

Using E-mail Consultations in a Large Class

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Abstract

This study investigated how technology can be used to help teachers manage a large class while at the same time retaining a high quality of instruction. This research looked at giving online consultations to four groups of roughly 30 students, with one teacher responsible for about 60 students. Students were assigned to use e-mail to share and discuss problems in a task-based curriculum. The findings revealed that students posted an average of 1.65 messages which is considered too low to gain benefits in their learning. Two problems encountered were practical problems, such as limited time, unfamiliarity with the use of technology, and technical problems, and activity-specific problems when the subjects did not have a clear idea of what was expected of them.

Consultations

English language teaching has shifted focus to be more on the learners with the belief that learning becomes more effective when learners take responsibility for their own learning. In this scenario, learners need to transform their beliefs about language learning and their roles as learners so that they can become effective independent learners (Kelly 1996), the ultimate goal of a learner-centered approach. To facilitate the process of reorientation and personal discovery for learners, “consultations” or “counseling” is one of many tools available for teachers.

Consultation or counseling refers to “an activity that helps learners manage their own learning problems and/or developing learning skills” (Riamliw, 2002). Kelly (1996) looks at counseling as “a form of therapeutic dialogue that enables an individual to manage a problem.” The two terms have one important thing in common, that is, “a relationship between two people: one needing an opportunity for talking over problems and the other having the sensitivity and maturity to understand and having the necessary knowledge and skills to enable a solution” (Kongchan, 2002).

Significance of consultations in language learning

It is believed that consultations help promote self-directed learning (Riamliw, 2002). In consultations, teachers discuss progress and problems with learners (as individuals or in groups) about their own learning focusing on making learners realize their own problems, and thus be responsible to solve those problems on their own (Carver & Dickinson, 1982; Kelly, 1996). In consultations, learners are given advice or suggestions so that they can cope with their learning problems by being able to monitor their weaknesses and correct their mistakes (Johnson & Lozada, 2001).

The consultation will be effective if learners make decisions themselves on how to solve problems. In the process of consultation, it is hoped that learners realize their control over their own learning and their responsibility for their own progress (Carver & Dickinson, 1982; Kelly, 1996).

Teacher-student consultations and student-student consultations

Generally, consultations are conducted between teachers and learners. The teachers' roles are to be a counselor and a good listener to whom learners can talk about their learning achievements, problems and future study plans (Kongchan, 2002). Within such a framework, Victoria Chan (1999) used teacher-student consultations to develop students' learning autonomy at the tertiary level. The approach she used for her ESL classroom was largely student-centered, including student-led seminars, self and peer evaluation, report writing tasks and teacher-student consultations as course components. The consultations were 30-minute discussion sessions between the teacher and each individual student. Her aims were to establish a personal relationship with the students as well as to discuss and evaluate students' progress and offer advice and guidance. These aims were to a large extent achieved, but there was still a lack of purpose to the students' work.

Even though consultations are beneficial to students in many ways, they are not without problems. When students come to consultation sessions, they bring with them similar problems in learning English, and as a result teachers have to repeat the same advice to a class of about 40-50 students. This makes consultations time-consuming and exhausting (Maneekhao, 2002).

With an attempt to alleviate the problem concerning time and workload, consultations at KMUTT are conducted in class time in groups, and students are involved from the first step (Maneekhao, 2002). They first share their problems in completing their assignments with their peers in groups. Later on, they share with the whole group and the teachers write the problems on the white board. The final step is for both teachers and students to supply solutions to each problem.

Now with an ever increasing number of students, teachers are facing a challenge, or maybe a pressure, to find alternative methods for consultations to make them less time-consuming and less exhausting. Student-student consultations might be an answer that we can employ to address the problem. Furthermore, technology for student-student consultations can be used because it has the potential to help accommodate more students.

Background/rationale of the study

Consultations at KMUTT

The School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), provides four Fundamental English courses for undergraduate students of science and technology. The first three courses are task-based and the last one is project-based. All students are required to take at least three English courses.

With this task-based curriculum, consultations have become one of the essential learner-centered activities to ensure success on tasks. In the three task-based courses, teachers act as counsellors in offering guidance, advice and support to the students.

The methods of consultations adopted at KMUTT are quite flexible. Teachers can give consultations to the students as a whole class, as groups or as individual students depending on the nature of the problems and time available. We have been running the consultations for four years and the methods have been regularly adjusted to give teachers more flexibility and freedom.

