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## Development of English for Communication and Techniques for Effective Job Interviews and Preparations for Effective Work Performance for Suan Dusit University's Second Year Students of Second Semester of 2017

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### Abstract

The research was carried out to fulfill the main objectives to help 27 second-year students of second semester of academic year of 2016's Culinary Technology & Services program to develop core English communicative skills. Regarding the tools used, relevant useful tests were conducted in which the tests processes were comprised of: 1) Pre-test: 20 questions of aptitude test related to job interviews. 2) Post-test: which comprised of resume' writing, oral/Q/A tests given at the end of the semester to test the students' speaking and responding abilities to the questions related to job interviews with an aim to test and to improve their understanding of parts of speech and correct usage of vocabulary, and 3) Questionnaires to measure their satisfaction (5-level Likert scale) which ranges from 1 as least satisfaction to 5 as most satisfaction and was analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Hence, the Pre-test result indicates the average score of 45%. Regarding Post-test, the result shows the average of 64%. In addition, the questionnaires' results relevant to satisfaction towards conducted English training activities to improve the 4-core skills and better understanding of job interviews and resume' writing indicate the score of 4.00 (high satisfaction) with the highest aspect towards resume' writing enhancement at 4.33 (high satisfaction). For the low aspect consistings of , unable to comprehensively read and analyze job classified ads, and unable to fully grasp and understand the whole job interview conversational contexts score at 3.33. To make the process more credible, conversational test (mock-up interviews) was also applied with the moderate score of 68%. In conclusion, the end result of the questionnaires shows a high satisfactory level at 4.05.

### Introduction

English is the most commonly used language in daily life and also in the business world. It is the preferred business language because it is a major global language,

and is globally spoken. However, one needs to use it correctly and appropriately, given its importance. Proper English does not mean only the ability to make grammatically correct sentences, but being able to

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perform other means of communication efficiently, for examples: giving a presentation, conducting negotiation and sales conversation, dealing with foreigners and customers just to name a few (Pandey, 2014).

To begin with, teaching pronunciation was an integral part of the study by ways of pronouncing the words by shortening syllable as is common and widely accepted in spoken English (a stress mistake can throw a conversation off track and can be misunderstood). Chen (1996) stated in his study that "English words can be composed of one or more syllables. In all words of two or more syllables, one syllable (stressed syllable) is stronger than the others (unstressed syllables) in the same word. A stressed syllable is louder, longer, clearer, and higher pitched than unstressed syllables. Thus, the combination of stressed and unstressed syllables helps to create the word rhythm in English, which displays an alternate change in strength, length, and pitch of syllables." as referred to Thai words for examples: the words... History isn't pronounce His-Tuh-Ree instead it is pronounced as His-Tree; Victory isn't pronounced Vic-Thor-Ree, but as Vic-Tree, etc. Moreover, intonation plays a key role when speaking, for example: when using affirmative sentences the tone would be flat whilst questioning the tone would go up and both aspects were used as a part of assessment elements when testing pronunciation. Due to the students' susceptible to below average levels of English proficiency, it was essential and beneficial that the research together with relevant practices and tests related to conversational dialogues for job interviews were performed, and most importantly, the obtained outcome can be used as a source to enhance students' English capacity, for improvement of curriculum building, a supporting tool for teaching, and perhaps, guidance for self-improvement, henceforth.

A related study regarding speaking skill by Bashir, Azeem & Dogar (2011) stated that learners can improve their speaking skill by ways of listening and repeating, provide and test learners' sentences structures and ask them to repeat as this can remove their shyness whilst short dialogues and short questions used in the classroom support their speaking skill. In addition, Krashen (1998) investigated listening and speaking skills and concluded that when students speak, this aspect provides evidence of whether he or she has acquired the language to some extent. In this study, the aforementioned methods were incorporated while performing conversational dialogue test and query-based/pictures-based test reflecting moderate improvement of pronunciation and sentences

structures. To further underpin the speaking methods used in this research, Baker & Westrup (2003) stated in their findings that speaking can help learners develop their grammar and vocabulary skills as well as their writing skill due to the facts that once they are able to listen and respond, whilst be able to recognize the spelling of words, and thus helps supporting their communicative ability.

