

The Determinant factors of Engineering Students towards the Significant of English Proficiency in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC): A Case of 3rd year TNI Students.

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Abstract-----The world economy has been in a wave of structural change due to the growth of international economic interdependence, especially in the notion of ASEAN Economic Community. According to the main goal of AEC, it is to seek regional economic integration by 2015 which includes various areas of cooperation.

Therefore, it might be said that the more liberalized labor market could provide more opportunities for Thai workers. However, it is indicated that Thai students need to improve their weak English proficiency for communicating with other people from other nations. This study, thus, aimed at finding factors affecting prospective Engineering students' English capacity for AEC.

The purposes of this study were mainly focused on investigating the students' English learning problems and finding out classroom interaction techniques to help students achieve in learning English in order to apply with the upcoming of AEC.

Research samples were 40 students from Faculty of Engineering: Automotive Engineering, Productive Engineering and Computer Engineering. Instrument used for gathering the data was in-dept interview which consisted of 10 open-ended questions.

The findings from the interview were categorized into 7 groups as follows:

- 1) Teachers were required to provide students an opportunity to practice four skills of communication (listening, speaking, reading and writing).
- 2) It was significance for the students to have a learning experience with new and interesting teaching-learning materials outside textbooks.
- 3) The students were able to speak with Thai and foreign teachers, but were not able to apply knowledge with real industrial placement.
- 4) The students commented that reading and writing were quite tedious. They needed activities that supported them to understand more than vocabulary and grammar memorization.
- 5) The students indicated that their English basic were not in tertiary level. The most important barrier was in areas of grammar, then, listening, speaking and reading respectively.
- 6) The students replied that they lacked confidence to speak English.

7) The students needed learning techniques that employed technology in classroom.

Further, the problems which barricaded the development of students' English proficiency were demonstrated.

Keywords— English teaching-learning approach, English Proficiency, ASEAN Economic Community, EFL Classroom, EFL Classroom

I. INTRODUCTION

As economic integration, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is dealing with economic situations. Therefore, the part of AEC impacts the ASEAN's nation members with potentiality of a regional integration. There are several forces that are driving these changes such as: Human resource development and capacity building; Recognition of professional qualifications; Consultation on economic and financial policies; Trade financing; Infrastructure and communication connectivity; Electronic transactions; Industrial integration; and Enhancing private sector involvement [1]. In short, the AEC will support the member countries to move free across the nations in major economical changes, access to global markets and information technology. This could present Thai workers with a competitive challenge from other AEC's workers. In order to gain advantages from the strong competition among AEC member workers, Thai skilled workers need to improve their necessary working skills, especially in English language, in order to catch up with the globalization trend and increase their job performance.

This is similar to learning concept of Nunan [2] who presents that language teachers should focus on classroom interaction. This effective learning strategy supports student to have an opportunity to think and share his or her ideas in class by using target language. Thus, the interaction between teacher and student, and students and students in classroom are promoted to help student learn both language and social skills. Pica [3], further, reveals that classroom interaction is playing an essential role in learning process as it allows a teacher to recognize students' responses and create opportunities to develop and practice the cognitive skill. This

is, moreover, indicates by Harper et al [4] that there are various forms of interactive learning. However, main focus is to provide feedback of second language input.

Therefore, this rises to a question of how to apply interactive classroom of English learning with 3rd year Engineering students. This includes the English teaching-learning process which prepares the students' English proficiency to compete with other AEC workers.

II. RESEARCH PURPOSE

The purposes of this study were

- 1) To investigate the students' English learning problems.
- 2) To find out classroom interaction techniques to help students achieve in English language and apply with the upcoming of AEC.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

- 1 Interviews with 40 3rd year Engineering students
- 2 The collection of site documents and associated materials
- 3 Analysis and synthesis of data derived from the ethnography
- 4 The interpretation and tabling of findings from the ethnography

IV. RESULTS

According to an ethnographic interview, the results were presented as follows:

1. Teachers provided students an opportunity to practice four skills of communication. However, there was less chance for the students to practice with teachers, especially in listening and speaking skills.

Example of the student answer

"I want to have more chances to speak in the classroom"
"It's good to learn with foreign teachers, but 1 hour a week is enough"

2. The students required new and interesting learning materials outside textbooks.

Example of student answer

"It's boring to learn something in textbook as I can read it at home"
"I want teachers to bring anything new and interesting in the classroom"
"I want to learn something that is from a real job industry, so I will get used to it from now on"
"It might be better if teachers find out new interesting materials to test us in classroom"

3. The students were able to speak with Thai and foreign teachers, but were not able to apply knowledge with real industrial placement.

Example of student answer

"I can speak with teachers but I don't know how to speak with other foreigners"

"I know how to keep a simple conversation with foreigners, but it must be very difficult to use it for work"

4. Reading and writing were quite tedious. They needed activities that support them to write rather than asking them to remember vocabularies and grammar.

Example of student answer

"I have to learn and remember vocabularies in textbook for an examination which some of them I don't actually use in communication"
"Every time I learn reading, I fall asleep"
"I think grammar is very important, but I can't remember its rules"
"I need activities to enjoy studying reading and grammar"
"I felt stress every time when I have a writing assignment"

5. The majority of student interview found out that their English basic were not in tertiary level. The most important barrier was in areas of grammar, then, listening, speaking and reading respectively.