The main problems all teachers encounter are that consultations take a heavy toll on teachers' time. Initially, teachers had to do the consultations outside class in their own time. They spent about four hours for 40 students for one consultation each and in one semester, there are three consultations to fulfill. Johnson & Lozada (2001: 85) pointed out that "If the practical problems of devoting time to consultations can be overcome, they promise to be of great benefit to both teachers and students."

Another problem encountered is that most students do not feel free to discuss their problems openly with their teachers in English, especially when teachers give consultations to the whole class or to a group of students. In addition, students' problems are repetitive and it is very boring for both teachers and students to go over the same problems repeatedly.

All of these problems have become a great concern when the university has a policy to increase the size of the student intake. This means that there will be more students who teachers need to accommodate during consultations.

However, the solution lies in the university itself. Since KMUTT is a technology university, and there are computer facilities everywhere on campus, why not use this facility to offer consultations through e-mail, in other words, on-line consultations? Gardner & Miller (1999) suggest a number of reasons why e-mail should be used as a counseling tool. Firstly, shy learners may be more comfortable using e-mail than face-to-face consultations. They can consult about their problems at any time and from anywhere that is convenient. In addition, e-mail gives learners real reasons for writing. E-mail helps teachers save time because consultations can be given to the whole class in just one time. Finally, the record of learners' questions and problems can be useful for teachers to check back on when needed.

From all of the advantages of e-mail stated above, it is interesting to investigate the effectiveness of the use of e-mail consultations for a large class. We would also like to learn about the problems arising, and how to solve them so that it can be used more effectively.

Subjects

The subjects of this study were 118 Engineering and Science students who were studying their second Foundation English course (LNG 102). These students were enrolled in four classes with two teachers. The number of students in each class varied as shown in Table 1. Roughly 2 students from each class joined one consultation group so there are a total of about 8 students in one group, and 15 consultation groups altogether. For each teacher, this represents a large class of about 60 students per teacher.

Table 1 Number of subjects

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Number of students	32	21	29	36
Lecturers	T1	T1	T2	T2
Total number of students	118			

The two teachers were also the researchers. One of us took care of 7 consultation groups and the other 8 groups. We have been teaching English for an average of 15 years. In the last 5 years we have tried to integrate technology into our English classes in various aspects. Some examples include using computers to correct student written work, and using E-mail as a means for communication with students. The experience has given us some grounds to conduct this research

The tasks in LNG 102

In this course (LNG 102) students have to complete two tasks for which consultations are given: *resourcing task*, and *portfolio task*. In the *resourcing task*, the students work in groups of four. Initially, they select a topic concerning a certain problem, e.g. a social problem, a health problem, or a technological problem. Then they come up with three questions that would help guide them to find solutions to the problem. After that, they search for information from any sources, such as the Internet and the library, to answer their questions. The outputs of the task are an oral presentation and a report explaining the answers to their questions, how they worked, and their problems and solutions when doing the task. The students have four weeks to complete the task. One serious problem for the *resourcing task* was the students' inability to find relevant information. Due to a lack of internet-searching skills, many students could not find texts or articles that contained the answers they wanted while other students found too many articles. Furthermore, many of the articles found were irrelevant.

In the *portfolio task*, the students are assigned to practise any skill of English in their free time in the Self-access Learning Center and also use other resources such as films, news on television, newspapers and songs. Then they complete a task record form explaining the learning materials and summarizing the stories they read or listened to. Students are required to share what they have learnt from the practice, and their problems and solutions when doing the task. As this task is a course adjunct, the students could spend the whole semester completing six learning materials. The main problems with the *portfolio task* concerned writing in English when students have to complete the task record form.

Since the task-based approach to learning is new to the students and the two tasks pose some difficulties, consultations are arranged to facilitate the students to work on the tasks and to solve their language problems effectively. Moreover, since our teaching experience revealed that most students had similar problems and the students might be able to help each other solve the problems, we decided to investigate the use of student-student consultations to see if students can really help their peers to solve the problems. Moreover, it is also challenging to conduct the consultations on-line to facilitate the process.

