

Research Title : The Use of English Among Members of the Thai Academic Community of Dhurakij Pandit University's Graduate Students
Researcher : Janpha Thadphoothon
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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษาการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษกับชุมชนนักวิชาการของนักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาศาสาบริหารธุรกิจ แห่งมหาวิทยาลัยธุรกิจบัณฑิต โดยการเก็บข้อมูลจากนักศึกษาหลักสูตรบริหารธุรกิจมหาบัณฑิตจำนวน 118 คน และ หลักสูตรบริหารธุรกิจดุษฎีบัณฑิต จำนวน 13 คน แบ่งเป็นนักศึกษาหญิงจำนวน 78 คน (ร้อยละ 60) นักศึกษาชายจำนวน 53 คน (ร้อยละ 40) ระหว่างภาคการศึกษาที่ 1/ 2552 เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูลได้แก่ แบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์ โต้เถียง ข้อมูลที่เก็บจึงมีทั้งข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพและข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณ

ผู้วิจัยได้วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลทั้งเชิงคุณภาพและปริมาณ สำหรับการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพนั้น ได้ใช้การวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา ส่วน การวิเคราะห์เชิงปริมาณนั้น สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ได้แก่ ร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน ทดสอบความแตกต่าง ของค่าเฉลี่ยด้วย t-test การวิเคราะห์ความแปรปรวนทางเดียว (One Way ANOVA) และการวิเคราะห์สหสัมพันธ์แบบเพียร์ สัน

ข้อค้นพบที่สำคัญมีดังต่อไปนี้

1. นักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาศาสาบริหารธุรกิจแห่งมหาวิทยาลัยธุรกิจบัณฑิตใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในชุมชนวิชาการใน ระดับต่ำ ($M = 2.20$) ทั้งนี้ยังได้พบอีกว่า นักศึกษา มีโอกาสใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในระดับต่ำ
2. นักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาศาสาบริหารธุรกิจแห่งมหาวิทยาลัยธุรกิจบัณฑิตได้ระบุทักษะที่ใช้อยู่ที่น้อยที่สุดได้แก่ทักษะ การอ่าน ทั้งนี้ยังได้พบอีกว่าการอ่านยังเป็นทักษะที่นักศึกษาให้ความสนใจและมีความกังวลในการใช้สูง อีกทั้งยัง ต้องการได้รับการพัฒนาทักษะการอ่านเนื่องจากมีความสำคัญยิ่งต่อการเรียนและการวิจัย

3. การรับรู้ว่าเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของชุมชนนักวิชาการไทยหรือไม่ มีผลต่อระดับการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาด้านบริหารธุรกิจแห่งมหาวิทยาลัยธุรกิจบัณฑิต กล่าวคือ นักศึกษาที่รับรู้ว่าเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของชุมชนฯ ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษบ่อยครั้งกว่ากลุ่มที่ไม่ได้ถือว่าตนเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของชุมชนฯ
4. เพศมีผลต่อระดับความต้องการการสนับสนุนทางด้านภาษาอังกฤษ กล่าวคือนักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาด้านบริหารธุรกิจแห่งมหาวิทยาลัยธุรกิจบัณฑิตเพศหญิงต้องการได้รับการสนับสนุนเกี่ยวกับภาษาอังกฤษมากกว่าเพศชาย
5. ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการสนับสนุนทางด้านภาษาอังกฤษกับความสามารถของนักศึกษาในการจัดการ/แก้ปัญหาการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษมีนัยสำคัญในเชิงลบ (-.39) กล่าวคือนักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาด้านบริหารธุรกิจแห่งมหาวิทยาลัยธุรกิจบัณฑิตที่มีความสามารถในการจัดการ/แก้ปัญหาในระดับต่ำมีความต้องการความช่วยเหลือทางด้านการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในระดับสูง
6. ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการรับรู้ความสามารถของนักศึกษาในการจัดการ/แก้ปัญหการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษมีนัยสำคัญในเชิงบวก (.33) กับการรับรู้ความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษของตนเองของนักศึกษา กล่าวคือนักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาด้านบริหารธุรกิจแห่งมหาวิทยาลัยธุรกิจบัณฑิตที่รับรู้ว่ามีความสามารถทางด้านภาษาอังกฤษในระดับสูงมีความสามารถในการจัดการ/แก้ปัญหาในระดับสูงเช่นกัน
7. การรับรู้ความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา มีความสัมพันธ์อย่างมีนัยสำคัญกับการสนับสนุนทางภาษาอังกฤษที่ต้องการจากมหาวิทยาลัย กล่าวคือนักศึกษาที่รับรู้ว่ามีความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษในระดับสูงต้องการการสนับสนุนทางภาษาอังกฤษจากมหาวิทยาลัยต่ำ ส่วนนักศึกษาที่รับรู้ว่ามีความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษต่ำ บอกว่าตนเองต้องการการสนับสนุนทางภาษาอังกฤษจากมหาวิทยาลัยในระดับสูง

Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the postgraduate students' English use with other members of the Thai academic community. The instruments of the research were the seven-part questionnaire developed by the researcher and the qualitative data from two roundtable seminars.

The questionnaire was answered by 131 DPU postgraduate students (MBA and DBA), collected during the first semester of the academic year 2009. The two roundtables were conducted in August, 2009. The statistics utilized in analyzing the data were percentage, mean, standard deviation, T-test, One-way ANOVA, and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. Qualitative data were analyzed using simple content analysis.

The major findings were as follows:

1. The level of English use within the academic community of the respondents was low ($\bar{X} = 2.20$). Like other graduate students in Thailand, the student participants reported that they had limited opportunities to practice or use English.
2. This study revealed that the reading skill was the most important skill for their study and it was their main concern. They said that they needed it to understand texts or related articles for their courses and research work.
3. The analysis found a significant relationship between the student participants' perceived identity, being or not being part of the Thai academic community, and their use of English within the academic community. The relationship was statistically significant at $p > .05$. Those who identified themselves as being part of the community were found to use more English.
4. The English support needed from the institution was high. It was found that gender influenced the English support needed. Compared with male participants, the female participants seemed to prefer more English support.
5. The correlation between their coping ability and need of support was significantly negative ($-.39$). This suggests that those who needed more support were those with lower English ability or vice versa. It was not a surprise, however, to discover that the respondents who said they needed more support were those whose perceived that their English ability was low.

6. However, the correlation between the ability to cope with the demands of English and the overall perceived English ability was significantly positive (.33).
7. This research also revealed the relationship between the subjects' perceived English ability and their support needed from the establishment. The correlation between the two variables was found to be significantly negative (-.28). This suggests that the subjects who needed less support were often those whose English ability was perceived to be higher or vice versa.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Postgraduate students are often considered budding academics. In Thailand, like elsewhere, they need to deal successfully with changes and expectations from society: they are expected to participate in the academic discourse of the local academic community as well as the global one. As academic discourse often entails understanding and using general and academic English. In short, they need to use it effectively.

For those who have spent some time doing their research in English-speaking countries such as England, Australia, or the US, one common concern for them, among others, would be how to participate and function effectively within the new discourse community. In this case, the demand is obvious: they have to use academic English to conduct their research and report their findings.

Usually, program providers implement academic support structures to assist postgraduate students in reaching their full potential and becoming leaders in the scholarly community. The University of Melbourne, for instance, has created an online course, a community of practice called *Postgraduate Essentials* (Brooks and Fyffe, 2004) as a community for new students to prepare themselves for their study. Today, program providers put in place support structures to help new students, enabling them to engage effectively in a new community of practice (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Postgraduate students such as MBA or DBA students at local universities in Thailand are often required to conduct research in Thai and use Thai to report their findings and writing up their theses. Nevertheless, as novice academics, they often have to read a great number of English texts, as they are major sources of research information. They are expected by the society, including the academic community, to know English and use it appropriately. In short, they are required to possess certain levels of academic English skills. In addition, one of the admission requirements for postgraduate programs in Thailand is that the students demonstrate adequate levels of English

proficiency; for example, a TOEFL / TU-GET / CU-TEP score of 550 or IELTS of 6.0 is a common requirement.

It can be said that English has become an integral part of Thailand's graduate education. In other words, new members (budding academics) need to gain their membership through their English ability. Such a gate-keeping measure, a common practice among higher institutions, is a means to ensure that candidates are equipped with academic English skills ready to participate effectively in the academic community and beyond. English, in addition to being a tool, is also a status symbol (Pennycook, 1994).

Thai academics are expected to have 'sound knowledge' of Thai and English, among other qualities such as critical thinking and IT skills. They possess certain dispositions, one of which is the drive to search for truths. They are expected to function as active researchers, excel in administrative, teaching, and academic matters. In academic institutions, Thai scholars, moreover, need to earn their academic titles such as assistant professorship and associate professorship.

While recognizing the fact that English is important, it usually takes some time for learners to develop proficiency in English as a foreign language for academic purposes. From the socio-cultural perspective, those postgraduate students, as they are acquiring the language, are being socialized into the new community (Ochs, 2002). As we know, there are many discourse communities, and different discourse communities have different ways of using English for their academic or professional purposes. There are 'technical terms' and jargon to master; there are conventions of usage to follow such as the use of loan words and calques.

1.2 PURPOSES

The aims were to investigate the characteristics of the graduate students' uses of English, their conceptions of Thai academics in business administration, their perceived competency, their perceived problems and difficulties, their perceived ability to cope with the problems, and their perceived English support needed from the establishment. One of the aims was to find the complex relationship among their uses of English, their personal characteristics, their perceived English competence, coping ability, and their perceived identity.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research asked the following questions:

1. What were their personal characteristics?
2. How did the student participants perceive their English proficiency?
3. What were their conceptions of the Thai academics? How did they perceive their identity as Thai academics?
4. Across the four skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, what were their levels of English use with other members of the Thai academic community?
5. What were their levels of problems/difficulties in their use of English?
6. How well or effectively could they cope with the problems/challenges?
7. Was the support they received from the university adequate?
8. What was the relationship among their personal factors, perceived identity, use of English, perceived English competency, problems in language use, and perceived English support?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to investigate the use of English among graduate students in business administration by investigating a broader range of factors and contexts of English use. It did so by analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data and perceiving the student participants as novice academics. It is significant because it attempts to probe more deeply into the complex relationship among their personal factors and English use. It is significant because it is perhaps the first comprehensive study on the use of English among Thai academics.

1.5 RATIONALE

As a result of the strong growth of graduate studies, there are now many research students in Thailand who are entering various discourse communities. These communities of practice, explicitly or implicitly, require that their members acquire and use academic English within and beyond their fields (Morita, 2004). The process of equipping the students with adequate academic English requires more than teaching them academic English as prescribed in the curriculum or textbooks. In the context of international students in English-speaking countries such as in Australia, Adamson (1993, cited in Wilson, 1997, p. 767) has argued that

international students need academic, cultural, and linguistic competencies to tackle university study.

To be competent in academic discourse requires their active participation in the academic discourse community over a certain period. This process of socialization is a complex process and is often non-linear. This developmental process, undoubtedly, requires 'time', as they need to engage in the academic English activities. In short, they need to learn the rules of 'the market' and adjust what Bourdieu called 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1991). From this perspective, new members need to engage in the activities of the discourse community.

Realizing that this process is complex, dynamic, and cultural, degree providers often put in place a series of academic interventions such as seminars and conferences for the novices to 'transform' themselves into experts. In other words, efforts are made to help the new students participate effectively in the new discourse community. Through the process, they will become legitimate participants within the periphery of the new discourse community (Wenger, 1998; Lemke, 2002). This process takes time. Academic support is thus a crucial element.

Novices in any field have many roles to play. They need to use academic English to gain membership and participate in many discourse communities, as there are many of them within the Thai academic community. Indeed, there are other discourse communities that focus on and communicate about particular disciplines, or domains of inquiry. For example, there are sets of rules for the field of accounting. These communities have their own professional organizations and publications within which group members communicate about topics of interest to scholars who are working in the same discipline. Again, they have their own conventions, rules, standards, assumptions, and ways of approaching topics. Therefore, another task of the novices is to learn how to communicate appropriately and effectively within their own discipline and beyond. Moreover, among the scholarly community, it is regarded that doctoral and master's degree holders/candidates are novice scholars who should be capable of using English to debate a wide range of issues. In addition, most postgraduate candidates are required to demonstrate their competence in scholarly research, which often involves extensive use of English. In the process, for example, they are expected to work closely with faculty members whose interests are similar to their own. This demands their active participation and dedication (Benz, 1996).

This research aims to study the process of DPU postgraduate students' engagement in the new discourse community. Even though the students are going to write their theses in Thai (L1), in the process, they have to read a great deal of English texts such as theses and articles. Furthermore, they are expected to be able to participate successfully in the existing academic communities (disciplinary community, Thai academic community, and global community). One of the requirements is to use English effectively within their field of expertise. Thus, in order to participate in the new context, they are required to use English to penetrate the myriad academic discourse communities, including establishing effective relationships with their instructors, classmates, peers, and scholars in their fields.

This study will investigate non-English-speaking graduate students (Thais) as they are being socialized into their community of practice. The new discourse community they have entered at the beginning of their program can be termed an academic community in business administration. This new community has its own standards, rules, assumptions, and expectations that govern communication within the community. An important part of joining the new community is learning how to communicate appropriately and effectively within it - how to communicate using the same language in order to function well within the new context. English is one aspect of their participation.

In conclusion, from a socio-cultural perspective, graduate students are in the process of becoming new members who are expected to be able to cope with academic English within Thai academic discourse. They are in the process of what Wenger (1998) called legitimate peripheral participation, transforming their identity. An in-depth understanding of their participation process as well as factors influencing their participation and new identities is worth an in-depth investigation.

1.6 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Below are the definitions of the terms used in this study.

Thai Academic Discourse refers to the ways members of the Thai academic community (teachers, researchers, scholars, professionals, and graduate students) use the language, Thai and English, to discuss, argue, and convey their thoughts, opinions, and feelings on matters or issues within their fields or related fields.

Thai Academic Community refers to a Thai academic community where members (teachers, researchers, scholars, professionals, and graduate students) are connected to the academy in some way, individuals who also use academic English to communicate their shared ideas and feelings.

Perceived English Competency is defined as a student participant's general level of ability in English, measured by the self-assessment questionnaire developed by the researcher.

Perceived Identity is defined as an individual student's self-report of how he or she perceives him/herself as a Thai academic in business administration and as part of the Thai academic community.

Perceived Coping Ability refers to students' self-report of their overall ability to deal with the demands of English use in their graduate study. The ability is assessed by the questionnaire developed by the researcher. This scale consists of seven items and has demonstrated reliability and validity. Responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (scored 1) to "strongly agree" (5). In this study, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .85.

English Use Within the Academic Community refers to the use of English of the respondents within the academic community. This scale consists of five items and has demonstrated reliability and validity. Responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "never" (scored 1) to "always" (5).

English Support from the University refers to the respondents' perception of the English support they need from the university. This scale consists of five items and has demonstrated reliability and validity. Responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (scored 1) to "strongly agree" (5). In this study, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .77.

Perceived Problems in English Use refers to the respondents' perception of the problems and difficulties they have experienced from their use of English within the academic community. There are four sub-constructs within this concept: Perceived Problems in Listening Skills, Perceived Problems in Speaking Skills, Perceived Problems in Reading Skills, and Perceived Problems in Writing Skills. Responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (scored 1) to "strongly agree" (5).

Graduate Business Students refer to the MBA (Master of Business Administration) and DBA (Doctorate in Business Administration) students of Dhurakij Pundit University for the first semester of the academic year 2009.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study only investigates 131 Thai graduate students. Any generalization of the findings should recognize the context and scope of this study.

1.8 EXPECTED BENEFITS

As it employs both quantitative and qualitative methods, it is expected that this research would create an in-depth understanding of how Thai graduate business students perceive themselves as academics, the role of English, their use English within the academic community.

It is also hoped that this insight will be useful for students as well as program providers, for they will be better informed of what, when, and where to put in place necessary English support structure, especially the academic one. In addition, this study will shed some light on the practice of academic English discourse within the Thai academic community.

1.9 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

This report is divided into six chapters.

The first chapter, Chapter One, presents the introduction with the following topics: Background of the Study, Purposes, Research Questions, Significance of the Study, Rationale, Definitions, Limitations, Expected Benefits, and Outline of the Research Report.

The relevant literature is reviewed in Chapter Two. Topics included are: Use of English in Thailand, Use of English within the Thai Academic Communities, and Literature on the Use of English among members of the Thai Academic Communities.

