Improving Basic English For Communication Of Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University Students In Preparation For Asean By Using The Teaching-Learning Cycle Model

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to design a basic English curriculum for communication of students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University based on the 70/70 standardized criteria efficiency, to compare the English competency of the students, and to survey the satisfaction of the trainees with the English training curriculum.The research methodology consisted of 3 steps: 1) curriculum design and development, 2) curriculum implementation and 3) evaluation. The population was 225 students from 5 programs: Thai, Hotel and Tourism, General Management, Biology, and Public Administration who took the English test and participated in the foreign language training project offered in 2013 by the Office of International Relations and International Education, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University. The sample was twenty nine students from the Biology Program, Faculty of Science and Technology, and they were selected by the purposive random sampling method. The research instruments were a aasic English curriculum for communication consisting of 10 lessons, an English test, 10 lesson plans, an evaluation form for IOC, and a form evaluating the appropriateness of the curriculum, as well as a questionnaire. The research statistics used were percentage, mean, standard deviation, and the t-test (Dependent Samples). The research findings showed that the index of the standardized criteria efficiency was 72.83/70.34%. The findings also indicated that the average score of the post-test of the students was significantly higher than that of the pre-test at the .05 level. Additionally, the average level of the trainees' satisfaction of with the training curriculum was high (X = 4.12). In conclusion, the findings indicate that the training curriculum is practical for human resource development in English language competency.

Keywords : Basic English for Communication, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University Personnel, ASEAN Community, Teaching-Learning Cycle Model

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Introduction

English is currently one of the most taught foreign languages in Thai educational institutes under the Ministry of Education such as primary education, secondary education and higher education (Ministry of Education, 1996). The annual English testing report of International Relations and International Education Office (IRIE) shows that the English proficiency of the first year students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University (RMU) is low, as ninety-two percent of the students are at a basic level (Office of International Relations and International Education, 2013).

Table 1 Report on English competency test of the first year students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University in 1/2013

Faculty	Total Number	Number of Examinees	English Proficiency level		
			Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Information Technology	279	104	104		
Agricultural Technology	274	164	164		
Law and Government	828	281	280	1	
Education	653	393	301	77	15
Science and Technology	1099	276	275	1	
Humanities and Social Sciences	853	415	395	15	5
Management Science	779	253	252	1	
	4765	1886	1771	95	20

The Office of International Relations and International Education, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University has the important responsibility of foreign language competency development for the students and university personnel in order to help them integrate with the for the ASEAN community members in 2015. Therefore, the office of IRIE initiated "the University Personnel Development Project for ASEAN" through foreign language training courses. In addition, IRIE provides a self-access learning center including an online learning program for both students and university personnel. The purpose of this research is to develop specific skills and knowledge of human resource, which support the policies of the 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan focusing on human resource development leading to the sustainable development of Thailand (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2006). Delahaye (2005) claims that human resource development is a continuous process of knowledge and professional skill development for organizational personnel. Ratakul (2011) asserts that training is a developmental process of knowledge, skill and attitude of organizational personnel for the efficient work performance

It is inevitable that the development of foreign language competency of university students is necessary for their future careers. Nunan (1992) states that teachers can achieve the goals of their language classes if they consider the personal information of learners, such as educational background, beliefs, cognitive styles, learning strategies, motivation, and attitude. These factors are necessary for language teachers to prepare good learning tasks based on learners' needs. The factors greatly affect their foreign language skill development for their daily use and future careers.

The Teaching –Learning Cycle is an instructional model which focuses on learning process and aims to provide support for learners as they move from spoken to written texts through four stages of the Teaching-Learning Cycle (Burn ,A.:1995 adapted from Callaghan and Rothery:1988) The four stages consist of 1) building the context or field of the topic, 2) modeling the genre under focus, 3) joint construction of genre, and 4) independent construction of the genre. The instructional model is based on the assumption that in order to learn to write effectively, students need to have an extensive understanding of and familiarity with the topic they are writing about.

The Office of International Relations and International Education realizes the necessity for foreign language competency development of students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University focusing special attention on basic English for communication. The research methodology consists of 3 steps: 1) curriculum design and development, 2) curriculum implementation, 3) evaluation.