Pedagogic approach

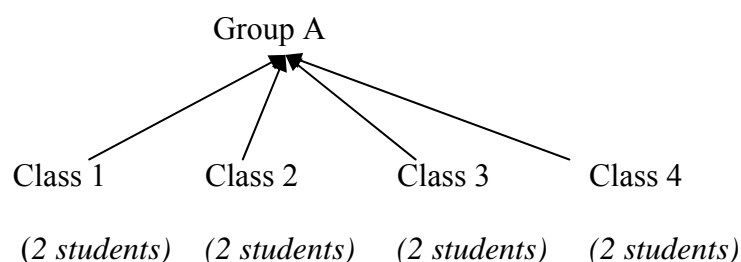
There are three major stages in managing the on-line consultations, namely, preparation stage, consultation stage and closing stage.

Preparation stage

A preparation stage is, in many ways, the most important stage. We made a precise plan about the time that the project would start and end, the approximate number of students in each consultation group, the topics of the discussion and so on. A handout was carefully prepared to convey all information that we thought might be useful for

the students, e.g. the definition of electronic consultations, the procedures and the duration of this activity (see Appendix 1 for the Electronic Consultation Handout for Students). In addition to the handout, there were two other things prepared in advance.

Creating consultation groups: Before creating the consultation groups, we checked the exact number of students in each class and the total number of students in four classes. Then, we discussed the number of consultation groups to be created and the suitable number of members to be allocated for each group. As we had four classes with different size, it was impossible to make every group the same size. Eventually, we ended up with fifteen consultation groups, namely Group A – Group O. Then, fifteen on-line Yahoo consultation groups were created. Each group was prepared for 6-8 members from four classes as shown in the diagram below.



Preparing students: Talking with friends and the teachers via a discussion list was new to every student. As a result, preparation was crucial. In the first week of the semester, we assigned the students to become members and acquire a Yahoo account number. About one week later, each class was taken into a computer laboratory for a training session. In doing this, we created two extra consultation groups to train the students how to subscribe to Yahoogroups and how to send and read messages. We also tried to familiarise them with on-line consultations. It took two periods (about 100 minutes) to complete this stage.

In the computer laboratory, the handout was distributed and explained to the students. One major focus of the preparation stage was the kind of messages or the topics the students could post to the list. Finally, an address of a discussion group was given to the students. They were assigned to subscribe to the group and start the discussion by introducing themselves to the group.

Consultation stage

The next step is the consultation period and this period lasted for 14 weeks. The first message that each student sent to the group was an introduction. They used their real name and also stated their class number. We also asked them to start the consultation by telling their friends about their portfolio.

As the purpose of this activity was mainly to have students consult each other about English learning problems, the topics of discussion were not very broad. That is to say, they could only share with the group members what topic they had chosen in *resourcing task*, what materials they studied for the *portfolio task*, what they learnt from the tasks, what problems or difficulties they encountered when doing the tasks, and how they solved the problems. More importantly, they were encouraged to ask the group for any suggestions or help in order to complete the task successfully. Since we believed that the students had background knowledge about grammar, we also

encouraged them to discuss other language problems, such as how to write grammatically correct sentences.

Closing stage

Near the end of the semester, we sent a message to inform the students about their last chance to discuss with friends via the discussion list. Eventually, during the last week, we posted a message to signal the end of the discussion and distributed a questionnaire in class to survey their attitudes.

Research methodology

Types and purposes of data collected

There are two major areas of interest for us in this study. One is the students' participation in the electronic consultations, together with their opinions towards this activity. The second involves the quality of the messages they posted to the discussion list.

Two types of data collected are data from the questionnaires and data from the messages students posted. Data from the questionnaires (see Appendix 2) reveal three main areas including students' personal information, their participation in the consultations and their attitudes towards the activity. The purpose of the questionnaire is to find out the frequency of reading and posting messages, reasons for posting or not posting messages, and their attitudes towards the activity. This included the appropriateness of the topics for discussion, the need for preparation and the advantages and disadvantages of electronic consultations.

Data from the students' postings were printed out and classified according to the types of information in the postings, such as self-introductions and greetings, statements and questions of academic problems, reports of the progress of work in class, opinions about the English course, and help and suggestions given to the groups. These data were used to find out topics of students' messages, the numbers of messages written during the period of the study, and the usefulness of the postings.

We hope that the data from the two sources will lead us to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of e-mail consultations as a replacement for the conventional consultations that our staff usually practise. This evaluation will be conducted in terms of the numbers and content of postings, and the students' participation and attitudes.