Chapter Three explains the research methodology. Chapter Four presents the findings, followed by the discussions of findings in Chapter Five. The summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations of the research are presented in the last chapter, Chapter Six.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature on the following topics:

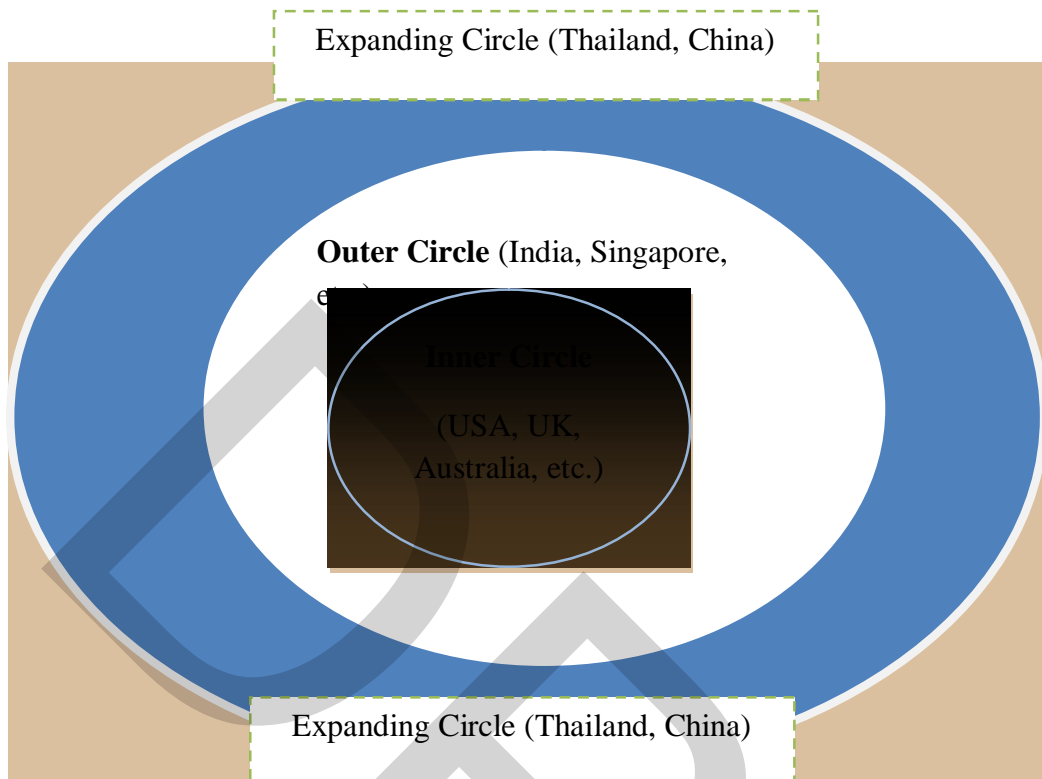
- English in Thailand
- The Role of English in the Thai Academic Communities
- Literature on the Use of English among Members of the Thai Academic Communities

2.1 ENGLISH IN THAILAND

Even though English came to Thailand during the Ayutthaya period, its influences on Thai culture were documented only during the early Rattanakosin period. At its first introduction, English was the language learned only by the ruling class. King Mongkut (Rama IV), for example, was probably the first Thai leader who used English to exchange knowledge between Thai and the Western countries (Watson, 1980). Publications in English and Thai came into existence during his reign (Prasithrathsint, 1985). After World War II, it has become a language learned by the ruling class as well as the general public.

Unlike in Singapore or Malaysia, English in Thailand is far from being its second language; it has been taught as a foreign language since its inception and it still is today. Thai students have been taught English as a foreign language. Standard Thai has been and still is the most important language in the Thai society. There are other foreign languages such as French, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese, among others. Lately, Chinese has become the second most popular foreign language among Thai learners. Kachru (1985) describes the spread of English in terms of three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle.

Figure 1 Three Circles of English Use According to Kachru (1985)



Based on Kachru's model (1985), countries within the inner circle are the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, among others. They provide norms and standards of English uses. The outer circle includes countries with their own norms and strong characteristics such as Singaporean English and Indian English. Thailand is one of the countries in the expanding circle. It relies on the standards set by native speakers in the inner circle. English is considered a foreign language.

In Thailand, English has also been gradually perceived as a global language. English as a global language is more than just a language for global communication (Crystal, 1997). In many countries, English has become a status symbol (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994). Like in many other countries, the ability to speak or use English well in Thailand is seen as a means to enhance one's social status.

As English has become a global language, including its role as a language for academic purposes, coupled with the globalization of Thailand, Thai academics, in addition to good

knowledge of *Sanskritized Thai*, are required to know and use English well. Indeed, having sound English ability is one of the most important requirements for most Thai academics.

Nowadays, it is observed that English has permeated into all fabrics of the Thai society and culture, as evidenced by the greater amount of English words mixed with Thai words or phrases in Thai media (Kapper, 1992).

In 1992, a new organization was set up by the Thai government ---- the English Language Development Center, aiming to provide English language training for almost all professions in the kingdom. The following quote shows the main function of English perceived by a state authority, that is, English as a means for national development. The mission statement^{*}, in particular, reflects the many roles of English in the development of the country; it goes:

To promote the use of English in various professional fields, so that Thai professionals are equipped with skills and knowledge of English for the national development in various areas such as education, economy, and society.

Among the Thai academics, English is recognized as an academic language. In addition to utilizing the knowledge borrowed from the literature written in English, Thai academics generally use English words or terms in their communities. Loanwords (including loan-translated words or calques) have been used as a common practice. English, indeed, has become a language frequently used among Thai academics.

2.2 THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN THE THAI ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES

Like academics elsewhere, Thai academics, have been using English for various purposes. In fact, they have been relying on knowledge and research findings from the West, especially the English-speaking cultures such as the US, Australia, and the UK. Being able to use English for utilitarian purposes, in addition to having excellent knowledge and skills of *Sanskritized Thai*, has been recognized as an almost indispensable requirement for one's role as a Thai academic.

^{*} From the official website of the English Language Development Center at http://www.eldc.go.th/eldc3/page/general/about_us.jsp [20 November 2009]

An online announcement of the Language Institute of Chiang Mai University about a course on academic English* provides reasons why having sound English skills are important for their study.

For graduate study, in addition to learning the content of each field, students need to have reading skills necessary to read English texts for their education, researching sources of knowledge from various sources; they also need academic writing skills to write their works and to present their academic works.

There are similar training courses throughout Thailand. All graduate schools in Thailand require that candidates have necessary English skills and knowledge. Research on the learning process of Thai graduate students by Paitoon Silarat (BE 2543), for example, pointed out the need for English instruction, among others, for Thai graduate students, reasoning that they need English to access advanced and updated knowledge, which implies that students have English competence.

There are frequent discussions about the use of English among Thai academics. Research on the use of English by Thai academics, however, is still in its infancy. This study is probably the first attempt to investigate their English use across the four macro-skills, their identities, their perceived problems and difficulties, their coping ability, and their needs of English support.

2.3 LITERATURE ON THE USE OF ENGLISH AMONG MEMBERS OF THE THAI ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES

Kanittha Thongsathit (BE 2538) investigated 60 graduate students' problems in conducting their master's thesis and their solutions. She found that during the stage of thesis topics selection, the main problem found was their limited English language ability. This deficiency hindered their ability to find research topics.

Naparath Dhithiwattana (BE 2539) investigated and compared the frequency and the pattern of mixing of English and Thai by lecturers of different disciplines at Kasetsart University and to study the relationship between their attitudes and behaviors of code-mixing. With regard to

* The Language Institute http://www.li.chiangmai.ac.th/th/News/Academic_Thesis.html [20 November 2009]

the lecturers' attitudes toward code-mixing, it was found that their attitudes did not always correspond to their code-mixing behaviors; eight out of the sampled fifteen people had correspondence of attitude and behavior of mixing English in Thai. In other words, they code-mixed even if they considered the practice inappropriate.

Sriwilai Polmanee (BE 2544) conducted a study to find out about the needs and problems of the graduate students in two programs: the Thai language and the English language programs (n =60). The results showed that the students of the two programs were similar in their needs of the English language. The students recognized that learning English was important in their study at the graduate level.

Chirapan (1987) conducted a survey and found that among the four skills, reading was the skills that Thai graduate students needed the most. The research asked graduate students at Mahidol University about their needs, problems and instructor expectations in the academic use of English. The respondents included graduate students and lecturers in three main disciplines; Life Science, Physical Science and Applied Linguistics. Questionnaires were distributed to 154 graduate students and 71 lecturers. The findings indicated that the all four skills were necessary. Moreover, it was found that Life Science students needed to use English in a wider range of activities than other students did.

A survey conducted by Pinyosunun (2005) pointed out that one of the major causes of English language problems among Thai postgraduate students was in the lack of opportunities to use the language. The survey also noted that most students said they overcame problems in using English in an international program by self-learning. This suggested the lack of support structure for English use.

Praphasri Srino (BE 2543) investigated the use of the Internet for educational purposes of 565 graduate students at Chiang Mai University Information Technology. She found that one of the reasons for the infrequent use of the Internet was the lack of English language skills. A report on the national strategies for the development of quality education by the Office of Education Council of Thailand also pointed out that, among other things, many graduates from higher education institutions, needed to improve their language skills (Office of Education Council of Thailand, BE 2551).

The literature has reported the importance of English in graduate studies in Thailand. It must be noted that Thai graduate students have problems in their use of English, which negatively affected their ability to conduct research. Reading was found to be the most needed skill.

Summary

In summary, in Thailand, English is the most popular foreign language. It has been recognized as a means to access knowledge and exchange information between Thai and non-Thai academics. Previous research showed that reading was the most needed skill; the opportunities of English use were reported to be limited. What has been confirmed is that English is an important factor influencing the students' success of graduate study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter identifies the participants of this study and selection method; it explains the research instruments and measures to ensure their validity and reliability; it also describes how the data were collected and how they were analyzed.

3.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population of this study consisted of DPU postgraduate business students, namely MBA and DBA students.

Table 3.1: Population and Sample

Program	Population	Sample
Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)	30	13
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	700	118

As of the first semester of the academic year 2009, there were 700 MBA students and 30 DBA students. The sample size was 131 graduate students: 118 MBA students and 13 DBA students.

3.2 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS, DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTRUMENTS, AND DATA COLLECTION

3.2.1 Research Instruments

The instruments were the questionnaire and the guided questions of the roundtable discussions.

The questionnaire consists of seven parts:

1. General information
2. Identity and perception of the Thai academic community
3. Perceived English Competency
4. Use of English within the Community
5. Perceived Language Problems and Difficulties
6. Perceived Language Coping Ability
7. Perceived Support Needed from the University.

3.2.2 Development of the Research Instruments

Two measures were implemented to ensure the high quality of the data collection instruments: content analysis and reliability analysis.

After reviewing the relevant literature, the researcher constructed the questionnaire. For the analysis of the contents, the researcher asked a panel of four EFL experienced teachers to validate or invalidate each of the items within each construct. The index obtained was the ratio between what was regarded as being relevant and necessary for the measurement of a particular construct and what was deemed to be unnecessary and irrelevant. This technique is called Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio or CVR, which has been widely used among researchers. This CVR, hence, was used to determine whether the items were essential/necessary for the measurement of the designed construct.

The CVR values range from +1 (All of the experts agree that the statement is necessary for the measurement of the construct) to -1 (They all say that the statement in question is unnecessary). Therefore, the values that are closer to +1 indicate that the experts are in agreement that the item is essential to content validity. See Appendix A for the detailed report of the analysis.

Once the content analysis was completed, the remaining items were selected to form the questionnaire. The trial was conducted to analyze its reliability. Thirty DPU postgraduate students answered the questionnaire.

Table 3.2 Reliability of the Constructs within the Questionnaire

Constructs Within the Questionnaire	Trialed α	Actual α
The Use of Listening Skill with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	0.68	0.73
The Use of Speaking Skill with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	0.86	0.85
The Use of Reading Skill with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	0.86	0.83
The Use of Writing Skill with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	0.84	0.85
Perceived Problems in Listening	0.71	0.82
Perceived Problems in Speaking	0.78	0.78
Perceived Problems in Reading	0.82	0.80
Perceived Problems in Writing	0.74	0.83
Perceived Coping Ability	0.74	0.85
English Support from the Institution	0.85	0.77

3.2.3 Data Collection

A questionnaire was distributed to the MBA and DBA students who took courses during the second semester of the academic year 2008. The analysis was based on the data from 131 copies of the answered questionnaires.

Quantitative Data and Qualitative Data

Quantitative data were collected from parts 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed through the cooperation from the graduate school of Dhurakij Pundit university.

Qualitative data were collected from two sources: (1) Data from the open-ended questions (Part 2 of the questionnaire) and (2) Data collected from the two focus group discussions.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics: frequency distribution, percentages (%), arithmetic mean (\bar{X}), and standard deviation (SD), t-test One-way ANOVA, and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient were also used. Data from the open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively using the content analysis method.

3.4 CRITERIA FOR INTERPRETING THE FINDINGS

The following are the criteria for the interpretation of the results of the analyses.

3.4.1 Respondents' Use of English

Data analyzed were interpreted based on the following criteria.

Table 3.3 Criteria for Interpreting Respondents' English Use

Mean Range	Level of English Use
1.00 – 1.49	Very Low
1.50 – 2.49	Low
2.50 – 3.49	Moderate
3.50 – 4.49	High
4.50 – 5.00	Very High

The higher mean range (3.50-5.00) reflects the higher levels of English use. The lower mean range (2.49-1.00) reflects the lower levels of English use.

3.4.2 Perceived Language Problems & Difficulties in Using English

Table 3.4 Criteria for Interpreting Respondents' Problems of English Use

Mean Range	Level of Problems & Difficulties in Using English
1.00 – 1.49	Lowest
1.50 – 2.49	Low
2.50 – 3.49	Moderate
3.50 – 4.49	High
4.50 – 5.00	Very High

The higher mean range (3.50-5.00) reflects the higher levels of language problems. The lower mean range (2.49-1.00) reflects the lower levels of language problems.

3.4.3 Perceived English Language Coping Ability

Table 3.5 Criteria for Interpreting Respondents' Coping Ability

Mean Range	Coping Ability Level
1.00 – 1.49	Lowest
1.50 – 2.49	Low
2.50 – 3.49	Moderate
3.50 – 4.49	High
4.50 – 5.00	Very High

The range between 4.50 and 5.00 means that the respondents perceived themselves as having the very level of coping ability. The range between 1.00-1.49 means that they have the lowest level of coping ability.

3.4.4 Perceived Levels of Support Needed from the University

Table 3.6 Criteria for Interpreting Respondents' Needs for English Support

Mean Range	Level of English Support
1.00 – 1.49	Lowest
1.50 – 2.49	Low
2.50 – 3.49	Moderate
3.50 – 4.49	High
4.50 – 5.00	Very High

The range between 3.50 - 5.00 indicates that the respondents perceived that they need to receive high level of English support from the university. The higher mean reflects the higher level of support needed from the university. The range from 1.00-2.49 shows that they need

the lower English support from the university. In between, the range between 2.50-3.49 means that they need the moderate level of English support.

3.4.5 Criteria for Determining the English Proficiency

Table 3.7 Criteria for Determining the English Proficiency

Mean Range	Meaning
1.00 – 1.49	Very Poor
1.50 – 2.49	Poor
2.50 – 3.49	Average
3.50 – 4.49	Good
4.50 – 5.00	Very good

The higher mean range (3.50-5.00) reflects the higher level of perceived English proficiency; the lower mean range (1.00-2.49) shows that they perceive themselves as having the low level of proficiency.

3.5 ROUNDTABLE SEMINARS

Two roundtable seminars were conducted. The title was: *English for Graduate Study: What, Why, and How Much?*

The first roundtable seminar was the one for the MBA student participants. There were five participants and it was conducted on Sunday, August 2, 2009. The second roundtable seminar was attended by 4 DBA students, held on Sunday, August 9, 2009. Both roundtable seminars were conducted at DPU. They were to elicit qualitative data to help support the findings from the questionnaires. See Appendix 3 for summaries of the two roundtable seminars.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has explained who the research participants were and how the research instruments were developed and validated; how the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted. This research analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the research and discusses them. The topics under this chapter are the following:

1. General Information about Respondents
2. Respondents' Perceptions of Their Identity and the Thai Academic Community
3. Respondents' Perceived English Competency
4. Respondents' Perceived Level of English Use in Their Graduate Study
5. Respondents' Perceived Level of English Use Within Their Academic Community
6. Respondents' Perceived Problems in Their Use of English
7. Respondents' Perceived Coping Ability
8. Respondents' English Support Needed from the University
9. Results of Roundtable Discussions
10. Summary of Findings

4.1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONDENTS

Age

This study investigated 131 student participants: 118 MBA students and 13 DBA students. Of that number, 78 of them or 59.50 percent were female. The tables that follow present the general information of the respondents.

Table 4.1 Respondents by Age

Age Range	MBA	DBA	Total
20-25	25	-	25
26-30	43	1	44
31-35	16	4	20
36-40	10	8	18
>41	2	-	2
Total	96	13	109

Most students were between 26-30 years old. Only two of them were above 41 years old. The data in Table 4.2 also show the age difference between the two programs.

Table 4.2 Age and Gender Cross Tabulation

Age Range	Male	Female	Total
20-25	16	26	42
26-30	11	29	40
31-35	9	10	19
36-40	6	12	18
>41	1	0	1
Total	43	77	120

It was found that 69% of them (82) were in the age range of 20-30 years old. 15.8% or 19 of them were between 31-35 years old, and 15.0% were between 36-40 years old. Only one of them was above 40.

Table 4.3 Respondents by Occupational Background

#	Occupation	Frequency	Percent
1	Business Owners	15	12
2	Civil Servants	21	16
3	Employees of Private Organizations	46	36
4	State Enterprise Employees	12	9
5	Teaching Professional (Private)	4	3
6	Teaching Professional (Public)	5	4
7	Graduate Students	26	20
Total		129	100

In terms of occupational background, the majority of the participants were in the business sector. Forty-six (36%) were employees of private companies; fifteen (12%) were business owners. Twenty-six (20%) were graduate students. Nine (7%) were in the teaching profession.

Table 4.4 Respondents by Number of Years at DPU

No. of Years at DPU	Frequency	Percent
> 1	38	29
1-2	64	49
2-3	13	10
3-5	15	12
Total	130	100

Table 4.4 shows that Sixty-four respondents (49%) were those who have been studying at the university between 1-2 years. Thirty-eight of them (29%) have been studying at DPU for less than a year. Twenty-eight (22%) have been at DPU for more than two years.

Overseas Training Experience

Table 4.5 Respondents by Overseas Training Experience

Experience	MBA	DBA	Total
YES	16 (12.3 %)	8 (6.2 %)	24 (19%)
NO	101 (77.7%)	5 (3.8 %)	106 (81%)
Total	117 (90%)	13 (10%)	130 (100%)

Their overseas training, as the data suggest, was at the low level. Of the total respondents of 130, only 24 (19%) said they have experienced such the training. The majority of them, 106 or 81% said 'No'. It is worth noting that the ratio of DBA students who reported having overseas training experience and those who did not was higher than that of the MBA students (MBA = .016; DBA = 1.60).