1. Objectives:

- To design basic English for communication for students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University by using the Teaching-Learning Cycle model based on the 70/70 standardized criteria efficiency,

- To compare the English language competency of the students before and after implementing the English language curriculum

- To survey the students' satisfaction of with the English language curriculum

2. Hypotheses:

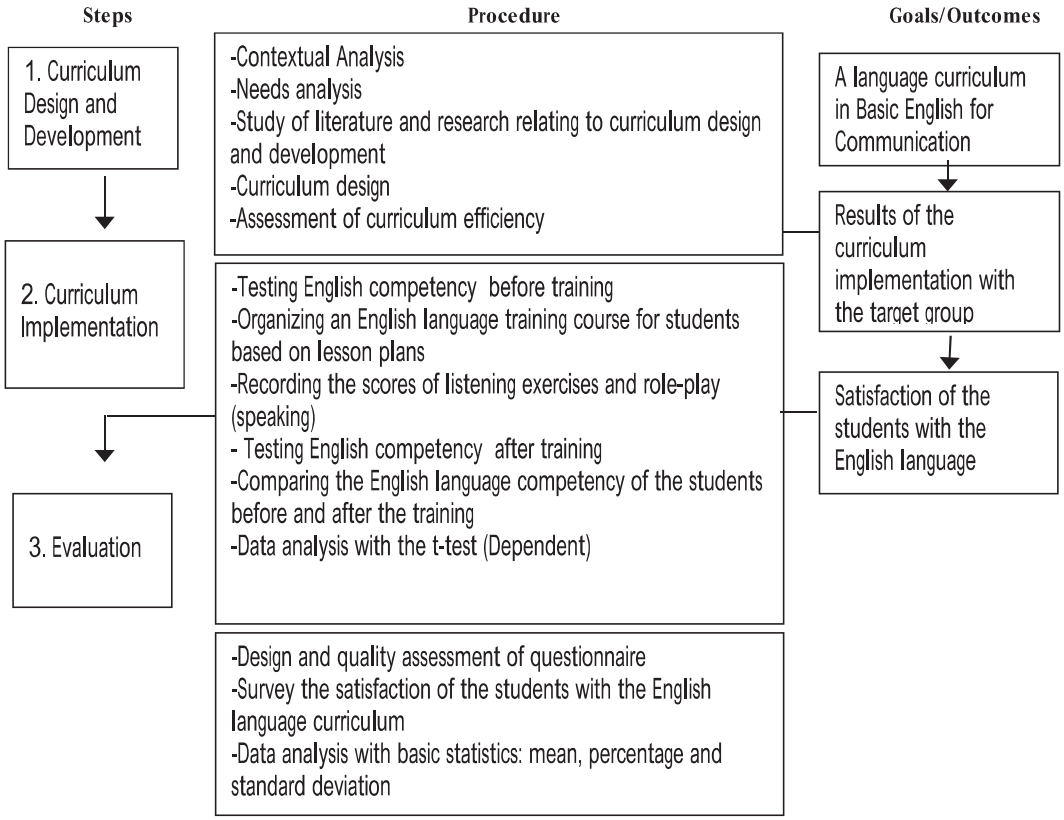
-The English language competency of the students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University after the training will be better than before the training.

-The students' satisfaction with the English language training curriculum will be high.

3. Scope:

This experimental research is a quantitative research by nature of the comparison of English language competency, and a qualitative research by nature of an English language curriculum development for the first year students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University during 2/2013.

Chart 1 Research Framework



Materials And Methods

1. Research Methodology

A one-group-pretest-posttest design was employed for the experimental research based on the concept, theories, and research of human resource development, adult learning theories, the Teaching-Learning Cycle model, basic English for communication including curriculum design and development for a research framework. The methodology consisted of three steps: curriculum design and development, curriculum implementation, and evaluation.

2. Population and Sample

The population was two hundred and twenty five first year students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University who took the English competency test organized by the Office of International Relations and International Education, and attended Basic English for Communication classes in 2/2013. They were from the Thai program, General Management program, Biology program, and Public Administration program. The sample was twenty nine first year students of the Biology program,

Faculty of Sciences and Technology, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University who took the English competency test and attended a basic English for communication class in 2/2013 that was selected by the purposive random sampling technique.

3. Research Instruments:

3.1 Basic English for communication, an English language curriculum was used to train the first year students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University. The curriculum was designed based on needs analysis, analysis of the course description, literature and research relating to the curriculum design, and the IOC index. The appropriateness and efficiency of the curriculum was then assessed by the experts.

3.2 Ten lesson plans for the experimental group were constructed on the basis of standards, and the objectives of the basic English for communication course offered by the Office of International Relations and International Education. The appropriateness and accuracy of the lesson plans were assessed by experts. The developed lesson plans consisted of: learning objectives, contents, activities, teaching materials, and evaluation.

