A Study of the Student Preparation Process Prior to Enrolling in Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) English Course in Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province, Thailand

การศึกษากระบวนการเตรียมความพร้อมของนักเรียนก่อนเข้าเรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 4 ในโรงเรียนปุ่มราชวงศ์ อ้าวเจริญจังหวัด

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to 1) to study the issues and factors in terms of English learning from the past to present, 2) to study and find a student preparation process prior to enrolling in Grade 10 English courses in Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province, and 3) to establish the participation of teachers, students and parents in solving problems concerning students’ English learning. The population of this study was 244 Mattayom 4(Grade 10) students, studying at Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province. The instrument of this research study consisted of English test. The questionnaire, observation, depth interview and group discussions were designed by the teachers, parents and the students for collecting the information. The research findings were as follow: 1) The student preparation process prior to enrolling in Mattayom 4(Grade 10) English courses resulted in students acquiring a close or the same knowledge in English. 2) Students had positive attitudes towards appropriate English teaching approaches. 3) The teachers, students and parents participated in solving problems concerning students’ English learning.

Keywords: Student Preparation Process, English Course

Introduction

Today every nation around the world has been thriving for betterment. Thailand is one of the developing countries, which has been growing rapidly during which advanced technologies are accessible globally. As a result of this, there is a need for adaptation to the accelerating and continuing change. The information that comes to Thailand is mainly presented in foreign languages especially in English. Therefore, high demands in English proficiency skills for business communication, higher education, occupations, creating cultural
understanding and global visions, and realizing a variety of the world’s cultures and viewpoints, which lead to international relations and collaborations (Ministry of Education 2008:190).

English education in Thailand has been developed and improved following the needs of the society and continual development of science for education. The Ministry of Education realizes the necessity and importance of developing the capacity of Thai people in communicating with other countries. Therefore, the Basic Education Curriculum was promulgated in 2001 is a strategy to improve the quality of education to be able to satisfy the needs of the people and society (Ministry of Education 2001: 1).

Foreign language education, especially English that is assigned to students throughout the Basic Education Curriculum, is not taught for knowledge alone but also for integrated experiences allowing students to be self-confident in using the language to process their thoughts in English, to increase and reinforce students to use English both in and out of class, and to involve students in English communication through diverse teaching and learning activities (Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development 2002:1). Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 aims to create a positive attitude in students towards foreign languages, also to be able to use foreign languages in various settings such as workplaces and higher-leveled education, to understand the histories and cultures of the world’s people, and to enable their thinking process to express creative ideas and culture of Thai to the world (Ministry of Education 2008:190).

Patumrachwongsa School, a big-sized school under the jurisdiction of Amnat Charoen Office of Educational Service, is one of many schools that see the importance and need of English education which results in the inclusion of English for communication education in the Basic Education Curriculum 2001 as a foundation for Grade 7 through 12 consisting of 42 classrooms and 1724 students and as a fundamental course and an additional curriculum. However, even though the school has taken note of the importance and needs for the subject to be included in the basic curriculum mentioned, but in a practical sense because Patumrachwongsa School has its service covering Patumratchawongsa District which includes 7 sub districts: Nawa sub District, Kampon sub District, NongKha sub district, Huay sub district, Lue sub district, Na Pasang sub district, Non Ngam sub district, and plus outside of service area students from Gudkaopun District, Kemmarat District, Ubon Ratchani Province, Muang District, Chanuman District, Amnat Charoen Province, who attend this school. Due to the students having received their previous education from different sized schools and various teaching settings, the teachers are faced with classroom difficulties. For examples, students may have different English skill levels, bad attitudes, and bad habits of failing to attend classes, copying
school work, and not completing their assignments. As a result of this, the researchers are of the opinion that these problems are important and there is an essential need for an immediate solution. They are also interested in working together to prepare students before they take the course. This will also increase the students’ basic skills in English to meet the expectations of the standard curriculum as well as satisfying both the students and teachers academically which may result in students having more positive attitudes towards the subject and performing better in school.

**Purposes of the Study**

1. To study the issues and factors in terms of English learning from the past to present.
2. To study a student preparation process prior to enrolling in Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) English courses in Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province.
3. To establish the participation of teachers, students and parents in solving problems concerning students’ English learning.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the issues and factors in terms of English learning from the past to present?
2. How do the teachers prepare the student preparation process prior to enrolling in Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) English courses in Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province?

**Significance of the Study**

This study tries to find a student preparation process prior to enrolling in Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) English courses in Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province. This will also increase the students’ basic skills in English to meet the expectations of the standard curriculum as well as satisfying both the students and teachers academically which may result in students having more positive attitudes towards the subject and performing better in school.

