



## Developing a Double Major Curriculum in Two Foreign Languages to Meet the Current Needs of Program Stakeholders

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### Abstract

A more globalized economy is seen as driving a demand for foreign language competency and a diversity of skills. Double-majoring especially in foreign languages is therefore in an upward trend as it broadens students' linguistic and cultural perspectives as well as providing more career opportunities. This study evaluated a double major program in two foreign languages by using a quantitative method. Questionnaires were designed as research instruments for four groups of program stakeholders as the sample groups including students, graduates, graduate employers and instructors. Data analysis revealed that studying two foreign languages as a double major was perceived to be beneficial for students' career paths and it was considered as a strength of the program, aside from the program option of providing a practicum course or an academic experience abroad. Recommendations from the stakeholders were discussed, including foreign languages of interest to be paired with English as double majors which, according to this study, Chinese was selected as the most preferred choice, and certain aspects of the curriculum management to be revised for the highest efficiency of foreign language learning and serve the needs of program stakeholders in the current global community.

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## 1. Introduction

World economies are growing by the effects of globalization and digitalization, so acquiring more knowledge is worth a premium. Simply having a university degree might not be sufficient to guarantee employment with a respectable income. Educational institutions, as a consequence, are being pushed to develop interdisciplinary programs with well-designed curriculums, and graduates being challenged to speed up and distinguish themselves for a competitive advantage in the job market.

Double majoring has become a rising trend as it offers better career prospects as well as a more diverse and deeper level of knowledge for students. Among the double majors provided at universities, foreign languages are widely recognized as preferred alternatives. Pitt and Tepper (2012) examined the proliferation of double majoring on university and college campuses in the United States and found that a foreign language was one of the most popular majors.

As for the Faculty of Humanities, the Bachelor of Arts program in Language for Communication was launched in 2017 by revising its previous Bachelor of Arts program in French Language to be a double major curriculum of two foreign languages. Other than English, students of this international program can select another Western or Eastern foreign language to major in, including French, German, Vietnamese and Khmer, and are provided with an option of spending at least one semester abroad in their target language countries.

To modernize this program and serve the needs of all stakeholders, the curriculum was evaluated in the academic year of 2019 in order to explore the opinions and expectations of program stakeholders, as well as enhance academic excellence for students in Thailand where English is taught as a foreign language.

### 1.1 Definition and importance of curriculum

Curriculum is a vital part which plays an important role in the field of education. Kelly (2004) stated that curriculum means much more than subjects to be taught. It provides the information on why teachers are teaching and what outcomes are created. Curriculum is also a map showing how to achieve the outputs of desired

learners' performance by suggesting appropriate learning activities and assessments to make students accomplish expected results (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

According to Dündar and Merç (2017), the curriculum can be considered as a detailed manual on how to conduct effective teaching and learning. This manual of education seems to contain a lot of questions within itself including what to be taught, to whom, how, under what conditions, and to what end.

Eisner (1994) added that the curriculum can be classified into three groups as follows;

- 1) explicit curriculum which publicly states the institutional goals and opportunities provided by the institution,
- 2) implicit curriculum which stands for hidden functions of the institution arising in the context through the learning process, and
- 3) null curriculum which is related to neglected content and processes as well as what is not provided by the institution.

No matter what type the curriculum is, with main components of objectives, content, implementation, and evaluation, it is widely accepted as a mandatory part of teaching and learning process. Without this guidance, teachers will be uncertain whether or not they have provided essential and interest-directed knowledge for students to reach the next level of education.

## **1.2 Curriculum Development**

Curriculum development is a continuous process of constructing and modifying the curriculum content. It is closely related to social context, the need of the society, and stakeholders of the educational system. Various parties contribute to this process including instructors, learners, graduates and graduate employers, each of which has different effects on the curriculum. Therefore, to take this process into consideration, a focus should not be limited to only curriculum structure and contents but also the role of different contributors (Lau, 2001).

Jadhav and Patankar (2013) explained curriculum development as a dynamic and systematic process sensitive to time and place in which steps of preparation, development, implementation and evaluation are involved. The main emphasis is on

deciding which knowledge to be taught and how to achieve expected outcomes through the teaching and learning process.