The number of the participants who have experienced English language training overseas was even lower. Of the total number of respondents, only 5 of them (4%) said they have done so. The majority of them said they never had such the experience (125 or 96%).

4.2 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR IDENTITY AND THE THAI ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

In an effort to find out the respondents' perception of the role of English within the Thai academic community, the open-ended question was asked, "What do you think are the qualifications of Thai academics in business administration field?" Below are the results.

In addition to other qualifications such as knowledge and skills in management and theoretical knowledge, many of them also mentioned the English ability.

Based on the table below, it was found that only 31 MBA students (30%) mentioned English proficiency as a part of the qualifications of Thai academics. It is worth noting that the ratio of DBA students who explicitly mentioned English as one of the qualities of the Thai academics in business administration and those who did not was higher than that of the MBA students (MBA = .42; DBA = 1.20).

Table 4.6 Respondents' Mentioning of English as a Qualification of Thai Academics

Program	English Competency Mentioned	English Competency Not Mentioned	Total
MBA	31 (30%)	74 (70%)	105 (100%)
DBA	6 (55%)	5 (45%)	11 (100%)
Total	37 (32%)	79 (68%)	116 (100%)

The next question asked in this section was whether or not they considered themselves academics in the field of business administration. They were also asked to provide a reason.

Table 4.7 Respondents' Perception of Themselves as Thai Academics

Program	Member of the Academic Community	Not a Member of the Academic Community	Total
MBA	30 (29%)	71 (71%)	101(100%)
DBA	6 (55%)	5 (45%)	11 (100%)
Total	36 (32%)	76 (68%)	112 (100%)

Fifty-five percent (6) of the DBA students perceived themselves as Thai academics. For the MBA students, however, the percentage was much lower, at 30%.

The last question of this section asked them about their perception of themselves as part of the Thai academic community.

Table 4.8 Respondents' Perception of Themselves as Being a Part of the Thai Academic community

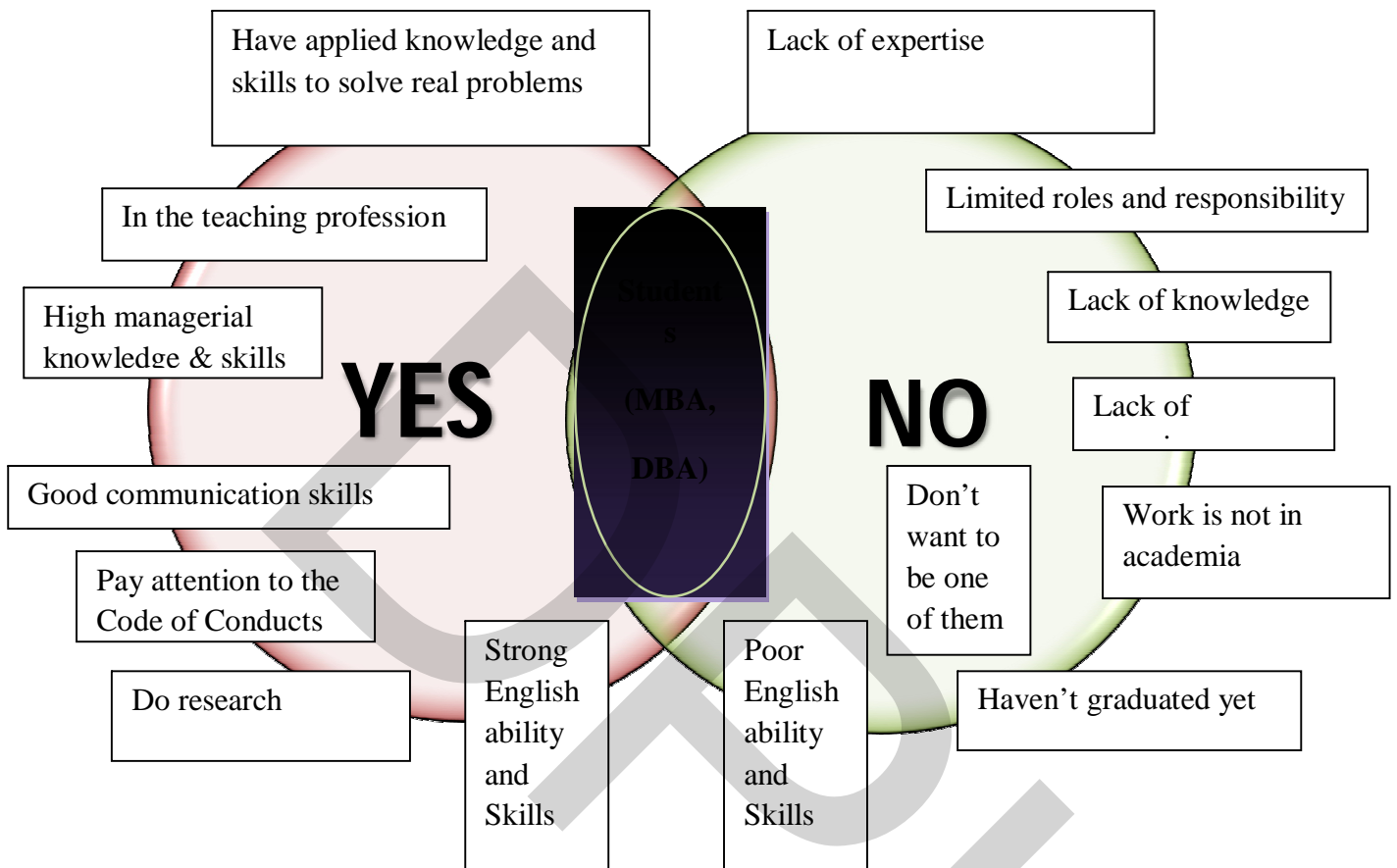
Program	Part of the Academic Community YES	Part of the Academic Community NO	Total
MBA	58 (60%)	39 (40%)	97 (100%)
DBA	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	10 (100%)
Total	65 (61%)	42 (39%)	107 (100%)

In response to the question "Do you consider yourself being part of the Thai academic community?" the majority of the student participants (61%) answered "Yes." Only 42 of them or 39 percent said "No".

In addition to asking the participants to state their perceived identity, they were also asked to provide reasons to substantiate their perceptions. The content analysis of the reasons given by the respondents to the question of being or not being an academic has revealed the discrepancies of their self-conceptions.

First of all, it was found that those who said that they were not academics were those that perceived themselves as having poor lower levels of English competency, lower levels of knowledge and skills, and less experience.

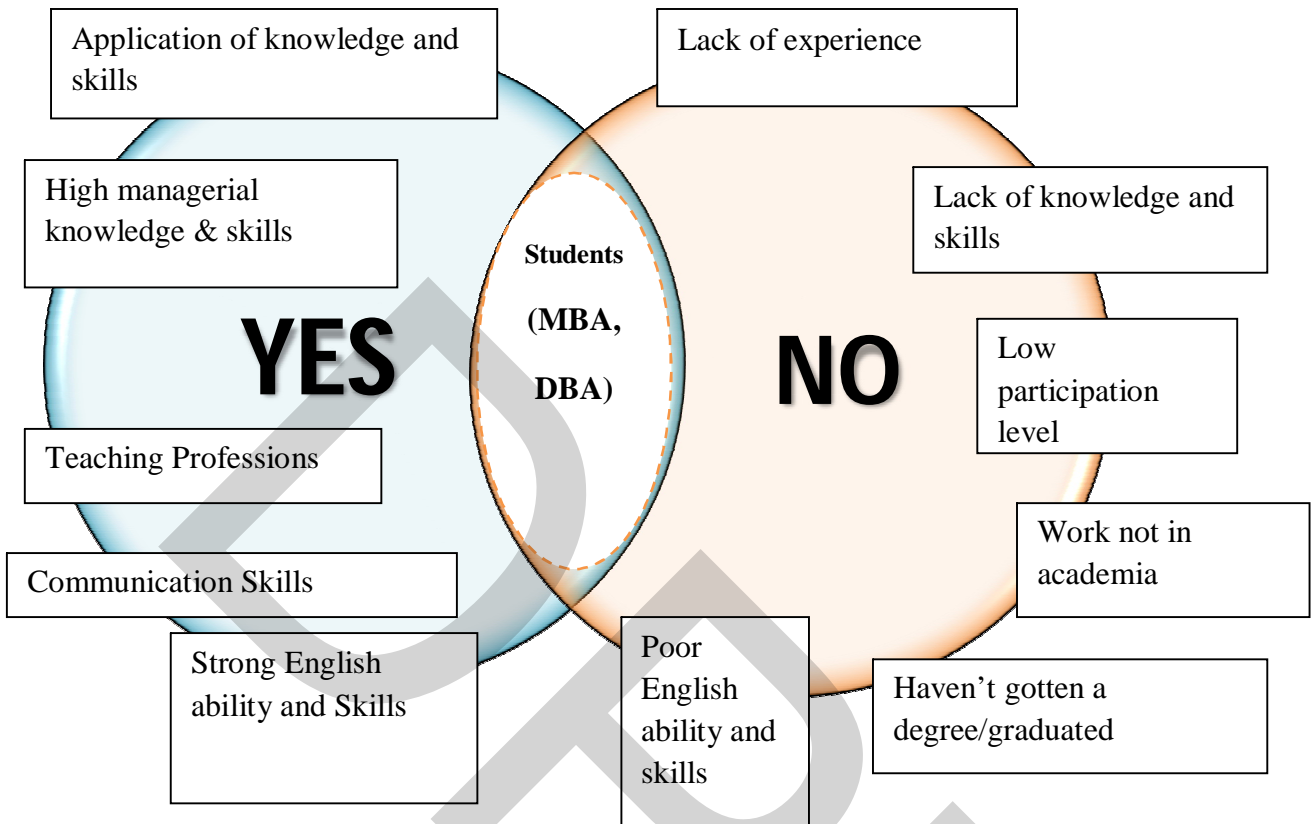
Figure 2 Respondents' Reasons for Being and Not Being an Academic



The above figure shows that the only commonality between those who said they were academics and those who said they were not was the fact that they were graduate students (MBA & DBA). Their other reasons, however, differed from each other. For example, those who perceived themselves as academics reasoned that they did so because they were in academia; they did research, possessed high managerial knowledge and skills. Those who said 'No' reasoned that they lacked experience and their work was not in academia. One of the reasons was English proficiency. Those who perceived themselves as academics perceived themselves as having high English skills and ability. However, those who said they were not academics mentioned that their English was poor.

It is worth noting that no one had explicitly mentioned the reason related to the public at large. This may reflect the emphasis of the university and the nature of the two programs, which is focusing on the individual progress and well being.

Figure 3 Respondents' Reasons for Being and Not Being Part of the Academic Community



The above figure shows that the only commonality between those who said they were academics and those who said they were not was the fact that they were graduate students (MBA & DBA). Their reasons differed from each other. The reasons were similar to the reasons given when asked whether they considered themselves as Thai academics. The two groups differed in their reasons cited. Again, English was mentioned as one of the criteria. But the lack of knowledge and skills was the most frequent cited reason for those who considered themselves not part of the community.

The last question of Part 2 of the questionnaire asks the respondents to explain why English is important for Thai academic in business management. Most of them said that English is necessary for Thai academics as it has become the global language. Textbook and articles are in English, so they need English to access the knowledge and information encoded there.

In sum, the respondents acknowledged the importance of English as a means to access knowledge and updated information written in English. Most of them perceived themselves as being part of the academic community.

4.3 RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED ENGLISH COMPETENCY

The student participants were asked to assess their English proficiency, skill by skill, followed by their overall self-assessment; a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very weak) to 5 (excellent) was used.

Table 4.9 Respondents' self-perception of English ability

Skill	N	Mean	Meaning
Listening	130	2.80	Fair
Speaking	129	2.65	Fair
Reading	130	3.16	Fair
Writing	130	2.75	Fair
Overall Proficiency	123	2.82	Fair

The above table shows the respondents' rating of their English proficiency. In general, the respondents rated themselves as having a 'fair' level of proficiency.

In terms of the student participants' listening ability, most of them (51.9) rated their listening ability as being 'fair'. Up to 29 percent rated their ability as weak and very weak. Most of them also rated their speaking ability as 'fair'; only 10 percent (13) said their speaking ability was good and excellent. For their writing ability, the majority of them said their ability was 'fair'.

Table 4.10 Weakest Skill by Program

Program	Weakest Skill				Total
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	
MBA	34 (30%)	43 (37%)	1 (1%)	38 (33%)	116
DBA	3 (25%)		1 (9%)	8 (67%)	12
Total	37 (29%)	43 (34%)	2 (2%)	46 (36%)	128

For DBA students, 67 percent of them (8 out of 12) reported that their weakest skill was writing; 25 percent (3) said that it was the listening skill. For MBA students, the speaking skill was mentioned as their weakest (37%). For DBA students, 67 percent of them (8 out of 12) reported that their weakest skill was writing; 25 percent (3) said that it was the listening skill. For MBA students, the speaking skill was mentioned as their weakest (37%).

Table 4.11 Best skill by Program

Program	Best Skill				Total
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	
MBA	25 (22%)	16 (14%)	61 (53%)	14 (12%)	116
DBA	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	7 (59%)	1 (9%)	12
Total	27 (21%)	18 (14%)	68 (54%)	15 (12%)	128

With regard to their reported best skill, it was found that both groups said it was the reading skills. In terms of gender, male and female students did not differ in their reported English competency.

Table 4.12 Perceived English Competencies by Program

	Program (N)	Mean	SD	Sig
Perceived English Competency	MBA (113)	2.86	.78	Not Sig
	DBA (10)	2.40	.96	

4.4 RESPONDENTS' USE OF ENGLISH IN THEIR GRADUATE STUDY

This aspect of English use was investigated by having the respondents answer the close-ended question: "Please identify the extent of your use of English in your graduate study."

Table 4.13 Respondents' Frequency of English use in their graduate study

Program	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
MBA	2 (1.7%)	27 (22.9%)	45 (38.1%)	30 (25.4%)	14 (11.9%)	118 (100%)
DBA	1 (8.3%)	-	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	5 (41.7%)	12 (100%)
Total	3 (2.3%)	27 (20.8%)	48 (36.9%)	33 (25.4%)	19 (14.6%)	130 (100%)

The majority of the respondents said they occasionally used English in their workplaces. Only 12.5% (17) said they often or always used it.

Table 4.14 Level of English Use in the Workplace

Program	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
MBA	19 (16.7%)	54 (47.4%)	24 (21.1%)	10 (8.8%)	7 (6.1%)	114 (100%)
DBA	3 (23.1%)	5 (38.5%)	5 (38.5%)	-	-	13 (100%)
Total	22 (17.3%)	59 (46.5%)	29 (22.8%)	10 (7.9%)	7 (5.5%)	127

4.5 RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED LEVEL OF ENGLISH USE WITHIN THEIR ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

The question to determine their English use within the academic community is: How often do you use English in your academic community? The results were as follows:

Table 4.15 Level of English Use within the Academic Community

Program	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
MBA	19 (16.1%)	41 (34.7%)	42 (35.6%)	9 (7.6%)	7 (5.9%)	118 (100%)
DBA	4 (33.3%)	6 (50.0%)	1 (8.3%)	0	1 (8.3%)	12 (100%)
Total	23 (17.7%)	47 (36.2%)	43 (33.1%)	9 (6.9%)	8 (6.2%)	130 (100%)

The mean of the 130 respondents who answered this question was 2.47, which was considered to be the use at the 'low' level. Only 13 per cent or 17 of them said they often or always used English in the community. The majority said they sometimes or occasionally used it.

Across the four skills, it was found that the respondents' use of English within their academic community was low ($\bar{X} = 2.20$). The use of listening skills was low ($\bar{X} = 2.16$, S.D .67); the use of speaking skills was very low ($\bar{X} = 1.91$; SD = .64). The use of reading skills was at the moderate level ($\bar{X} = 2.58$; SD = .74). The use of writing skills was low ($\bar{X} = 2.12$; SD = .78)

The use of English in the community of the two programs, MBA and DBA, was found to be similar. In other words, their use was not significantly different from one another's.

4.6 RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED DIFFICULTIES IN THEIR USE OF ENGLISH

In general, the respondents reported that they had problems communicating in English; the level of difficulties was moderate. Their difficulties spanned across the four macro-skills.

Table 4.16 Perceived Difficulties in English Use

Difficulties	Responses	Mean	SD	Meaning
Listening	131	3.25	.83	Moderate
Speaking	131	3.35	.75	Moderate
Reading	131	3.24	.71	Moderate
Writing	131	3.31	.79	Moderate
Overall	131	3.29	.79	Moderate

Moreover, it was also found that their perceived problems were positively correlated with each other. The correlations were found to be significant.

Table 4.17 Respondents' perceived problems in their English use

#	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Listening	1.00	.73*	.66*	.54*
Speaking	-	1.00	.68*	.61*
Reading	-	-	1.00	.68*
Writing	-	-	-	1.00

This confirms that the problems are across the four skills. An independent t-test shows that the two groups did not significantly differ in their perceptions. Both groups has similar problems using English, and the problems were at the moderate level ($\bar{X} = 3.28$).

Table 4.18 Perceived Difficulties in English Use by Program

	Program (N)	Mean	SD	Sig
Perceived Difficulties in English Use	MBA (118)	3.28	.65	Not Sig
	DBA (13)	3.38	.73	

It was also found that genders did not have a significant effect on their perceived English difficulties. The mean of this construct for male participants was 3.13, and for the female participants 3.38.

Table 4.19 Perceived Difficulties in English Use by Gender

	Program (N)	Mean	SD	Sig
Perceived Difficulties in English Use	Male (43)	3.13	.67	Not Sig
	Female (78)	3.38	.66	

4.7 RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED COPING ABILITY

Another aspect of the analysis was to investigate the respondents' perceived coping ability, that is, how well they can cope with the demands of English use within their academic community.

Table 4.20 Perceived Coping Ability

Coping Ability	Responses	Mean	Meaning
Listening and Speaking	131	3.20	Moderate
Reading and Writing	131	3.30	Moderate
Overall	131	3.26	Moderate

Based on the total 131 respondents, the overall mean of their perceived coping ability was 3.26, which was at the moderate level. Across the four macro-skills, their perceived coping ability was moderate.