Data analysis

We distributed 118 questionnaires and received all of them back. Data from the questionnaires were tallied and percentages were calculated. In the open-ended section of the questionnaire, similar items were grouped and percentages calculated.

For the e-mail postings, in the period of 14 weeks of the study students wrote 190 messages which were classified into 5 categories of information according to the aims of the consultations or what we instructed them to do during the consultation stage (see 3.1.2). Then, the number of each category of messages was counted and percentages calculated to see the number of postings related to the categories identified in the consultation stage. The 190 postings include 237 instances of these 5 categories of information (some postings contained more than one category of information). The average number of words per posting was 39.49.

Findings

The findings will be reported under three topics; number of postings and the relevance to the aims of the messages posted, students' participation and reasons for posting and not posting their messages, and student's attitudes towards e-mail consultations.

Number of postings and the relevance to the aims of the messages posted:

The experiment lasted 14 weeks with the trial period in the first week when students were asked to practise sending messages of self-introductions. The second week was the start of the project when students were on their own doing online consultations to share and discuss problems in learning English and in doing their class assignments which include *portfolio* and *resourcing tasks*. Students were also asked to discuss how they solved their problems.

In total students posted 190 messages, which include 237 instances under the five categories. Figure 1 illustrates the ratio of each category of postings.

Figure 1 The ratio of each category of postings

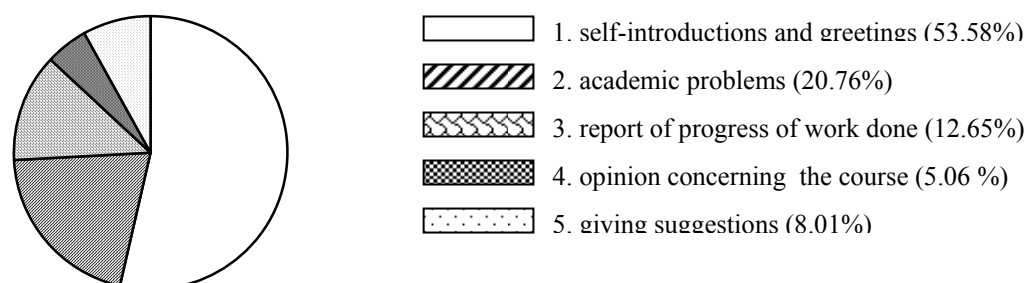


Table 2 The breakdown of postings of all 15 groups

Groups	Self-Introduction	Academic problems		Report of progress of work	Opinion of the course	Giving suggestions		Total instances
		English	Others			English	Others	
A	12	2	1	-	-	-	1	16
B	8	4	-	-	-	-	-	12
C	7	3	-	3	-	1	1	15
D	8	1	-	5	-	1	1	16
E	8	3	-	-	2	-	-	13
F	7	2	-	2	1	-	-	12
G	9	6	-	4	1	-	1	21
H	8	-	-	2	-	-	-	10
I	8	2	3	1	-	-	2	16
J	11	5	-	6	3	-	5	30
K	6	3	-	3	-	1	1	14
L	5	3	-	1	1	-	1	11
M	9	1	2	2	1	-	-	15
N	10	3	-	-	-	-	3	16
O	11	4	1	1	3	-	-	20
Total %	127 53.58%	42 (17.72%)	7 (2.95%)	30 12.65%	12 6%	3 (1.26%)	6 (6.75%)	237
		49 20.67%				19 8.01%		

Table 2 shows the breakdown of postings of all 15 groups. Self-introductions (required for the first postings) were satisfactory (53.58% or 127 instances – some students introduced themselves more than once). However, many did not complete the other requirements. Only 17.72% (42 instances) addressed the academic problems which are directly related to the main aim of the consultations, only 12.65% (30

instances) reported progress of work done, and only 1.26% (3 instances) gave help and support concerning learning English.

Concerning the content for discussions, students discussed a lot about *portfolio* (15 instances) and very little (1 instance) about the *resourcing task*. The rest were about English skills in general and problems of time management (see Table 3).

With regard to the pattern of interaction between students and teachers, students were expected to help solve each other's problems. The teachers wanted to transfer the role of controlling the discussion to the students. However, the students did not join in very enthusiastically, so teachers had to step in. As a result, out of all the questions posted for solutions and suggestions, only 1 suggestion originated from peers, whereas 25 suggestions came from teachers. Because of this, almost all (96 %) of the interactions were between students and teachers, with only 4% being student-student interaction.