**Literature Review**

There have been some related researches conducted on readiness, attitude, participation of parents and community in different ways.

Eiko Ushida (2005: abstract) studied *The Role of Students’ Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning in Online Language Courses*. Students’ attitudes and motivation were examined within a socioeducational framework while learning contexts were
examined based on Dörneyi’s components of foreign language learning motivation. Students’ learning behaviors and learning outcomes were used as predictor and criterion variables in a series of quantitative and qualitative analyses. The results showed that students tended to have relatively high anxiety about the LOL course at the beginning of the semester, perhaps due to their lack of familiarity with the specific LOL learning environment. The students’ motivation and attitudes toward L2 study were relatively positive and stable during the course.

C. Anders R. Berg (2005) studied the Factors Related to Observed Attitude Change Toward Learning Chemistry among University Students. Six students who displayed major attitude changes were identified through a pre- and post-course attitude questionnaire administered to sixty-six first-year university chemistry students. Those with largest attitude changes, both positive and negative, were selected to highlight the contrast between students. The six students were interviewed; descriptions of their one-semester chemistry course experiences were analyzed to identify factors associated with their change in attitude. A positive attitude change was associated with evidence of motivated behavior, while a negative change was linked to less motivated behavior. Students addressed similar factors in the educational setting, but students with positive attitude changes exhibited fewer negative views of educational factors, while students with negative attitude changes showed an opposite pattern. Since the same factors, students’ perceived level of teacher empathy for their efforts at chemistry learning, affected both groups, this indicates a possibility for changes in educational setting beneficial to all students.

Attapol Khamkhien (2006) studied Thai and Vietnamese University Students’ Language Learning Strategies. The purposes were to investigate language learning strategies used by Thai and Vietnamese university students, to compare the use of the strategies by the two groups of students, and to study the influence of gender, motivation, and experience in studying English on their choice of the language learning strategies. The results of the study are useful particularly to educational planners, methodologists, and classroom teachers; they not only help them understand the strategies used by Thai students in learning English better, but also facilitate the process of improving English education in Thailand.

Pirom Intanoo (2006: abstract) studied The Process of Integrative Learning through Community Context: Case Study of Jute – Mat Weaving. The research findings were follow: 1 the integrative learning through community Context, case study of jute-mat weaving, consisted of five steps: 1 search for knowledge, 2 exchange of experience, 4 summation of body of knowledge, and 5 appreciation of outcome and appreciation ; 2 the learning achievement after the attitude after the learning was higher than that before the learning at
The findings of the research show that these language learners, on the whole, reported medium frequency of use of out-of-class language learning strategies. The results of the data analysis also demonstrate that frequency of students’ overall reported used of individual out-of-class language learning strategies varied significantly in terms of perceptions of English language ability levels. The implications, limitations of the present investigation as well as further research were also discussed.

Worawan Wongsriwiwat (2007) studied Problems in Learning English among non-English-major Students at Valaya Alongsorn Rajabhat University under the Royal Patronage. The findings showed that the major problem in learning English among this group of subjects was English background. Most of them tended to be poor at listening, writing, speaking, vocabulary and grammar. They did not find studying English enjoyable in spite of high motivation and positive attitudes. Apart from that, the main problem found in terms of learning strategies was that they had little contact with foreigners outside the classroom, even though they employed other helpful learning strategies. Nonetheless, they were unlikely to have inhibitory personalities for learning English.

Chadarat Peh (2009) studied A Development of an English Readiness Teaching Kit Using Teaching English as Secondary Language by Comprehension – Based Approach. The findings revealed that: firstly, the English Readiness Teaching Kit has an efficiency value of 92.15/84.28 compared with the standard value at 80/80 level; secondly, every K-2 demonstrated an increased in the listening and speaking skills at their own pace; thirdly, every K-2 student had been more acquainted with the spoken English; fourthly, every K-2 student had shown good improvement from the pre-post tests, with an average score of 0 increased to 16.14 over 20; and fifthly, every k-2 student had enthusiastically enjoyed all the lessons as well as the related activities.

