

Study of the Essential Academic English Skill for Graduate Education

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาและเปรียบเทียบปัญหาและความต้องการสำหรับ “การใช้ทักษะภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการสำหรับการเรียนชั้นบัณฑิตศึกษา” จำแนกตามเพศ อายุ ระดับการศึกษา ประเภทของมหาวิทยาลัย สาขาวิชาเอกและอาชีพ กลุ่มตัวอย่างของงานวิจัยซึ่งได้จากการสุ่มแบบแบ่งชั้นภูมิ (Stratified Random Sampling) ได้แก่ นิสิตนักศึกษาคณะศึกษาศาสตร์ทั้งมหาวิทยาลัยรัฐและเอกชนในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร จำนวน 400 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยได้แก่ แบบสอบถาม สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนา (Descriptive Statistics) ได้แก่ ค่าความถี่ (frequency) ค่าร้อยละ (percentage) ค่าเฉลี่ย (mean \bar{X}) และส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน (standard deviation) และ สถิติเชิงอนุมาน (Inference Statistics) ได้แก่ t-test และ F-test ผลการวิจัยพบว่า 1) นิสิตนักศึกษาทั้งมหาวิทยาลัยรัฐและเอกชนมีปัญหาด้านการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการ ทั้งในด้านการฟัง พูด อ่าน และเขียน คิดเป็นร้อยละ 2.96 หรืออยู่ในระดับปานกลาง 2) นิสิตนักศึกษาทั้งมหาวิทยาลัยรัฐและเอกชนมีความต้องการด้านการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการ ทั้งในด้านการฟัง พูด อ่านและเขียน คิดเป็นร้อยละ 2.93 หรืออยู่ในระดับปานกลาง 3) นิสิตนักศึกษาที่มีความแตกต่างทางด้านอายุ ประเภทมหาวิทยาลัย สาขาวิชาเอก และอาชีพ มีปัญหาและความต้องการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการต่างกัน อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 และนิสิตนักศึกษาที่มีความแตกต่างทางด้านเพศ และประเภทมหาวิทยาลัยไม่มีความแตกต่างในด้านปัญหาและความต้องการในใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการสำหรับบัณฑิตศึกษา

คำสำคัญ: ทักษะภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการ บัณฑิตศึกษา

Abstract

The purposes of the research were 1) to study the problems and needs of English skills of graduate students; and 2) to compare the level of English skills and English skills required of graduate students. A sample of 400 graduate students was selected from the Faculty of Education of the private and public universities in Bangkok Metropolis, using the stratified random sampling to determine the types of universities and simple random for the graduate students personal information. The research instruments were the problems and needs questionnaires. The data were analyzed through percentage, descriptive analysis, narrative descriptions and essay.

The research findings were as follows: 1) graduate students both from public and private universities had problems in academic English skills at 2.96% or at medium level: listening skills are at medium level (\bar{X} = 2.69), speaking skills (\bar{X} = 3.19), reading skills (\bar{X} = 2.76) and writing skills (\bar{X} = 3.20); 2) graduate students both from public and private universities had needs in academic English skills at 2.93% or at medium level: listening skills are at medium level (\bar{X} = 2.67), speaking skills (\bar{X} = 3.17), reading skills (\bar{X} = 2.69) and writing skills (\bar{X} = 2.93); 3) Difference in types of universities, ages, majors of study and occupations play a significant difference in problems and needs of academic English skills at the level of .05 whereas genders and levels of education play no significant difference in problems and needs of academic English skills.

Keywords: Academic English Skills, Graduate Education

Introduction

At this moment, English language is largely promoted and considered as the most important language. In the graduate education, English skills are the most important skill because graduate students have to read or study educational resources as resources of knowledge for their research or thesis writing. Importantly, all educational documents are in English, graduate students have to access but they have problems or obstacles in English skills. However, studying English is the one useful branch which graduate students should improve and develop. Therefore, we consider that Thai society emphasizes importantly on learning and academic. In Thailand, ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is interested but most Thai students are not ready to prepare themselves because the lack of English skills they cannot use it effectively. "Thai students seem to perform poorly. The mean score on national tests on the English skill has always been below 50, which is a failing grade by any standard. AEC average test has proven that Thailand's English language proficiency is at what they called "a very low proficiency level" than other ASEAN members like Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam", Thanthong-Knight, S. (2015). Though, the Thai government promotes and supports English learning, it is not adequate.

The problem of foreign language, English is the one of the biggest problems for studying and understanding such as technical terms, words and expressions. The students solve these problems by using "Google Translate" that is unaccredited. For using English effectively, the researcher creates this study to survey the needs of the essential English skills for graduate education. The needs analysis can help to collect information about students' needs and

requirements. Therefore, the information obtained from needs analysis can be used to help solving problems.

Objectives

1. To study the problems and needs of English skills of graduate students studying in the Faculty of Education both public and private universities in Bangkok

2. To compare English skill problems and needs of graduate students characteristics classified by levels of education, genders, types of universities, majors and occupations

Research Methodology

Population

Graduate students studying in the Faculty of Education at public and private universities of Bangkok Metropolis.

