

The Analysis and Assessment of TNI Students' Grade Performance on their English Language Proficiency

Thomas del Castillo

College of General Education and Languages Thai Nichi Institute of Technology

1771/1 Pattanakarn Road, Suanluang Bangkok 10250 Thailand

thomas@tni.ac.th

Abstract— The purpose of this study is to see how to improve Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology (TNI) students' English skills.

The researcher has divided the research into different parts. The initial part was to randomly monitor 63 students' grade performance for four consecutive semesters. While the second part of the study dealt with the impact of how different faculties affect students' performance in their English classes by randomly selecting 90 students from 5 different faculties which are Business Japanese, Automotive Engineering, Computer Engineering, Information Technology and Industrial Management.

Secondary data was gathered from the Office of Registration and Education Services. The researcher has implemented various kinds of data analysis including percentage growth rate, mean, standard deviation, Anova test and Tamhane test.

Results were as follows:

PART I

1. Students' performance decreased as the course became more difficult.

2. The composition of student grades changed dramatically from high grades (A to B+) to middle grades (B to C+) upon taking ENL101- ENL202.

PART II

1. There is a difference in students' performance in English from different faculties.

2. Business Japanese students outperformed students from other faculties.

Keywords— Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology, student's performance, percentage growth rate, standard deviation

I. INTRODUCTION

These days, Thailand is beginning to play an important role in transcending national boundaries, learners of languages are realizing the advantages open to those who can speak foreign languages, in particular English. A demand for English proficiency in many institutions and companies is desirable. This demand is not only for basic conversational English, but also for learning English to pass entrance examinations, making presentations at meetings, conventions or seminars in professional organizations and most essentially gaining leverage in being part of well-renowned multinational companies in the country. This is only possible if a Thai applicant not only completes a degree in university with a high GPA and outstanding credentials but also attains

high scores in their English proficiency exams such as the TOEIC.

Many researchers pointed out that learning institutions, government agencies, and businesses are being required to raise the level of English proficiency for their students, employees, and staff in order to meet the ever increasing demand for English proficiency to operate effectively and productively as globalization now encompasses Thailand.

With rapid pace and continuous transformation of today's information, language teaching techniques should always be updated and performance of learners should conversely be isolated and monitored to verify improvement and success in language learning.

A Thai researcher [5] suggested that:

"The role of English in Thailand is quite important as it is in many other developing countries. New technology and the adoption of the Internet have resulted in a major transition in terms of business, education, science, and technological progress, all of which demand high proficiency in English. Mergers, associations, and takeovers are common and English is used as the means to communicate, negotiate and execute transactions by participants where one partner can be a native speaker of English or none of the partners are native speakers of English.

She also mentions that "Thailand has always been a country with one official language, Thai. We are proud that we have never been colonized. Another reason for having been a country with one language is the concept of national stability. There have been proposals to make Thailand a country with two languages, Thai and English, but this has never materialized due to the abovementioned reasons. English can therefore, be at most the first foreign language that students must study in schools."

It was also suggested in the research that "Researchers on the topics of needs and wants of English in workplaces have also suggested that the English curriculum in Thai universities cannot meet the demands for English used in the workplace. The skills used most at this level are listening and speaking which are not the focus skills in the Thai tertiary education English curriculum." [5]

In addition to this, TNI has organized the English classes for students in three departments for more than a year. However, the background data concerning the English learning abilities of the students have not been compiled yet.

Consequently, learners wished they could speak English fluently but most of them think that English is too challenging for them to be competent because of these difficulties:[5]

- Interference from the mother tongue (Thai) particularly in pronunciation, syntax and idiomatic usage.
- Lack of opportunity to use English in their daily lives.
- Unchallenging English lessons.
- Being passive learners.
- Being too shy to speak English with classmates.
- Lack of responsibility for their own learning.

In order to solve the problem, the Thai scholar [2] emphasized that language teachers have to find new ways to help students achieve their goals in language learning. The primary goal was to ensure that Thai students could communicate English in social settings. One proposal is that students should become more equipped with skills that both academics and business sectors require. There is a need to increase the student's motivation to learn English language in class, and even acquire the language outside the class. This could be achieved by teachers changing their roles in the classroom, and introducing modern technologies into their language teaching practices.