Several stages need to be included in the process of curriculum development such as planning, designing, developing, implementing, evaluating, revising, and improving. This supports Dündar and Merç (2017)'s explanation about the six main steps of curriculum development including needs analysis, goal settings, syllabus design, methodology, testing and evaluation.

### **1.3 Curriculum Evaluation**

After implementing the designed curriculum, there are still some questions to be considered such as whether the curriculum really meets expectations of the people affected by it and reaches the objectives under the current situations and major concerns. In order to answer these questions, the whole curriculum needs to be evaluated.

Brown (1995) stated that the curriculum evaluation deals with every process from the specification of the objectives, adaptation of in-class implementation, and processing all gathered information during the stage of development. As for the types of curriculum evaluation, some scholars (e.g. Weir & Roberts, 1994; Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001) classified them into two main types, formative and summative as follows:

#### **1) Formative evaluation**

This kind of evaluation aims to improve the curriculum by gathering data throughout the processes of curriculum implementation and development. It is used for monitoring the quality of curriculum, gaining feedbacks, and judging the changes made during the implementation process to ensure that all aspects of a program are likely to produce success.

#### **2) Summative evaluation**

This type of evaluation is conducted at the end of the implementation process to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum and provide data about what the program has achieved in a period of time.

In order to evaluate educational programs and curriculums, either under the formative or summative approach, several models have been used including CIPP Model which

was also applied in this study as a theoretical framework. This model, introduced in 1983 by Stufflebeam, is widely accepted as an effective model for curriculum evaluation.

#### **1.4 CIPP Model**

According to Stufflebeam (2003), the CIPP model includes four elements:

1. C- Context which includes objectives and background of the program,
2. I - Input which means materials and resources needed for the implementation of the curriculum,
3. P - Process which refers to the teaching and learning process, and
4. P - Product which focuses on the quality of students, the usefulness and potentials of the curriculum that benefit the society.

This model, which can be used for both formative and summative evaluations, provides the holistic view of every curriculum component by evaluating from each and every aspect. According to Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007), CIPP contains an important element which makes itself different from other models by emphasizing the context for the evaluation of teaching, learning, and development process.

As described by Aziz, Mahmood, and Rehman (2018), sample questions regarding the Context evaluation include whether the objectives of the program are suitable, if the courses taught are relevant to the objectives, and if the institution is fulfilling social needs. With respect to the Input evaluation, it aims at determining the resources exploited to meet the objectives, including physical and human resources, facilities, and curriculum content; while the Process evaluation focuses on the implementation of curriculum as well as the teaching and learning processes to check if the inputs are used effectively to reach the desired goals and maintain the quality of education. Finally, the Product evaluation includes learning outcomes, students' achievement, as well as the knowledge, skills and abilities the students attain to benefit their future careers and the society.

#### **1.5 Double major program**

A double major program enables students to graduate with a degree in two different majors that they are interested in. Earning a double major is a valuable educational experience in university for undergraduate students. Some research

findings confirmed that students who graduate with a double major have higher earnings than those who complete a bachelor's degree with a single major. Del Rossi and Hersch (2008) stated that graduates with a double major earn 2.3% more than those with a single major. This result was in line with Hemelt (2010)'s findings that a double major graduate earns 3.2% more than his/her single major counterpart, though that wage premium depends on the type of attended institutions.

Apart from financial returns, an educational experience in a double-major program can develop students' life skills. In a survey conducted by Pitt and Tepper (2012), 64% of 1,760 students at nine universities and colleges agreed that a double major enhanced their creative thinking ability and up to 80% of the students believed that their double major could enrich the development of intellectual curiosity. In the same vein, Sahin (2019) explored how double major programs in foreign language education were implemented in Turkey and revealed that a dual program helped by broadening the horizon of students and providing different perspectives. According to Sahin (2019), most of the participant educators had positive attitudes toward double major programs.