Samples

The sample size is determined by using table of Krejcie and Morgan (Krejcie and Morgan. 1970: 607-610). Each sample group had the size of 384 students to create a confidence level standard. The researcher selected 400 students for the sample group. After that Stratified Random Sampling is used for the type of university and Simple Random is used for students' personal information. The sample groups consisted of 219 students from public universities and 181 students from the private ones.

Research Tool

1. Documents and books on essential academic English skills for graduate education.

2. The questionnaires for the sample group on the essential academic English skills needed for graduate education.

Research Procedure

1. Study documents and related research about the needs of the essential English skills for graduate education of graduate students both from public and private universities in Bangkok.

2. Study how to make a questionnaire from documents and related research to create with inclusive content.

3. Present the questionnaire to advisor for checking and suggestion.

4. Present the questionnaire to be corrected by 3 experts for content validity and further development.

5. Develop the questionnaire follow suggestion of experts and represent it to advisor for the last edition before using.

6. Distribute the complete questionnaire for the try-out with 40 graduate students not the sample of population.

7. Get questionnaires to find the reliability with alpha coefficient of Cronbach and the reliability is 0.87.

Data Collection

1. The researcher collects the data by herself using the following procedure. For the Questionnaire, the researcher makes the official contact to the selected universities of the sample group in order to make an appointment for data collection. At the return date, the researcher gathers back the questionnaires, check for the completion of the data, and do the supplementary interview if there is some incomplete information.

2. The researcher collected the data by herself using the research tool and the survey results.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed and interpreted the data, using the descriptive statistics and essay.

Research Findings

l) The problems and needs of academic English skills for graduate education from students in private and government universities in Bangkok

The data of academic English skill problems is at moderate level or at the level of 2.96. After analyzing each academic English skill, all academic English skill problems are at moderate level as the following:

1. Listening skills are at the level of 2.69 (e.g. to comprehend the complicated sentences or arguments)

2. Speaking skills are at the level of 3.19 (e.g. to speak spontaneously and fluently in various situations)

3. Reading skills are at the level of 2.76 (e.g. to read correctly with the melodic pronunciation)

4. Writing skills are at the level of 3.20 (e.g. to write correctly and clearly with the important information)

Regarding academic English skill needs, the data is at moderate level or at the level of 2.93. After analyzing each academic English skill, all academic English skill needs are at moderate level as the following:

1. Listening skills are at the level of 2.67 (e.g. to reply and tell what they have heard)

2. Speaking skills are at the level of 3.17 (e.g. to reply naturally and fluently)

3. Reading skills are at the level of 2.69 (e.g. to read correctly with the melodic pronunciation)

4. Writing skills are at the level of 2.93 (e.g. to write in various types according to objectives)

Table 1 The problems and needs of academic English skills for graduate education from students in private and government universities in Bangkok Scores range

4.50 – 5.00 = the highest

3.50–4.49 = a lot

2.50–3.49 = medium

1.50–2.49 = less

1.00–1.49 = the least

English skills	Problems	Needs	Level
Listening skills	3.19	3.17	medium
Speaking skills	2.76	2.69	medium
Reading skills	2.76	2.69	medium
Writing skills	3.20	2.93	medium
Total	2.69	2.67	medium

II) The comparison between the level of academic English skill problems and needs for graduate education from students' characteristics classified by levels of education, genders, types of universities and occupations

The graduate students had the difference in levels of education and genders, but there was no a

significant difference in problems and needs. Graduate students had the difference in types of universities, ages, majors and occupations and there was a significant difference in academic English skill problems and needs of the graduate education as the table 2.

Table 2 The comparison between the level of academic English skill problems and needs for graduate education from students' characteristics classified by levels of education, genders, types of universities and occupations

Title	Genders	Levels of education	Types of universities	Occupations	Ages	Majors
Listening skill problems	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Listening skill needs	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Speaking skill problems	-	-	-	✓	-	✓
Speaking skill needs	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Reading skill problems	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading skill needs	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Writing skill problems	-	-	-	✓	-	✓
Writing skill needs	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓

* ✓ means a significant difference

Discussion

1. The study of problems and needs of English skills for graduate education

The result of study, graduate students had problems and needs of academic English skills at the medium level because English subject is obligated and required in every level of education thus students have at least basic English skills to use in everyday life. Importantly, there are English subject standards to assess students before graduation and it is consistent with the National Council of Teachers of English said:

“The graduate students are required to gain the English skills at least at the level of pre-advanced for Master degree and high-advanced for Doctorate Degree for 4 domains: personal, public, occupational and educational” and “The study of English was as a basic of communication and involved skills” Council of Europe confirms.

Penwarden, R. (2013) also confirms “Respondent bias is created by the unwillingness to provide honest answers stems from the participant’s natural desire to provide socially acceptable answers.”