In terms of approaches to a language, there are two basic principles in learning actual language texts (or lessons): [3]

"First, repetition should be the format for every feature of language: grammar, vocabulary, usage. Grammar features should be learned by practice, not just explanation. The more you *hear, repeat and use* a sentence pattern, the better you will know it."

"Second, complementing the first, grammar features should be dealt with in usable function terms. Rather than rules or explanations, focus should be on examples. Features should be illustrated, so the learner starts with sentences that show the usages. These will stick with the student better and will also give a practical format."

II. METHOD

In this study, the researcher had randomly selected 153 TNI students in conducting the experiment to represent the population of all TNI students.

A. Research Instruments

Secondary data of first and second year students gathered from Office of Registration and Education Services of TNI.

B. Data Collection Process

The secondary data gathered for this research is composed of students' names, identification number, faculty and grades which were collected from the Office of Registration and Education Services of TNI. This office accumulates this data at the end of each semester and stores all students' records. The range of the students' age examined is between 18 to 22 years old.

The first set of data was for monitoring student performance. The researcher randomly selected 63 students who completed four courses of English classes taken for four semesters consecutively. The classes are from ENL 101, ENL 102, ENL 201, and prerequisite-ENL 202. This first group of students was monitored based on their performance using scores received throughout their four semesters.

A second set of data was also randomly selected from the total student records gathered from the same office. However, in this particular set of data, the researcher randomly picked 18 students from each faculty (i.e. Business Japanese, Automotive Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Information Technology, and Computer Engineering), which totalled 90 students. These students were assigned as the sample group representing all the students from each faculty and used to test the hypothesis that had been set.

III. RESULT

Part I

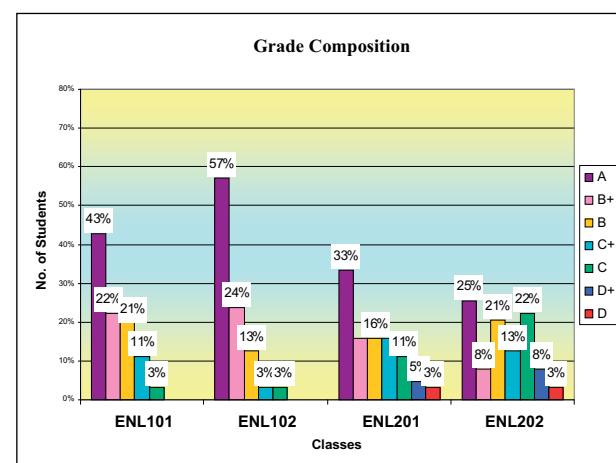
This first part of this research involves observing and examining the score performance of the 63 students at the end of four semesters. The assumptions that were drawn in examining the student performance were:

1. Students are required to take ENL 101, ENL 102, ENL 201 and ENL 202 (as prerequisite), respectively.

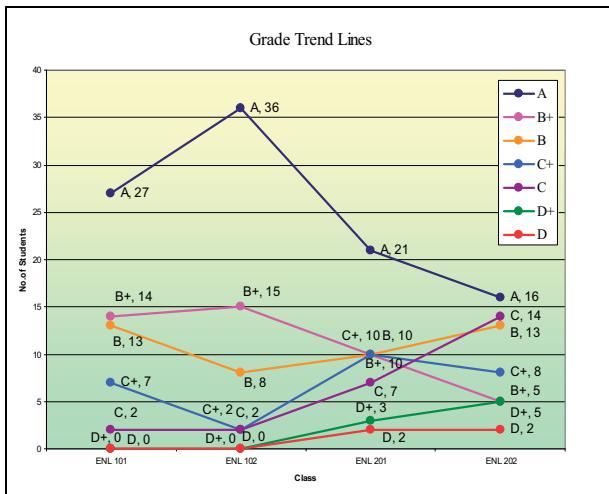
2. English courses get more complicated as level escalates from ENL 101 to ENL 202

Descriptive	ENL101	ENL102	ENL201	ENL 202
Average Score	77	80	73	69
Mode	70	77	67	60
Median	78	82	74	70
STDEV	7	7	10	10
Maximum Score	91	93	90	87
Minimum Score	60	60	50	50

