose textbooks of their own interest.

3.4 The students from Management have moderate level problems - there are too many English classes, the content is *not* related to my major subject, the textbooks are poorly designed, the textbooks are too expensive; and high level problems - the content is boring, the textbooks lack interesting pictures, and students are not given opportunities to choose textbooks of their own interest.

4. The students from Science and Technology have low level of administration problems. Whereas, the remaining students have the problems at moderate level. Following are the problems from moderate to very high levels classified by faculties:

4.1 The students from Humanities and Social Sciences have high level of administration problems - there are insufficient English books in the library, classrooms in tall buildings are difficult to access, there are too many students in each

classroom, there are insufficient native English teachers, there are very few English teachers; and very high level problems - there is insufficient access to English lab, there are insufficient audio-visual aids.

4.2 The students from Education have moderate problems – there are insufficient English books in the library, classrooms are noisy, classroom facilities are in poor condition, classrooms in tall buildings are difficult to access, there are too many students in each classroom.

4.3 The students from Science and Technology have moderate level problems - there are too many students in each classroom, there are very few English teachers, there are insufficient native English teachers.

4.4 The students from Management have moderate level problems - there is insufficient access to English lab, classrooms are noisy, there are too many students in each classroom, and there are very few English teachers; and high level problem - there are insufficient English books in the library.

The comparison of the problems of the students across faculties

When the comparison of the problems is made among the four faculties, the results show that there is no significant difference. The details are shown below:

1. The students from all faculties have the instructor problems that are not significantly different at the level of .05.
2. The students from all of the four faculties have learner problems that are not significantly different at the level .05.
3. The students from all of the four faculties have curriculum and textbook problems that are not significantly different at the level of .05.
4. The students from all of the four faculties have administration problems that are not significantly different at the level of .05.

Possible Solution to the Problems

1. Instructor Problems

It is possible to solve the instructor problems by using team teaching – a Thai teacher working together with a foreign teacher. Team teaching has a lot of advantages.

Using authentic materials is also a good solution to the teacher problem. One example of materials is English newspaper, which can be adapted to suit the language learning activities such as skimming, scanning, and understanding vocabulary.

Using the Internet is another solution as it is more challenging to students. It is effective in bringing the outside world into the classroom. Besides, the teaching and learning can be a lot of fun.

2. Learner Problems

Using easy English is less threatening. It makes the lesson more enjoyable and promotes positive attitudes towards learning English.

When the learner faces unfamiliar words, it is wise to use synonyms, words with the same or similar meaning.

Another possible solution is using explanation which is sometimes provided in the text by the writer.

3. Curriculum and Textbook Problems

The process of curriculum development is important for the solution of the problem. The curriculum should reflect learning theories as well as the needs of the learners.

It is also a good idea to have students design their own curricula. Research has shown that the students are more active than traditional students.

4. Administration Problems

Reducing class size is necessary for the solution of the problems. A smaller class will allow the teacher to take good care of individual students since the teacher spends less time on paper work.

Administration problems can also be solved effectively if staff hold a meeting each week so that they can find ways of working together to achieve common goals.

Conducting prediction study is advisable for administrators to solve administration problems. This study will provide information about students and all stakeholders which is useful for long-term plan.

Using technology in solving administration problems is a common practice nowadays. A good example is the use of teleconference or electronic mail.

Also, classroom arrangement or classroom design should allow learning to take place in a friendly atmosphere. For example, a round table or a U-shaped table is suitable for class discussion.

Discussions

The following discussions are concerned with the problems in learning the foundation English course in the four areas as well as the solutions to the problems.

1. The students from Humanities and Social Sciences and those from Science and Technology have instructor problems at a low level. Whereas, the students from Education and Management Science faculties have instructor problems at a moderate level.

The instructor problems considered most important are the following: lack of punctuality, lack of teaching preparation, and failure to take care of individual students.

These problems are due to a large number of factors. For example, each instructor teaches too many hours a week, and there is not enough time to prepare his

or her lessons. In many classes, there are so many students that the instructor cannot possibly look after them individually.

Solving these problems is possible if more English instructors are recruited, and at the same time the class size is reduced. However, increasing the number of teachers is not an easy task because English major graduates are in high demand in schools and universities but there are not enough qualified teachers (Kosashunhann, 2007). Besides, teachers' salaries are low, which makes teaching an unattractive career. Rather than becoming teachers, the most competent language graduates become flight attendants, clerks, receptionists or find other positions in the private sector. This problem is not limited to language graduates, but is endemic within the Thai education system (Mackenzie, 2002).

2. The students from Science and Technology have learner problems at low level. While those from the other faculties have learning problems at moderate level.

The learner problems considered most important are the following: I do not like to learn English, I do not understand spoken English, I cannot speak English, and I do not have good basic knowledge of English.

These problems are closely related to learning strategy which should be established in the language learner. The learner himself should increase his motivation and participation in the use of the target language. Kosashunhann (2007) gives the following advice: Ask teachers to explain and try to be confident; Stop worrying about mistakes; and practice English outside the classroom with songs, news, movies, or books in English.

As a rule, Thais do not speak English particularly well, especially when compared with some other South-East Asian countries like Malaysia or Singapore. There are many reasons for this such L1 interference, questionable education system, and many very poor English teachers in Thailand (*Teaching English in Bangkok*, 2008).

3. The students from Humanities and Social Sciences, Education, and Management Science have curriculum and textbook problems at moderate level. While the students from Science and Technology have the same problems at low level.

The curriculum and textbook problems considered most important are the following: the textbooks are poorly designed, the textbooks lack interesting pictures, and students are not given opportunities to choose textbooks of their own interest.

The above problems conform to the fact given by Qiang & Wolff (2003) that textbooks written by Thai teachers often use inappropriate vernacular. They are usually authored by teachers who have had little or no exposure to English culture and must rely upon their understanding of dictionary definitions for word choice.

In this situation, the textbook will need to be evaluated. Following are some questions to ask (Grant, 1988: 120):

- Is the book communicative?
- Will the students be able to use the language to communicate as a result of using the book?
- Does it fit in with our objectives?
- Does it seem teachable?

4. The students from Science and Technology have low level of administration problems. Whereas, the remaining students have the problems at moderate level.

The administration problems considered most important are the following: Classrooms are noisy, There are too many students in each classroom, and There are very few English teachers.

These problems can overlap with instructor and learner problems because these areas are actually interrelated to administration problems. Inevitably, administrators are responsible for making plan that will facilitate learning. The number of students should not be too large for the teacher to manage effectively.

Recommendations

1. Prior to the commencement of an English course, it is important that a pre-test is administered to diagnose the students' background knowledge, and the information obtained is taken seriously in the process of lesson planning. In doing so, the course will be likely to suit the learners.

2. Problems in teaching and learning English in Thailand are varied. These problems can hinder the country's development, especially in the modern world of today. The university should take an active role in promoting research and training in the field of English or other foreign languages.

3. It is necessary to run a professional development programme to staff. The school should create additional time for staff development. A good example is the one proposed by Halsdorfer (2006). In such a programme, students would be released almost an hour early once a week to create time for staff development.

5. The results obtained from this study should serve as information for further practice in the development of English instruction. All parties concerned should work closely together to solve the problems without delay in order to increase the competitiveness of Thais in the global arena.

6. Administrators should play a great role in stimulating and supporting the efforts of instructors to improve teaching and learning process by highlighting the importance of this practice in the newsletters and publications they distribute. And it is important to provide follow-up to, and support for, the efforts to change. In addition, administrators can help these initiatives by recognising and rewarding excellent works of teaching staff in general and the adoption of newly invented teaching techniques in particular.