Due to the fact that the majority of the 27 second year students of Suan Dusit University's English proficiency levels ranged at a low intermediate with the average total scoring outcomes at moderate side of 60 plus points out of 100, hence it is important for the students to receive more English coaching and trainings for work purposes in order to compete for job interviews and work place readiness. That said, teaching activities had been customized to suit their needs and their levels (methods and techniques used are explained in the latter part). The research was carried out with an aim to improve the students' four core skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) with emphasis on the teacher being a coach/facilitator and to focus on the query approach (verbal/two-way communications and written) as well as conversational/dialogue test (task-based) as the main drivers. Recognizing the students' common weaknesses e.g. unable to put words in correct/proper position in sentences, plus extensive teaching conversational and situational English combined with tools used (query/questioning-based approach), jumbled words test, and group speaking activities applied (picture-based/sentences forming), it was anticipated that the students' communicative ability (listening and speaking) would have improved through the said applications and executions as apparent in the outcome.

## Objectives

1. To develop and to improve the students' English communication capabilities (listening, responding/speaking, writing resume' and reading) in order to prepare for job interviews.
2. To enhance the students' understanding and knowledge with regards to proper use of sentences structure, workplace-related/vocabulary in daily life, and ultimately to be able to apply the said aspects in variety of situations.
3. To find out weaknesses first then use tests, inquiry and tasks-based methods/activities as solutions to resolve the weaknesses as well as to support the entire experimental processes.

## Conceptual Framework

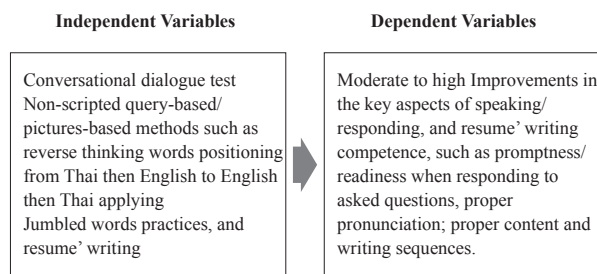


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

## Research Methodology

### 1. Population and Samples

They were 27 second-year students in the second semester of academic year of 2016's Culinary Technology & Services program to develop core English communicative skills.

### 2. Research Instruments

Regarding the steps of experimental process, below are Active Learning activities, techniques and tools used to obtain the results:

2.1 Conducted pre-test of 20 questions regarding aptitude test related to job interviews.

2.2 An exercise-based activity to improve vocabulary/sentences structure/writing skills: Finding incorrectness/errors in paragraphs relevant to parts of speech, collocation and grammar and correct mistakes. In this activity, teacher provided several articles/stories (below-intermediate to intermediate English levels) of current events, movies, real life situations etc. Using this, the made mistakes were shared and learned from one another (knowledge sharing).

2.3 Using picture-based (workplace-related) for listening and responding (speaking) improvements Model: students in groups of three looked at the picture and teacher asked situational questions using...Why, What, How, Who, Which, When, and Where. In this process, each group had about 1 minute in trying to produce answer (s) and respond. Using this activity, it was noticed that the students' thought process had been stimulated, and thus drove them to try to come up with an answer which in turn supported their confidence. To support the matter, a related study by Boonkit (2010) cited that "building confidence for English language learners is imperative as confidence and competence usually lead to strengths of English speaking skills." As well, Patil (2008) asserted that "building up the learner's

confidence to eliminate fear of making errors were a priority that the teacher should consider in order to make the learners feel comfortable with their language use.



Figure 2 An unorganized and chaotic office

Source: Scrivener's Learning Teaching., A Guide Book for English Language Teachers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Macmillan Education (2009).

2.4 Using jumbled words sentences to test parts of speech/sentences structure: Example: Rearrange the given sentence: difficult me situation how you Tell handle a...Answer: Tell me how you handle (v.) a difficult (adj.) task (n.). Purposes: Testing and cross-checking the students' understanding of words positioning and vocabulary skills.

2.5 Conversational dialogue test (query/question-based/mock-up interviews).

2.6 Organized post-test which comprised of resume' writing, oral/Q/A tests given at the end of the semester to test the students' abilities with regards to speaking and responding to questions related to job interviews with an aim to test and to improve their understanding of parts of speech and correct usage of vocabulary.

2.7 Questionnaires to measure their satisfaction (5-level Likert scale) which ranges from 1 as least satisfaction to 5 as most satisfaction and was analyzed by using descriptive statistics.