4.8 RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED ENGLISH SUPPORT NEEDED FROM THE UNIVERSITY

This construct was determined from their responses to the following items:

- ❖ I would like the university to help me develop my knowledge and English language skills.
- ❖ My English language skills and ability are adequate; I do not need help from the university.
- ❖ The university should provide me more help to improve my English language skills.
- ❖ My English language competency is adequate to support my study and work in Thailand.
- ❖ Overall, I have received the adequate English support from the university.

They were asked to identify their attitudes towards each of the items above, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The higher mean reflects the higher level of perceived English support needed from the university.

Table 4.21 Perceived English Support

Item	Responses	Mean	SD	Meaning
I would like the university to help me develop my knowledge and English language skills.	131	3.70	1.04	High
My English language skills and ability are adequate; I do not need help from the university.	131	3.82	1.03	High
My English language skills and ability are adequate; I do not need help from the university.	131	3.83	.86	High
My English language competency is adequate to support my study and work in Thailand.	131	3.94	1.08	High
Overall, I have received the adequate English support from the university.	131	4.05	.86	High

Based on the table above, the mean calculated from the responses of 131 respondents answering five items of the construct was as high as 3.87 with S.D. of .70. This shows that, in general, the respondents perceived that they needed the high level of English support from the university.

4.9 RESULTS FROM THE ROUNDTABLE SEMINARS

Two roundtables were conducted in August 2009, the title of which was *English for Graduate Study: What, Why, and How Much?* The first roundtable was conducted on 2 August 2009, participated by five MBA students, facilitated by the researcher. The second one was organized on 9 August 2009, participated by four DBA students, also, facilitated by the researcher. Below is the summary.

1. English is Important, but...

All of them agreed that English competency was necessary for graduate study. Without strong knowledge and skills of English, they said they would face several problems.

One of them said that the university should have a gate-keeping measure when it comes to students' English competency, saying that:

I'd like to suggest that DPU should set a minimum standard like other institutions, say CU-TEP, to scan the students. This may help. Then we have them take a remedial course, like we have just discussed. In my opinion, the readiness of the students comes first.

How much English do they need to function well in the society? MBA students agreed on one thing, that is, English is a plus. They also need to have competency in the subject matters.

For me, the society may not expect an MBA graduate from a Thai program to have a high competency of English. They do, however, expect you to be competent in the subject matters of the content subjects and your ability to apply the knowledge and skills in real situations. English is a supplementary competence preferred by everybody. As WTC has mentioned, English is useful for your individual progress. If you don't have a high level of its competency, you are okay. An MBA graduate needs to be competent in the knowledge and skills of business. English is a plus.

For DBA, English is also optional.

I think what's more important is that they are good communicators. They may or may not know a great deal of English, but if their communication is successful, it is more preferable. My opinion is that if you are not good, but communicate effectively, you are better than when you are good, but poor communicators.

For some, high English competency was perceived to be optional. What's more important than having good English knowledge and skills is the effective communication.

2. Use of English & Coping Ability

For both graduate programs, MBA and DBA, as they were the Thai ones, the language of instruction is Thai. Unlike the graduate students at Mahidol University, they did not have to write their reports in English. This fact might be the cause of the low level of English use. Both groups, however, mentioned that their teachers or professors required them to use the textbooks written in English. So reading was the important skills. One MBA student had this to say:

English for graduate study, for me, is mainly about the use of reading skills - to read the textbooks we use. Even though we are in the Thai program, the textbooks are all in English. The lecturers' sources of references are from the texts in English.

Similarly, DBA students mentioned reading was the most frequently use skill.

We rely a lot on the reading skills as we have to read a lot of English texts. We need to read when we work on reports or our theses. If you have poor reading skills, your reports might be of low quality.

The lack of English support structure might have resulted in the students having to deal with the problems themselves. A DBA candidate, for example, said: "I try to cope with the problem by myself. Use a dictionary and translate."

3. Importance of Reading Skills

Reading was perceived as the most important skill by every participant of the roundtable seminars.

One MBA participant (MBA) said:

My impression is that postgraduate English, mainly, is mainly about the use of reading skills. So far, the textbooks our ajarns (lecturers) have used are written in English. Even though, the instruction is in Thai, but the texts are in English. Ajarns use them as their references. Other skills such as speaking and reading are rarely used.

For DBA, reading skills were very important for the study at the doctoral level

In my opinion, graduate-level English requires students to have skills in their use of English, across the four skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. I think at this level, reading skills are very important. As a DBA candidate, I have to read a lot of articles from journals in English. Without good reading and writing skills, it would be difficult to produce good research reports or theses.

They said they had to read textbooks assigned by the teachers. The difference between MBA and DBA students seemed to be the range of reading materials. DBA students said they often had to read academic journal articles, in addition to textbooks.

4. Technical Terms and Jargon

Most of the participants mentioned that they needed to understand technical terms and academic and business jargon.

In my opinion, English for graduate study may be viewed as general English, but it is more specific. As a DBA student, I read textbooks and articles from journals related to business studies. More business jargon and technical terms are used. Grammar is general, but vocabulary is more business-focused.

They said that even though the language of instruction was Thai, they had to know some technical terms or English loan words.

We give an oral presentation in Thai. Yes, there maybe some occasions where we have to read English terms aloud. We use English terms or expressions in our presentations. But the presentation is in Thai.

5. Perception of Thai Academics

One of the topics discussed was the perception of Thai academics. Are they academics?

Some of them said 'yes', many said 'no'. One of them said:

For me, I'd say 'No', but I'm in the process of becoming one. When I am one of the academics, I am sure I'll be ready.

When asked: Do you see yourself as an academic? one of them said she was in the process of becoming one.

No, I'm not at the present. But, surely, I'm part of the community. My ability and skills are not great, not good enough to be a guru or sage in marketing. But I'm developing myself all the time.

Another MBA said:

I'm a member, but I'm not a star or a significant member of the community, not yet.

As whether they perceived the existence of their own academic community, most of them said they recognized the community. An MBA has said:

Yes, I can see it. I can see that there are people who speak the same language as mine. We can share and exchange information and opinions. I'm sure there is such a community.

One of them said:

As we understand, if we speak the same language, we are members of the community. If we don't know, we cannot engage in conversations.

6. English Support

One of the issues discussed was English support. With regards to the provision of English support from the university, it was found that the support was inadequate. This reflects from the participants' opinions. For the MBA program, one course of English, Remedial English, was not adequate for the students to develop the language.

Poor English background is a big problem for many students. It is evidenced when they have to read thick textbooks. Another thing is that the time to learn English. I, personally, think that one remedial course is insufficient.

One of them suggested that DPU should require that their students have high levels of English competency: *"I'd like to suggest that the university use English, it's really necessary."*

How should the English be delivered? One kind of support should be the support ‘on the task’, to form a small group and read the texts and discuss with them. This is evidenced by an opinion of a DBA student who said that more English courses may not be an answer to the problem.

I think if the language institute has an English course, I guess there are few students who would participate. This is because we are more focused. I think what is best for us is when we get together as a group, and we read more. If there is a way to help read as we read our articles or texts, and exchange our ideas among us, Thai or in English. This, I'm sure, will help us better understand the English in our community.

Peering tutoring has also been mentioned as a means to support their English learning. An MBA student said that:

The problems would be solved by peer tutoring. We help each other, For example, WCR may be good at one particular topic, so he would be asked to tutor that topic. This is effective. Sometimes I don't have to read in English, I learn from his summary.

The results of the two roundtables added dimensions to the study, the qualitative information, which is rich in details. The results seem to confirm the results of the survey.

4.10 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table 4.22 Summary of Respondents' Use of Macro-Skills

#	Construct	Mean	SD	Meaning
1	Use of Listening Skills with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	2.16	.67	Low
2	Use of Speaking Skills with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	1.91	.64	Very Low
3	Use of Reading Skills with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	2.58	.74	Moderate
4	Use of Writing Skills with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	2.12	.78	Low

In terms of their use of English skills (macro-skills), it was found that the most frequently skills reported were the reading skills. This finding was not a surprise. The information from the two focus group seminars confirms this quantitative finding.

The use of writing and speaking skills were found to rank lower. Again the findings were consistent with those from the focus group seminars.

Table 4.23 Summary of Respondents' Perceived Language Problems

#	Construct	Mean	SD	Meaning
1	Problems in Listening Skills	3.25	.83	Moderate
2	Problems in Speaking Skills	3.35	.75	Moderate
3	Problems in Reading Skills	3.24	.71	Moderate
4	Problems in Writing Skills	3.31	.71	Moderate

The subjects said they had moderate level of language problems across the four macro-skills.

Perceived Language Coping Ability

The means was 3.26 with SD of .60. Their language-coping ability was moderate. The English coping ability of males and females were different from each other at the 0.05 level of significance.

Perceived Support Needed from the University The mean was 3.87 (SD = .70). Their level of need of institutional support was high. They needed more support from the university.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the results of the analyses. More than half of the respondents considered themselves part of the academic community. English was perceived an important aspect of Thai academics. However, the use of English was found be limited in domain and frequency. Theirs was limited to the educational context. Most of them perceived their English competency as being at the 'medium' level. The most used skill was reading. Their ability to cope with the language demands was moderate, and they needed a high level of English support from the university.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS

The discussions of the research findings are sequenced according to the research questions.

5.1 Perceived English Competence

One of the research questions was how the student participants perceived their English competency. The student participants perceived that they had a medium level of English competency. It was also found that the MBA and DBA students did not differ in their perception of their English proficiency. The mean of the MBA students (N=113) was 2.86 (SD=.78). This means that they perceived themselves as having an average level of English proficiency. The MBA students' perception was similar to that of the DBA's one: the mean of the DBA students was N=10) at 2.40 (SD=.96).

The fact that very few participants have self-rated their English ability as 'good' or 'excellent' provided useful information for program providers. Clearly, this finding signals that their English competency was insufficient to handle complex and advanced scholarship and research. Poor English skills have been reported by the Thailand's Office of Education Council as having a negative effect on the quality of Thai graduates (Office of Education Council of Thailand, BE 2551).

The respondents' English skills should be improved, as they are of significant factors in two spheres: study and employment. A newspaper report by Nanchanok Wongsamuth (15 December 2009) has quoted Yupadee Yudhanaraweesak, managing director of an executive recruitment agency Boyden Associates, as saying that, in 2015, Thailand will be disadvantaged by the limited English skills of its skilled workforce. A recent news article published online also stated that Thai graduates, in general, were weak at English skills (Barnes, 2005). The education establishment should be alarmed to learn that Thai graduates hoping to study overseas such as Australia or America would have problems using English in their studies. However, it is worth noting here that a big problem facing many international students in English-speaking countries is that they do not have adequate English skills to complete their studies (Baty and Caulcutt, 2005).

To be competent in English, as mentioned by many students during the roundtable seminars, may take time. It requires their active participation in the academic discourse community over a certain period. They need to engage in the academic English activities. Active engagement may refer to providing graduate students opportunities to learn from more experienced academics. This is consistent with previous research conducted by Somjit Kaewmanee (BE 2551) who investigated the problems of 81 graduate students in conducting their thesis at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University. The researcher found that the graduate students would like the professors offer them opportunities to take part in their research while they are taking their graduate courses. They said that such offer would allow them to gain direct experience before working on their research. This research has revealed that the respondents prefer more English, and the only remedial English available is inadequate.

5.2 Conceptions of the Thai Academics

Another research question asked was related to student participants' conception of the Thai academics in business administration. Most of the respondents surveyed did not perceive themselves as academics. However, most identified themselves as *part* of the academic community.

Their main reason (for 'No' to being an academic) was that they lacked the knowledge, abilities and skills required. Some of their reasons were as follows:

No, I do not think that I'm an academic. In my opinion, an academic is a person who works in academic-related areas. We are only students, and our aim is to use knowledge from this education to develop our organizations.

One of them stated this reason. "No, I'm still a student". Other reasons were: "*No, I haven't got the knowledge and ability required*"; "No, I'm still a student. Haven't graduated yet, and my knowledge is not adequate to qualify me as one of the academics".

In short, the respondents who said they were not academics had reasoned that they were still students and were not equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills.

The reasons for 'Yes; (that they considered themselves 'academics)': "Yes, but still lacking one qualification --- the (English) language ability". This may reflect the importance of English proficiency as one of the criteria for being an academic in the Thai academic

community. This belief is in line with the notion of English as a gate-keeping tool in many societies (Pennycook, 1994).

All participants of the roundtable seminars recognized that English as a global language necessary for Thai academics in business administration. They reasoned that textbooks and reading materials are mostly in English. In fact, several of them reasoned that the bodies and knowledge and theories are encoded in the English language. However, based on the same sources, most of them said that English is only one of the many things that they have to know. For example, one participant said, “Not just English, but English is one of the criteria. I mean you need to have knowledge of other things as well.” Similarly, another MBA said: “I’d find it not easy to engage in the community if we feel that we lack the ability and knowledge”.

What are the essential qualities of graduate students? A prominent Thai scholar, Dr. Vichit Sri-Sa-Arn, has outlined three qualities of a graduate study; one of them is the so-called ‘scholarship.’ He put it this way:

When we talk about graduate study, we often refer to characteristics, which I think are universal across all disciplines. ... The first characteristic is that at this level, the focus is on the creation of specialization, aiming to develop a specialist for a given field. ...The second is that such the study emphasizes the creation of ‘new knowledge’ through research process....The third is that a graduate study aims to create ‘scholarship’ in a person...that person would be a learned person, a person with scholarship....or to develop an academic or a scholar.

Even though English competency is important, it is perceived to be one of the many things deemed necessary for a person to identify him/herself as an academic. When designing a program or a curriculum, educationists and policy makers need to take a broader perspective when designing an advanced-level curriculum such as the MBA or DBA programs. The need seems to go beyond the traditional conception of English competency; it is evidenced from this research that what they also need to acquire is a group of academic discourses. English is just a part of the many forms of literacy, and it should be perceived in broader terms than the traditional conception of literacy as the ability to read and write, be it in Thai and in English. In order for a person to be a member of a discourse community, they need to use the same language as other members of that community (Gee, 1990). Several participants said that they recognized their academic community through the use of the same language --- business jargon and similar styles of writing and speaking, both in Thai and English.

Yes, I can see it (my academic community). I can see that there are people who speak the same language as mine. We can share and exchange the opinions. I'm sure my community exists.

5.3 English use within members of the Thai academic community

Despite the fact that English was perceived as an important aspect of the community, their use of the language was limited. Across the four skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it was found that the reading skill was the most frequently used skill according to the participants. Most of them rarely had to write in English, except for some key academic expressions and technical terms. Their levels of English use with other members of the Thai academic community were from low to moderate. The level of English use across the four skills was 'low'. This finding was similar to previous reports of Thai graduates' use of English (Pinyosunun, 2005).

Most of the students lacked overseas training. It was found that their level of such training was low. Of the total respondents of 130, only 24 (19%) said they have experienced training in countries outside of Thailand. The majority of them (106 or 81%) said they did not have such experience. The number of the participants who have experienced English language training overseas was also low. Of the total number of respondents, only 5 of them (4%) said they have done so. The majority of them said they never had such the experience (125 or 96%). The study found the relationships between the three domains of English use: for education, within the academic community, and at the workplace.

Table 5.1 Respondents' English use in three domains

Domains	Responses	Mean	SD	Meaning
Workplace	127	2.37	1.03	Low
Education	130	3.29	1.03	Moderate
Academic Community	130	2.47	1.05	Low

Table 5.1 shows that the majority of them used English for educational purposes ($\bar{X} = 3.29$). The correlation between the Use of English at workplace, the use English for education, and the Use of English within the community was statistically significant.

Table 5.2 Relationships between three Domains of English Use

Domains of English Use	Workplace	Education	Community
Workplace	1.00	.18*	.45**
Education	-	1.00	.44**
Community	-	-	1.00

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Most of the respondents moderately used English in their graduate study ($\bar{X} = 3.00$). Like other graduate students such as the study by Prinyajarn and Wannaruk (2008), the subjects of this study have limited opportunities to use and practice English in their graduate study.

5.4 Problems / Difficulties of English Use

Overall, they said that they experienced moderate difficulty communicating in English, across the four skills ($M = 3.29$). This is not a surprise as most of them said that their proficiency was at a medium level.

The finding is similar to a study by Porn Prommaharach (BE 2545) who investigated thesis writing problems of the graduate students of the Faculty of Science, Chiang Mai University. Among the top problems reported was their English ability. In particular, the students had difficulties using English to help them complete their research projects.

It seems obvious that the language problem affected their ability to complete their education. Research conducted by Sirirut Khoonchak (BE 2539) also reported that poor English reading skills negatively affected the graduate students' ability to complete their theses. Many graduate students at Mahidol University¹, for example, may struggle to cope with the demands of having to write their theses in English. The use of English in reading texts and others relevant to thesis writing was found to be one of the main problems preventing students from graduating.

¹ Graduate students of Mahidol University are required to write their long papers, theses, or dissertations in English. Any exception (in Thai) needs to satisfy the special circumstances that require the formal approval of the dean.

Source: <http://www.grad.mahidol.ac.th/grad/ThesisWriting/en/index.shtml> Retrieved on 20 December 2009.

Table 5.3 Relationships between the respondents' perceived institutional support, their perceived English competence, and their perceived coping ability

#	English Support Needed	Perceived English Competency	Perceived Coping Ability
English Support Needed	1.00	-.28**	-.39**
Perceived English Ability	-	1.00	.33**
Coping Ability	-	-	1.00

** = $P < .01$; * = $P < .05$

The table above shows that the three variables correlated significantly. English support was negatively related to their perceived English ability (-.28). This means that those students who perceived themselves as having lower levels of English competency were those who needed more English support from the program providers. The relationship between English support and their perceived coping ability was also negatively significant (-.39). This means that those whose coping levels were high were those whose need of English support from the university was low.