Table 3 Problems and responses

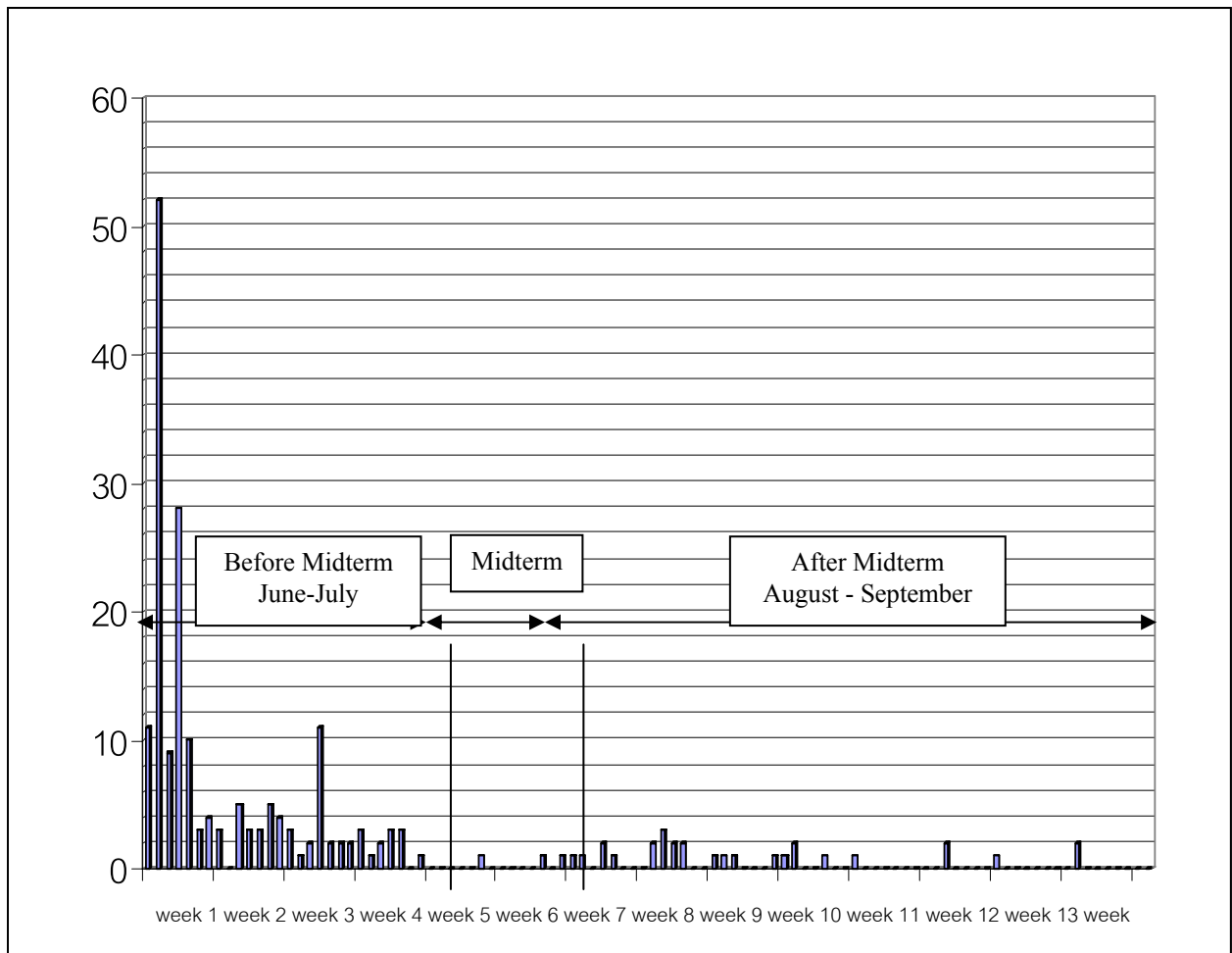
Groups	Statements & questions of academic problems	Report of progress of work	Giving help & suggestions	Content	Intended audience of messages
A	2	-	-	<input type="checkbox"/> textbook reading strategy <input type="checkbox"/> skill improvement in general	T T
B	4	-	-	<input type="checkbox"/> portfolio <input type="checkbox"/> skill improvement in general	T T
C	3	3	1	<input type="checkbox"/> portfolio and uses of SAC <input type="checkbox"/> resourcing task (sources)	T T
D	1	5	1	<input type="checkbox"/> grammar (ask for sources to find grammar)	T
E	3	-	-	<input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (watching films) <input type="checkbox"/> time management	T T
F	2	2	-	<input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (vocabulary) <input type="checkbox"/> skill improvement in general	T T
G	6	4	-	<input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (vocabulary) <input type="checkbox"/> time management <input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (find materials) <input type="checkbox"/> resourcing task (change topic)	T T S T
H	-	2	-	<input type="checkbox"/> portfolio	T
I	2	1	-	<input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (topic selection) <input type="checkbox"/> textbook reading strategy	T T
J	5	6	-	<input type="checkbox"/> listening skill <input type="checkbox"/> grammar <input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (select activities in SAC) <input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (grammar)	T T T T
K	3	3	1	<input type="checkbox"/> resourcing task (topic selection)	T
L	3	1	-	<input type="checkbox"/> portfolio <input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (writing)	T T
M	1	2	-	<input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (listening)	T
N	3	-	-	<input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (listening)	T
O	4	1	-	<input type="checkbox"/> learning styles <input type="checkbox"/> portfolio (writing)	T T
Total	42	31	3	Textbook reading strategies = 2, Skills in general = 3, Portfolio = 15, Resourcing task = 3, Grammar = 2, Time management = 2, , Listening = 1, Learning style = 1	T= 25 (96%) S= 1 (4%)

