

# English Language Teaching and English Language Development of Teachers in One Excellent Private Vocational Institution in Chonburi Province, Thailand

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**Abstract:** *This study aimed to study ways that English language was taught in selected private vocational school in Chonburi province and explored how did English teachers in a selected private vocational school develop their English language proficiency. Moreover, to learn how private vocational school conducted English teaching with the best quality. Due to English language is necessary for vocational students. In order to keep up with the demands of producing skilled labour, Vocational schools in Thailand need to pay greater emphasis on developing English language competencies including communication skills for students. A qualitative approach was applied to answer research questions. The steps of data analysis proposed by Atkinson (2002) used in analysing the data obtained from participants. The researchers used ATLAS.TI version 6.2 for coding and grouping information that obtained from the participants.*

**Keywords:** English in vocational school, English in vocational school, English development

## Introduction

Vocational education is an educational institution that mainly produces and develops the labour force to the job market with skilled labour and semi-skilled labour. The teaching methodologies of Vocational Education are comprised of a combination of practical training and theoretical studies was stated by (Namthongdee, 2015). Therefore, the students acquire knowledge and expertise in both theoretical and practical fields and use them to access the job market with the necessary skills and qualifications to be able to contribute to developed workforce with higher quality skills. In order to develop knowledge and expertise in an effective manner, there must be an interest in adopting innovative changes. Thai labourers who possesses some technical skills are the workforce essential for the development of the economy of the country. This is because a skilled and knowledgeable workforce is an essential resource for the industrial sector Vocational training is required to develop workers and increase demand for competent workers. In other words, the industry sector requires highly skilled labour to work and accelerate the growth of the country's economic development.

Therefore, the vocational education schools needed to encourage confidence for vocational students to communicate with foreigners. Especially, industrial students who are labourers to help advance the economy and to develop the country. In order to be high performance workers, the vocational students must be concerned about the weak points of English speaking. To increase the number of vocational students who have English skills, the researchers aim to examine English language teaching in a selected private vocational school in Chonburi province. In addition, the public vocational students' English proficiency in Thailand appears to be an indication of a weak point from the recruitment persons' perspectives, English communication skills are urgently needed. Those skills are important for vocational students

because they can use them for communication with future foreign employers and the skilled workforce from other countries in which they work was stated by (Khumontri, Trakulkasemsul, & Bunsom, 2014)

In order to keep up with the demands of producing skilled labour, Vocational schools in Thailand need to put a strong emphasis on developing English language competencies including communicative skills. While the need for English language training for English teachers has become one of the concerns discussed in most schools in Thailand, teaching and learning English in vocational schools has been rarely reviewed. Thus, promoting and supporting English teaching in vocational education is crucial not only for craftsmen graduating from vocational schools but also for the future of Thailand.

### **Research objectives**

1. To study ways the English language that was taught in a selected private vocational school in Chonburi province.
2. To explore how did the English teachers a selected private vocational school develop their English language proficiency.

### **Research questions**

1. How was English Language taught in a selected private vocational school in Chonburi province?
2. How did vocational teachers working in a selected private vocational school develop their English language proficiency?

### **Literature Review**

The English language teaching and learning management in vocational schools from the conference of Ministry of Education which embraces Mr. Jaturon Chaisaeng minister of education who was the chairman of the conference in May, 2014 found that English language teaching in vocational schools should focus on developing occupational communication. English language teaching for the development of vocational students continues to apply the curriculum that is consistent with the English language teaching of the Primary Educational Service Area Office (PEASO) and also found that English Teaching in the past could not be conducted by the nature of language learning which starts from listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is recommended that the vocational students' proficiency development approach should focus on improving English teachers and English language teaching system development. The teachers who are devoid of any new technique for English teaching development, in addition, should increase study time and revamp study schedules to focus on promoting intensive conversation courses (Thai Rath online, 2014).