With benefits on financial returns and life skill development, the number of graduates in double majors, as a consequence, has been increasing in the past decade. Pitt and Tepper (2012) reported that about a quarter of all college students select a double major. However, there has been a concern that pursuing a double major may prolong the time students need to graduate as a result of higher amount of coursework and more credits required to complete the degree. In addition, Sahin (2019) claimed that students who enrolled in double major programs were under pressure of the intensity of the courses and examinations.

Despite these concerns, several scholars (e.g. Del Rossi & Hersch, 2008; Pitt & Tepper, 2012) confirmed that double majoring is not a burden and there is no need for academic administrators to worry about these concerns as most students who select double major programs are over-achieving learners capable of completing their Bachelor's degree within four years and less likely to say that such major combination negatively influenced their learning motivation and ability.

In Thailand, double majoring is also a favorable alternative for undergraduate studies. Several universities provide students with double major curriculums ranging from those in the same fields to across vocational tracks. However, there have not been substantial research studies with an emphasis on the implementation of double major Bachelor programs especially under the scope of two different foreign languages. This study will then highlight this aspect to serve the needs of program stakeholders and achieve the highest effectiveness of foreign language teaching and curriculum development.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

In order to modernize the Bachelor of Arts program in Language for Communication and promote academic excellence, this study aimed at exploring the following two aspects of this double major program;

- 2.1 to investigate stakeholders' opinions on the program
- 2.2 to examine strengths and weaknesses of the program

## **3. Research Methodology**

To achieve the research objectives, a quantitative method was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2019 by using questionnaires as research instruments. The sample population were randomly selected from four groups of program stakeholders namely 152 current students of the Language for Communication program majoring in English-French, English-German, English-Vietnamese, and English-Khmer, 90 graduates from the Bachelor of Arts program in French major and those of various majors but minoring in German, Vietnamese or Khmer, 43 employers from various occupational fields and 18 instructors of the program. Four sets of questionnaires were designed to collect data from each group of stakeholders. Based on the theoretical framework of CIPP model curriculum evaluation, the content of all questionnaires covered the four aspects of Context, Input, Process, and Product.

There were some similarities and differences among the four sets of questionnaires with regard to roles and related points to the curriculum for each type of

the stakeholders. Obtained data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics in terms of percentages.

#### 4. Research Findings

##### 4.1 Objectives of the program

The Bachelor of Arts program in Language for Communication aims at developing four attributes among students. Current students as concerned stakeholders were asked whether or not they considered each program objective as suitable. The number of those who agreed with each of the four objectives were shown in table 1.

**Table 1**

*Students' opinions on program objectives*

Curriculum objectives	The suitability of curriculum objectives
1. Demonstrating language proficiency in English and another foreign language for occupational purposes	98%
2. Being honest and responsible in academic, occupational, and social aspects	97%
3. Possessing analytical-thinking and problem-solving skills required for future careers	92%
4. Becoming enthusiastic in learning based on communicative language competency	98%

Data from table 1 revealed that most students (more than 90%) considered all curriculum objectives as suitable, with the highest percentage of agreement on items 1 and 4 concerning the enhancement of language proficiency and the cultivation of enthusiasm for learning respectively. The least favored objective (item 3) was regarding the development of students' analytical thinking and problem-solving skills, but it was still on the high level of agreement.

#### 4.2 Benefits of knowing two foreign languages

Results showed that all groups of stakeholders expressed similar opinions on the advantages of knowing two foreign languages. Most students (99%), and all graduates (100%) as well as instructors (100%) agreed that being proficient in two foreign languages is productive for the students' future careers, while only 30% of graduate employers supported that idea.

**Table 2**

*Program Stakeholders' opinions on benefits of knowing two foreign languages*

Benefits of knowing two foreign languages	
Students	99%
Graduates	100%
Graduate Employers	30%
Instructors	100%

With regards to foreign languages to be provided together with English in order to be occupationally beneficial for graduates, Chinese was seen as the most preferred choice among graduates and employers. French, Vietnamese, and German were mentioned following by quite similar numbers of respondents. In addition, since the respondents were allowed to select more than one answer, other languages were also mentioned such as Japanese, Korean, Russian, Burmese, and Lao.