### 3. Collection of Data

3.1 Pre-test (20 points of multiple choices) and post-test (resume' writing and oral Q/A): designed to test the students' knowledge and attitude/aptitude towards writing proper contents, coherence and sequences, correct sentences structure, and proper used of vocabulary in sentences. For pre-test, the average of the correct answers was 9 out of 20 questions (45%) which was below average due to their unfamiliarity of job preparation

dialogues and insufficient understanding of job interview questions used. For post-test the average was 64% of which the high criterion percentage was writing sequences at 77%, followed by proper content at 71%, and the lowest indicated correct sentences structure/parts of speech at 53%, and vocabulary usage at 54% reflecting additional writing practices, continuous learning and practicing of sentences structure were deemed necessary moving forward. (See Table 1)

**Table 1** Post-Test (Individuals resume writing)

Item	Assessments Criteria	Average Score (%)
1	Writing Sequences	77
2	Correct Sentences Structure/Parts of Speech	53
3	Proper Content	71
4	Vocabulary Usage	54
	<b>Average</b>	<b>64</b>

### 3.2 Conversational dialogue test (mock-up interviews)

The samples of interview questions were randomly selected to test all 9 groups of students (3 students per group); each group was given 10 questions (percentage-based), and was allowed to answer within 1 minute and 20 seconds timeframe. Vice versa, each group was asked to provide questions whilst answers were given by teacher. In doing so, analyzing and thinking processes were triggered and responded. According to a research, the term “query” means “questioning something to get answers to what someone has learned.” By applying Query-based method, the average score was 68% average (moderate) with the high side was promptness when responding to questions at 82 %, proper pronunciation at 65%, and on the low side was parts of speech/sentences structure at 58% reflecting meager knowledge of English fundamentals resulting in a moderate outcome. (See Table 2)

#### 4. Data Analysis

According to the above results, analytical assessment on the conducted activities and methods used pertaining to English preparation for job interview can be concluded that: 1) high satisfaction in being able to use knowledge gained for practical use 4.33; Increase of confidence when speaking 4.33 ; able to write proper resume and cover letter 4.33, and the benefits of conducted activities can be used as guidance for job interviews at 4.20. The findings reflect that progress had

**Table 2** Conversational Dialogue Test (query/question-based): each group was given 10 questions and was assessed based on 3 criterions, then converted to percentage.

Groups-based	Proper Pronunciation (100 %)	Parts of Speech Sentences Structure (100 %)	Promptness/Readiness when Responding to Asked Questions in Timely Manners Q/A (100 %)
1	62	55	82
2	65	57	84
3	58	61	74
4	72	65	88
5	54	52	69
6	66	61	83
7	69	60	86
8	73	64	89
9	63	57	79
<b>Total score (900)</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>734</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>S.D.</b>	<b>6.24</b>	<b>4.92</b>	<b>6.58</b>

been made from incorporated methods e.g. conversational dialogues practices and oral tests with time limitation in particular as learners were motivated by group engagement and rationally responded to the asked questions. (See Table 3)

**Table 3** Surveyed Questionnaire Results: May 2nd, 2017.

No.	Applied criteria/usefulness	$\bar{X}$	%
1	Students were able to understand and grasped key points	4.00	80.00
2.	Able to use knowledge gained for practical uses	4.33	86.70
3.	The benefits of conducted activities /practices can be used as guidance for job interviews	4.20	84.00
4.	Increase of confidence when speaking	4.33	86.70
5.	Able to write proper resume and cover letter	4.33	86.70
6.	Students had opportunities to share knowledge and exchange information among others regarding preparations for a job interview	3.83	76.70
7.	Able to analyze job classified ads	3.83	76.70
8.	Able to understand and respond to job interview questions	3.83	76.70
9.	Able to perform pre-interview: Self-introduction	3.83	76.70
10.	Knowledge gained was substantially adequate	4.00	80.00
	<b>Average</b>	<b>4.05</b>	<b>81.09</b>

