

Competency Analysis of Communicative Thai Language Usage of Students in a Work-Integrated Learning Program

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Abstract

This research aimed to analyze students' competency of communicative Thai language use in the Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) program in the Diploma of the Industrial Technology at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna. The research was conducted with both quantitative and qualitative methods. Related concepts and theories are studied through the synthesis of current documents and research works. Data were collected with questionnaires

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and interviews based on concepts of the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (Public Organization) and Thai Language Proficiency Level of the Sirindhorn Thai Language Institute, Chulalongkorn University. The results of the research were that the listening competency of students was at a good level while speaking, writing and reading competencies were at a medium level. The three lowest competency skills were: 1) the reading comprehension for the main idea and concept summary of not very complex stories from both intensive and extensive reading in their field of study, 2) correct alphabet pronunciation with clear sound and natural way of speaking, and 3) writing with precise language, appropriate to the purposes, progressive order and sequences in expressing their ideas, including words choices and correctly arranged sentences. The research recommended that teachers should provide teaching and learning preparation to help students develop communication competencies. This should be done by integrating them into the context of the working area so that students adjust and apply them appropriately to their job in the workplace. This would lead to the achievement of the objectives of the program in building students' potential skills to meet the needs of the labor market.

Keywords: competency, curriculum integration, use of Thai language for communication, Work-integrated Learning (WIL)

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์สมรรถนะการใช้ภาษาไทยเพื่อการสื่อสารของนักศึกษาหลักสูตรบูรณาการการศึกษาร่วมกับการทำงานระดับประกาศนียบัตรวิชาชีพชั้นสูง สาขาวิชาเทคนิคอุตสาหกรรม มหาวิทยาลัย

เทคโนโลยีราชชมงคลล้านนา ดำเนินวิธีการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณและการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ โดยสังเคราะห์แนวคิดและทฤษฎีที่เกี่ยวข้องจากเอกสารและงานวิจัยเก็บข้อมูลด้วยแบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์ ตามแนวคิดของสถาบันคุณวุฒิวิชาชีพ TPQI (องค์การมหาชน) และระดับสมรรถภาพการใช้ภาษาไทยของสถาบันภาษาไทย สิรินคร จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย ผลการวิจัยพบว่า สมรรถนะในทักษะการฟังอยู่ในระดับดี ส่วนสมรรถนะในทักษะการพูด การเขียน และการอ่านอยู่ในระดับปานกลาง ทั้งนี้สมรรถนะย่อยมีน้อยที่สุด 3 อันดับแรก ได้แก่ 1) การอ่านจับใจความสำคัญและสรุปความคิดรวบยอดของเรื่องที่อ่านทั้งในและนอกสาขาของตนที่ไม่ซับซ้อนมาก 2) การพูดอ่านออกเสียงอักขระถูกต้อง เสียงดังฟังชัด และมีวิธีพูดเป็นธรรมชาติ และ 3) การเขียนที่ใช้ภาษาได้ดีเหมาะสมกับวัตถุประสงค์ เรียงลำดับและแสดงความคิดต่อเนื่อง เลือกใช้คำและเรียบเรียงประโยคได้ดีถูกต้อง ด้านการพัฒนาทักษะการสื่อสาร ผู้สอนควรจัดการเรียนการสอนที่ช่วยพัฒนาสมรรถนะการสื่อสารโดยบูรณาการศาสตร์ตามบริบทของงาน เพื่อให้ศึกษานำไปปรับใช้อย่างเหมาะสมและสอดคล้องกับการปฏิบัติงานในสถานประกอบการ นำไปสู่ผลสัมฤทธิ์ของงานตามเป้าหมายที่ถูกกำหนดไว้ อันเป็นการเสริมสร้างทักษะและศักยภาพให้ตรงตามความต้องการของตลาดแรงงาน

คำสำคัญ: สมรรถนะในการทำงาน หลักสูตรบูรณาการ

การใช้ภาษาไทยเพื่อการสื่อสาร การศึกษาร่วมกับการทำงาน

Introduction

The National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy Office (STI) of the Ministry of Science and Technology had analyzed workforce development that did not correspond with needs of the labor market because of awareness of workforce development problems. From the demand side of the industrial sector, four major problems

identified were: 1) lack of knowledgeable workers that could be developed to operate high-end technology, 2) lack of opportunity for learning and knowledge development of workers in factories, 3) lack of educational platform that effectively connects industry and educational institutes, and 4) inconsistency of knowledge acquired from educational institutes and work requirements in industries. Persons who had an understanding of or experience in industries were encouraged to be involved in management by recruiting working teams who understood the business operation of enterprises and competition in industrial markets. This was necessary to produce a high-end workforce and enhance the competitive ability of enterprises and Thailand's industrial sector. Therefore, a Work-integrated Learning project, also known as Workplace-based education platform was created with coordination between enterprises and educational institutes. The main purpose was to create knowledge and transfer up-to-date expertise from the industrial sector. The intent was to respond to the needs of workers for modern knowledge and ability in production technology and production systems. Educational institutes participating in the project had to develop curriculum that mostly integrates the content of study with work (The National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy Office [STI], 2018).