Example of student answer

"Honestly, I think my English is not at a university level"
"I need to start from the very first basic of English language"
"I think my grammar is not good, so I don't know how to write and speak correctly"
"I think grammar is the most important part in English learning because it links to other types of communication"

6. The students lacked confidence to speak English. Although teachers gave them an opportunity to practice speaking frequently, most of them admitted they employed good memorization rather than good speaking techniques.

Example of student answer

"I'm really afraid when I have to talk in English because I will forget grammar rules and vocabulary"
"I always walk away when I see foreigners" "I have to think what I'm going to say in Thai and then translate to English later on, it is really waste of time to speak out and make me lose confidence"

7. The students needed learning techniques that employed technology in classroom.

Example of student answer

"I think the most interesting way of learning is to use computer technology instead of textbook"
"I used Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) once and it was very fun"

V. DISCUSSION

A. *The Application of Creative Writing and Critical Thinking*

Writing is an individualized process which typically does not allow a teacher to observe the process as it is happening. On the other hand, most teachers' responsibility is to revise the students' finished work. This is contrary to Beare [5] who asserts that students need to be personally involved in writing exercises in order to make the learning experience of lasting value. Ennis [6], further, suggests it is important to integrate critical and creative thinking with writing. His notion is to put students into practice, and they have write on the whiteboard and share their writing with teacher and students. Along with the thoughts and ideas being expressed, all students need to deal with writing content and organization, grammar improvement and correction of common errors, with sharing new vocabularies in the classroom. This is relevant to Pathere [7]'s work who recommends that having the students read each other's work provides a variety of responses. Knowing that other students will read their work can encourage students to take more time over thinking and planning. Macrorie [8] moreover, recommends exploratory writing which focuses on students' interest. It is like writing to learn and unfold as the student writes from the mind on a problem and stimulating thought.

B. *Video Recording Speaking*

Bailey [9] demonstrates the use of video-based assessment in public speaking course. This benefits both teachers and students as video recording enables to review the students' speaking performance and allow them more time to provide constructive feedback to the students. This is similar to Lewis [10] who advocates that by viewing their own videos, students can reflect on their performance, analyze their learning progress and set improvement goals. In other words, video assessment helps students focus on their strengths, weaknesses, language skills and knowledge. Hirschel et al [11] did the research of video self-assessment for language learners in Sojo University, Japan. The research results show that student video is correlated with a positive effect upon students' interest in, enjoyment of, and confidence in speaking English. The findings are applicable to teachers and advisors of learners who wish to empower their students in realizing progress for language learning endeavors that can sometimes tenuous.

C. *Integration of Press and Internet*

This is related to the classroom environment which derived by Alexander [12] who indicates that the objective of education is to extend the learner's world. In an everyday situation, the learner is exposed and encountered both written and oral information coming from the press and Internet as both devices provide creative ideas for making effective use of the variety of readily authentic, accessible and up-to-date English. MacWhinney [13], however, contends that length is a significant factor in text selection. A length of between five and ten minutes seems to be appropriate under most conditions. On the other hand, less proficient learners may be

asked to read or view shorter passages in order to avoid an overload of information. Stern [14], moreover, argues that topics should relate with human condition, such as cultures, education, environmental problems, technology, or issues of everyday life that are universal enough to be understood.

Krashen [15] illustrates that bringing the news into the classroom offers a whole range of interest possibilities to enhance the learner's command of English language. CNN offers a series of lively programs audiences normally watch to become informed about what goes on in the world. Basic contention is that the learner can be helped to transfer comprehension and analyzing skills. Senior [16], further, discusses that teachers can use the pause button and freeze the picture on the screen. This enables the students to think and talk about what happened up to certain point and to predict what is about to follow. Task variables, therefore, should include text structure, familiarity of the content, and comprehensibility of the oral input and purpose of viewing. A great deal of planning to teach the students can go into varieties of activities.

D. *The Significance of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)*

The software packages mainly started on the learning vocabulary items or discrete grammar points. Then, the programs were upgraded to allow teachers and students greater flexibility in choosing picture materials. The third advancement is the ability of computers to be linked together in networks. This enables computer to be used in a similar situation as an audio lab with the expanding capabilities of to be linked worldwide. Egbert and Hanson-Smith [17] further, define eight aspects for a more optimal language learning environment as:

- Learners have opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning.
- Learners interact in the target language with an authentic audience.
- Learners are involved in authentic tasks.
- Learners are exposed to and encouraged to produce varied and creative language.
- Learners have enough time and feedback.
- Learners are guided to attend mindfully to the learning process.
- Learners work in an atmosphere with an ideal stress/anxiety level.
- Learner autonomy is supported.

In the internet economy, companies will focus increasingly on their core competencies and outsources all other tasks to other companies and business partners. This growing trend towards outsourcing and the internet's ability to quickly enable interactions and alliance formation among various companies will lead to the formation of virtual enterprises that are dynamically formed to meet a market opportunity [18].

VI. CONCLUSION

The significant of AEC allows students to learn to think critically about knowledge and the world- to evaluate information and reach an educated opinion about it. The challenge for them is to learn how to evaluate and use that information- to find the meaning in the knowledge- so that the knowledge can successfully be applied to new situations [19].

The problems derived from TNI 3rd year Engineering students were mainly focused on four skills of English communication. However, these highlighted the application of classroom learning with real industry placement. It is not necessary that the students can get good grades in the examination without realizing how to use knowledge as a skilled worker in a high competitiveness among AEC country members. Thus, the ultimate goal is to challenge the learner with thought-encouraging tasks, which are practical and oriented to assist them to empower their thinking process and develop their critical, creative, innovative and problem-solving skills.

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