**Table 3**

*Stakeholders' opinions on interesting foreign languages to be provided together with English*

	Chinese	French	Vietnamese	German	Khmer	Others
Graduates	44%	37%	10%	8%	1%	0%
Graduate Employers	84%	16%	19%	19%	21%	9%

#### 4.3 Strengths of the curriculum

From the study, two aspects were mentioned by program stakeholders as curriculum strengths. The former was double majoring in two foreign languages and

the latter was the program option for students of either being on a practicum (in Thailand or abroad) or taking a foreign language course at the target language countries.

As indicated in Table 4, up to 85% of students and 93% of graduates considered double majoring in two foreign languages to be productive. Regarding the program alternative to develop students' linguistic and occupational skills through either a practicum or a language training experience at target countries, graduates, employers, and instructors found it advantageous and essential, though only 44% of the employers considered having an experience in language learning abroad as important.

Current students were not asked about their opinions on the practicum or an academic experience abroad. This was because their decision on enrolling in this program showed that they had already acknowledged and agreed with this aspect.

**Table 4**

*Strengths of the curriculum*

	Double-Major Program in two foreign languages	Practicum opportunity or Academic Experience Abroad		
		Practicum Abroad	Practicum in Thailand	Academic Experience Abroad
Students	85%	/	/	/
Graduates	93%	60%	70%	78%
Employers	/	51%	67%	44%
Instructors	100%	89%	100%	83%

#### **4.4 Management of program and curriculum structure**

In terms of the curriculum management, this program has served undergraduate students since 2017 with a double major curriculum that includes courses in English and another foreign language required at the same number of credits. English and another foreign language selected by the students are the languages of instruction. Results from the study showed that most stakeholders concerned agreed that the program has been well managed under the four umbrellas of English-French, English-German, English-Vietnamese, and English-Khmer majors.

With regard to the curriculum structure, students are required to complete 153 credits from three sets of courses including General Education courses, Specific

courses, and Free Elective courses. This study did not focus on the General Education courses because they were set according to the university's academic policy. Data from table 5 demonstrated that a number of students and instructors (72-100%) perceived the curriculum structure positively, with the instructors showing higher percentages of agreement in every aspect. As for the students, 7-28% of them disagreed with some aspects of the curriculum structure.

**Table 5**

*Curriculum Structure*

Curriculum Structure	Students	Instructors
1. Total credit requirement (153 credits)	74%	100%
2. Specific Courses in English (42 credits)	92%	94%
3. Specific Courses in selected foreign language (54 credits)	85%	94%
4. English Core Courses (6 credits)	86%	89%
[English for Career Preparation III and English for Career Preparation IV]		
5. Integrated Courses (9 credits)	72%	94%
[Language for Cross Cultural Communication, Cultural Contemporary, and Comparative Language Analysis]		
6. Cross Cultural Courses (6 credits)	93%	100%
[Practicum and Academic Experience Abroad]		
7. Free Elective Courses (6 credits)	80%	100%

According to the data in table 5, two main aspects that the students considered as unsuitable were the total credit requirement (item 1) and the Integrated Courses (item 5). Up to 26-28% of students considered the total number of 153 credit requirement and the number of credits for Integrated Courses as too high. Besides, around 15% of the students said that the total number of credits for Specific Courses in the selected Foreign Language was too high and 20% showed dissatisfaction with the Free Elective Courses by claiming that the freedom of selecting Free Elective courses was too limited.

#### **4.5 Students' Learning Efficiency and Employers' Expectations on Graduate Learning Outcomes**

As prescribed in the program specification called Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (TQF2), students and graduates of the Bachelor of Arts program in Language for Communication are expected to achieve nine Expected Learning Outcomes (ELO) as follows;

ELO1 Being capable of communicating for personal purposes in English

ELO2 Being capable of communicating for personal purposes in the selected foreign language

ELO3 Being capable of expressing opinions in English

ELO4 Being capable of expressing opinions in the selected foreign language

ELO5 Being aware of similarities and differences between English and the selected foreign language

ELO6 Being aware of similarities and differences between cultures of native English speakers and speakers of the selected foreign language

ELO7 Being capable of applying linguistic and cultural knowledges for occupational purposes

ELO8 Having the habit of life-long learning

ELO9 Taking the initiative at work and dealing well with cultural diversity

In this research, students and graduates were asked to evaluate the level of their achievements for each Expected Learning Outcome (ELO) into 5 scales (1-5) from the least to the most achieved, while graduate employers were asked to express their expectations towards the graduates regarding the nine Expected Learning Outcomes into 5 scales (1-5) from the lowest to the highest expected.