Recognizing the importance of the above-mentioned issue, Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna (RMUTL) participated in developing the country's industrial system by creating a Diploma program in Industrial Technology, which started in 2013.

According to the educational model of the Work-integrated Learning curriculum, students have to work during the period specified

by the enterprises. The work is counted as part of practice hours in courses which have practice credits. Students receive a transfer of knowledge through various processes which are course activities assigned by instructors. Students will be able to apply their knowledge with working skills and have higher proficiency through work that meets the needs of employers in eight proficiencies: 1) communication skills, 2) self-confidence, 3) customer-related management, 4) Enthusiasm in participation, 5) knowledge of industry and business, 6) self-satisfaction, 7) occupational network, and 8) professional ethics (Kanchanapiboon & Phoemphian, 2016).

The ability to communicate is the most important proficiency that graduates need in the workplace for efficient operation. If personnel in an organization have effective communication skills, the organization will be led towards the achievement of its goals (Ruck & Welch, 2012). Information is not disseminated very quickly with advancement of communication technology and a wide variety of communication channels and faster internet. This is a factor that causes changes in communication and language usage of people in society (Saengin, 2019), particularly for students. Common problems identified in the use of Thai language for communication include incorrect level of language use, misspelled words, use of slang words, and use of wrong form of tone mark. Lack of familiarity with language used in communication among specific groups and lack of knowledge of word meanings may lead to the wrong choice of words used in writing (Khumting, Sangkhaphanthano, & Rodsap, 2020).

This may also lead to incorrect and inappropriate academic and daily communication according to Thai language usage principles. From the problems mentioned above, researchers who teach students enrolled

in the Work-integrated learning program are well aware of the importance of developing communication skills to increase students' operational efficiency. Therefore, proficiency in communicative Thai language usage of students in the Work-integrated Learning program should be analyzed and results should be applied to the curriculum. This is to increase students' communication proficiency needed by employers and enterprises.

Objectives

This study focuses on competency analysis of communicative Thai language usage of students in a Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) program in order to develop the learning and teaching of Thai language to students in the WIL program.

Methodology

This research was conducted with the qualitative method through the study of existing documents and related research. A questionnaire and an interview was used to gather data from 10 instructors of the participating institute. Questions in the questionnaire and the interview were based on a conceptual framework of graduate attributes specified in the Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, Thai language proficiency for communication in daily life framework of the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (Public Organization) (Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (Public Organization) [TPQI], n.d.), and Thai language proficiency level specified by The Sirindhorn Thai Language Institute, Chulalongkorn University (The Sirindhorn Thai Language Institute, Chulalongkorn University [STI], n.d.).

The questionnaire was inspected by three Thai language-teaching experts who held the academic position of assistant professor. The questionnaire was inspected for content validity index or the Index of Item-objective Congruence (IOC) to examine the appropriateness of question items. Data were analyzed by content analysis, as well as frequency, means, and standard deviation, using the following criteria for ranking communicative Thai language proficiency. 4.50 – 5.00 (very good), 3.50 – 4.49 (good), 2.50 – 3.49 (moderate), 1.50 – 2.49 (fair) and 0.50 – 1.49 (poor).

Findings

1. Results from the analysis of data gained from 10 instructors who answered the questionnaire about communicative Thai language proficiency of students in the Work-integrated Learning program are as follows:

Table 1
Students' Competency of Listening Skill

Proficiency of listening skill	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1.1 Students listen attentively and focus on materials they listen to.	3.80	0.92	Good
1.2 Students can get the main idea correctly from materials they listen to.	3.40	0.84	Moderate
1.3 Students can analyze and distinguish facts and opinions from materials they listen to.	3.60	0.84	Good

1.4	Students can evaluate values of materials they listen to.	3.50	0.85	Good
1.5	Students can get the speakers' purpose from materials they listen to.	3.50	0.71	Good
1.6	Students can answer questions correctly and to the point.	3.50	0.71	Good
Total		3.55	0.14	Good

Table 1 indicates that overall proficiency in listening skills of students in the Work-integrated Learning program was at the good level (Mean = 3.55). The highest listening proficiency is listen attentively and focus on listening materials (Mean = 3.80, good); the lowest listening proficiency is correct main idea retrieval from listening materials (Mean = 3.40, moderate).