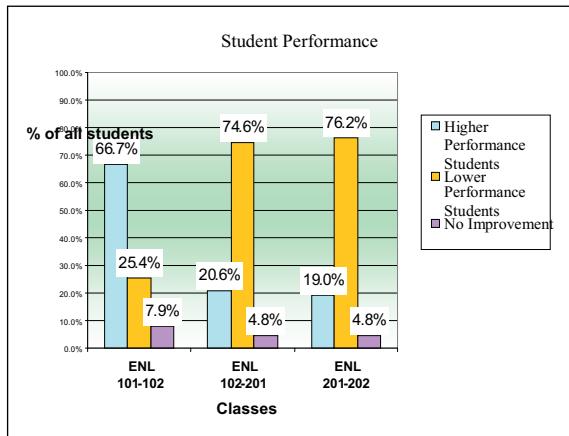
These descriptive statistical values of four different classes illustrated that the higher level of the English course the student takes, the higher the gap between the top and the bottom of the class. The average score tends to fall as the course gets more difficult.



In average, throughout all four English courses, 40% of students received grade A upon taking ENL 101 to ENL 202, although the number of students who received C highly increased from 2 to 14 students. The composition of the grade obviously has changed from high grades (B+ to A) to middle grades (C+ to B).



The researcher then scrutinized the trend of each grade specifically to find the trend lines for this group of students. From the figure shown above, it exemplifies that high grades (A and B+) has a downward slope. In the contrary, low grades (C to D) rose from ENL 101 to ENL 202.



The percentage of students who received higher grades successively dropped for three periods. On the other hand, the percentage of students who achieved lower performance highly grew at a rate from 25.4% to 74.6%, and 76.2% indicating that students' competency in English language may not have been adequate to cope with the increased level of difficulty as each English course escalates.

Part II

The collected data was analysed using SPSS program to test whether there is any difference in the mean score of the five faculties of TNI students for English class.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minim	Maxi
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Automotive Engineering	18	75.611	3.63219	0.85612	73.80	77.42	68	81
Computer Engineering	18	69.056	10.4345	2.45944	63.87	74.24	50	82
Business Japanese	18	79.444	9.48821	2.23639	74.73	84.16	61	95
Information Technology	18	68.722	9.20873	2.17052	64.14	73.30	55	84
Industrial Management	18	70.889	8.45673	1.99327	66.68	75.09	53	89
Total	90	72.744	9.37192	0.98789	70.78	74.71	50	95

Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
4.184	4	85	0.004

The significant level from this study in the variance test table above is equal to 0.004, which is less than 0.05 ($0.04 < 0.05$), thus the result of the variance test has indicated that at least one faculty's variance is different from each other.

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1,554.07	4.00	388.52	5.27	0.00
Within Groups	6,263.06	85.00	73.68		
Total	7,817.12	89.00			

The result of this Anova test shows that the significant value is at 0.001 and the alpha level that was set at 0.05 indicating that $\text{sig} < 0.05$. Therefore with this result, H_0 is rejected or the performance of all students varies among faculty.

IV. DISCUSSION

For purposes of proper distinction of terms in this analysis, grades were put into categories below:

- High grades*— refer to scores in the range of 75-100 or from B+ to A
- Middle grades*— refer to scores in the range of 65-74 or from C+ to B
- Low grades*— refer to scores in the range of 50-64 or from D to C

Part I

From the data analysis obtained, the researcher has recognized some issues that require further study. By observing students' performance through all four consecutive semesters, data analysis had illustrated that

as the courses get more difficult, students' performance drops, and the percentage of students who received middle grades has increased continuously. On the other hand, the number of students who previously obtained high grades dropped over four courses. Thus, the grade composition of the class had changed from mostly high grade students to mostly middle grade students.

Part II

Another factor that showed a discrepancy on the performance of students is the faculty. Tests have shown that students from different faculties tend to perform differently. It was obvious that students majoring in Business Japanese outperformed other students coming from other majors.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Owing to the endless development of the world's communication technology, languages have become an essential tool for people coming from different countries. As a result, over the past few decades, people have paid attention to language learning.