Freek Olaf de Groot (2009) studied Motivation and Attitudes toward Learning English as a Foreign Language: The Case of Rajabhat students in Thailand. Motivation is regarded as the most important factor affecting second language development and achievement. Presently, literature shows that Thai University graduates’ English language proficiency does not meet the requirements of English for professional usage. 200 Rajabhat students over four years in bachelor programs (English and education), were tested with an aptitude and motivation test battery. Results show that students are motivated and exhibit a positive
attitude toward learning English and that the nature of students’ impaired second language (L2) achievement is caused by a poor formal and informal acquisition environment. In addition, this paper found that although students have the desire to learn English, are willing to expend the effort needed to do so, and, have positive attitudes toward learning English, not all three elements are present at the same time, and preventing the full materialization of a student’s motivation. Furthermore, significant differences have been found between the years of enrolment. The motivation scores for years 2 and 4 are significantly higher than for years 1 and 3.

According to the previous study mentioned above, it is assumed that the readiness, attitude, participation of parents and community are the benefit to language competence development. Much research has studied in many different levels in order to find an interesting technique and process for increasing the students’ basic skills in English to meet the expectations of the standard curriculum. They were related to this study and it is necessary to find another way to prepare the student preparation process prior to enrolling in Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) English courses.

Research Methodology

1. Population

The population of this study is 244 Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) students, studying at Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province.

2. Research Instruments

The instrument of this research study consisted of English test, under The Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008). This passed the investigation and it was printed as the student evaluation containing 55 questions with an explanation about the evaluation. Then the evaluation was tested by having 41 of Mattayom 3 (Grade 9) students from Patumrachwongs School take it as to find difficulty and statistical values. The students were given one hour to complete the evaluation, then the results were analyzed, which yielded the value of difficulty or the P-value between 0.32 – 0.82, the value of discrimination or the r-value between 0.27 – 0.82. After that the analysis showed the value of the reliability by using $KR_{20}$ of Kuder and Richardson, which yielded 0.85, and then selected 40 questions on the evaluation that met the standard. Lastly, the evaluation was revised to meet the expectations before being used for data collection. The questionnaire, observation, depth interview and group discussions were designed by the teachers, parents and the students for
collecting the information. All the research instruments were approved by both academic experts and advisors and were tried out before being administered.

3. Data Collection

In this study, the data that was collected includes the meetings both officially and unofficially, depth interviews, observations, student learning evaluations, study visits, research trainings, group discussions, the analysis of the documents involved, and information on the internet. The primary data collection was done in the research area by holding official and unofficial meetings, depth interviews, observations, student learning evaluations, study visits, research trainings, and group discussions for collecting as much data as possible.

4. Data Analysis

Due to the research having obtained its data orally as to be able to better understand the circumstances and phenomena, a quantitative analysis was conducted by following this procedure; categorizing the results of the student English learning evaluations into groups by using the scores; reading the data from the interview tapes; holding group discussions with those involved; categorizing the data into similar types; selecting data groups related to the questions and then interpreting the data results; holding a public forum to check the accuracy of the data group categorization; revising the data for the interpretation to be accurate and complete (Chayada Danuwong, 2008: 33); and lastly, using the interpreted data to be the standard for designing the procedure of students’ preparation.

Results Analysis

1. The issues and factors in terms of English learning from the past to present

1.1 Former English Teaching Methodology

Patumrachwongsa School is a second largest high school in Amnat Charoen Province with 1,724 students attending, who are in the service area of Amphoe Patumratwongsa, and who are out of the service area from Amphoe Kudkaopun, Amphoe Khemrat, Unbon Ratchathani Province; from Amphoe Muang Amnat Charoen, Amphoe Chanuman, Amnat Charoen Province. The school’s admission process starts with the intake of the students who have finished middle school and they will sit in an exam for a class arrangement according to their chosen fields of study. The students who receive the highest scores in the order of 1 – 40 will be placed into a special classroom; for other classrooms will have students who receive from high scores to low scores combined so they are varied in knowledge, skills, attitude, and responsibility. This kind of classroom arrangement shows that the students’ knowledge in English is also different, for example, in Grade 10 classrooms there are 3 English subject periods per week, which is about 60 periods per semester. But the
students who are in the special classroom will receive extra 3 periods for English each week, which is 60 extra English periods for a semester and plus the normal English curriculum of 60 periods a semester, which becomes 120 periods for the English subject. Evidently, the learning opportunities are also marginally different. Whereas in the past, with only one format of an English lesson plan was designed for basic English skills to be used in every classroom so that everyone would receive an equal educational opportunity without considering the individual differences, which results showed that the students had a lot of academic differences that caused low English learning results, and also affected their English learning in the second semester, which concerned the teachers, the parents, and the students.