The significant positive relationship was found between the participants' perceived English competency and their coping ability (.33). The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). It implies that those who could cope well with the demands of English in their study were those whose English competency was at the higher level or vice versa. This finding may confirm a study conducted by Alisa Vanijdee (2009) on the strategies used by Thai students. She found that most Thai undergraduates have low meta-cognitive skills. These skills include their ability to plan and deal with challenges and difficulties.

The results of the two roundtables confirm the findings of previous studies. The participants recognized that their language background was inadequate to cope with the assigned reading,

especially thick textbooks. They called for more attention to English, asking for more English courses. This confirms the findings of the survey on their need of institutional support.

The finding was also confirmed by the data from the roundtables. One MBA student said: "*For the foundation English program, one course for the whole program is inadequate for us to be independent in our study that requires the frequent and advanced used of English.*"

Another aspect of English difficulties mentioned by the students was the need to have lexical competence (academic English). Many of the students, especially the DBA students, were from different occupational backgrounds.

This clearly shows that the English support structure was inadequate or insufficient to render support the challenges of English faced by many graduate students. One of them said he had to deal with the problem himself: "*First of all, I try to cope with the problem myself. Use a dictionary and translate*".

The student participants' use of English may reflect the influence of the Western knowledge on Thai academic culture. The heavy use of reading skills and the use of technical terms and jargon indicate that Thai academia in general relies on the knowledge and expertise from the West, mediated through the use of English. Sinlarat (2005) criticized the Thai academic culture of borrowing Western knowledge. He suggested a new direction and mindset, that is, that Thai academics should create their bodies of knowledge suitable for Thai society. In order to become a knowledge-producer society, the Thai academics need to be more confident in their use of English, especially the writing and speaking skills.

5.5 Coping Ability

As reported in the previous chapter, 131 respondents rated their English coping ability was at the moderate level ($M=3.26$). It was also found that MBA and DBA students did not differ in their coping ability.

Interestingly, it was found that the means of the coping ability of the male and female students were significantly different from each other at the confidence level of .05. The mean of the male students' coping ability was higher than that of the female students. The table below shows the data analysis of the respondents' English coping ability by gender.

Table 5.4 English Coping Ability by Programs

Construct	Program	Responses	Mean	SD
Coping Ability (Listening & Speaking)	MBA	118	3.19	.69
	DBA	13	3.55	.55
Coping (Reading & Writing)	MBA	118	3.28	.61
	DBA	13	3.44	.63
Overall Coping Ability	MBA	118	3.24	.61
	DBA	13	3.40	.53

Table 5.5 Gender and Coping Ability

	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	Sig. (2-Tailed)
English Coping Ability	Male	43	3.43	.55	.02*
	Female	78	3.17	.64	

* $P \geq .05$

This finding could explain the difference in perceived need for English support between male and female students.

5.6 Perceived English Support Needed from the University

This study found that the respondents needed high levels of support from the university ($M=3.87$, $SD = .70$). Moreover, the negative correlation between perceived support and their perceived English ability ($-.28$) seemed to suggest that there were some students who needed more support --- students with weaker language skills and ability.

What kinds of supports did they need from the university? One of them said that the support in terms of understanding key words should be useful for them.

We have been assigned to read journal articles related to our field of study, which has been helpful. What I like to see more, more English support from the university is the more emphasis on key concepts and technical terms. This would be helpful in our communication, as we need to use the same discourse.

As many of them mentioned the need to have adequate reading skills to handle the reading load, it seems that they need English support in terms of reading skills the most. But what manner of reading support was preferred? On-task support was the kind of support that has been mentioned. An DBA participant has explained what ‘on task’ means:

I think what is best for us is when we get together as a group, and we read more. If there is a way to help read as we read our articles or texts, and exchange our ideas among us, in *Thai, English or both*. This, I’m sure, will help us better understand the English in our community.

The above excerpt shows that what the graduate students need to master is a special kind of discourse ‘academic English’. They also need to socialize with other members, more or less experienced, of the academic community. They seem to say they need more than just ‘English grammar and vocabulary’ --- they need what Gee (1990) calls ‘discourse’. This need seems to go beyond the distinction between Thai and English. It seems to go deeper into the discourse level. It is similar to the embedment of knowledge manifested through certain use of words and expressions. This requires heavy and serious ‘socialized process’ and the support should be on-going.

5.7 Relationships Among the students’ personal factors and other factors: their use of English, perceived English ability, perceived problems and difficulties in English use, and English support

This study found that there were significant relationships between some of the students’ personal factors (age, gender, overseas training, and perceived identity) and other factors perceived English competency, perceived problems and difficulties, perceived coping ability, and perceived English support needed from the university.

Based on the analysis of quantitative data, this study did not find a significant relationship between the students’ occupation and their use of English. Neither did it find any relationship between their occupation and other factors.

Their ability to cope with English demands did not depend on their occupations. The table below shows the relationship.

Table 5.6 Relationship between Occupation and Coping Ability

Occupation	N	Mean of Coping Ability	SD
Business Owner	15	2.90	.55
Civil Servant	21	3.22	.53
Employee (Private Organization)	46	3.31	.65
Employee (State Enterprise)	12	3.21	.47
Teacher (Private University)	4	2.89	.83
Teacher (Public University)	5	3.65	.48
Student	26	3.46	.53

However, from the roundtable discussions, some students said that the English use mattered in their jobs. For example, one of the roundtable participants stated.

I work at an international college, so I have to use a great deal of English. When there is a meeting, and it's always conducted in English. I have to take notes in English and prepare a report in English.

Their ages and the number of years studying at the university were not significant in explaining the students' use of English and other activities. Results of the data from the questionnaire confirm the result of the roundtables.

Overseas Training Experience and Self-Perceived Competence

We found that overseas training experience and perceived English ability were significantly correlated. The mean of those respondents who had overseas training experience (N=23) stood at 3.17 (SD=.77); those who did not have such the experience outnumbered the former's (N=99) with the mean of perceived English ability at 2.74 (SD = .79). The difference

was significant at the 0.05 level. This may suggest that overseas training experience played a significant role in the students' self-esteem.

Table 5.7 Overseas Training Experience and Self-Perceived Competence

Overseas Training Experience	Responses	Mean of Self-Perceived Competence	SD
YES	23	3.17	.77
NO	99	2.74	.79

Perceived Identity and English Use

This study asked two questions concerning the students' perceived identities: (1) their perceived identity as an academic, and (2) their perceived identity as being part of the academic community. The distinction of the concept was proven to be valid and useful in explaining their use of English and perceived competency. The students' perception of themselves as 'part of the academic community' was found to have significant ability to differentiate their reported use of English in two domains: English use within the community and English in education. As the data from the Table 5.5 suggest, those who perceived themselves as being 'part of the community' said that they had used more English in their studies and in the academic community at large. However, the reported English use at work was not found to be significantly different.

Table 5.8 Perceived Identity and English Use in Three Domains

Domain of English Use	Part of Thai Academic Community	N	Mean	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)
Workplace	YES	63	2.46	1.11	.680
	NO	40	2.37	.95	
Academic Community	YES	65	2.73	1.09	.009**
	NO	42	2.21	.92	
Education	YES	65	3.56	.98	.005**
	NO	42	3.02	.92	

** $P \geq .01$

The table below shows the powerfulness of perceived identity to affect the respondents' language use. Though their self-perception as academics did not have any effect on their reported use of English across the three categories, but their perception of being 'part' of the community mattered a lot. This seems to indicate the different constructs between the two questions. It was found that their perception of themselves as academics was related to their perceived ability to cope with English challenges.

Table 5.9 Perceived Membership and English Coping Ability

An Academic?	N	Mean	S.D.	Sig. (2-Tailed)
YES	36	3.47	.51	.05*
NO	76	3.18	.64	

* $P \geq .05$

Seeing oneself as an academic is something positive. They would be able to solve problems. Most of them, however, felt they could cope well with the problems.

The role of perceived identity reported in this study may provide another example of the relationship between academic achievement and academic self-concept. The frequently used construct that has been linked to SC is academic achievement. Lyon (1993) has highlighted the importance of the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement, and stated that "academic self concept is theoretically more closely related to academic achievement than most other cognitive variables" (p. 203). The relationship between their overall perceived English ability, the perceived support from the institution, and their coping ability.

Gender and English Use, Coping Ability, and English Support

In terms of English use, it was found that males and females differed in their use of English in three macro-skills, listening, speaking, and reading.

Table 5.10 Gender and English Use

English Use	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Listening	Male	43	2.34	.69	.04*
	Female	78	2.08	.65	
Speaking	Male	43	2.10	.66	.01*
	Female	78	1.78	.59	
Reading	Male	43	2.80	.72	.02*
	Female	78	2.49	.71	
Writing	Male	43	2.23	.77	.29
	Female	78	2.07	.79	

* $P \geq .05$

It was, however, discovered that gender differences affected the respondents' needs of support from the establishment. Compared to the male students, females said they received the higher level of support from the institution.

Table 5.11 Gender and English Support

	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	Sig. (2-Tailed)
English Support	Male	43	3.64	.73	.00**
	Female	78	4.02	.66	

** $P \geq .01$

Female and male respondents rated their perception of support received as 'high'. However, their ratings differ significantly at the .01 level of confidence. Compared with males ($M = 3.64$), the females rated this category as high as 4.02.

One theory could explain the difference between the two genders' need of English support. In terms of language learning strategies, Madeline and Oxford (1988) have reviewed the roles of gender in second language learning, pointing out that females tend to use more social learning strategies, e.g. asking for help and clarification.

Moreover, the relationship between perceived English competency and support needed from DPU --- the correlation is negative and is significant at the .05 level (-.28). This means that the students need less support if they have better English competency. Those who said they needed more support were those whose English competency was lower.

Gender also plays a salient role in explaining the perceived coping ability. The English coping ability of males and females differ from each other at the 0.05 level of significance

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discusses the results of study. It was found that there were two personal factors, gender and identity, that played significant roles in many aspects of their language use. Gender influences the perceived English support and their perceived coping ability. Identity influences their perceived English coping ability, perceived English competency, and perceived English use in their graduate study. English was perceived as a useful tool and an important factor determining the self-perception of the graduate students. It is noted that the most frequently used skill among the students, is the reading skill, and the frequent use of technical terms portrays the hegemony of the Western knowledge in Thai academia.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the following topics: Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations.

6.1 SUMMARY

This study investigated the use of English among other members of the Thai Academic Community of Dhurakij Pandit University's graduate business students. The total of 131 postgraduate students (MBA and DBA students) participated in the study by answering the seven-part questionnaire. Qualitative data were also derived from two roundtable seminars conducted in August 2009. The statistics utilized in analyzing the data were percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test One-way ANOVA, and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient.

The five aims were 1) to investigate the characteristics of the postgraduate students' uses of English, 2) their perceived competency, 3) their perceived problems, 4) their perceived ability to cope with the problems, and 5) their perceived support received from the university. In particular, this research intends to find the complex relationship among their uses of English, their personal characteristics, their perceived English competence, and their perceived identity.

The key findings are summarized as follows:

1. Most of the student participants were female. Most were between 20-30 years old. Most of them did not have overseas training experience. In terms of their perceived English competency, most of them said their English competency was at the moderate level.

2. The majority of the respondents did not perceive themselves as Thai academics. Even though a low percentage did not think they were Thai academics, more than half of them regarded themselves as being part of the Thai academic community.
3. In general, the level of English use with other members of the Thai academic community was low. Their use of English was limited in domain and frequency. Most of them said they read to facilitate their graduate studies. It was not a surprise to find that they chose reading rather than writing or speaking as their greatest need. Data from the questionnaire were confirmed by the data from the roundtables.
4. The subjects said they had moderate level ($\bar{X} = 3.29$) of language problems across the four macro-skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The result from the roundtables confirms this survey.
5. In terms of their perceived language coping ability, the means was 3.26 with SD of .60. Their language-coping ability was moderate. This research has found that gender.
6. Perceived support from the university, the mean was 3.87 (SD =.70). Their level of support was high. This study shows that male and female students' perception of English support was significantly different from each other. The mean of the support received from the university among male students was lower than that of the female. This may suggest that both sexes prefer different modes of English support. Female students seem to prefer more English support.
7. The relationship between gender and support received from the university was identified. The mean of the female participants was higher than that of the males. Other factors investigated (program of study, the number of years studying at the university, age level, and occupational background) were not significant in their uses of English.
8. Gender was found to be a factor that has salient potent to explain many facets of English use.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this research has confirmed a number of hypotheses regarding young Thai academics. English competency, as one might expect, is perceived as one of the qualifications that characterizes the Thai academia. Despite this acknowledgement, the participants have reported that their use of English was limited in domains and frequency. In general, members of the Thai academic community seldom interact with each other in English, which is not a

surprise. The students reported that their competency was moderate, and they encountered the moderate level of challenges and difficulties. Most of them perceived themselves as being part of the Thai academic community. In particular, it has found that the two factors, identity and gender, seem to matter the most in explaining the characteristics of English use among the Thai graduate students.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS

Several of the research findings have the following practical implications.

1. The study found the low level of English use among the student participants. Their use of English was limited to their graduate studies. The program providers/developers should structure the learning environment to be more conducive to language development by, for example, organizing English workshops.
2. The study found the relationship between the student participants' perceived identity and their use of English for graduate study. Even though most of them did not acknowledge themselves as members of the community, most, however, recognized that they were part of the community. Complex as it may be, 'academic identity' seems to play a crucial role in many aspects of learning, especially the education at the tertiary level. This may suggest that program providers look beyond conventional teaching such as teacher-centered conventional classroom teaching. This may require that the university to provide more opportunities for them to go overseas to enrich their educational experience.
3. Even though the perceived English support from the university is high ($M = 3.8$), the study found that male and female student participants perceived English support from the institution differently. How male students seek English help and support from the institution may be different from how female students do. This study also found that male and female students perceived their English coping ability differently. Compared with the male students, females were less able to cope with English demands. As more adult males and females have opportunities to enhance their educational potential, program providers should recognize the different needs of the two genders; this may mean that their support structures will need to be adequate, flexible, and individualized in some cases.

4. Considering the actual need of the students to be competent in the reading skills (M=2.58), many of them felt that their English was insufficient to handle the demands of English. The program providers should offer a series of workshops to function as an integrative support structure.
5. Results of the two round tables show that technical terms and business jargon matter in their graduate learning and their ability to function in the community. Special attention needs to be paid to the introduction of these aspects.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This study only investigated 131 graduate students in one of the private universities in Thailand. Nine students joined the two roundtables. Thus, its generalizability is limited. Future studies should broaden the scope of the investigation. For example, a study should be conducted to compare the characteristics of English use between graduate students who need to prepare theses in English and those who have to do them in Thai.
2. This study revealed that perceived identity had the role in explaining reported language use and the level of language coping ability of the student participants. Further research should investigate the many facets of perceived identities and other variables, e.g. the relationship between identities and other variables such as attitudes and motivation.
3. The present study has reported that the level of English use of the student participants was at the low level. This seems to confirm the current state of English use among postgraduate students in Thailand. (A small percentage of them said they had overseas language training experience). The program providers should create conditions where they are required to use more English in their postgraduate study. The model to be avoided seems to be the one that isolates English from the rest of the curriculum. Many students explained that English is needed in all subjects. The support they need should be integrated.
4. Future research should investigate the effectiveness of English content-based curriculum, as it has the potential to respond many of the postgraduate students' needs, including the need to be competent in the jargon of the field.

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Appendix A

Content Validity Analysis



The panel of 4 EFL specialists was asked to consider each item of the questionnaire. The names are as follows:

Dr Srawut Na Pattalung, Dr Samorn Ketsom, Asst. Prof. Dr. Kedsuda Ratchadavisitkul, and

Dr Intira Jarujinda

Part 1: English Use within the Academic Community

Please identify whether or not each item is necessary for the measurement of the level of the English use of the students with other members of the Thai academic community.

Use of Listening Skills

#	Listening	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I attend/give an academic presentation given in English.	4	0	1.00
2	I listen to a radio program presented in English.	4	0	1.00
3	I participate in a seminar or a conference conducted in English.	4	0	1.00
4	In general, I listen to English used by other members of my academic community.	4	0	1.00

Use of Speaking Skills

#	Speaking	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I converse in English with other students.	4	0	1.00
2	I converse in English with the teachers/lecturers.	4	0	1.00
3	I give an oral presentation in English.	4	0	1.00
4	I speak in English with my classmates.	4	0	1.00
5	I present an academic paper in English.	4	0	1.00
6	In general, I speak in English with other members of the academic community.	4	0	1.00

Use of Reading Skills

#	Speaking	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I read academic articles written in English.	4	0	1.00
2	I read English newspapers.	4	0	1.00
3	I read textbooks written in English.	4	0	1.00
4	I read the information written in English on the Internet.	4	0	1.00
5	In general, I read many types of texts written by	4	0	1.00

	other members of the academic community.			
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Use of Writing Skills

#	Speaking	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I write a report in English.	4	0	1.00
2	I write an academic paper in English.	4	0	1.00
3	I write an assignment in English.	4	0	1.00
4	I write e-mails in English to communicate with my classmates and teachers.	4	0	1.00
5	I write short notes and memos in English.	3	1	.75
6	Overall, I write in English to communicate with other members of the academic community.	4	0	1.00

Part 2: Perceived Problems in English Use

As an EFL/ESL specialist, please identify whether or not each item is necessary for the measurement of the student participants' perceptions of their own English problems and difficulties. Please mark (X) in the space provided.