In conclusion, when taking all of the content into consideration, the usefulness of the messages students posted was very low because most of them did not address the aims of the consultations. In addition, patterns of interaction were mostly student-teacher which is not the aim of the study.

Participation

Table 4 below shows the frequency of the students' postings. The data came from the dates of the messages students posted.

Table 4 The frequency of students' postings



To investigate the phenomenon, it is necessary to look at the reasons why students posted and did not post messages. However, students had different frequencies of reading and posting messages and as a result it will be helpful to group students on the basis of their frequency of reading and posting messages (the data is taken from questionnaire items 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4). Group 1 is those who neither read nor posted messages; Group 2 is those who did not read but did post messages; Group 3 is those who read but did not post messages; and Group 4 is those who both read and posted messages. Table 5 shows these 4 groups of students, and their frequency of reading and postings messages.

For reading messages, only 12.50% of the students from Group 3, and 6.49% of students from Group 4 read messages every week. As for posting, none of the students

Table 6 Reasons for not posting messages

Group 1 not read and not post messages	Group 2 not read but post messages	Group 3 read but not post messages	Group 4 read and post messages
Reasons for not posting messages: 1. no time to consult (61.53%) (PP) 2. having no ideas to write (53.84%) (AP) 3. having no ideas of what to do in the activity (53.84%) (AP) 4. not familiar with using e-mail (38.46%) (PP) 5. lack of computers (38.46%) (PP) 6. slow system (38.46%) (PP)	Reasons for not posting messages: 1. slow system (75%) (PP) 2. no time to consult (50%) (PP) 3. lack of computers (50%) (PP) 4. having no ideas of what to do in the activity (50%) (AP)	Reasons for not posting messages: 1. slow system (25%) (PP) 2. no time to consult (45.83%) (PP) 1. having no ideas of what to do in the activity (41.66%) (AP) 2. having no ideas to write (66.66%) (AP)	Reasons for not posting messages: 1. having no ideas to write (49.35%) (AP) 2. slow system (33.76%) (PP) 3. lack of computers (32.46%) (PP) 4. no time to consult (27.27%) (PP)

Note: (PP) Practical problems, (AP) Activity-specific problems

Students' attitudes towards e-mail consultations

Table 7 reveals students' attitudes towards the usefulness of e-mail consultations. Almost all of the students (93.22%) think that the activity was very useful.

Table 7 Usefulness of online consultation

Usefulness	Useful	Useless	No response
Respondents	110 (93.22%)	2 (1.69%)	6 (5.08%)

Table 8 summarizes the reasons students think it was useful to do online consultations. Most of them (67.79%) believed that the activity could help them improve their English and 54.23% think that it could help them solve problems in learning. It is interesting how useful students thought the activity was when they participated so little.