1.2 The problems with learning and teaching English in Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) in the past

Patumrachwongsa School has been in operation for high school educational level and has taught the English subject, but the academic results and the quality of the subject has not met the expectations of the teachers, students, parents, and networks. From this study, it was found that the problems in learning English lying in 4 aspects, which included the policies of class operation, the procedures and activities in learning English, the teachers and students, and the lack of the training and preparation process for the students who were admitted.

2. The student preparation process prior to enrolling in Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) English course in Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province

The assessment of the students, who studied in Grade 10, first semester, found that their skills in English were different, which were categorized into 3 groups as follows:

1. Not ready Group
2. Intermediate Group
3. Excellent Group

The similarities and differences in students’ preparation were:

1. Not ready Group – it consisted of 12 students and had a method of procedure in preparing students for English as follows:

1.1 Breaking the ice method allowed students to express their feelings in developing their knowledge of English such as storytelling, writing out the problems and needs, and giving insights about learning English. This is how it was done:

1.1.1 The teacher would give an introduction about studying English in the past and the advantages of self-expressions concerning problems, needs, and suggestions in self-improvement of English, which all would be kept confidential.
1.1.2 Each student expressed their feelings, and if some people did not want to do it in words, in which case they could write them down.

1.2 The method of a gradual process

This method used Accelerated English Program (AEP), also known as Accelerated Language Learning, to help increase the range of English vocabulary in response to the needs of the students, which would become a foundation for English learning.

1.3 The integration process

This process combined varieties of activities together. Speaking and writing easy sentences activities by using the vocabulary from the gradual process method.

1.4 The method of compliment

This was a very important method because it helped increasing positive attitude in students.

1.4.1 Writing a compliment letter was to report the learning progress of the students to their parents through letters.

1.4.2 Home visiting was to meet with the parents of the students and present them with the English lesson plan.

From the observation of this study, it was found that some students did not want the teacher to visit their homes because they were ashamed of their living conditions, however, most importantly the students would like the teacher to accept them and understand them better. A good relationship between the teacher and a student included informal greetings and showing concerns for their health.

After observing the development of the not-ready group and after having followed the process of the student development, the relationship between the teacher and students was improved marginally. This could be seen from the tone of their voice, where at the beginning it was dissonant towards the teacher, but later became more respectful and reasonable.

2. The intermediate group

2.1 Breaking the ice process - Breaking the ice method allowed students to express their feelings in developing their knowledge of English such as storytelling, writing out the problems and needs, and giving insights about learning English.

2.2 The process of increasing the vocabulary

This method used Accelerated English Program (AEP) to add unfamiliar words and make them more abstract based on the needs of the students in learning English.

2.3 The process of increasing skills
This was a diverse activity that used technologies, printed materials, and advice from the teacher, which had the following method:

2.3.1 The teacher introduced the varieties of learning methods and the essence of adding more knowledge in English.

2.3.2 The students presented the learning approaches to the students’ desired English skills such as grammar, verb and subject agreement.

2.3.3 The teacher and students gathered a collection of learning resources such as websites on the internet, articles, journals, and books.

2.3.4 The teacher expounded on the structure of the English language; subject and verb agreement, and reading skill.

2.3.5 The students learnt from the computers and shared it through the exchange of knowledge between student friends.

2.3.6 The teacher assessed the students’ learning through an exam on the structure of the English language, verb and subject agreement, and reading skill.

The result of the skills addition showed that the method of giving a lecture by the teacher in the classroom did not capture students’ attention as effective, which method should be changed to allow the students to create self-learning and when they ran into a problem or something was unclear, in which case, the teacher would come in to play.

2.4 Kudos

Complimenting was a way to enhance the students’ attitude towards learning English by praising, exhibiting students’ works, and reporting students’ achievements by meeting with the parents.

The result of this approach revealed that the students were happier, smiled more in the classroom, and desired more home visits from the teacher.

3. Excellent Group

3.1 Breaking the ice process

Breaking the ice method allowed students to express their feelings in developing their knowledge of English such as storytelling, writing out the problems and needs, and giving insights about learning English.

3.2 The process of reviewing to proceed forward

This method allowed reviewing the old knowledge by putting an emphasis on being able to answer questions, presenting information, and debating.

3.3 The process of knowledge enhancement

This process exploited teaching aids such as technologies and printed materials, which proceeded as follows:
3.3.1 The teacher introduced the diversity of learning methods.
3.3.2 The students proposed learning methods with additional English skills to be added in their learning designed by them.
3.3.3 The teacher and students gathered learning sources (websites) from the internet.
3.3.4 The students exchanged what they learnt with each other.
3.3.5 The teacher assessed the students through students’ presentations in front of the class and from their responses to the teacher and friends’ questions.