## Results

Based on the continuous observations, findings analysis and test results, it was concluded that: the most reliable solution to improve the students' speaking/listening



skills was conversational dialogue test (non-scripted: query/question-based, using jumbled words positioning test, producing questions which had relevancy to the given answers, and practices forming dialogues through pictures-based (putting words in correct position by ways of thinking in English instead of Thai) due to the fact that they were motivated, cooperated, and were enthusiastic to respond and were involved as shown on "Promptness When Responding to Questions" index with the score of 82% corresponded to Leong & Ahmadi (2017), which stressed the importance of creating motivation by ways of developing friendly and cooperative environment as this would enable learners to overcome their struggles, reduce fear and anxiety when performing oral dialogues. Furthermore, a supported study by Sinwongsuwat (2012) asserted that non-scripted question-based activities could provide EFL learners with better opportunities to deal and engage with conversational matters, and at the same time instigating and initiating verbal interactions. Moreover, using the aforementioned techniques allowed teacher to recognize the students' weak points when listening and answering non-scripted questions such as improper uses of parts of speech, vocabulary, pronunciation, as well as grammatical errors. Hence, using this as a key guidance, teachers could further design and implement suitable materials/plans to support testing trials going forward. Further benefits could also be stated that the used methods were hands-on and put emphasis on using English in real-life situations as the main objective. Practically speaking, the students were able to be exposed and dealt with the actual circumstances and realities, which in turn forced them to respond and learn through trials and errors. The outcome as a whole, students' sentences forming ability was improved due to positive reinforcement and motivation using the applied tests and activities stated

## Discussion

Boonkit (2010), her study cited that in the Thai context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), instructors regularly asked the question why the majority of undergraduate students were unable to speak English confidently, especially for communication in real situations with foreigners and native speakers. One among many reasons to take into consideration might be a lack of confidence because of fear and anxiety about making errors as stated by Trent (2009). Based on the author's teaching experiences of nearly ten years it has

been discovered that numerous primary and secondary school teachers seemed to have lack of proper pronunciation skills as well as sound knowledge of parts of speech, phrasal verbs, idiomatic expressions as all these are essential if one wishes to use English proficiently. As well, lack of knowledge in vocabulary/not having adequate vocabulary bank was another common weakness as approximately minimum of two thousand English words are needed to literally communicate. Another common weakness that was found in the study was learners were not able to use words order/collocation correctly, for examples: hard frost not strong frost, thinking hard not thinking strong due to the fact that Thais tend to misunderstand the meanings and words positioning between Thai words and English words, and perceive them as the same meaning, as a result using them incorrectly, in particulars when using adjectives such as house big in Thai, but big house in English; a man kind in Thai, but a kind man in English or even in the case of the word Thum-Ruat-Barn=police house (incorrectly and straightforwardly translated word by word as police home using Google Translate) instead of using volunteer police. On pronunciation, it was further discovered that good numbers of students had difficulty in pronouncing words which ended with th, sh, l, r, v, st, z, sk, t, te, d, ed, s, k, se, ce, ne e.g. rice/lice/light/like; fry/fly; tree/three; six/sick; press/place; wish/witch; rock/lock; file/fire; none/nun; crave/cave; full/fool; daily/dairy; confidence vs. confident; response vs. respond etc. In learning how to pronounce and hear the said words repeatedly, their meanings and implications to the sentence were also taught and clarified. Furthermore, the students were asked to share their ideas of their past learning experiences during high school years to classmates (during this process weak points and drawbacks that had hindered their progress were recorded) then each small group practiced saying difficult words, yet common while teacher observed and provided suggestions and corrections. Additionally, pronunciation of verbs that (past and participles) ended with ED such as posted, educated, stopped, loved, ended, figured, calculated, washed, cleaned were explained, tested/challenged, and was later assessed during oral presentation/Qs & As test. In supporting the process, according to (Jenkins, 2002) one important aspects in improving pronunciation to make correct consonant sounds, for examples: when you pronounce the name "McDonald's" put the stresses (loud sounds) on Mc Donald's, and equally important is be able to pronounce

long and short vowel sounds, like “leave” and “live” as the words have completely different meanings.

Speaking further on weaknesses, based on observations related to the practice exercises given; it was found that students were not familiar with using nouns for verbs for example: Where are you heading to? In this situation, it means “Going to”, in this step teacher tested students by having students guess the forward movement/gestures of teacher’s hands and head and tried to guess the implications of the verb. Using this, it initiated learners’ thinking ability and reinforcing their will to speak. In a way, (Winterbottom, 2015) this method implies to discovery learning where the teacher gives examples and allows learners to ask, subsequently learners are asked to provide similar situational/functional words, and ultimately form sentences. Though in order for this to work, teachers are required to have in-depth knowledge and full understanding of vocabulary meanings, its functionalities as well as know wide range of words.