3.3 The English competency test consisted of three parts: 1) Vocabulary, 2) Language used in daily life, and 3) Reading comprehension. The test was then assessed for content validity, and ambiguity and accuracy of the language by experts.

3.4 Two sets of the questionnaire

3.4.1 The 18-item questionnaire was used to survey the needs of students for English language development. The questionnaire was assessed for content validity, accuracy, and appropriateness of the language by the experts.

3.4.2 The 16-item- questionnaire was used to survey the satisfaction of the students with the English language training curriculum. The questionnaire was assessed for content validity, accuracy and appropriateness of the language by the experts.

4. Data Collection

4.1 The data from the needs analysis for foreign language development were collected from 698 first year students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University who took an English competency test and applied for foreign language training courses organized by the Office of International Relations and International Education in 2/2013. Then the data were calculated, tabulated, and analyzed by means of statistical procedures.

4.2 The data of foreign language competency were collected from twenty nine first year students of the Biology Program at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University. The curriculum implementation consisted of : orientation, testing English competency before training, organizing the training for the students, assessing listening skills from listening exercises and speaking skills from role play situations of each lesson, and testing English proficiency after the training. The data consisted of the results of an English proficiency test focusing on vocabulary, language used in daily life and reading

comprehension. Then the data were calculated, tabulated and analyzed by means of statistical procedures.

4.3 The data were composed of the results from the questionnaires on the students' satisfaction with the English language curriculum. The data were collected by completing the questionnaires, and this data were calculated, tabulated and analyzed by means of statistical procedures.

5. Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of the results of the questionnaires on the needs for foreign language training courses, the English competency test, and the students' satisfaction with the curriculum. The arithmetic mean was used to provide the average scores of the pre-test and post-test, including the average level of the needs for the training courses of the first year students and the students' satisfaction. The standard deviation was used to show the variation of the scores and the satisfaction. The t-test (Dependent) was used to determine whether there was any significant difference between the pre-test scores and post-test scores for English competency. Cronbach's Alpha was determined by SPSS program to ascertain the reliability of the English proficiency test and the questionnaire.

Results

The results of this research were summarized as follows:

1. Curriculum Design and Development

The curriculum design was based on the needs analysis of the first year students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University.

Table 2 Results of the needs for English language development of the first year students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University in 2/2013

No	Training Courses	Number of Applicants	Percent
1	Basic English for Communication	506	76.70
2	Intermediate English for Communication	74	11.20
3	English for Tour Guides	45	6.80
4	Academic English for Communication	35	5.30
	Total	660	100

The research results showed that four English language training courses were needed by the first year students consisting of Basic English for Communication (76.70%), Intermediate English for Communication (11.20%), English for Tour Guides (6.80%) and Academic English for Communication (5.30%). The curriculum was composed of: rationale, goals, learning objectives, contents, training methodology, teaching materials, evaluation, number of trainees, quality of trainees, time, place and expected outcomes. In regard to the quality

assessment of the curriculum, the findings indicated that the average level of the curriculum quality was high (X = 4.78), the IOC index of the curriculum was 1.00-0.80, and the value of the standardized criteria efficiency was 72.83%/70.34%.

2. Curriculum Implementation

Table 3 Comparison between the scores of the pre-test and post-test for the English competency of the experimental group

No	Score		No	Score	
	Pre-test (100)	Post-test (100)		Pre-test (100)	Post-test (100)
1	46	60	16	41	71
2	45	86	17	41	81
3	41	66	18	35	82
4	53	75	19	38	66
5	35	78	20	30	65
6	38	68	21	43	73
7	38	68	22	35	62
8	43	75	23	45	77
9	41	63	24	45	70
10	46	73	25	46	69
11	35	76	26	28	65
12	53	71	27	36	75
13	38	68	28	50	66
14	40	66	29	35	62
15	45	73	Total	1185	2040

The research results revealed that the average score on the English competency test of the students after the training was significantly higher than that of the score before the training.

3. Evaluation

Table 4 Results of the students' satisfaction with the English language training curriculum (Basic English for Communication)

No	Item	X	S.D
1	Personality of the trainer	4.37	.72
2	Expertise of the trainer	4.31	.71
3	Practical application of the English training course	4.31	.76
4	Friendliness and kindness of IRIE officers	4.24	.68
5	Convenience of parking area and toilet	4.24	.68

The results indicated that the average level of the trainees' satisfaction with the English training curriculum was high (X = 4.12). The five highest-rated areas of the training curriculum were: 1) personality of the trainer, 2) expertise of the trainer , 3) practical application of the English training course, 4) friendliness and kindness of the IRIE officers, and convenience of parking area and toilet (X = 4.37, 4.31, 4.31, 4.24 and 4.24 respectively).