It should be noted that this process was a learning method demanded by the students with the use of computers and the internet; therefore, it showed that the classroom atmosphere was filled with the students’ dedication and satisfaction in the sort of learning. It could be because of the learning material such as the internet had a vast diversity of knowledge and games that were stimuli.

3.4 Compliment method
Compliment helped increase positive attitude in students towards English learning by presenting students’ works in exhibits and representing the program ‘friend helps friend’.

4. To establish the participation of teachers, students and parents in solving problems concerning students’ English learning

The teachers, students, and parents participated in solving learning problems of the students in the English subject, which first the learning problems were addressed such as the students did not do homework, review their lessons, and read the textbooks. On the same occasion, the students suggested a teaching method that seemed appropriate for them like the subject must be interesting and fun. As a result, the teachers reviewed the previous unsuccessful teaching methods for creating new lesson plans for teaching English by using the past data as variables in solving the problems and the suggestions from the students, which helped the students to learn according to their abilities. The new teaching methods would serve the needs concerning different individual backgrounds and readiness, which would result in students gaining more skills and positive attitude towards learning. The responsibilities of the parents were to oversee the areas of homework and learning behaviors of their children, and building motivation and encouraging their kids.

Conclusion
This study aimed to study the issues and factors in terms of English learning from the past to present, study a student preparation process prior to enrolling in Mattayom 4 (Grade
10) English courses in Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province, and establish the participation of teachers, students and parents in solving problems concerning students’ English learning of Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) students of Patumrachwongsa School, Patumratchawongsa District, Amnat Charoen Province.

The population of this study was 244 Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) students, studying at Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province.

The instrument of this research study consisted of English test. The questionnaire, observation, depth interview and group discussions were designed by the teachers, parents and the students for collecting the information. All the research instruments were approved by both academic experts and advisors and were tried out before being administered.

A quantitative analysis was conducted by following this procedure; categorizing the results of the student English learning evaluations into groups by using the scores; reading the data from the interview tapes; holding group discussions with those involved; categorizing the data into similar types; selecting data groups related to the questions and then interpreting the data results; holding a public forum to check the accuracy of the data group categorization; revising the data for the interpretation to be accurate and complete (Chayada Danuwong, 2008: 33); and lastly, using the interpreted data to be the standard for designing the procedure of students’ preparation.

In conclusion, it was found that the student preparation process prior to enrolling in Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) English courses could result in students acquiring a close or the same knowledge in English. Students had positive attitudes towards learning English. Furthermore, teachers, students, parents, and the community participate in solving problems in learning English. This conclusion is supported by data from the raw scores, questionnaire, observation, depth interview and group discussions.

Discussions

There are many ways that can improve the learning’s student. Due to the students had different English skill levels, bad attitudes, and bad habits of failing to attend classes, copying school work, and not completing their assignments. This researcher studied a student preparation process prior to enrolling in Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) English courses in Patumrachwongsa School, Amnat Charoen Province. It was found that this process increase the students’ basic skills in English to meet the expectations of the standard curriculum as well as satisfying both the students and teachers academically which may result in students having more positive attitudes towards the subject and performing better in school. This may imply that the preparation of the students is good for increasing learning ability Chadarat Peh (2009)
who studied a development of an English readiness teaching Kit using teaching English as secondary language by comprehension – based approach.

Moreover, the result seems to support Joanna Smith (2011:71) who studied Parent Involvement in Urban Charter Schools: New Strategies for Increasing Participation. The strategies were linked with increasing parents’ self-efficacy and comfort level in participating in their children’s education. It means participation helps students increase learning abilities.

According to Eiko Ushida (2005) who studied The Role of Students’ Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning in Online Language Course, a student’s attitude and motivation has frequently been reported to be the most critical factor.

In conclusion, the most important components of a student preparation process prior to enrolling in Mattayom 4 (Grade 10) English courses in Patumrachwongsa School are positive attitude, motivation, participation (among teachers, students and parents), and appropriate teaching approaches. To achieve in preparation process, not only teachers but also students have to pay attention and practice their English continuously after class. The responsibilities of the parents were to oversee the areas of homework and learning behaviors of their children, and building motivation and encouraging their kids.

Further Study Recommendations

1. The English contents should be narrower so that there will be sufficient time to cover all the issues under study.
2. Games should be used more in the teaching method.
3. Further research should be conducted with students at other levels.

References


