

Problems in Using English Language of Business English Students at Roi Et Rajabhat University: A Student Perspective

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Abstract

This study aimed to 1) identifying the problems in using English language of Business English major students at Roi Et Rajabhat University and 2) compare the problems in using English language amongst Business English major students in all four years based on students' perceptions in order to help teachers to revise and develop proper English courses for the students. The participants were all 123 Business English major students who were studying in the second semester of the Academic Year 2019. There were 17 first-year students, 37 second-year students, 40 third-year students, and 29 fourth-year students participated in this study selected by purposive sampling method. The research instrument was questionnaire on students' problems in using English language skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing, respectively. The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) of the instrument was within 0.60 - 1.00. The reliability of the questionnaire was 0.927. Means and standard deviation and Analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze collected data.

The results of the study revealed that all students encountered the problems in using English language at the moderate level in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In relation to each individual language skill, speaking was reported the highest level perceived by the students and the skill with the lowest level is writing. However, there was no significant difference in using English language skills amongst students in all four years. The findings suggested that curriculum revision and program evaluation including classroom interactive activities for the improvement of students' speaking ability should be conducted.

Keywords: problems in using English language, students' perspective

1. Introduction

It is known that English language has been a compulsory language subject in the curriculum of Thai schools and university. From primary school to university, Thai students have studied English for at least sixteen years. However, many research studies demonstrated that they still have the problems in using English for communication (Noom-ura, 2013; Somdee & Suppasetseree, 2013)

This problem becomes more serious when the ASEAN Economic Community is implemented in 2015. Due to English language is chosen as the official lingua franca of ASEAN, newly graduated students are expected to use English language effectively in both the domestic and international workforce. This situation arouses universities and education institutes throughout Thailand to prepare their students to be able to encounter more competitive marketplace of employment, especially the English language proficiency (Warawudhi, 2013). Accordingly, producing high English proficiency graduates to the workforce is the crucial responsibility of the higher education institute

In Thailand, English has been taught as a foreign language. This makes practicing using English in the real world outside classroom of Thai students limited. According to this limitation, each higher educational institute in Thailand has put a great emphasis on the teaching and learning of English instead of trying to change educational environment. This makes English teacher become the most important factor in student learning success

To enable English teachers to help students to learn successfully, providing appropriate proportion of contents and skills in each course is important for language teachers (Warawudhi, 2013). Accordingly, finding what skills students weaken and require to fulfill their language competency is the first task of the teacher. Problem study then can be employed as the teacher's instrument to find out what the problems of using English that students encounter.

The importance of problems analysis that sheds the light on its basic function and contribution in the design of courses, syllabuses, and teaching materials or activities is stated by many scholars. Richterich and Chancerel (1987) said that needs analysis is considered as a prerequisite in any course design. This is supported by Berwick (1989) who claims that needs assessment, which requires learners' involvement, is important for decision planners to design the course. Hawkey (1980) states that needs analysis is a tool for designing courses. That is a "language training situation with reasonably specific occupational or educational objectives involving a reasonably homogeneous group of learners". Course designers can carry out specific language skills, forms, and functions of courses from the obtained information of learner's needs.

Consistency with the ideas of Knox (1997) who claimed that implementing needs analysis is important because it enables the researcher to describe assumptions regarding the way to design materials and course content to suit learner's needs. "The curriculum content and learning experiences should be negotiated between learners, teachers, and coordinators at the beginning of the project and renegotiated regularly during the project".

Consequently, in order to design an appropriate course for learners, conducting needs analysis in search of specific type of information in relation to the learning situation is desired. It takes into account the learner's cultural awareness, proficiency level in English, the available materials and all possible information that help the teacher to transmit an appropriate knowledge to the learners. (Razika, 2017).

Due to the reasons mentioned above, the study on problems of using English language of Thai students majoring in Business English Program at Roi Et Rajabhat University in student perspective is, thus, useful for teacher in order to revise and develop proper English courses for the English major students. This can help English language teachers at Roi Et Rajabhat university in providing proportion of contents and skills in each course that help strengthen students' ability in using English.

2. Research Objectives

2.1 To identify the problems in using English language of Business English major students at Roi Et Rajabhat university

2.2 To compare the problems in using English language amongst Business English major student in all four years

3. Methodology

3.1 Subjects of the Study

123 Business English major students consisted of 17 first-year students, 37 second –year students, 40 third-year students, and 29 fourth-year students were purposively selected as the subjects of this study. They were required to complete the questionnaires to echo the problems in using four language macro skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing at the last week in the second semester of the academic year 2018.