Problems in the Use of Listening Skills

#	Listening	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I often have problems when I converse with other members of the academic community in English.	4	0	1.00
2	When I participate in an academic presentation given in English, I have difficulties following it.	4	0	1.00
3	I rarely have problems when I listen to other people talking in English.	4	0	1.00
4	I usually have difficulties following the lectures in English.	4	0	1.00
5	I often have difficulties following other students when they speak in English.	3	1	.75
6	In general I have difficulties in my listening skills when I communicate with other members of the academic community.	3	1	.75

Problems in the Use of Speaking Skills

#	Speaking	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I can speak English fluently.	4	0	1.00
2	I need to improve my English speaking skills.	4	0	1.00
3	I try to avoid speaking in English with native speakers.	4	0	1.00
4	I feel uneasy when I speak English.	3	1	.75
5	I often have problems when I give a presentation in English.	3	1	.75
6	In general, I have problems and difficulties speaking in English with other members of my academic community.	3	1	.75

Problems in the Use of Reading Skills

#	Reading	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I have problems and difficulties reading English texts and have a real need to improve my reading skills.	4	0	1.00
2	I have problems understanding various English text types such as textbooks, journal articles, and news articles.	4	0	1.00
3	I have the ability to read and understand texts in English.	4	0	1.00

4	I try to avoid reading English texts.	4	0	1.00
5	I like reading in English.	3	1	0.75
6	I enjoy reading English texts.	3	1	0.75
7	In general, I have problems understanding English texts often used in my academic community.	3	1	0.75

Problems in the Use of Writing Skills

#	Writing	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I often have problems and difficulties writing in English.	4	0	1.00
2	I feel proud of my English writing skills.	4	0	1.00
3	I feel that my writing skills are inadequate when I have to write anything in English.	3	1	0.75
4	I can write an academic article in English if I am given editing help.	4	0	1.00
5	I feel uneasy when I have to write in English.	4	0	1.00
6	I try to avoid writing in English.	4	0	1.00
7	In general, I have problems writing in English for communication and use within my academic community.	4	0	1.00

Part 4: Perceived Coping Ability

As an EFL/ESL specialist, please identify whether or not each item is necessary for the measurement of the student participants' perceptions of their ability to cope with their own English problems and difficulties. Please mark (X) in the space provided.

#	Listening-Speaking	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I have effective ways to solve my listening and speaking problems.	4	0	1.00
2	I always attempt to solve my listening-speaking problems.	4	0	1.00
3	I am able to deal with my English listening-speaking problems and difficulties.	4	0	1.00
4	I believe that I can improve my own listening-speaking problems.	4	0	1.00

#	Reading-Writing	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I have effective ways to deal satisfactorily with my own reading-writing problems and difficulties.	4	0	1.00
2	I almost always make efforts to solve my English reading and writing problems.	4	0	1.00
3	I have an ability to deal satisfactorily with my reading and writing problems.	4	0	1.00
4	I believe that I can improve my reading and writing skills.	4	0	1.00

Part 5: Perceived English Supported Needed from the University

As an EFL/ESL specialist, please identify whether or not each item is necessary for the measurement of the student participants' perceptions of English support from the university. Please mark (X) in the space provided.

#	Item	Necessary	Unnecessary	CVR Ratio
1	I would like the university to step in and help me develop my knowledge and English language skills and ability.	4	0	1.00
2	I would like the university to provide me with English support so that I can present a paper in English.	4	0	1.00
3	My English language skills and ability are adequate; I do not need further help or support from the university.	4	0	1.00
4	I would like the university to help me improve my English so that I can write an abstract in English.	4	0	1.00
5	I would like the university to give me English support so that I can write a thesis in English.	4	0	1.00
6	I really need English support from the university.	4	0	1.00
7	The university should work harder to help me improve my English language skills and ability.	4	0	1.00
8	English language development is my own responsibility.	4	0	1.00
9	My English language ability is adequate to support my study and work in Thailand.	4	0	1.00
10	Overall, I have received adequate support to develop my language skills.	4	0	1.00

Appendix B
Questionnaire





English Department, Language Institute

Dhurakij Pundit University, 110/1-4 Prachachuen Road, Lak Si, Bangkok 10210,

www.dpu.ac.th

To Postgraduate Students, Dhurakij Pundit University
 Subject Request for Research Cooperation
 Attachment Questionnaire

My name is Janpha Thadphoothon, a researcher working on a research project titled *The Use of English with Other Members of the Thai Academic Community among Dhurakij Pundit University's Postgraduate Business Students*. The aims of the research are to (1) investigate the post-graduate students' perceived English ability, (2) investigate the postgraduate students' conception of the Thai academics and their perceived identities, (3) investigate the scope and extent of DPU postgraduate students' use of English with other members of the Thai academic community, (4) identify the main problems arising from their use of English within the Thai academic community, (5) identify the students' perceived coping ability, (6) investigate the relationship between the students' personal factors, their perceptions, and the factors related to language use, and (7) find out about the support they needed from the institution regarding the training of English.

This questionnaire has seven parts: (1) General Information, (2) Identity and Perception of the Thai Academic Community, (3) Perceived English Competency, (4) Use of English within the Community, (5) Perceived Language Problems, (6) Perceived Language Coping Ability, (7) Perceived Support from the University.

This study defines the term 'the academic community in business administration' as a group of individuals, including graduate students (MBA & DBA), lecturers, researchers, business people, academics in the field of business administration or related fields, be they in the governmental or private sector.

No risk or discomfort from participating in this research project is anticipated. The findings of this research will generally be presented as an article in a refereed paper and/or at conferences. Your responses will be kept in strict confidential.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

(Dr Janpha Thadphoothon)

Researcher

Part 1: Respondents' Personal Details

My study program is (Please mark X)MBA.....DBA.

I am (Please mark X) ___ 20-25 years old ___ 26-30 years old ___ 31-35 years old ___ 39-40 years old ___ 40 years old or above

I have been studying at this university for ... (Please mark X) ___ less than 1 year ___ 1-2 years ___ 2-3 years ___ 3-5 years

Gender: ___ Male ___ Female

Please identify your occupation:

___ Owner of a business

___ A civil servant

___ An employee of a private company

___ An employee of a state enterprise

___ A teacher/lecturer (Private)

___ A teacher/lecturer (Government)

___ A graduate student (not working yet)

Others (Please specify) _____

How frequently do you use English in your workplace? (Choose one answer only)

_____ Never (0%)

_____ Rarely (1-20%)

_____ Sometimes (21-50%)

_____ Often (51-80%)

_____ Always (81-100%)

Have you ever attended or participated in a training program conducted overseas?

(Please mark X) _____ YES _____ NO. (If Yes), which
country(ies)_____ Length of Stay:_____

Have you ever been overseas to learn English? (Please mark X) _____ YES

_____ NO. (If Yes), which country (ies)_____ Length of
Stay:_____

Part 2: Identity and Perception of the Thai Academic Community

The questions in this part deal with your perceived identity, that is, how you see yourself as an academic or part of the Thai academic community. Please write your answer in the space provided.

This study defines the term ‘the academic community in business administration’ as a group of individuals, including graduate students (MBA & DBA), lecturers, researchers, business people, academics in the field of business administration or related fields, be they in the governmental or private sector.

To you, what are the key qualifications of a Thai academic in the field of business administration?

Do you consider yourself **an academic** in business administration? Why/Why not?

Do you consider yourself a part of the Thai academic community of business administration? Why/Why not?

Why is having English skills and ability necessary for Thai academics in the field of business administration?

Part 3: Perceived English Competency

Please evaluate your own English competency (ability and skills) by marking X in each of the category.

Listening

_____ : Very Weak

_____ : Weak

_____ : Fair

_____ : Good

_____ : Excellent

Speaking

_____ : Very Weak

_____ : Weak

_____ : Fair

_____ : Good

_____ : Excellent

Reading

_____ : Very Weak

_____ : Weak

_____ : Fair

_____ : Good

_____ : Excellent

Writing

_____ : Very Weak

_____ : Weak

_____ : Fair

_____ : Good

_____ : Excellent

Globally (In General)

_____ : Very Weak

_____ : Weak

_____ : Fair

_____ : Good

_____ : Very Good

Your English grade at DPU is (Please mark X) (Note: This question is optional.)

___ A

___ B

___ C

___ D

F

S

U

I have not taken the course

Which of the following skills is considered your weakest? (Choose only one).

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

Which of the following skills is considered your best (strongest)? (Choose only one).

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

How often do you use English in your graduate study (Choose only one)?

Never (0%)

Rarely (1-20%)

Sometimes (21-50%)

Often (51-80%)

Always (81-100%)

How often do you use English in your academic community (Choose only one)?

Never (0%)

Rarely (1-20%)

Sometimes (21-50%)

Often (51-80%)

Always (81-100%)

Part 4: English Use Within the Academic Community

For each of the given items, please select one of the five options that best represents your experience. The five options are: (1) Never (0%), Rarely (1-20%), (3) Sometimes(21-50%), (4) Often(51-80%), and (5) Always (81-100%).

Listening Skills						
#	Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I attend/give an academic presentation given in English.					
2	I listen to a radio program presented in English.					
3	I participate in a seminar or a conference conducted in English.					
4	In general, I listen to the use of English by other members of your academic community.					

Speaking Skills						
#	Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I converse in English with other students.					
2	I converse in English with the teachers/lecturers.					

3	I give an oral presentation in English.					
4	I speak in English with my classmates.					
5	I present an academic paper in English.					
6	In general, I speak in English with other members of the academic community.					

Reading Skills						
#	Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I read academic articles written in English.					
2	I read English language newspaper.					
3	I read textbooks written in English.					
4	I read the information written in English on the Internet.					
5	In general, I read many types of texts written by other members of the academic community.					

Writing Skills						
#	Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I write a report in English.					
2	I write an assignment in English.					
3	I write e-mails in English to communicate with my classmates and teachers.					
4	I write short notes and memos in English.					
5	Overall, I write in English to communicate with other members of the academic community.					

Part 5: Perceived Problems in English use

For each item/statement, please rate your level of agreement-disagreement by marking X in the cell provided.

Perceived Problems in Listening Skills						
#	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I often have problems when I converse with other members of the academic community in English.					
2	When I participate in an academic presentation given in English, I have difficulties following it.					
3	I rarely have problems when I listen to other people talking in English.					
4	I usually have difficulties following the lectures in English.					
5	I often have difficulties following other students when they speak in English.					
6	In general I have difficulties in my listening skills when I communicate with other members of the academic community.					

Perceived Problems in Speaking Skills						
#	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I can speak English fluently.					
2	I need to improve my English speaking skills.					
3	I try to avoid speaking in English with native speakers.					
4	I feel uneasy when I speak English.					
5	I often have problems when I give a presentation in English.					
6	In general, I have problems and difficulties speaking in English with other members of my academic community.					

Perceived Problems in Reading Skills						
#	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I have problems and difficulties reading English texts and have a real need to improve my reading skills.					
2	I have problems understanding various English text types such as textbooks, journal articles, and news articles.					
3	I have the ability to read and understand texts in English.					
4	I try to avoid reading English texts.					
5	I like reading in English.					
6	I enjoy reading English texts.					
7	In general, I have problems understanding English texts often used in my academic community.					

Perceived Problems in Writing Skills						
#	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I often have problems and difficulties writing in English.					
2	I feel proud of my English writing skills.					
3	I feel that my writing skills are inadequate when I have to write anything in English.					
4	I feel uneasy when I have to write in English.					
5	I try to avoid writing in English.					
6	In general, I have problems writing in English for communication and use within my academic community.					

Part 6: Perceived Language Coping Ability

The items/statements in this part aim to illicit your perceived English coping ability or your ability to deal with the difficulties and challenges when you use English to service your graduate study.

For each item/statement, please rate your level of agreement-disagreement by marking X in the cell provided.

Perceived Coping Ability						
#	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I have effective ways to solve my listening and speaking problems.					
2	I am able to deal with my English listening-speaking problems and difficulties.					
3	I believe that I can improve my own listening-speaking problems.					
4	I have effective ways to deal satisfactorily with my own reading-writing problems and difficulties.					
5	I almost always make efforts to solve my English reading and writing problems.					
6	I have an ability to deal satisfactorily with my reading and writing problems.					
7	I believe that I can improve my reading and writing skills.					

Part 7: Perceived Support Received from the University

The items/statements in this part aim to illicit your perceived English support from the university. For each item/statement, please rate your level of agreement-disagreement by marking X in the cell provided.

Perceived English Support						
#	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I would like the university to step in and help me develop my knowledge and English language skills and ability.					
2	My English language skills and ability are adequate; I do not need further help or support from the university.					
3	The university should work harder to help me improve my English language skills and ability.					
4	My English language ability is adequate to support my study and work in Thailand.					
5	Overall, I have received adequate support to develop my language skills.					

Appendix C

Summary of Roundtable Seminars



Note: Two roundtable seminars were conducted. The title of the seminars was English for the Graduate Study: What, Why, and How Much?

Sunday, August 2, 2009 [MBA] Sunday, August 9, 2009 [DBA]

The two roundtable seminars were conducted at DPU.

1. MBA Roundtable
2. DBA Roundtable

The audio-taped roundtable seminars were transcribed into Thai. The transcription has been translated into English, then it was summarized.

MBA Roundtable

Note: All names of the participants are pseudonyms except the researcher (Janpha).

Janpha:

- Let me first introduce myself. My name is Janpha Thadphoothon. At present, I'm an English teacher from the English Department of this university. I've taught a few English courses at the postgraduate level --- the DBA (Doctor of Business Administration). This roundtable seminar is part of a study titled *The Use of English Among Members of the Thai Academic Community of Dhurakij Pandit University's Graduate Business Students*. My research participants are MBA and DBA students of this university (DPU).
- The topic for the roundtable seminar today is *English for Graduate Study What, Why and How Much* --- To define what English for postgraduate study means, why it is important, and the term 'how much' means how much English graduate students should know. *How much here means How much English do you need?* It also means "How much time do we need to spend learning or practicing it in order to become competent users of the language?"
- This is the theme and topics for our roundtable seminar. What I would like to do is to exchange opinions on the mentioned topics and related issues.
- Firstly, what do you think about the term 'English for graduate study'? What's it all about?

PJN:

- English for graduate study, for me, is mainly about the use of reading skills --- to read the textbooks we use. Even though we are in the Thai program, the textbooks are all in English. The lecturers' sources of references are from the texts in English. Though other English skills are important such as speaking and writing, they are rarely used by us.

Janpha:

- So for you PJN, the most needed skill is reading. You don't have to use productive skills like speaking and writing. Am I right?

PJN:

- Speaking and writing skills are not directly required in my study. But for my work, I need to use them. I'm working for an international college of the university, so I have to use quite a great deal of English, including speaking and writing skills.

Janpha:

- That's why we have an expression in Thai 'to read text'. To อ่าน text for graduate students means to read textbooks written in English. Usually, lecturers assign their students to read texts before class for discussion.

WCR:

- In addition to reading skills, I think knowledge of grammar is also very important for us. When we read texts, we need to apply the knowledge of grammar to help us read better, like, we have to summarize main ideas. We also need to translate some ideas and put them in Thai.

Janpha:

- Do you mean when you read texts, you need to summarize them for main ideas, which requires a knowledge of grammar?

WCR:

- Exactly. Moreover, we also need to understand the meaning of the vocabulary and jargon, as well as other technical terms.

Janpha:

- You've mentioned the term vocabulary. And we have come to the point where we realize that reading skills are important for graduate study, so are grammar and

knowledge of vocabulary, including technical terms. What do you think about this, NPW?

NPW:

- I strongly agree with what PJN and WCR have just said. At the graduate degree level, the instructional language involves more use of English, and the difficulty level is higher than the level of the undergraduate degree. This reflects in the use of English textbooks.

Janpha:

- With regards to your reading skills, you have to read challenging texts written in English, most of you, I guess, read and help yourselves by using a dictionary. If you still do not understand, you often ask for help from classmates. Still, if your mates cannot answer or help you, you opt to the assistance of the teachers. As for speaking skills, you rarely use them. I want you to say something about the speaking-listening skills. I mean, are they necessary?

WCR:

- We used speaking-listening skills when we did the remedial course.

Janpha:

- You did? Can you please tell me about it?

WCR:

- It's a required course. We had to take an English course and the teacher was not a Thai English teacher, so we had to use English all the time.

Janpha:

- The teacher did not speak in Thai at all?

WCR:

- That's right.

Janpha:

- But that's limited to the classroom only, am I right?

WCR:

- Yes, only in the classroom.

Janpha:

- Apart from one remedial course, you don't have to use any speaking skills on other subjects, as the language of instruction is entirely in Thai.

WCR:

- That's right.

PJN:

- For example, we give an oral presentation in Thai. Yes, there maybe some occasions where we have to read English terms aloud. We use English terms or expressions in our presentations. But the presentation is in Thai.

Janpha:

- PJN has just mentioned one characteristic of English use. The practice of code-switching, that is, the mixing of Thai and English. In many cases, academics code-switch from Thai to English. One quality of the use of English at this level, for me, is to code-switch correctly and appropriately. You may not have to speak English, you, however, need to code-switch, in writing and speech. For the writing skills, you rarely use them, is that right?

NPW:

- We rarely have to write in English.

Janpha:

- Can you tell me about the use of writing skills in your remedial English course?

NPW:

- Of course, we had to write or do exercises given by the teacher in the English language. In other content courses, we use Thai. We write assignments and give presentations in Thai. All in Thai. It's a Thai program, anyway.

Janpha:

- How about you PWD? In work, how often do you write in English?

PWD:

- I rarely do. I write short notes such as leaving notes to foreign teachers.

Janpha:

- Let me put it this way. In work, all of you write? How often do you have to do it?

PJN:

- My case is special, as I am working with the expats, and English is used most of the time. The meetings are in English, and I take notes in English, including the meeting minutes and agendas.

Janpha:

- Do you have to take minutes?

PJN:

- Minutes of meeting are in English, which is quite challenging. This is part of my responsibilities.

Janpha:

- Thank you. Let's move on to the next topic. It's about the use of English at the graduate level. In your opinion, how much English, I mean how often do you use it in your study?

PJN:

- Do you mean how often do we use English? I think we use it quite often. Some students are okay with that; however, some MBA students have not opened their minds to English. This results in the use of Thai handouts by some teachers. However, most teachers use English in their handouts, which is okay for those who are open-minded. Those who have not opened their minds to this kind of learning, in my opinion, often feel bored and unmotivated. Yes, we do use a lot of English.