2. The comparison between the level of English skills and English skills required to use for graduate education

For problems and needs of English skills, the result presents that the genders and levels of education had no significant difference.

In the part of university type, students studying in private universities had the most academic English skill problems both listening and reading skill problems and also demanded to develop all English skills because it is possible that teachers are not enough when comparing to the number of students therefore students’ knowledge and skills are limited. Importantly, teachers are crucial to help them develop and enhance graduate students’ English skills.

According to Times Higher Education (2015) confirms the lists of the best global universities are graded by Times Higher Education or THE 2015–2016 to judge world class universities ranking by indicators. The lists are presented that top 10 of Thai universities are public universities such as Chulalongkorn University. It presents the private universities should improve their learning and instruction.

Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) suggest that not only teacher is the crucial component in language learning especially in reading skills for improving English learning but also learners should emphasize on self-learning as follows:

“Teachers play a central role in the development of motivated readers. Learners with sufficient motivation can achieve a working knowledge. Motivation plays a central role in the development of positive reading habits and attitudes.”

And Janzen (2007) suggests about reading teaching and learning that should be selected the appropriate and the development use of materials to be more interesting and up-to-date. Moreover, reading skills must be integrated with other language skills such as listening skills which is the important one to reach the language learning.

Michael Rost (2001) analyzed the most important of listening skill teaching:

“The teaching of listening involves the selection of input sources (which may be live, or be recorded on audio or video. Effective teaching involves: the careful selection of input sources or selective listening materials (authentic, interesting, varied and challenging), the creative design of task, the assistance to help learners enact effective listening strategies and maximize learner interaction and the integration of listening with other learning purposes.”

The other occupations (who are not a teacher) have a significant difference in English skill problems because most of graduate students are foreign language teachers and they always have to develop and improve themselves all the time, for example access to English educational resources, study and gain new knowledge for teaching. However, the persons with other occupations should improve and develop themselves to be more effective in English skills.

Moreover, graduate students majoring in the education administration and instruction had less problems and needs of English skills when comparing to the educational technology and education psychology, respectively. It is possible that graduate students majoring in education administration always contact and communicate with foreigners such as welcoming foreign guests and overseas field trips. Most of graduate students majoring in the instruction are teacher especially English teachers who always work with many English educational resources to develop their reliably academic knowledge for teaching. Moreover, graduate students majoring in the educational psychology face with problems and need to develop English skills because they always study and work with many documents but they are in translated or Thai version.

Donna Price–Machado (1998) describes about the competencies essential of English teaching skills. The competencies essential of English teaching for achieving the jobs or in academic terms, there are 2 categories of abilities: the first is foundation skills and including basic skills; the second means competencies that include working well in teams, using resources, acquiring and evaluating data, and understanding and using technology.

Brown, J. (1994) and Strangman & Hall (2004) confirmed that every occupation especially teachers need to develop the knowledge and English skills. Teacher is the important element in language learning because they can represent the new language and culture; teacher's positive attitude that can help students identify more positively with their language skills. The Alberta Teachers' Association (2015) also said about the nature of teachers who should develop their knowledge and skills to students.

“Teachers are devoted to continuous development of their ability to deliver their service. A teacher has professional knowledge and skills gained through formal preparation and experience. Teachers provide personal, caring service to students by diagnosing their needs and by planning, selecting and using methods and evaluation procedures designed to promote learning. The processes of teaching include understanding and adhering to legal and legislated frameworks and policies; identifying and responding to student learning needs; providing effective and responsive instruction.”

The graduate students with different ages have a significant difference in academic English skills. The graduate students aging less than 30 years old had the most listening and reading skill problems and they need to develop the most reading skills. Normally, the younger people can learn and understand the new thing fast than the older ones but the working experiences of each person are also important to develop knowledge and skills. According to Brown, J (1994) the younger is good in language learning as a good rote learner because they learn the new things easily. However, a good language learner will use many components to succeed

including empathy, practice and input such as experience and social context.

Conclusion and Recommendations

For the study of the problems and needs on “Essential academic English Skills for Graduate Education” with graduate students in the public and private universities:

1. The graduate students aging 31–39 years old had the most problems and needs of academic English skills. Importantly they should improve and enhance their English skills from English learning and experience works.

2. The graduate students studying in private universities had the most problems and demanded needs of academic English skills. Therefore, English learning and teaching of private universities should be developed to be more effective and comprehensive, for example the curriculum.

3. The graduate students working as other occupations (non-teaching) had the most problems and needs of academic English skills, they should develop their English skills for personnel and vocational purposes to be more potential.

4. The graduate students majoring in education psychology had the most problem and needs of academic English skills. They are expected to be able to use effective English skills therefore they should always work with English resources and communicated with foreigners to improve their English skills.

The study of students' achievement in graduate education after the study “Study of the Essential academic English Skills for Graduate Education”:

This study should be added more questions in a part of personal information about job position,

grade or study-record and program of education (regular or international) to study and compare the difference of problems and needs of English skills. Moreover, it should be studies in depth such as interview for finding the ways to solve problems and to develop academic English skills.

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