Table 6 showed the percentages of respondents who select levels 1-5 for each of the nine Expected Learning Outcomes (ELO).

**Table 6***Stakeholders' opinions on Expected Learning Outcomes (%)*

Leve	Stakeholder	ELO							
1	Students	3	5	3	8	3	4	4	6
	Graduates	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	0
	Employers	2	14	5	12	16	21	9	9
2	Students	8	14	9	16	11	11	16	16
	Graduates	4	8	6	10	12	8	7	9
	Employers	26	42	21	28	37	26	30	14

Leve	Stakeholder	ELO							
3	Students	22	30	23	38	30	31	33	26
	Graduates	12	20	17	27	27	30	26	21
	Employers	35	16	42	35	30	37	26	47
4	Students	32	32	36	27	37	36	30	44
	Graduates	32	38	33	30	32	39	32	51
	Employers	21	12	14	12	10	9	19	19
5	Students	35	19	30	11	20	19	18	16
	Graduates	51	33	44	32	28	21	35	39
	Employers	16	16	19	14	7	7	16	12
Mean	Students	3.78	3.46	3.84	3.17	3.63	3.58	3.45	3.64
	Graduates	4.27	3.94	4.15	3.82	3.74	3.69	3.95	4.16
	Employers	3.23	3.04	3.24	2.91	2.55	2.55	3.03	3.20

From Table 6, it can be said that a significant number of students and graduates evaluated their achievements of the nine Expected Learning Outcomes from levels 3-5. Most graduates considered themselves as having a high level of English and their selected foreign language competency as well as other aspects of Expected Learning Outcome achievement. Current students, however, evaluated themselves as accomplishing Expected Learning Outcomes in lower levels compared to the graduates.

As for the expectations of employers towards the graduates, communicative skills in English and the second foreign language were needed in more complicated aspects than only for an everyday life context. In addition, the employers considered the ability of applying linguistic and cultural competency for occupational purposes as more important than just knowing the theories of languages and cultural content. Life-

long learning and self-learning skills were also considered significant attributes for graduates.

## 5. Discussion

This study aims at developing a double major program in two foreign languages by exploring stakeholders' opinions on the program objectives, curriculum management, curriculum content and students' learning efficiency based on the theoretical framework of CIPP curriculum evaluation. Findings indicated that the program stakeholders realized the advantages of learning two foreign languages as a double major. In terms of the curriculum implementation, some aspects were considered as well-managed while others were seen as needed to be revised as mentioned in the following.

The first aspect to be discussed was regarding curriculum objectives. Most students perceived the program objectives positively, especially with respects to the development of language skills and the cultivation of enthusiasm for learning. The least favored objective was related to the development of analytical thinking and problem-solving skills for occupational purposes. To explain, the curriculum might be considered as not strengthening students' analytical and professional skills enough. As seen in some recommendations from the students, it was suggested that the program should add more content to enhance students' skills of applying knowledge for professional careers such as speaking, critical thinking, problem solving, and academic writing skills. Besides, more scholarships for academic opportunities abroad were requested, together with field trips and extra-curricular activities in order to enrich students' life experience in an occupational context.