Furthermore, Dr. Teerakaet Charoensetthasin, Minister of Education pointed out of a necessary improvement in English language proficiency of the vocational students in the long term since, in the school year 2017 the office of Vocational Education Commission (VEC) must increase the emphasis on vocational students at all levels and all majors must increase English language study hours to prepare for the readiness of labour development that steps into Thailand developing '4.0' (Thailand 4.0) was published in (Siam Rath News online, 2016). In addition the English language improvement of vocational students when debating about the quality and readiness of teaching media which is used in the vocational education schools at present is not

sufficiently diverse thus, it is essential to concern about the importance of producing English language instructional media in vocational education schools.

Charoensetthasin, found that they should provide training for the teachers to create their instructional media and accordingly he established the Vocational English Camp for producing instructional media and English language communication skills practise to ensure their progress to recognise “Echo VE: English is a must” in order to develop the English language competency of vocational education students and the personnel who worked within vocational education.

In other words English language teaching for vocational education students should not follow the general English the same as school students. Moreover, it was not necessary to learn grammar or profound vocabulary but it must emphasise on occupational English where the vocational students must study. For example, vocabulary or English phrases to use for communication in the working field and focus on conversation (Naewna news online, 2017). The office of VEC foresaw the importance of the preparation of how to conduct the Competency-Based-Curriculum development at all levels which forms the base for an international professional qualification to increase English competency among vocational students. This will directly affect wages appropriate to the level of ability and whether they progress in their careers. Thus, to develop English competency of the vocational education students, the office of VEC under Dr.Suthep Chittayawong, Secretary of VEC is committed to developing the proficiency of the vocational students to prepare them to get into working according to international standards, English language is an essential part of this and is an approach that must be conducted to bring Thailand into the 21st century (Naewna news online, 2017). He also he mentioned that Echo VE: English is a must project which is a continuous plan of the Office of VEC that corresponds with the ministry of education policy to enhance English language skills to increase English language proficiency in the career field nationwide for the vocational education students. Devawongse Varopakarn Institute of Foreign Affairs (DVIFA, 2018) in collaboration with the office of VEC conducted English language training programme for vocational education students and vocational education personnel which has the purpose of improving English language proficiency and to expand English language understanding for communication among the vocational education teachers to advocate for driving the industrial group in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC).

Sittilop (1994) stated that teaching English as a Foreign Language in both general English and occupational English has been changing and developing throughout the years since the years of 1940 – 1950 when English teachers used to translate the grammatical method to teach students. Then, they changed to direct teaching methods to focus on familiarising students with English and using the language as much as possible concentrating on the speaking method and using gestures as well as teaching aids to help students understand the meaning. Then, English teaching method returned back to using the popular teaching methods, of speaking and listening methods, where English language was treated like a habit. Making a habit of language with the learners practicing listening and speaking sentences repeated so that the speakers do not need to particularly understand all the meanings but they must be able to reply automatically.

### **Research Design**

In order to study ways that English language was taught in a selected private vocational school as well as explore how did the English teachers a selected private vocational school develop their English language proficiency. The researchers viewed that a qualitative approach could be the best-fit. This was because information relating to these points could be obtained qualitatively through the use of qualitative data collection techniques. This could be planned

carefully and follow a standard rapport protocol. The required process, as a result, had the researchers following the qualitative research methodology standpoint to accomplish the research project.

### **Data collection**

The data collection technique which the researcher employed to use in this study was an in-depth interview. Semi-structured interview was considered as a strategy in the interviewing for this study.

Chosen participants in this study were 12 people who were concerned with the research subject matter. These comprised one school principal or school management teams, one head of English department and 11 English language teachers working in one selected award winning private vocational school.

The selection procedure which the researchers employed to use to obtain information in this study was purposive selection. The researchers also used “snowball technique” to extract the useful information.

In this study, the researchers followed the qualitative data collection circle proposed by Creswell (1998 as cited in Suwannaset, 2017). According to Creswell, the data collecting process was regarded as “a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions” (p.28). Creswell (1998), furthermore, advised that it is imperative that the researcher identify the following points in his plan: 1) Locating site/Individual. 2) Gaining access and making rapport. 3) Purposefully sampling. 4) Collecting data. 5) Recording information. 6) Resolving field issues. And 7) Storing data.