3.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument applied in this study was the English language questionnaire adapted from Pawapatcharaudom (2007) and verified by three English lectures at Roi Et Rajabhat University to check the effectiveness of the questionnaire in term of content validity and Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to investigate the reliability of the questionnaire before employing. The questionnaires were divided into three parts. The general information was asked in the first part. The second part was five-Likert-scale questions asking students to report their problems in four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The problems were classified into 5 levels: always = 5, usually = 4, occasionally = 3, rarely = 2, and never = 1. And the third part, open-ended question was constructed in order to elicit students' English language problems as well.

3.3 Data collection

To gather data, questionnaire was administrated to the Business English major students of Roi Et Rajabhat university at the last week in the second semester of the academic year 2018.

3.4 Data Analysis

To achieve the objectives of this study, descriptive statistics analyses in terms of mean and standard deviation and Analysis of variance (ANOVA) were carried out. The questionnaires were computed

for means and standard deviation (S.D.) in order to reveal the problems of Thai students in business English program at Roi Et Rajabhat university in using English language. The criteria for the degrees of the problems perceived by business English major students in using English language are as follows: (Suppasetsee, 2005)

Means	Interpretations
1.00 - 2.33	Students have low problems in Using English Language
2.34 - 3.67	Students have moderate problems in Using English Language
3.68 - 5.00	Students have high problems in Using English Language

4. Results

4.1 To Identify the problems in using English language of Business English major students at Roi Et Rajabhat university

Table 1 Students' Problems of Speaking Skills

Years	Number of students	Students' Problems of Speaking Skills	
		Mean	S.D.
First	17	3.02	0.59
Second	37	2.88	0.42
Third	40	2.99	0.45
Fourth	29	3.10	0.41
Total	123	3.00	0.46

The results presented in Table 1 show that in total, the means score of questionnaire was at 3.00 (S.D. = 0.46). Based on the criteria of means adopted from Suppasetsee (2005), this indicates that students had moderate problems in speaking. When considering students in each year, the fourth year students had the highest problems in speaking (M = 3.10, S.D. = 0.41).

Table 2 Students' Problems of Listening Skills

Years	Number of students	Students' Problems of Listening Skills	
		Mean	S.D.
First	17	2.94	0.72
Second	37	2.94	0.57
Third	40	2.91	0.53
Fourth	29	3.01	0.50
Total	123	2.94	0.56

According to Table 2, the study on students' problems of listening skills show the total means of 2.94 (S.D. = 0.56). It can be interpreted as students had moderate problems in using listening skills.

When considering students in each year, the fourth year students had the highest problems in using listening skills with means of 3.01 (S.D. = 0.50).

Table 3 Students' Problems of Reading Skills

Years	Number of students	Students' Problems of Reading Skills	
		Mean	S.D.
First	17	2.67	0.71
Second	37	2.94	0.63
Third	40	2.92	0.64
Fourth	29	2.97	0.56
Total	123	2.90	0.63

From Table 3 the students encountered the problems of reading skills in overall at moderate level at the means of 2.90 (S.D. = 0.63). When considering students in each year, the fourth year students had the highest problems of reading skills at the mean of 2.97 (S.D. = 0.56).

Table 4 Students' Problems of Writing Skills

Years	Number of students	Students' Problems of Writing Skills	
		Mean	S.D.
First	17	2.60	0.69
Second	37	2.67	0.49
Third	40	2.55	0.50
Fourth	29	2.77	0.60
Total	123	2.64	0.55

It is obviously shown from Table 4 that the students had moderate problems of writing skills as seen from the total means of 2.64 (S.D. = 0.55). When considering students in each year, the fourth year students revealed that they had the highest problems in using writing skills at the means of 2.77 (S.D. = 0.60).

4.2 To compare the problems in using English language amongst Business English major student in all four years.

Table 5 Comparison of Students' Problems in Using English Language

Year	Number of students	Speaking		Listening		Reading		Writing	
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
First	17	3.02	0.59	2.94	0.72	2.67	0.71	2.60	0.69
Second	37	2.88	0.42	2.94	0.57	2.94	0.63	2.67	0.49
Third	40	2.99	0.45	2.91	0.53	2.92	0.64	2.55	0.50
Fourth	29	3.10	0.41	3.01	0.50	2.97	0.56	2.77	0.60
Total	123	3.00	0.46	2.94	0.56	2.90	0.63	2.64	0.55

Regarding to the findings from Table 1 to 4, it can be summarized as revealed in Table 5 that the students similarly encountered the problems in using English language at the moderate level in speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills as seen from the total means of 3.00, 2.94, 2.90 and 2.64 respectively. However, when considering in each skill the students reported that the highest problem they perceived is speaking skills and the lowest problem they encountered is using writing skills. In addition, it can also be shown that the fourth-year students reported that they had the highest problems of using four skills comparing to the first, second, and third year students as seen from the total means of 3.10, 3.01, 2.97, and 2.77 respectively.