Discussion and Conclusions

1. Discussion

This paper discusses only the curriculum design and development, and the results of the curriculum implementation and evaluation.

1.1 Curriculum Design and Development

1.1.1 The results indicated that the average level of the English competency level of the first year students was low (basic level 1), and the findings showed that four English training courses consisting of Basic English for Communication, Intermediate English for Communication, English for Tour Guides and Academic English for Communication were needed by the first year students for English language competency development. The contextual study and needs analysis of the target group is necessary for a curriculum design and development. Nunan (1988) has asserted that the needs analysis is an important starting point for an efficient curriculum design because a curriculum designer or developer can get useful personal information of the learners or trainees such as educational background, age, gender, marital status, goals, learning styles and strategies.

1.1.2 The curriculum design was adopted from the principles of curriculum design and development of Taba (1981) consisting of: 1) needs analysis, 2) foreign language curriculum design, 3) planning curriculum, 4) curriculum administration, 5) evaluation. The principles of learner-centered instruction and communicative approach adopted from Nunan (1988 and 1998) and the principles of the Teaching-Learning Cycle adopted from Burn (1991) have been employed to design English language learning activities. Nunan (1991) claims that the trends of English instruction emphasize the learner-centered approach and that the activities should provide learners with an opportunity to practice language or interact with language as much as possible.

1.1.3 The results indicated that the value of the standardized criteria efficiency was higher than the standardized criteria. The efficiency may be caused by the systematic steps of the curriculum design and development consisting of: 1) needs analysis, 2) course analysis, 3) assessment of the accuracy and appropriateness including IOC index. Nunan (1991) states that the success of teaching English should be based on the learners' personal information such as background knowledge, beliefs, learning styles and strategies, motivation, and attitude. Additionally, the 60-hour-training curriculum is sufficient for trainees to practice listening and speaking skills both in the class and out of the class. Manoonpol (2001) cited in Baldwin and Williams (1988) has asserted that a practice-based

learning model is an efficient methodology .

1.2 Curriculum Implementation

The results revealed that the average score of the post-test on English language competency was significantly higher than that of the pre-test score. The results may be caused by the efficient instructional model. The Teaching-Learning Cycle focuses on a learning process through 4 stages. Moreover, the language and contents are used in their daily life and trainees are also provided an opportunity to practice language in meaningful situations.Sopa (2004) asserts that the Teaching-Learning Cycle is an efficient instructional model affecting the English linguistic ability of university students. Galloway (1993) claims that content and learning activities for communication should be related to daily life use and provide students with communicative purposes. Nunan (1991) claims that efficient communicative activities should provide learners an opportunity to interact with language as much as possible.

1.3 Evaluation

The average level of the trainees' satisfaction with the English language training course was high. The results may be caused by the meaningful learning activities and realistic and practical content. The activities have been designed based on the principles of learner-centered instruction, the communicative approach, and the Teaching-Learning Cycle model, and were arranged sequentially and systematically. Nunan (1991) claims that the content and activities based on the needs of learners affect the success of learning and teaching foreign languages.Galloway (1993) asserts that the practical content and language should be realistic and used in the daily life of learners.

2. Conclusions and Suggestions

2.1 Curriculum Design and Development

The research results showed that Basic English for Communication was mostly needed by the first year students for English language development. The curriculum included rationale, goals, learning objectives, contents, training methodology, teaching materials, evaluation, number of trainees, quality of trainees, time, place and expected outcomes. In regard to the quality assessment of the curriculum, the findings indicate that the average level of the curriculum quality was high, the IOC index of the curriculum was 1.00-0.80, and the value of the curriculum efficiency was in the standardized criteria.

2.2 Curriculum Implementation

The results showed that the average score of the post-test of English language competency of the trainees was significantly higher than that of the pre-test score.

2.3 Evaluation

The findings indicated that the average level of the trainees' satisfaction with the training course was high. The five highest-rated areas were personality of the trainer, expertise of the trainer, practical application of the training course, friendliness and kindness of the IRIE officers and convenience of the parking area and toilet.

In conclusion, the English language training curriculum is effective and practical for

developing English language competency. It is also obvious that the trainees are greatly satisfied with the curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum should be used for the English language development of the students and university personnel at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University including people in the community. The model of this research will be a useful guideline for other foreign language development as well as other professional development. Regarding further studies, an interactive learning model, web-based instruction, and distance learning strategies should be studied.

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