### **Data analysis**

The evening of that day, the researchers transcribed the recorded audio files into text or document files to enable analysis of the data obtained from informants, the researchers made sure that the researchers transcribed every evening of the day that the researchers interviewed and made sure that the researchers got the atmosphere, feeling, and ideas about what was going on during the interview conversations. The researchers used ATLAS.TI version 6.2 for coding and grouping the information that they obtained from the participants.

In this study, the steps of case study data analysis in this study as proposed by Atkinson (2002) consisted of 4 steps as follows:

**Step 1.** To present concepts about repository using basic relational database theory.

**Step 2.** Creating codes to identify the respective ‘chunks’ of data. These resulting codes are then analysed and rationalised.

**Step 3.** Analysing case studies by creating reports.

**Step 4.** Creates the final record by linking the rational code with the initial proposal and the appropriate new proposal is created.

### **The Findings**

The participants in this study were 12 people can be presented as follows: informants were female (83.33%) and male (16.7%). The age of these informants were respectively presented between 26 and 40 years (58.33%) and between 41 and 60 years old (41.66%). Their teaching experiences in this vocational school are as follows: seven people (58.33%) have been teaching for 10 years, five people (41.67%) have been teaching for more than 10 years. While

10 informants (83.33%) are full-time English teachers, two informants (16.7%) who are not full-time English teachers but assist teaching English in some English courses.

The first research question was How was English Language taught in a selected private vocational school in Chonburi province? In responding to the first research question, it has been found how English Language was taught in a selected private vocational school in Chonburi province? The English teachers highly pay attention to lesson plans, teaching patterns and teaching techniques due to the private vocational school conducting the use of an online teaching application in this school in the first year. The English teachers recognised that they have to adapt themselves to a new teaching methodology. Thus, they emphasise a teaching methodology and extremely paid attention to make students understand the lessons. Therefore, they decided it was necessary to find new teaching media and teaching materials. To ensure that students are interested in learning English this school is using a teaching application. The curriculums in this teaching media are developed by an agency who are expert in TOEIC testing and how to get high TOEIC marks, aimed at getting passing TOEIC simulation testing at the final exam when the year ends. The teachers expected and found that using a teaching application which is used in school will return the best results and the teachers have met new teaching methodologies and teaching techniques well. This study reported that 1) The English language is taught in different ways. 2) English teaching techniques which are used to teach vocational students are an integration of active learning activities: using role play and using games in the classroom. 3) Promoting active learning activities. 4) English is taught through the use of learning materials obtained from different sources. 1) downloading some VDO clips from YouTube, 2) using English songs, 3) using computer translation applications or Google Translate in their classroom. These developed or obtained materials are considered based on the lesson plans which are given by the agency. 5) English is designed to solve problems occurring in the English classroom. These are lacking attention to learning English, and not having much opportunity to learn English speaking in classroom. 6) English is taught to improve TOEIC scores of their students. By performing well in the TOEIC test, students can increase their job opportunities after graduating. 7) English is taught through possessing understanding Measurement in the Classroom. 8) English is taught applying technology in Classroom Management.

The second research question was How did vocational teachers working in a selected private vocational school develop their English language proficiency? In responding to the second research question the teachers working in a selected private vocational school possess many ways of developing their English language proficiency, most of the teachers have chosen YouTube and the Internet as a variety of sources to develop themselves and the schools conducting an English proficiency seminar through inviting experts to share knowledge with the teachers. All supported the above theme comprising: 1) The English teachers possess Self-Individual Development through the Internet. 2) Discussing English teaching experience through sharing teaching problems or English teaching methodology. 3) English was developed through enrolling on English courses.

## Discussion

Responding to research question one “How was English Language taught in a selected private vocational school in Chonburi province?”