Table 8 Reasons

Reasons	Respondents
Language improvement	80 (67.79%)
Solving problems in learning	64 (54.23%)
Better attitude towards English	42 (35.59%)
Computer skills	3 (2.54%)
Socialising	2 (1.69%)
Typing	1 (0.84%)

Discussion and recommendations

The main aim of this study is to look at how technology can be used to help teachers manage large classes while at the same time trying to retain a high quality of instruction. This research was conducted to introduce online consultations to four groups of roughly 30 students, with one teacher responsible for about 60 students.

In this study, students were assigned to use e-mail to share and discuss problems in learning English and in doing their class assignments, and to suggest to their peers how they could solve their problems. The results revealed that students posted an average of 1.65 messages which is considered too low to gain benefits in their learning. In addition, only 31% of the content of the postings directly related to the aim of the consultations.

Even though the findings are not promising, almost all of the students (93.20%) agreed that this activity was useful because it could help them improve their English as well as having the potential to help them solve problems in learning English. Moreover, it could help save teachers' time if conducted effectively and appropriately.

The findings reveal two types of problems encountered in the project. They are practical problems which concern time and technology as well as unfamiliarity with the use of e-mail, and activity specific problems. The followings are some suggestions for dealing with these problems:

Practical problems – The practical problems of students' inability to use e-mail and the lack of computers may be solved by itself when the university upgrades itself into an IT campus in the near future.

As for the problem of the lack of time to post messages, one worthwhile solution might be for the teachers to try to get the students to give English a higher priority. If the students are motivated, then they will allocate time for it and find every possible way to give themselves an opportunity to use English. As a result, the first two problems may also be solved once students are motivated.

Therefore ways of motivating students (see e.g. Byrnes, 2001; Dörnyei, 2001; Williams, 1999) should be given precedence and implemented in conjunction with e-mail consultations.

Activity specific problems – Students mentioned that they did not know exactly what to do in this activity and had no ideas concerning what to write in consultations. These problems revealed that they were insufficiently prepared for the e-mail consultation task.

The lack of success in implementing the task might come from the reason that students were not familiar with the nature of the task which had two new features that they had to cope with. The first one is for students to lead and take the initiative in giving suggestions to their peers about language learning. The other is for them to use e-mail in giving and receiving consultations. As Nolasco & Arthur (1990) put it, when discussing innovations in large classes, "learners may be particularly resistant to change if the change that is required of them runs counter to what is taking place elsewhere within the system." In doing this task, the students' role had to change totally from passive learning to active learning.

From these two new features that the students have to cope with, two types of training may be needed. The first one is training in the use of technology, and the second one is training in how students give consultations. The teachers provided adequate training for the first aspect. However, the second training, how to give consultations, which was crucial to the successful implementing of this task, was missing. We ignored this preparation because we thought that students would be able to do it without difficulty. In other words, we overlooked Shamim's (1996: 110) caution that "learner acceptance of a proposed change is largely taken for granted", an assumption that often leads to problems with innovation. As a result, learners had to struggle and this led to failure of the innovation.

Since the consultation task involved changing the role of the students in that they have to become a facilitator to help their peers solve language problems, learner preparation should consider cultural patterns (Shamim; 1990). In Thai culture, students' beliefs are generally that teachers are the people who have all the knowledge so they will be the people who give the knowledge to the students. In other words, students generally do not believe that it is their role to give knowledge to their peers.

In conclusion, when implementing innovations in the classroom, it is essential to take students' beliefs into account and give more attention to preparing students for the innovation. These considerations of how to implement the innovation were derived from a small research project concerning the setting up of e-mail consultations but it is likely that they will also be able to be applicable to other innovations that attempt to solve large class problems.

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Appendix 1 – On-line consultation class handout

Electronic consultation for LNG 102

1. What is electronic consultation?

Consultation is a session set aside for students of LNG 102 to talk to, discuss, or share your problems in learning English with your teacher and/or friends.

Due to an increased number of students enrolling in English courses, School of Liberal Arts is trying to find an effective way for teachers to accommodate a large number of students at one time when doing a consultation. The advancement of technology nowadays as well as the leadership of KMUTT in technology might be able to give a solution to teachers in conducting an effective consultation using an e-mail.