From the results drawn from the tests, students whose grades have depreciated as they progressed to a higher level of learning English may have been based from the following reasons:

- Ongoing enrolment policy of the school in accepting entrants from provinces (i.e. English background is scarce, practical use and exposure to the language are insufficient) may have affected the screening procedures applied in taking students to study in TNI, compromising the evaluation of students' English ability resulting to a high number of students entering the institution but with a number of students low in performance abilities in English.

- The course load of students in their second and third year would have increased dramatically as compared to their entry year making sophomore and junior students refocus their attention to their major subjects and paying less attention to minor subjects such as English.

- Context of textbooks used might not have been appealing to students learning motivation in terms of content layout, pictures, colours, activities and exercises. The level of the textbook used may have been too difficult with the teaching method applied not changing as the course level escalated.

As for Business Japanese students dominating in the English language as compared to other students in other majors, it could be based from the assumption that most students in this faculty have come from good Catholic schools and International schools that have integrated English in their curriculum from the primary to secondary level. It may also be due to students' early exposure and practical usage of the English language with native speakers and fellow classmates.

The writer would like to state some suggestions that could possibly help in promoting English. This is through the following:

- Implementing international programs either through a collaboration of Thai Nichi Institute of Technology with other foreign universities in different English speaking countries or linking with overseas institutes. These programs may be through an exchange student program, a summer camp, invitation of English lecturers giving presentation or seminars about their culture, economic status, educational history of their university, internship or job placements offered and other related information that would enlighten students' knowledge of the speaker's country of origin.

- Providing more teaching hours of listening and speaking from the current 1 hour a week to two hours weekly- allowing more students more time to practice speaking and listening to different accents from audioscripts played in class.

- Participating in debates, oral speaking contests such extemporaneous speaking, public speaking, recitals, spelling bees and the like. Organization of different clubs in the university would instigate participation in these contests as students are given time to exercise their skills during club or organization meetings.

- Expansion of knowledge involving realistic use of English language in communication, learning and understanding the culture of native speakers, knowing the differences between Thai and the English language, being able to use English to gain information in other subjects, being able to use English as a lifelong learning tool, to find pleasure in terms of socializing and networking with native speakers and to use it in real work situations. Honing student skills involves communication strategies, thinking skills, critical and creative thinking, self-evaluation, learning skills, knowledge seeking skills, technology skills and how to work with others.

- Application of a tool that can help monitor student s' performance through periodic evaluation of their midterm and final exams and implementation of subtests incorporated during their course of study in a semester through quizzes.

In the future, the writer hopes that Thai Nichi Institute of Technology would consider mixing all students from different faculties. This means that students are grouped by their current English level upon entry to the university, (i.e. based from the results of their English scores from the TNI entrance examination). This will also allow teachers to focus on developing advanced students' skills pushing them to perform better and isolate frail English performers weaknesses using the TOEIC test format as a measurement tool in assessing their performance and preparing them for the real testing of the TOEIC exam. This proficiency test is part of the requirements needed for a TNI student to fulfil upon completion of course credits before graduation. With this set up, students can learn and interact together in a more realistic learning environment as compared to the status of the outside world wherein learners of any language are not segregated by their faculty but more of their level of proficiency.

REFERENCES

- [1] Van De Bogart, W. "Teaching Conversational English to Thai Students" "An alternative approach using Role Play for ESL Students". Retrieved August 27, 2006 from www.earthportals.com/Portal_Messenger/conversationsl.html
- [2] Prapphal, K. "English Proficiency of Thai Learners and Directions of English Teaching and Learning in Thailand". Retrieved July 25, 2006, from <http://pioneer.netserv.chula.ac.th/~pkanehan/doc/EnglProfLearnhailand.doc>
- [3] Jennings, Orville Boyd. "How to Learn a Language and a Culture". Retrieved from December 10, 2007 from <http://orvillejenkins.com/langlearn/langapproaches.html>
- [4] Biyaem, Suda "Learner Training: Changing Roles for a Changing World, Educational Innovation for Sustainable Development." 3rdUNESCO-ACEID International Conference, Bangkok. 1997
- [5] Wiriyachitra, A. "English Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand in this Decade". Thai TESOL, 14(1), 4-7.,2004. Retrieved from <http://www.apecknowledgebank.org/resources/downloads/English%20Language%20Teaching%20and%20Learning%20in%20Thailand.pdf>