While reading and listening are considered to be the two receptive skills in language learning and using; writing and speaking are the other two productive skills necessary to be incorporated in the development of effective communication. Of all the four macro English skills, speaking and listening are the most important skills needed for verbal communication (Boonkit, 2010), she cited Zaremba (2006) that “speaking and communication skills were usually placed ahead of work experience and ahead of academic credentials for new recruits”. That said...providing opportunities for students to engage in situational dialogues and frequent speaking tasks play a significant roles in the improvement of students’ ability and confidence (Tam, 1997). Correspondingly, EFL learners must have considerable understanding of words and sentences; that is, they must understand how words are segmented into various sounds, and how sentences are stressed in particular ways.

With a goal to enhance their communication skills, it was found that repetition of verbal practices using activities such as describing a variety of pictures which had implications to forming then saying correct sentences and using proper adjectives/adverbs with correct position appeared to have been workable and productive as students were able to perform sentences after seeing picture (a sentence formed prior to verbal testing activity...An office unorganized and chaos with a boss lazy; after activity was conducted...A chaotic and unorganized office with a lazy boss). Given their overall

low English fundamentals, it is necessary that teachers put forth in convincing learners and changing their mindset not to think in Thai sentences structure but instead in English structure, particularly when positioning an adjective in front of a noun as in the case of Thai language where nouns are positioned before adjectives, whilst pronunciation can also be assessed at the same time.

The study and the test outcomes enabled us to discover the followings: (1) concerning productive skills (writing and speaking): inadequate vocabulary knowledge and lack of knowledge of parts of speech/sentences structure were the major weaknesses which led to incapability of forming and producing sentences, and (2) On receptive skill (listening), incorrect pronunciation and inadequate vocabulary knowledge and lack of knowledge of parts of speech/sentences structure were apparent. However, the obtained results reflected that conducted activities and applied techniques which had been used throughout the study had been proven reliable and served the students’ needs e.g. non-scripted: question-based, words/vocabulary recognition through correct pronunciation, clear and thorough explanation on the usage of Thai words and meanings versus English meanings resulted in improvements in production and formation of correct sentences.

On other important aspects, it was noticed that learners needed to improve their analytical thinking skills, especially when exposed to unfamiliar and unrelated-to-the study’s questions. Though, these concerns can be assisted and improved by allowing learners to have more opportunities to practice speaking/engaging in conversations at very minimum of one hour per day. Importantly, teaching materials and classroom activities should be focused on open-ended formats/question-based as well as thinking-based and put emphasis on two-way communications as high priorities as opposed to doing grammar exercises and memorization, all with the ultimate outcome towards enabling learners to express and explain different daily/worldly situations in English in their own words/opinions whether it be paraphrasing and/or debating.

In addition to this, continuously practices on listening and trying to get used to tones, sounds, stress, and different accents of native speakers are strongly recommended. As well, promoting hands-on and minds-on activities/exercises that enable learners to test ones’ cognitive skills is tremendously beneficial for skills improvement.

## Suggestions

1. Further classroom researches are needed to be conducted in order to improve the students' listening, speaking abilities in particulars by ways of using WH-questions (open-ended) and responses which can be done in accordance with Active Learning approach complemented with activities and skill tests that enforce and enable learners to think, analyze, and produce whether it be responding to asked questions and being able to communicate and perform dialogues in functional and practical situations in a timely manner.

2. Self-development is absolutely necessary with regards to knowing, and understanding of vocabularies for situational/functional uses as well as speaking with correct pronunciation as these were major weakness of majority of the studied students. Moving forward, ones should follow the techniques, fundamentally laid guidance/instructions that have been applied and tested during the study, and put to good use on a regular basis due to continuity in practicing the language is imperative, and must find time to practice speaking and engage themselves in real situation.

3. Active Learning concepts are needed to be taught and facilitated in keeping learners motivated. Additionally, teaching methods and electronic tools/applications/Social Media need to be customized to serve their needs and be able to improve their weak points... with emphasis on listening and speaking aspects.

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