Students will have to become a member of a Yahoo discussion list whose name is **LNG102Consultation**. There will be 20 groups of students and each group will have 8 students, 2 from 4 groups of LNG 102, and one teacher. You will consult with your teacher and friends about your problems in learning English under the three main topics learned in class. The consultation will be done via an e-mail, hence the name “**electronic consultation.**”

2. What do you consult?

You may talk about your problems in learning English in relation to the three main topics that you learned in class, *concordancing*, *portfolio* and *resourcing tasks*. You can share with the group what you've learned, discuss the problems or difficulties that you have when doing the activities, and say how you solve those problems. You can also give some suggestions or comments that you feel would be useful to the group members.

3. What are the procedures?

- First, get into a group of eight (2 from LNG 102 Groups 2, 4, 6, and 10.) Your teacher will help with the selection of the group members.
- Second, become a member and acquire a YAHOO account number. You can do this by going to http://mail.yahoo.com/?_intl=us and click at **Sign up now** which appears on the same page. Then follow the instructions of acquiring an account number. If you have any problems, check with your friends or teacher.
- Third, get the address from your teacher to subscribe to Yahoogroups by following the instructions:
 - key in your address that you get from your teacher, such as <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/consultation102A/>. The page of the discussion list will appear.
 - click <Join this group> (this message is in a yellow box at the top right hand corner.)
 - enter your ID and password to sign in and follow the path of applying for a member of the group

You will receive a message from Yahoo introducing the group and how to post the message, and so on. Save that message for future reference.

4. When does the consultation start?

You can spend the month of June in familiarising yourself with sending messages via- e-mail , posting messages to the discussion list, practicing giving comments and so on. The actual consultation can take place *from July to August*. You can post your messages as many times as needed.

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire

Questionnaire for On-line Consultation for LNG 102

Please answer the questions

1. Personal information

You are a student of the Department of _____ in the Faculty of _____. Your English section number is _____.

2. Your ability in using computer and your English proficiency (Please circle the number that corresponds the most to you, 1 = not proficient, 5 = very proficient)

The ability in using computer

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. sending and receiving e-mails | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. typing in English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

English proficiency

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. writing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. speaking | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. reading | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3. Consultation

3.1 Did you open your e-mail to read the postings? Yes No

3.2 If you did, how often?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. every week | b. once every two weeks |
| c. once a month | d. less than once a month |
| e. others. Please specify _____ | |

3.3 Did you post messages? Yes No

3.4 If you did, how often?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. every week | b. once every two weeks |
| c. once a month | d. less than once a month |
| e. others, please specify _____ | |

3.5 If you posted less than 3 messages or no message at all for the whole semester, please give your reasons (You can choose more than 1 reason.)

- a. I am not competent in sending e-mails.
- b. I could not find a computer to send e-mails.
- c. The system was too slow so I felt discouraging.
- d. I was afraid of making mistakes and felt embarrassing about them.
- e. I did not see the usefulness and did not understand the aims of the activity.
- f. No marks were given.
- g. I had no time.
- h. I could not think of anything and had no ideas to write.
- i. I could consult with the teacher in person so there was no need for

online consultation.

ف j. Other students in the group did not write and answered my e-mails.

ف k. The consultation group was too big so I felt unfamiliar with them.

ف l. I did not know exactly what to do in this activity

ف m. Others, please specify _____

3.6 If you posted messages more than 3 times, please give your reasons (You can choose more than 1 reason.)

ف a. I looked at this as a good opportunity to practice English.

ف b. I would like to consult English language problems

ف c. Teachers assigned me to do it.

ف d. I think that it was my responsibility to do it.

ف e. Others, please specify _____

3.7 When the teacher encouraged you to post messages, did you do it?

ف Yes

ف No

If yes, why?

If no, why not?

4. Topics for consultation

Do you think if these topics for consultations were appropriate?

TOPICS	APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE
2.1 Problems in learning		because _____
2.2 Problems in doing portfolio		because _____
2.3 Problems in resourcing tasks		because _____

If you do not like these topics, please give suggestions. _____

3. Training

Would you like to have some training before doing consultation online?

ف Yes

ف No

If yes, what training would you like?

ف Writing e-mail in English

ف How to consult and give consultations

ف

Others,

please

specify

4. Do you think this activity is useful?

ف Yes

ف No

If you agree, how does this activity help?

ف It can help improve my fluency in writing

ف I can have good attitudes towards English language.

ف It can help solve problems in learning.

ف

Others,

please

specify

7. Comments:

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