Category 1: English language is taught through a diverse range of teaching techniques. The findings in this study have found that the teaching techniques used in this school focus on grammar, and vocabulary. This study is consistent with Khunmontri, Trakulkasemsuk, Bunsom (2014) who reported that Thai English teachers teach grammar rules. They indicated that

teaching English vocabulary technical terms is essential for English learning and Widodo (2015) showed that this is important in helping student's ability to remember words. It helps them to understand important vocabulary to increase their professional knowledge. This vocabulary facilitates the creation of the meaning of professional texts. For example, accounting students mentioned the professional conditions related to financial statements. Thus, the students understanding of relevant vocabulary in English is better than listing and memorising such vocabulary but it was necessary for them to understand the use and meaning of it in context. This study is evidence that the ability to understand, use, apply, and explain key vocational vocabularies, as well as the capability of creating links, enables students understanding about those vocabularies and helps the students build vocational knowledge. However, the findings have found that in this school, English teaching used an online teaching application in their teaching.

Category 2: English is taught through certain teaching methodologies integrated with learning activities. The findings in this study have found that there were many methodologies used to conduct activities in the classroom such as role-play, games, and making a video suggests that using technical equipment or practising speaking English with teachers draws students' attention through their interest in playing games. This is congruent with Shi and Zhang (2017) also pointed out that vocational students are still teenagers who are interested in games. Based on their age, playing games is recommended in the English classroom. Games can not only make their attention span longer but make them feel more interested in English.

Category 3: English is taught through Student Learning Activities. As a result, teachers conducted fun activities and interesting ice-breaking activities following the lesson plan but moreover, in this school teachers' focus on demonstration lessons' such as students creating a Video clip to suggest asking for directions or how to use technical equipment which is related to the education field. This is similar to Yeganehpour (2017) who also found that the first time he met students, there were some shy students who did not like to join activities at first but after a few efforts, they learned to join and enjoy varied activities. It seemed that using these kinds of activities completely increases their attention and interest in learning. The findings of this research are in line with studies that suggested ice-breakers as a natural, purposeful, funny and motivating activity which facilitates, supports communication, pronunciation, fluency, and increases their expression.

Category 4: English is taught through the materials obtained from different sources. The findings in this theme found that teachers obtain some useful contents from the Internet to create teaching materials. Teaching in a vocational school, teachers are providing interesting materials in order to draw students' interest in lessons such as Video from YouTube and games. Teachers prepare materials and retrieve some of them from the Internet to build teaching materials that are suitable for students due to vocational students not really recognising how important English is, which is consistent with Ronald (2016) English teaching material development in teaching English as a foreign language is an important part of the teaching method. Hence, English teachers must not avoid its use. Therefore, teaching materials should have interest for the students in order that they become comfortable with the teaching method. Furthermore, the teaching materials should also challenge students. It can be done by providing topic materials that make students enjoy activities.

Category 5: English is designed to solve problems occurring in the English classroom. These are lacking attention to learning English, not having much opportunity to learn English speaking and sleeping in the classroom due to the students not knowing how important English

is. However, students lack motivation which is consistent with Mebitil (2014) finding that depending on both parameters; the learners' answers provided in the questionnaire as well as, the teacher's observation process the following difficulties have been outlined on the part of the learners: 1) Lack of motivation; English is not important for them. 2) Low level of language proficiency. Hence, they encounter a set of problems at different levels: such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure 3) Lack of appropriate terminology for their fields of study.

Category 6: English is taught aimed at TOEIC Marks. As a result, in this school, the management team were aiming at English proficiency for the vocational students. They have arranged a TOEIC subject as a core course, thus, having TOEIC teaching and learning in a classroom. Especially, the students who are senior or in their final year. This study coincides with the thinking of Anuyahong (2018) stating found that the pedagogical activities must be appropriate to the students' ability level in order to motivate students. The ultimate goal of language study is the ability to use the language for communication with others. If the classroom situation is related to the need to learn the language, it will motivate students to learn more.