In summary, students can pay attention, focus, and demonstrate critical thinking while digesting, assessing communicative messages that were delivered and answering all questions correctly and accurately.

Table 2
Students' Competency of Speaking Skill

Competency of speaking skill	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
2.1 Students use correct and suitable language correctly for the context.	3.40	0.97	Moderate
2.2 Students use suitable language for the situation.	3.40	0.84	Moderate
2.3 Students can sequence ideas with criteria, reasons,	3.40	0.84	Moderate

	and usefulness and can draw conclusions.			
2.4	Students can pronounce correctly, loudly and naturally.	2.90	0.99	Moderate
2.5	Students have body language that is suitable for the content, with appropriate eye contact and facial expression.	3.20	1.32	Moderate
2.6	Students are confident in standing and moving. They dress appropriately and have good manners.	3.20	1.14	Moderate
Total		3.25	0.20	Moderate

Table 2 demonstrates that overall proficiency in speaking skill of students in the Work-integrated Learning program is at the moderate level (Mean = 3.25). The lowest speaking proficiency is correct, loud, and natural pronunciation (Mean = 2.90, moderate); the highest speaking proficiency is suitable body language for the content of speaking, with appropriate eye contact and facial expressions, as well as confidence in standing and moving, appropriate dress, and good manners (Mean = 3.20, moderate).

In summary, students are able to use the language that is correct and suitable for the content. However, confidence while speaking could be improved, especially the correctness of pronunciation and speaking naturally.

Table 3**Students' Competency of Writing Skill**

Competency of writing skill	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
3.1 Students can use language well, varied, and suitable for the purpose. They can sequence and express opinion deeply, continuously, completely, and explicitly. They can choose words and arrange sentences correctly.	3.00	0.82	Moderate
3.2 Students can use language well and suitable for the purpose. They can sequence and express their opinions continuously. They can choose words and arrange sentences well and correctly.	2.90	0.74	Moderate
3.3 Students can use language well and suitable for the purpose. They can sequence and express their opinions continuously. They can choose words and arrange sentences quite well.	3.00	0.82	Moderate
3.4 Students can choose words appropriately. They can sequence and show relationships well.	3.20	0.79	Moderate
Total	3.03	0.13	Moderate

Table 3 shows that overall proficiency in writing skill of students in the Work-integrated Learning program is at the moderate level (Mean = 3.03). The highest writing proficiency is an appropriate choice of word use, good sequencing and connecting expressions of opinions (Mean = 3.20, good); the lowest writing proficiency is well and suitable use of language for the purpose, good and continuous sequencing and expressing of opinions, and good and correct word choice and sentence arrangement (3.00, moderate).

To summarize, students demonstrated the use of language that is suitable for the purpose; however, they still lack good sequences arrangement.

Table 4
Students' Competency of Reading Skill

Competency of reading skill	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
4.1 Students analyze and interpret the content in every kind of reading text, regardless of genre and period, both inside and outside their field of subject. They can understand important points of the text and ideas that the writer wants to convey besides the context of the text.	3.40	0.84	Moderate
4.2 Students analyze and interpret from language of the content in every kind of reading text, regardless of genre and period, both inside and outside their field of subject. They can	3.10	0.88	Moderate

	understand important points and ideas that the writer wants to convey besides the context of the text.			
4.3	Students analyze and interpret from language of the content in the reading text, both inside and outside their field of subject. They can understand important points and ideas that the writer wants to convey.	3.00	0.82	Moderate
4.4	Students can get main ideas and draw conclusion of the reading text, whether inside or outside their field of subject, which is not very complicated.	2.80	1.03	Moderate
Total		3.08	0.25	Moderate

Table 4 illustrates that overall proficiency in reading skill of students in the Work-integrated Learning program is at a moderate level (Mean = 3.08). The highest reading proficiencies are abilities to analyze and interpret content in all types of reading texts, regardless of genre and period, both inside and outside their field of subject, and understanding of important points and author's ideas conveyed outside the context of the reading texts (Mean = 3.40, moderate). The lowest reading proficiency is the ability to get main ideas and draw conclusions of the reading texts which are not very complicated, whether inside or outside their field of subject (Mean = 2.80, moderate).