As for the double major concept, it was considered by program stakeholders as beneficial for students. This supported research findings from Pitt and Tepper (2012) as well as Sahin (2019) that students and educators had positive attitudes toward double major programs. Both studies confirmed that double majoring enhanced students' thinking abilities and expanding their knowledge in different perspectives. However, when it comes to the pairing of two foreign languages as double majors, less than half of the graduate employers (30%) believed that knowing two foreign languages

was a privilege. Interestingly, in the later section of the study it was demonstrated that more than 80% of the employers pointed out that English competency was essential for professional purposes, and they expected company employees to have communicative skills in foreign languages. Therefore, it can be said that the graduate employers' opinions were still in agreement with the learning of two foreign languages. In addition, Chinese was selected among all groups of respondents as the most interesting foreign language to study in a pair with English. Consequently, English-Chinese double major should be provided as another track under this curriculum to keep up with the growing popularity of the language.

Besides, the program was said to have two major strengths of combining the study of two foreign languages in one degree and providing opportunities for a practicum or an academic experience abroad. However, graduate employers did not see the practicum abroad or an academic experience at foreign countries as essential. This point can be explained, to some extent, that the employers paid more attention to the outcome than the process. As demonstrated in the final section of the research findings that the employers expected graduates to be competent in communicative level of foreign languages and capable of expressing opinions in foreign languages.

With regard to the curriculum structure, results revealed that some students disagreed with the total requirement of 153 credits by claiming that it was too high. This seemed to support Sahin (2019)'s finding that double major students were under pressure from the intensity of the courses. However, such requirement could be explained by citing the announcement of Thailand's Education Ministry on Standard Criteria for Bachelor's Degree Program B.E. 2558 that the number of major course credits must not be less than 30 and another 30 credits are needed for double majoring, with the total number of at least 150 credits for a double-major program. Therefore, program administrators should explain this condition to the students and make them realize that the total credit requirement was necessary for double major students to be competent in the two selected majors.

As for the study plan, results revealed that the students and instructors considered the four-year study plan with 21 credits required for each semester and 6 credits for the last semester (practicum or academic experience abroad) as suitable so

the students will be able to complete the degree within four years. Moreover, the students did not express concern about not being able to graduate in a specified period of time. This finding was in concord with Del Rossi and Hersch (2008) and Pitt and Tepper (2012)'s beliefs that most double major students were over-achievers who can complete their degrees within four years and the double major did not discourage their learning motivation or ability.

In terms of the course content, some students stated that the content of certain courses seemed to be overlapping such as the three speaking courses of "Oral Communication", "Public Speaking", and "Discussion and Presentation". According to the course descriptions, these three speaking courses emphasize different aspects of speaking skills; speaking in everyday life context, speaking in more formal situations, and speaking for professional purposes. However, descriptions of these courses and other courses specializing in similar linguistic skills should be revised to reduce possible overlaps among the contents.

Another issue of dissatisfaction mentioned by some students was the limited freedom of selecting Free Elective courses. A possible factor contributing to this was the fact that it was not easy, in terms of human resources and course management, to provide many free electives in foreign languages for students to select based on their preferences. However, one possible way to solve this problem is to seek cooperation with other international programs of the university to share courses taught in English or foreign languages that the students of different international programs can enroll together as free electives.

The last aspect to be discussed was the achievement of expected learning outcomes that the students and graduates evaluated themselves and the expectation that the employers had towards graduates. From the study it was found that most graduates evaluated themselves as of high proficiency in English and foreign languages. This means that the program has achieved its objective of developing students' foreign language competency. Although current students evaluated themselves as having lower levels of achievement when compared to the graduates, it was probably because the students were still in the middle of their studying path. As for the expectations of employers towards the graduates, foreign language skills, cultural competency, and

life-long learning habit were seen as essential for communicative and occupational purposes.

## **6. Conclusion**

In order to modernize a double-major curriculum in two foreign languages, this study was conducted to investigate program stakeholders' opinions on the Bachelor of Arts program in Language for Communication (International Program). Findings revealed that learning two foreign languages as a double major was considered as beneficial, and Chinese was selected as the most interesting foreign language to be provided in a pair with English. In addition, the program strengths of providing internship opportunities and academic experience abroad were well recognized, while more extracurricular activities were recommended to enhance students' critical thinking skills. Pairing a major in foreign languages can also assure the program stakeholders that graduates have a high level of language proficiency and intercultural skills which are essential for surviving and thriving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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