Table 6 Comparison of the differences of Students' Problems in Using English Language

Skills		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Speaking	Between Group	.853	3	.284	.1349*	.262
	Within Group	25.074	119	.211		
	Total	25.927	122			
Listening	Between Group	.158	3	.053	.163*	.921
	Within Group	38.582	119	.324		
	Total	38.740	122			
Reading	Between Group	1.102	3	.367	.912*	.438
	Within Group	47.964	119	.403		
	Total	49.067	122			
Writing	Between Group	.824	3	.275	.893*	.447
	Within Group	36.617	119	.308		
	Total	37.441	122			

* p-value = 0.05

According to Table 6, the findings demonstrated no significant difference in using English language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing in overall and in each skill. It can be seen from Table 6 that the p-value of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are .262, .921, .438, and .447 respectively. These values show that there is no significant difference of students' problems in using English language in all four years at the level of .05 ($p > 0.05$)

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The study findings have revealed that firstly the students encountered the problems in using English language at the moderate level in speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills respectively. When considered in each skill students' speaking problem was at the highest level while problems with writing was at the lowest level.

Secondly, the result of the comparison of the differences of students' problems in using English Language in all four years shown that there is no significant difference of students' problems in using English language.

The aforementioned results were discussed as follows: First, the findings confirmed the results of previous studies conducted by Warawudhi (2013) that the fourth-year English major students of Burapha University recognized their English ability at the intermediate level. And speaking and listening skills were mentioned as the very difficult used skills. Consistency with the study of Aunruen (2005) that aimed at the exploration of the needs and problems in English language of travel agents working in Chiang Mai. The findings also revealed that travel agents had the most difficulty in speaking. As well as, the study conducted by Jeff (2019) that aimed at identifying the most difficult basic skill faced by learners of English in first year undergraduate classes at UEA. The findings of the study likewise revealed that speaking skill was the biggest problem.

Second, the second finding might not be something that we are expected to attain, as a teacher we always believe that the more students learn, the more they gain or know. This belief supported by a study of English proficiency of pupils with English as an additional language which yielded that pupils who have been in an English school for 5 or more years are more likely to be assessed as competent or fluent in English than pupils who have been in an English school for 1 to 4 years. (Department of Education, 2020). This evidently shows that English proficiency levels increase with the number of years in an English school. However, this finding can be resulted from the curriculum courses or teaching techniques which might not be suitable for the students so they cannot help them to increase their English skills. These made students of all four years were not different when we asked them rated the degree of problems in using English language.

Moreover, the challenge of learning speaking in EFL context may be because students have very few chances to use English outside the classroom and teachers also do the talking in classroom approximately 50 percent to 80 percent (Nunan, 2003). If classroom teachers do not provide opportunities for students to increase the amount of time of interaction by communicating in the target language, students will not be able to improve their speaking ability. Accordingly, classroom techniques and the task or activities designed should be taken into teachers' consideration. Additionally, this study reflected that the process of curriculum development should be focused on communicative language teaching which its focus is more on speaking and different communicative needs of learners (Nunan, 2003).

In conclusion, the data earning from this study will be somehow valuable for all English language teaching staff at Roi Et Rajabhat University to design tailor-made courses that are a perfect fit

for their students or applying for a curriculum development. This is related to Kara, Ayaz, and Dündar (2017) indicating that the curriculum designers should be informed about the academic needs or problems of students otherwise the process of curriculum development will be ineffective.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Implications

6.1.1 English teachers: For English teachers, they can reconsider or redesign their courses in terms of material, content, and technique in order to solve the problems according to the most difficult skills the students encountered.

6.1.2 Program administrators: Regarding to curriculum administrators, the obtained information of students' problems might help them to carry out specific language skills, forms, and functions of courses which can help students to go over the problems they came across. However, assessment of students' perceived problematic skills is inadequate for syllabus design especially the fourth year students who are prepared to use the target language in the target situation for their future career. The stakeholders' needs such as managers and employers should participate in the process of syllabus design.

6.1.3 Business English major students: According to the results demonstrated in this study, they would learn that amongst the four language skills, their weakest skill was speaking. Accordingly, they have to spend more time to practice and strengthen this skill. Their positive attitude towards English speaking should be motivated. They might be willing to put themselves to business English environment. In so doing, they will become more proficient in English speaking.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

6.2.1 According to the results from the questionnaire, the subjects were only from Business English major students for further study the exploration of English language teachers' point of view and factors influencing students' speaking ability are highly recommended.

6.2.2 In order to establish the validity and reliability of the obtained data and gather greater insight information, the triangulations should be conducted in further research study.

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