Janpha:

- You mean even though the handouts are in Thai, the technical terms are mostly in English?

PJN:

- Yes, some of them.

Janpha:

- Is there a case where the teacher uses English? I mean what's on PowerPoint slides, but the explanation is in Thai. Is this the case?

PJN:

- PowerPoint slides and texts are mostly in English.

Janpha:

- And teacher explains the slides in Thai, right?

PJN:

- That's right.

Janpha:

- Some students have problems following the teachers, I think.

PJN:

- They do. I know some of them, so I know they have problems.

Janpha:

- And how do they deal with the problems?

PJN:

- The problems would be solved by peer tutoring. We help each other, For example, WCR may be good at one topic, so he would be asked to tutor that topic. This is effective. Sometimes I don't have to read in English, I learn from his summary.

Janpha:

- That's more like solving problems through group activities. Did you study English with any native speaker?

PJN:

- Yes, we did. For our first English course, we studied with Mary Ann. But it was an introductory course.

Janpha:

- It was in an English class, right?

PJN:

- Yes.

Janpha:

- Okay. But for a content subject, you only have Thai lecturers, most of whom have graduated from an overseas university, right?

PJN:

- Yes, that's true.

Janpha:

- Before moving on to the next topic. Does anyone have anything thing to add?

WCR:

- In my case, my use of English is moderate. I think the English here is quite intensive. After two years studying here, this is my impression. I'd like English to be integrated into all the subjects students have to learn. When we give a presentation, we have to give some definitions of technical terms. We often do it in Thai. I'd like the program to add more English in to the curriculum. Say, when we do midterm exams or final exams. I think if there are tasks where we have to give definitions of technical terms or some English, it'd be good for us, as we will have both contents and English skills, even though we are not doing the English program.

Janpha:

- I think sometime it's easier for us to communicate using English. For example, the word 'Human Capita', I think it's easier to use English. Other words such as management or feedback we use English, as they are better for our communications. Do you want them to be included, explicitly, in the course? Do you think they should be part of your curriculum?

WCR:

- That's right.

Janpha:

- Does anyone want to add? If not, let's move to another topic. The next topic is about your problems and difficulties in using English. Would anyone like to start?

WCR:

- If the students do not need to use English in their work, they may lack inspiration or motivation to learn English. If anyone uses English in their work, they're motivated. The big problem, I think, is the lack of motivation, as we don't have to use it at work.

Janpha:

- I see. So, it's something to do with your background, or what's called 'English in the workplace'. I think it determines our use of English. If you have to use it in your work, you have to use it. That's simple. How about the use of English for your graduate study?

NPW:

- In my case, I don't have any serious problems. My background has helped me. I got a BA in English, so I have a few problems reading texts. For some of my classmates, some of them do not have strong English background, and they have problems in their reading skills. They complain that the thick and expensive textbooks required to purchase by the teachers are not worth spending the money on. Why? They rarely use them, they don't read them. After taking the course, the textbooks look very new.

Janpha:

- I see. I can imagine this.

NPW:

- Poor English background is a problem for students who have to read thick textbooks. Another thing is that the time to learn English. I, personally, think that one remedial course is insufficient.

Janpha:

- Let me recap this. You have said that some students still have difficulties reading textbooks, even though they have taken the remedial course? What's should the university do?

NPW:

- It's not easy to solve, and I think English takes time.

Janpha:

- As an English teacher, if you have poor background of English, a semester of remedial lessons, is hardly the answer.

NPW:

- I agree.

Janpha:

- A semester of remedial lessons is inadequate to serve the purposes. Another way to solve the problems like we have just discussed may lie in the fact that we integrate the English components into many non-English subjects like marketing or financial management. Many students have little chance of English use in their workplaces. So, maybe, making English, especially, the key vocabulary and jargon, part of the curriculum is another means to deal with the amount of English.

NPW:

- I'd like to suggest that DPU should set a minimum standard like other institutions, say CUTEF, to scan the students. This may help. Then we ask them to take a remedial course, like we have just discussed. In my opinion, the readiness of the students comes first.

Janpha:

- Another related issue is the issue of using English for gate-keeping mechanism. This is a conventional means being used by, I dare say, all institutions. There's an issue ---

that is – is it necessary to do so? From one perspective requiring the students to have high scores on standardized tests is something unnecessary. We may not be able to answer this, but we should discuss another issue, that is, the need of English use by graduate students in the Thai society. I refer to the perception or the expectation of the society. In reality, do they need to have that high level of competency?

WCR:

- For me, what I consider having a high level of English competency to be something very important. In my organization, which is a public one, there are indicators of my competencies. And if we know English, we have an edge over others when we are assessed by the supervisors. Another benefit is the greater chance to develop myself. Say, if there is a scholarship overseas. If my English is very good, and I can pass the English test. If I am qualified, but my English is poor and cannot pass the standard, I will lose my chance.

Janpha:

- English gives you an advantage in work. Those who have better English skills have more opportunities to move ahead. Is this what you suggest?

WCR:

- Yes.

Janpha:

- But do they have to use that much English in real work?

WCR:

- Maybe they don't have to be that competent. But having a high competency matters a lot in work. For example, when we have a lot of knowledge and are good at English, we can ask for changes of departments. We can ask for a transfer to the other departments that needs more use of English such as the Department of Export Promotion, so that we can grow in the career path.

Janpha:

- What's interesting to note is that, in reality, English use is not frequent. But it is needed to support your career path. Is that right?

WCR:

- Yes.

Janpha:

- This is interesting. Would anyone like to add anything else?

PWN:

- In my opinion, the use of English depends on an individual student or graduate and his or her society. Many of them can function well without using much English.

Janpha:

- You mean it depends on an individual student and his or her social environment?

PWN:

- Exactly, it's about how English matters for them.

Janpha:

- So, this may mean that the need of English should be varied?

PWN:

- Yes.

PWD

- For me, to be blunt, those who do not know much English, there's nothing to worry for them. In Thai society, they can function well without much use of English.

Janpha

- For you, PWD, MBA students don't need to know much English, even after they have graduated?

PWD

- Yes, you don't have to use it. It's like an option.

Janpha:

- If you do accounting, it does not affect your accounting performance. Is that what you seem to suggest?

PWD:

- Not really. In accounting, we use some English. But it is not used when we talk to each other. But we do write in English, when we have to keep a balance with our superiors. Yes, English is needed in this regard, but if we have to deal with English-speaking foreigners, we can simply say 'I don't know'. I think this is okay.

Janpha:

- The next issue is something I refer to as 'identity.', which maybe defined as your self-perception. In other words, how you see yourself as an academic in the Thai academic community. Identity, from this perspective, also depends on how other people think of you. For example, I'm an English teacher, and my identity is thus an English teacher. You have to know English well. You have to know using which word. There is no other choice.

NPW

- Does the term mean how we see ourselves? I'm still not clear about the term.

Janpha:

- It's about how you perceive yourself as an academic.

NPW:

- My answer to this is related to what I have just said.

Janpha:

- Please explain.

NPW:'

- The image or identity of graduate study is really important. English is one of those indicators. Let's think about all the MBA programs available in Thailand. The society will judge us. This person is from so and so university, and they will be judged and identify the differences. The program has its identity.

Janpha:

- Do you think the MBA program here and others differ in their English requirements?

NPW:

- No, it's not the difference of the English ability. I am sure our English and other MBA programs' English are not different from one another. But the competency is not the same. I am talking about MBA in general. The standard or quality of each program is not the same. The image of this university seems to be positive. In terms of English, ours is as strong as any other place.

Janpha:

- Does anyone wish to add anything else?

NPW:

- For me, the society may not expect an MBA graduate from a Thai program to have a high competency of English. They do, however, expect you to be competent in the subject matters of the content subjects and your ability to apply the knowledge and skills in real situations. English is an advantage preferred by everybody. As WTC has mentioned, English is useful for your individual progress. If you don't have a high

level of its competency, you are okay. An MBA graduate needs to be competent in the knowledge and skills of business. English is a plus.

Janpha

- You mean the business knowledge in your academic field?

PJN:

- That's right. But the emphasis is not on the mastery of English. But if you have a degree say MBA from an English-speaking country, you'd get two things, business knowledge and the English language.

Janpha:

- Thank you PJN for your opinion.

Janpha:

- WCR, how about you? Anything to say about this?

WCR:

- Is identity about my role and how I see it?

Janpha:

- Yes, it's about how you see yourself as a member of the society and how the society perceives you.

WCR:

- Today the world is smaller and we often have meetings, conferences, or seminars between Thais and non-Thais. I think, yes, we need English, and we need to know some English to communicate with others.

Janpha:

- If we don't know English well enough, I think it'll be quite difficult. Don't you think?

WCR:

- I agree. Otherwise, we'll only be sitting idly, not knowing what's going on.

Janpha:

- So, can I say that, as a graduate student, at least, you should know some English? If your English was poor, would you be judged by the society?

NPW

- Yes.

Janpha:

- We seem to pass our judgment; they, too, pass theirs. If they said 'Human Capital' and we didn't recognize it. I think this may be a problem.

NPW:

- Yes, it should be the case that we speak the same language. We are doing the same degree – MBA – or doing Marketing, so we should recognize each other's language. If we don't understand each other, maybe we are from different schools.

Janpha:

- I see. Does anyone want to say anything more about this? Otherwise, we should move on to the next topic. It's about our academic identity, our community. Do you consider yourself an academic in your field? And do you see yourself part of the academic community in business administration?

WCR:

- For me, yes, I'm and I see my self being part of the academic community.

Janpha:

- Part of the community?

WCR:

- Yes, part of it. And I've participated in it and I've learned from it, so that I can apply the knowledge to solve real problems. Moreover, I can help pass it on to others.

Janpha:

- You said you are part of the academic community, WCR. As part of the community in business admiration, how much English is required so as to function well in the community? At the moment, do you feel that your English is sufficient for the use within the community?

WCR

- My English is okay, but I still have a lot to learn. In my workplace, English has been used as a gate-keeping mechanism, as English is one of the criteria for selecting new employees and promoting existing ones. For me, better English means better chances of getting a promotion.

Janpha:

- WCR, you are telling me that your community expects its members to be competent in English. Now you see yourself as part of it. Am I right? So, in order to be a full member of the community, you have to try harder, right?

WCR:'

- Yes, but I don't agree with it. The thing is that we have made a big mistake. It was our past mistake. Nowadays, we have tests and exams, and we have been so obsessed with them. We have been tested -- again and again. I think it's a waste of money and time, and energy. It's hard to find those with very good English to fill the position.

Janpha:

- So, do you think it's a bit too preoccupied?

WCR:

- Not really, I just feel that it's a bit too much.

Janpha:

- In your community, to be accepted as an academic, do you need to have a high level of English ability?

WCR:

- I don't quite approve of this thinking. In fact, what I like is to accept those capable people whose English may be at the intermediate level, and then train them. Very few people are excellent in English, if they are given a chance. I think they can develop English to function well. It's about on-going development.

Janpha:

- NPW, how about you?

NPW:

- I agree with what WCR has just said. As for your question, yes, we're part of the community.

Janpha:

- Do you see yourself as an academic now?

NPW:

- No, (I'm not) at the present. But, surely, I'm part of the community. My ability and skills are not great, not good enough to be a guru or sage in marketing. But I'm developing myself all the time. Certainly, I'm part of it.

Janpha:

- As part of the community in marketing, are you developing yourself to be a full member of the community? When you have graduated, do you think you can function as a member of the community?

NPW

- I think I can. As I have said, learning is a process of self-development, and I'm learning all the time. I may not be no. 1 in the field, but there are other numbers like no. 2 and no. 3.

Janpha:

- It's what we call the Heavy weight, Light Fly Weight or Straw Weight; there are many levels of participation, from smaller to bigger. You'd slowly increase your participation.

NPW:

- I'd find it not easy to engage in the community if we feel that we lack the ability and knowledge.

Janpha:

- I see. Do you see the community? Can you see it?

NPW:

- Yes, I can see it. I can see that there are people who speak the same language as mine. We can share and exchange the opinions. I'm sure my community exists.

Janpha:

- And...you have a place in the community. Right?

NPW:

- Yes, I know my level and participation.

Janpha:

- I must admit that this conception of academic community is a new concept. It's one of the concepts within my study. It's like a construct in research, which means that it

may not be obvious. By the way, PWD, do you see the community, or see yourself in the community?

PWD:

- My understanding is this. As we understand, if we speak the same language, we are members of the community. If we don't know and cannot engage in the conversations we should know English. By the way, I'd like to suggest that the university, use English, it's really necessary.

Janpha:

- PJN, how about you?

PJN:

- If you ask how I see myself...

Janpha:

- Yes, as a member of the academic community..yes.

PJN:

- As a member of the community...I see it, yes.

Janpha:

- Clearly?

PJN:

- No, not at the moment, because I have not graduated yet.

Janpha:

- I see. Unless you graduate, the membership is not clear. But do you think at the moment, your English is okay for your participation?

PJN:

- I think I can manage it.

Janpha:

- You can manage and handle the challenges

WCR:

But I'm not the star or a significant member of the community, not yet

Janpha:

- How about you PWN? As you are walking into the community, what do you think about their idea; what'd they think of you?

PWN:

- They would see that we can use English, communicate in English because we have an MBA degree. We are expected that we should know English and be part of the community.

Janpha:

- Being part of the academic community and a member of the community are similar; it's a gradual process of becoming a full member of the community. Sometimes, you often feel uncertain of how you can take part in it. This is my idea.

PWN:

- I think we're not sure of our roles in the community. What are our roles in the community? This is what we want to know. And we can find them out from being part of the community.

Janpha:

- Thank you very much everybody for sharing the ideas and experiences and discussion.

DRU

DBA Transcription

Note: All names of the participants are pseudonyms except the researcher (Janpha).

Janpha:

- Let me first introduce myself. My name is Janpha Thadphoothon. At present, I'm an English teacher from the English Department of this university. I'm also teaching English at the graduate level --- the DBA (Doctor of Business Administration). I've taught for over three years. This roundtable seminar is part of a study titled *The Use of English Among Members of the Thai Academic Community of Dhurakij Pundit University's Postgraduate Business Students*. My research participants are MBA and DBA students of this university (DPU).
- The topic for the roundtable seminar today is *English for postgraduate study What, Why and How Much* --- To define what English for postgraduate study means, why it is important, and the term 'how much' means how much English graduate students should know. *How much here mean How much English do you need?* It also means "How much time do we need to spend learning or practicing it in order to become competent users of the language?"
- This is the theme and topics for our roundtable seminar. What I would like us to do this afternoon is to exchange ideas on the mentioned topics and related issues.
- Firstly, please introduce yourself.

TER:

- I'm TER.

PRP

- I'm PEP.

ATW

- ATW.

Janpha

- First of all, TER, what does English for graduate study mean to you?

TER

- In my opinion, English for graduate study may be viewed as general English, but it is more specific. As a DBA student, I read textbooks and articles from journals related to business studies. More business jargon and technical terms are used. Grammar is general, but vocabulary is more business-focused.

Janpha

- PRP, what to you is postgraduate English?

PRP

- For me, English at the postgraduate level means the use of English at the higher level in all four macro-skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. At this level, the most important skills are the reading ones. For me, in my study, I have to read a lot, e.g., textbooks and articles from journals. Accuracy is very important.

Janpha

- Yes. ATW, you have something to add?

ATW

- For me, graduate English is similar to what the two of them have just said. What is needed is the kind of English that is more academic and applicable for our areas.

Janpha

- You mean it's about English for academic purposes?

ATW

- Yes. It's the kind of English for specialized purposes. As we read a lot, we might recognize academic terms and expressions. We can learn from them. We have to be selective in using this kind of English. We have to be able to analyze and judge the quality of the texts, which is reliable and which is not.

Janpha

- How about the use of English? Do you have to use it very often?

ATW

- From my own experience, we have to use it quite often, especially when we have to read articles and textbooks. The lecturers often use cases from English sources, so we have to read them in English. If you ask me how we use English, I can tell you that we read a lot; we rarely write. When we write reports, we write them in Thai.

Janpha

- How about when you have to search for information on the Internet?

ATW

- We have to google a lot, all the time...

Janpha

- Do you use keywords?

ATW

- Yes, keywords are important. But this does not mean that the Thai sources are unreliable, but the English ones are more 'inter' or modern, up-to-dated and are more recognized and accepted by scholars all over the world. In fact, as we know, the Thai sources rely on the sources from English texts. Sometimes, when we work on Thai case studies, we google in Thai to trace the sources, we sometimes find that the original sources are in English, so we have to follow them, and that means we have to apply our English skills..

Janpha

- How about you PRP? On the same issue.

PRP

- We rely a lot on the reading skills as we have to read a lot of English texts. We need to read when we work on reports or our theses. If you have poor reading skills, your reports might be of low quality. In terms of writing skills, we rarely have to write reports in English. We, as mentioned, often have to use keywords to search for the needed information. As for listening-speaking skills, we experience them in class. Our lecturers use a lot of English. If we can't follow them, we will not understand the lessons.

Janpha

- Most of the lecturers' power point slides are in English?

PRP

- Yes, English is used in every course.

Janpha

- Do they, I mean the teachers, use a lot of technical terms?

PRP

- Of course, they do, but we rarely converse in English. But we need to be competent in the key business terms. For technical terms, if we, for example, mispronounce them, communication will break down. In my opinion, all macro-skills are important.

Janpha

- Let me summarize what we have just discussed. The most used skill is reading, and critical reading skills are essential. You have said that you are in the Thai program, so speaking skills or conversations are rare. But you have admitted that you need to be able to read the technical terms correctly for effective communication. You have also

mentioned that all four skills are important, not just reading. TER, do you have anything to add to this?

TER

- Just to add that, as you know, it is a Thai program, As a Thai program, it is a fact that writing is not something we have to do very often. Even though we are doing the Thai program, we still need to use correct technical terms and business jargon. Many of the terms we use are English terms. We use them because they can communicate the ideas or concepts effectively, which can make our presentations successful. Writing is also important. When the lecturers introduce new terms to us, we need to learn to write them in English and grasp their meanings. Even though we understand the terms and can find Thai explanations, the explanations are often too long and often sounds complicated. Many words have never been calqued (loan-translated).