Category 7: Ensuring students' learning outcomes accorded to the measurement criteria. Teachers used a general criteria such as pre-test and post-test to evaluate the students understanding and proficiency in lessons. The stage of evaluation depended on contents that a curriculum agency had uploaded on a computer teaching programme. This report contends with Zhao (2018) who also indicated the main evaluation methods of teaching effectiveness and teaching quality in vocational schools. The school used the English syllabus as a reference basis and regarded the emphasis in daily teaching as the main examination content. Students' classroom learning results are tested and the students' single answer marks are used for comprehensive evaluation.

Category 8: English is taught applying technology in classroom management. This school has used Google Classroom to manage the classroom and conduct English teaching and learning in a classroom. It is easier to assign tasks to students due to sometimes in the classroom there is no time for conducting activities. Students can immediately submit their assignments through Google Classroom; moreover, teachers can upload teaching contents on it. This study similar to Dixon (2016) also mentioned that student work is submitted through Google Classroom, reviewed, and checked by the teachers both online and within the classroom. Students receive marks checklists with each assignment.

Response to research question two "How did vocational teachers working in a selected private vocational school develop their English language proficiency?"

Category 1: English teachers participate in self-individual development through the Internet to develop their English proficiency to train students. Teachers use social media or communication applications such as YouTube, watching films and listening to audiobooks to practise their English skills. Since the teachers have chosen English teaching materials from the Internet, the teacher's imperative is to use those ways for developing their English skills because the internet is a substantial knowledge source which is free of charge. This is similar with Alhabahba and Mahfoodh (2016) who also found that English language teachers' motive for using online teaching resources is a significant determinant of their practices at classroom level as well as the contribution of the Internet to their overall professional development. Furthermore, teachers' motives are the reasons that drive teachers towards seeking online teaching resources on the Internet to use these resources for professional development.

Category 2: Discussing teaching English experiences through sharing teaching problems or English teaching methodology, the findings have found that teachers developed themselves through inviting English experts to conduct an English Seminar to share their experiences and discuss teachers' experiences, teaching methodologies, and conducting activities in the English department in order to improve English skills. This study is similar with Kumar (2015), who found that in fact, every year vocational education encourages the schools of higher learning to conduct seminars, conferences, and teacher-training programmes so that the English language experts on developing new teaching methodologies help the teachers in English Language teaching.

Category 3: English developing through enrolling on English courses and English seminars including an English camp. As a result, teachers enrolled on English courses for developing their English skills in order to improve themselves to train students and to continuously develop their English skills which were compatible with Hu (2005) who also mentioned that there was response to the growing importance attached to continuing education and the varied needs for professional development. Another major avenue for practising teachers to pursue continuing education is the self-study higher education system. Furthermore, self-individual teacher development was undertaken by the vocational school mainly taking the form of seminars and training conducted by in-school or invited experts, training programmes designed for and delivered at particular schools, and short-term courses that lead to the award of professional certificates for work in curriculum and teaching materials.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the researchers believed that this private vocational school is an excellent school due to this school possessing awards to demonstrate the school's standard. The researchers would like to provide some practical contribution to both private, public vocational schools, and other interested parties in Thailand.

The teachers in a selected private vocational school have been developing their English proficiency by using YouTube and adopting self-development without being forced by the school rules. The researchers would recommend that they should have an HRD centre for collecting, searching and providing certain websites in the school data base when the teachers need to develop themselves.

The English teachers developed their English skills through enrolling on English courses from international institutions for increasing teaching techniques and conducting activities in the classroom. The vocational schools should provide websites to learn and improve their English proficiency.

### **Recommendation for the further studies**

First, the researchers found that this private vocational school has been using an English teaching application for teaching, focusing on grammar for getting TOEIC marks and applying technology to teach the students such as Google Classroom, games, and video clips on YouTube. They obtained teaching materials from various sources to conduct activities in the classroom.

Second, the findings indicated that the school has used the computer application to teach the students but there is no information about how the computer can be applied in the teaching, there should be further study on this issue.



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