In conclusion, students can analyze and interpret the content both inside and outside of their subject field. However,

their ability to get main ideas and draw conclusions of the content could be improved.

Results of qualitative data analysis from interviewing 10 instructors reveal that skills that students need to develop the most are writing and speaking. Writing, in particular, is an important skill for the study in Work-integrated Learning program, as well as speaking skill to communicate understanding during work. Instructors who teach subjects related to communicative Thai language should provide studies or activities that help develop better communication skills for students.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of communicative Thai language proficiency of students in the Work-integrated Learning program indicates that students have good listening proficiency, but moderate speaking, writing, and reading proficiencies. The analysis of questionnaire by items for the lowest proficiency in each communication skill reveals that: 1) the listening skill of correct main idea retrieval from listening materials has the lowest mean; 2) the speaking skill of correct, loud, and natural pronunciation has the lowest mean; 3) the writing skills of well and suitable use of language for the purpose, good and continuous sequencing and expressing of opinions, and good and correct word choice and sentence arrangement have the lowest means; and 4) the reading ability to get main ideas and draw conclusions of the reading texts which are not very complicated, whether inside or outside their subject field has the lowest mean. The analysis of interview content reveals instructors' agreement that students need to develop more in their writing and speaking skills. This finding corresponds with results from research in Thai language conditions and problems usage which

concluded that most problems in Thai language usage are found in writing, reading and speaking skills (Khumting & et al., 2020).

The necessary development of communicative Thai language proficiency of students in the Work-integrated Learning program should focus more on message-transmitting skills. In the Work-integrated Learning program, students are required to report their results of operation in various forms in addition to studying course content by : 1) noting operation in Logbook, 2) writing Production Process Chart, 3) writing components of manufacturing systems, 4) knowing Target Value and Tolerance, 5) analyzing production process with 5 factors (5 M), 6) using 5 Why to find origins of problems, 7) analyzing causes of problems with Fish Bone diagram, and 8) presenting results in meetings and discussion and applying agreed solutions to their practice. (STI, 2018).

An analysis of communicative proficiency is of utmost importance in developing graduates' potentials according to the policy of the government to drive the potential of its population towards competitiveness at a global level. In particular, students in the Work-integrated Learning (WIL) program have a good opportunity to work in enterprises. If students do not develop themselves to increase their potentials in work, their function could be incorrect and cause damage to the organization. The essential thing in improving skills efficacy is communication strategy to help develop one's ability to continue communication (Saengphakdeejit, 2016). When instructors in this kind of program know factors and findings about the proficiency level or potential of students' language usage for communication, they could provide more suitable educational process and learning methods for students' development in order to meet the goals of the curriculum more efficiently.

This research shows that overall, the communicative Thai language competency (reading, speaking, and writing) of students in the

Work-integrated Learning program are at the moderate level. However, their listening skills are good. Therefore, it could be said that communication is the priority in developing graduates to have potentials required by the national policy to drive Thais to have competitive potentials on the world stage. The Work-integrated Learning (WIL) program provides students with opportunities to work in industry while developing skills needed in both work and study. Teachers agreed that students' communicative Thai language competency, in particular, should be seriously developed to increase their operational potentials in the future.

Conclusion

Results from the study of communicative Thai language proficiency of first-year students in the Work-integrated Learning program of the Diploma in Industrial Technology, Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna are as follows:

1. Regarding communicative language proficiencies in Work-integrated Learning, writing, speaking and reading are at the moderate level while listening is good. When analyzed by items, the lowest writing proficiency expressed by students is good and suitable use of language for the purpose, good and continuous sequencing and expressing of opinions, and good and correct word choice and sentence arrangement. The lowest speaking proficiency is correct, loud, and natural pronunciation. The lowest reading proficiency is the ability to get main ideas and draw conclusions of the reading texts which are not very complicated, whether inside or outside their field of subject. Lastly, the lowest listening proficiency is correct main idea retrieval from listening materials.

2. Concerning the development of students' communicative Thai language proficiency, all 10 instructors agreed that students need to develop more in writing and speaking skills because during their study in the Work-integrated Learning program, students have to note

results of operations to write reports and submit to the instructors, which is part of practice credit required in several courses.

Recommendation

There should be further studies to develop manuals or practice toolkits to develop the teaching process and learning activities in order to enhance communicative Thai language competency, both in educational institutes and in the workplace that are suitable for students in the Work-integrated Learning program.

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