Janpha

- You seem to use a lot of English loan words. How about the English words that have been calqued?

TER

- Calques are not common. As I have said, many terms are not in Thai. We import them from the West.

ATW

- I'd like to add that sometimes using loan-translated words (calques) make communication unnatural.

Janpha

- I agree with you, ATW. I've conducted a study on the characteristics of the English being used among Thai academics and have found that there is a great deal of Western knowledge in the Thai writing. We may write our theses or academic works in Thai, but the contents are heavily influenced by the western ideas, evidenced by the use of English loan words and calques. I'd like to discuss with you the use of English,

problems and your ability to cope with English use, as well as the English support from the university. TER, what do you think?

TER

- In my case, my B.A. and MA are not in the same field. My doctoral degree is in another field. I have experienced that some terms are used differently in other fields. So, my idea is that we need to be aware of the different meanings assigned or used by other communities. We have been assigned to read journal articles related to our field of study, which has been helpful. What I like to see is more, more English support from the university and more emphasis on key concepts and technical terms. This would be helpful in our communication, as we need to use the same discourse. I'm talking about my case, of course. We need time to acquire various key terms in various subjects such as marketing, statistics, and finance. I guess we need to adjust our discourse or language. Time is needed for us to adjust and absorb the different meanings of technical terms, and I think if we have a chance to apply what we have learned, we'll learn them much better.

Janpha

- Thank you TER for your input. SUC, welcome to the forum.

SUC

- Hi, I'm SUC, DBA student, class 3. Today, I'm glad to join this roundtable seminar. I'm sorry for not being able to join this forum from the beginning, but as I have informed you that I will be late as I have had to fulfill some errands.

Janpha

- SUC, do you have any problems in your use of English?

SUC

- At first, I was quite concerned, as my English was not good. Both grammar and conversations were poor. But I worked hard to improve my English. When I was in an English class, I learned some English and I also practice using English at home. I also

benefited from watching English program on cable TV. My reading and writing have improved from reading journal articles required by all courses. Now, I think my English has improved to a certain level, but I still feel it's not okay for me yet.

Janpha

- I see. When you have problems reading academic journal articles, how do you deal with them?

SUC

- First of all, I try to cope with the problem by myself. Use a dictionary and translate.

Janpha

- Do you ask for help from your friends or teachers?

SUC

- No, not very often. I often get struck with technical terms. I often work on projects based on a case of my company, which is a company producing electronic stuff. Many technical words are not what people in marketing and finance are familiar with.

Janpha

- One reason we can understand what we read is our familiarity of the words. Is it because of the fact that we have learned it from our professional experience?

SUC

- That's true. For example, in my field, I'm in the marketing field. I am familiar with many of the terms I encounter in the journal. However, many of them are deeper than what I know, never seen them before. But I try my best to get the meaning in Thai. I try to decode it.

Janpha

- How about you ATW? Any problems dealing with your use of English?

ATW

- You have asked the right person. I've problems speaking English. I often feel shy, especially when there are other Thais nearby. I dare speaking in English. I don't know why I still have problems conversing in English. Despite the fact that I have taken English courses from many English language schools in Thailand, I still have problems with my spoken language, not to mention my writing skills. I think all of us here would agree with me in this regard. We may be too preoccupied with using correct grammar, so we feel inadequate to utter anything in English. I even spent time studying English overseas. At first I struggled, but after about two months, I could speak English with few problems. When I returned home to Thailand, my speaking skills gradually declined, and I soon got back to my normal situation. I feel shy and embarrassed to speak English in Thailand.

Janpha

- Research findings often suggest that the use of English is still in its infancy. We have few opportunities to use it, even in the English programs. Most of them need to read and use technical terms.

ATW

- When I went to Sweden, I could get myself from the airport to my destination with my English. I could ask for directions in Sweden without any serious problems. In Europe, My spoken English was okay. Back to Thailand, I still have to face the same problems and difficulties. My problems are, first of all, I feel that it is embarrassing to speak in English in front of other Thais. And two, I am afraid of making mistakes. I think the two are my personal problems. Anyone who could solve these two problems, I think, would be able to excel in English in Thailand. SUC, for example, has good English skills. He is concerned about his using of correct accent. I have noticed that that he was worried about the accent. For me, I think it is not a problem, not a big deal, and farangs would understand you. They understand us. I think only the Thais would pass judgment concerning our accent. This is of course my personal perspective. This university has the staff and the facilities, but they do not provide adequate English classes. At Kasetsart University, for example, there are several

English classes available every semester. For us, we had one course only. Then we have nothing more. We lack this continuity.

Janpha

- PRP, can you give us your opinion on this?

PRP

- For me, I can manage well in conversations and reading. I have a lot of difficulties in my writing skills. This is because, like you have said, I'm doing the Thai program, and do not have a chance to write in English.

Janpha

- Do you plan to write a paper or an academic article in English?

PRP

- I have thought about it. My writing is far from perfect. I am still at the basic conversational level. I sometimes write a letter to a friend overseas. The DBA program does not require that we have to write anything in English, except one English course. This, I feel, is something blocking the development of our English. Nowhere in the curriculum is it stated that we students are required to write reports or do assignments in English, except for one course, English for Postgraduate Study. This subject, however, is not our core subject, just a supplementary. The main problem is our opportunities to use it, as ATW has mentioned. Yes, we use English, but only in English classes. When we are outside of class, it's unlikely that we speak to each other in English. This is what I think is a big obstacle preventing us from developing our English.

Janpha

- One issue I think is worth pondering upon, and that is, why do we have to speak English to fellow Thais unless you are majoring in English. In fact, most English majors I know speak Thai most of the time.

PRP

- In an English class, we may use English inside, but as soon as we step out of the room, we resort to our mother language, Thai. That is the reason why it is hard for us to develop our English. Only one or two hours we use English in class is hardly adequate. It lacks consistency. As a matter of fact, we can use English even when we are not in an English class, but often others do not speak English with us. The real issues are in the consistency and the opportunities of English use. If the curriculum requires that we use writing skills or even listening and speaking skills, it will have to be that way. Everything, I think, depends on the consistency of English use. The same principle can be applied to our use of Thai. Daily practice helps develop our formal Thai. If we spent 2-3 years studying at an English-speaking country, our English would surely be developed. The worst skill for us is writing. We have problems writing in Thai too.

Janpha

- Let's move on to the next issue. We are aware that Thai society expects us to know, to have knowledge of something, including English. How much English should you as budding academics know?

TER

- My idea is that, even though we are in Thailand, we have to admit that the majority of theories and ideas are from the West, of course, this situation is not limited to Thailand. As many things are from the West, we need English to learn about the progress and development, so we can further develop them for our benefit. Therefore we need to study and learn about them. They would not write in Thai anyway. Graduate students need to read their academic journals to access updated knowledge. Therefore, for me, as far as the English language is concerned, Thai graduate students need to have strong writing skills. Speaking and writing skills may depend on our necessity. So we need to practice reading a lot. If we want to ask for advice, we may have to use our conversation skills. If we have to write an article in English to let other nationalities know about our work, we may publish or write the report in

English. But the reading skills are very important. Listening-speaking skills depend on individual needs.

Janpha

- Let me just add a few words to what TER has just said. Reading allows us to get what others have said, their thoughts, their theories or concepts, which are not really the Thai concepts. So if we have good English competency, that is to say, we can speak, read, and write well in English, it's like we can do the two-way communication. This is a way do the exchange, not simply to receive. In stead of being a receiver, passively, we should be the giver too. SUC, do you have anything to say about this?

SUC

- I've experienced that graduate students really need to have good English skills. In business, we need to use English to communicate and negotiate with other business people around the world. English can help us open the door of business opportunities. Further more, English has become a global language. When I meet a Filipino, we use English. There are about 30 Filipinos in my neighborhood. They can use English far better than I can. Sometimes I feel embarrassed when I am in the fitness center; younger children are more fluent than me. But from a broader perspective, English is something we need to learn and make it one of our strengths. The key for me is to find and seek every opportunity to use English.

Janpha

- SUC, I agree with what you've just said that English is a global language. English is used to communicate with other nationalities. We use it to communicate with the Filipinos, Indians, and Malaysians, and others.

SUC

- Indeed, many clients, from India or Taiwan, sometimes, their English is not as perfect, or as poor as mine, but we do understand each other. I think we have to be flexible and try harder to communicate in English.

Janpha

- Their English, too, is not perfect.

SUC

- Yes, they are not perfect. Some of them, I feel, are worse than us.

Janpha

- How about the Japanese?

SUC

- The Japanese? In general, their English is not better than ours. In Asia, I think, Thais are among the top, especially our knowledge of grammar.

Janpha

- PRP, anything to add on the expectation of Thai society about your English?

PRP

- In Thai society, within the context of graduate study, I think, English is very important. If you can't read English well, you'd have problems working. At present, only about 20 percent can speak in English, but that's only for the moderate level. English is essential for study and work. When we have graduated, in work, we do need it to negotiate in business. If our English is poor we would be in disadvantages. So, for graduate students, English is a must.

Janpha

- Anything to add?

ATW

- We must have English ability and skills.

Janpha

- Please elaborate on this.

ATW

- The word ‘graduate study (บัณฑิตศึกษา)’ has a positive connotation. This reflects an advanced level of education. As for the recognition of the society, it must be admitted that, for the Thai society, sakdina (field power) matters, so titles, positions, and ranks are important. The term ‘graduate study’, forces us to uphold our ability. If our English scores are low, we’d feel pressured. For the public, English is needed for graduates of the master and doctoral degree levels. We need to improve ourselves. From another perspective, the level ‘graduate study’ is a curse, as it will force us not to take risks in speaking or writing in English, as we are afraid of making mistakes. That’s why we often read, so nobody can hear or understand us. When we translate we use jargon and technical terms in our fields.

Janpha

- Let me interrupt for a few seconds. Sometimes, in many programs, English has been used as a gate-keeping tool. They say that if your English is not up to their required level, you cannot enter the program or graduate. There are many negative aspects of this way of thinking. For one thing, it is not based on a scientific rationale. How much English will they be using in the Thai society anyway? There’s no evidence to suggest that they use a lot of English in Thai society. Yes, they have to read English texts a lot when they study. Of course, they may argue that they want their graduates to have higher calibers so they ask them to present papers in English.

SUC

- This is how I see it. Most Thais have excuses and conditions when it comes to English and this makes them too tense. They would avoid talking to farangs, but if we allow ourselves to feel relax, we’d be more successful. For example, young kids are very good at speaking English. I feel that my generation has been conditioned with rules and practices which are not good for language learning. This, I think, needs to be changed.

Janpha

- Does anyone have anything to say about this? Otherwise, I shall come to the last issue -- that is the issue of identity. Identity is related to the use of English, your ability. Many of you have mentioned this, For example, one of you (ATW) has said, "graduate-level students must have good English skills". I think there is something in what you have said, something deeper than that. It implies the identity of the students as graduate students, which is something different from being the undergraduate students. This means that graduate level students are being viewed as budding or full academics. As doctoral degree students, people cannot regard you otherwise, except the fact that you are academics or in the process of becoming one of them. It can safely be assumed that the education at this level is about helping you to become 'scholars' or 'academics'. My last topic for discussion is this. With regard to the issue of 'identity', I'd like to invite you to discuss your learning experience, as a doctoral degree student, how do you view yourself as an academic, how much English do you need to know...anyone would like to begin.

ATW

- May I ask you this first? Do you want me to discuss my role as an academic or my role as someone who is going to be one?

Janpha

- Well, at the moment, do you consider yourself an academic?

ATW

- For me, I'd say 'No', but I'm in the process of becoming one. When I am one of the academics, I am sure I'll be ready.

Janpha

- When do you think you'll be ready...

ATW

- When my English is better than this...

Janpha

- I see, English is one of the criteria. Do you say that good English is a quality for being an academic?

ATW

- Not just English, but English is one of the criteria. I mean you need to have knowledge of other things as well.

Janpha

- So English is only one of those qualities.

ATW

- Yes, and there are two approaches to learning

Janpha

- Yes. Can you clarify this, a bit more details?

ATW

- I guess my English has reached the required level. My English ability is adequate. In terms of theoretical knowledge, however, I think I have a lot to learn. The Thai style of teaching is different from the style of the West. For example, a case about a CEO. The professor would only give us one perspective. Each of us has to find other point to discuss about that CEO. For the discussion in the Thai context, a lecturer would tell us what to do, giving us less room to express our opinion.

PRP

- ATW is trying to suggest that Thai teachers' method of teaching is spoon-feeding; but, for Western teachers, they're more opened, allowing us to have our say and express our opinions.

ATW

- You're right. The way we are being taught reflects our ways of learning things. When we are learning with Western teachers, we act differently. And the process to get the goal is different too.

Janpha

- I'd like to share my experience as a doctoral student in an Australian university many years ago. They gave me an office, an independent office, a room downstairs. I had my own office and a computer with the Internet access. They treated me like one of the staff. Even though, I considered myself a student, they, on the other hand, seemed to consider me a staff member, a researcher, an academic. Identity, for me, means the way I see myself and how the society sees me. My point is this, if you perceive yourself as a member of the Thai academic community; and, you know feel that the community expects you to be competent in English, you would strive to fulfill the expectation. One of you has just told me that at present you are not an academic but part of the community. So, I'd say your level of participation determines your role and status in the community. I am a teacher at a university, so I consider myself an academic in my field. Now, can you tell me about yours?

TER

- For me, I do not understand what roles academics really have to play, for I am not in the teaching profession. I have been working for a private organization and have decided to do a DBA program. My intention is to open up another perspective, that is, the perspective of business administration. Another thing is the focus on business skills. When I have graduated, I, surely, will have more career opportunities. I may have a chance to do some academic works and enter the academic community. I do not necessarily think that my English will be better than others. I am content with the English skills that are usable and serve my purposes. For me, a graduate with good English, but who cannot communicate well is not what I consider good. I do not know how to talk to them. They may know a lot but they are poor communicators. From an outsider, an academic is a good communicator, not limited to a person who has a lot of knowledge or knows a lot of English. I think what's more important is that academics are good communicators.

Janpha

- Academics in my understanding do not have to be teachers at colleges or universities, there are different types of academics, e.g. independent academics. For me, academics are those who consider themselves a specialist or expert in a particular field. They maybe working in universities or other organizations. Many of them are graduate students. There are several levels of academics --- ranging from the heavyweight or big names to the straw weight. SUC, you are about to say something?

SUC

- For me, with regard to the role of English in the graduate level, I think not all of the graduates of the graduate level students are or should be academics. They may be working as executives and managers, some of them may be academics in various communities. Others may be specialists. Especially in Thailand, in our industrial sector, there are a lot of companies with foreign investment. Some have 30 per cent; some may have up to 70 per cent. English has been used in the grassroots level as well. Local administrators sometimes have to go overseas to study and exchange ideas with neighboring countries such as Vietnam. Many foreigners visit us and would like to learn from us too. English is thus a must. At the tertiary level, I think, we need to communicate well in English, and good at writing as well as speaking skills, too.

PRP

- Are we talking about the role of English among academics?

Janpha

- Yes, for example, as a doctoral level student, you are, probably, at the highest level, do you see yourself as an academic and if so, how relevant is English. May be the society expects you to be that good.

PRP

- Definitely, it is something the society expects us to be good at. It is also our expectation. We, too, need fulfill our expectation. At present, I am working on a

dissertation, something new to Thai society. Once it's done, I'm sure I can present it to the Thai public. It's a small beginning. If it's only in Thai, only some Thais will know about it. My intention is to make it available in English so as to let the non-Thais understand my work. And for me to be able to do that, I need to have strong English skills. With regards to Thai academics, if the only language they know and can use is Thai, they are limited in scope of their scholarship. Without English, they won't be able to produce global quality work. Thus, English is something we must be serious about. If I want to be an academic acknowledged by the society, I also need to present my work in English.

Janpha

- Assigned identity is in many ways a form of social mechanism. Identity is what and how we see ourselves. Thai society, in my opinion, expects something from us. They expect graduate students to have acceptable English skills and ability. English has become more important in many aspects of our lives. Even though many of you do not consider yourselves academics, but all of you consider yourselves part of the Thai academic community. Of course, you may increase your participation and get more involved in the activities of the community. TER, do you have anything more to say?

TER

- From my experiences in using English, I remember that when I was in a high school, I focused only on studying. When I was in a university, I took only one English course, that was, the first semester of my first year. They expected us to have some knowledge of English, sufficient to do the study. I am an engineer, and I often use engineering terms, our jargon and technical terms. I don't think any institute would be able to really teach us what words or vocabulary to use. The skills are embedded in our work. The same thing I think is true when we talk about academics. They too are professionals, so they are bound to deal with their areas of English. They may have to read and write what is related to their everyday activities. This is what I think.

Janpha:

- For example, research terms such as sampling, questionnaire, and so on.

TER

- Yes. I think if the language institute offered an English course, I guess there would be few students who would participate in it. This is because we are more focused. I think what is best for us is when we get together as a group, and we read more. If there is a way to help us read our articles or texts, and exchange our ideas in Thai or in English. This, I'm sure, will help us to better understand English in our community.

Janpha

- Thank you everybody for your participation.

About the Researcher

Janpha Thadphoothon graduated with a bachelor's degree, First-Class Honors, in Education from Chulalongkorn University in 1992. In 2000, he obtained a Master's degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Thammasat University, Bangkok. In 1999, he also received an advanced certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) from RELC, Singapore. He holds a Doctorate in Education from the University of Canberra, Australia. He currently works as a lecturer at the Language Institute, Dhurakij Pundit University.

Mailing Address:

Dhurakij Pundit University

Language Institute

110/1-4, Prachachuen Road

Laksi, Bangkok

10210, Thailand

Email: janpha.tha@dpu.ac.th