

## The importance of English in Thai society and in technology

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### ABSTRACT

The Thai government has to modify the progressive policy to reinforce global issues for developing countries as world economic development. In other words, if each country integrates the growth of the economy, it reduces the poverty of the population. Because the Thai government's efforts to promote the English language plays as the most significant tool for communication worldwide and it is expanded unstoppable by all users. Generally, Thai people are more interested in learning English which makes them easy to communicate with foreigners who come along with the growth of tourism, trade and investment. Moreover, it was obvious that English is used for education, economy, trade, technology, etc. The purpose of this article aims to describe two functions of English in Thailand both the importance of English in Thai society and the importance of English in technology. In this article, the author also proposed English users from different of various purposes such as the importance of technology (CALL) program that is a kind of the technological teaching aids for teaching foreign languages around the world.

**Keywords:** The importance of English, Thai society, Technology

### Introduction

English in Thailand, has two major functions: it is the 'language of communication and mass media both with the outside world and with the international and foreign business community within the country and it is the 'language of modern technology in higher education (Wangsotorn, 1980). In addition, English plays an important role in practicing thinking, managing, facing and applying knowledge skills. It is considered an important factor in

developing skills for education personnel, students and communicating with foreigners (Thaphech & Surasith, 2023).

As a general rule, English is needed as a tool to transmit language and enhances communication, business, transportation tourism industry, and community from one country to another country. Apart from that, English is needed in higher education because there is a relationship between English and technology in terms of technological teaching aids in the English language classroom. Moreover, English used by many people in academic area is not only found in science and technology, but is also in humanities, and other non-science field of study (Rhekhailit & Ierdpaisalwong, 2019). Thus, two functions of English in Thailand can be described as follows:

### **The importance of English in Thai society**

#### **Workers**

Sufficient knowledge of a foreign language is a major part of the job requirement that is announced by many enterprises to seek proficient workers. If the workers have adequate knowledge of a foreign language either western or occidental language, they will have the opportunity to get a better job rather than the others. Hence, the workers who realize the essentials of a foreign language try hard to learn it to fulfill their absent knowledge. Moreover, they not only want to learn a foreign language like English as a target language for working in a certain enterprise, but they also want to get a higher salary to escape from poverty. To examine the knowledge of English, TOEFL, TOEIC or IELTS are the most famous English proficiency tests that are employed to measure what level their language skill is (Criper and Davies, 1988; Spolsky, 1993; Clapham, 1996; cited in Davies, Lyons & Kemp, 2003). Moreover, language testing is also used for understanding both test takers' language abilities and test scores can infer their levels of language use (Bachman, 1993). Additionally, the results of the test reveal the examinees' capability of language skills (Saengsongfah, 2011). Some groups of workers believe that famous tutors can help them pass the test with satisfaction score. Hence, many language institutions serve the needs of workers who are interested in learning a foreign language to get their ideal job rather than use it to communicate with foreigners. From this viewpoint, English language for the workers is the only target language that serves their needs for increasing higher salary.

### **Tuk Tuk drivers**

Certainly, the number of visitors to Thailand is extremely high when compared with the neighboring countries. Since, plenty of tourist attractions persuade many visitors to see many interesting places that are surrounded by the scenery of tropical flower gardens, waterfalls, beaches or historical sites. Hence, the growth of tourism involves advertisements via websites on the internet that are usually written in English to make possible understanding for all visitors around the world (Thompson, 2011). However, to travel with pleasure, many visitors have to contact with a travel agency, tour guide, and especially Tuk Tuk drivers. In a tourist area, Tuk Tuk or Samlor (three-wheeled and open-aired) is unique Thailand's symbol vehicle to appeal to tourists who like a sightseeing tour. The demand of English is needed for Tuk Tuk drivers who act as tourist guides who show visitors around places of interest (Horey, 1991).

Many Tuk Tuk drivers communicate short sentences with tourists because they lack an opportunity for English language learning due to their poverty and limited education but they are good service minds to enjoy taking care of their “Farang” or foreigners. To solve this problem, the local university such as Ayutthaya Rajabhat University and Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University should provide English courses to poor and illiterate people such as Tuk Tuk drivers for enhancing their abilities of English communicative competency. Tuk Tuk drivers have a chance to get their knowledge of English and know how to be successful in communication with their customers. (Wongthon & Sriwanthana, 2007). Therefore, it seems that the growth of the tourism industry must increase in the future because there is effective communication between tour guides especially Tuk Tuk drivers that make a good impression on visitors.

### **Thai EFL learners**

According to the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 with regard to English as a mandatory subject the entire basic education core curriculum (Grades 1–12). Thai students who live in Thailand have to study English as a foreign language and as a compulsory subject due to the basic education that aimed to develop at least 12 years of English language learning. In addition, they have a chance to choose other languages either western or occidental languages which they are interested in studying as foreign language.

Even now, foreign language learning can enhance students' attitudes toward how to create critical thinking and open their visions of the global society. For these reasons, the students will be capable of conveying beneficial aspects of Thai culture to native speakers

and non-native speakers successfully across the world (Ministry of Education, 2008). Therefore, English language teaching (ELT) is mainly focused on how to organize and create effective methods for developing the students to acquire knowledge in English language classrooms (Darasawang & Srimavin, 2006).

At present, the Thai government's policy emphasizes on developing the economy in terms of tourism economy or free trade. The fact that AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) is not only associated with Asia's borderless economy and integrates the well-being of people but also mainly focuses on promoting the widespread use of the English language in the ASEAN. Because of the significant role of English, it can be a special tool to assist people who live in ASEAN community to improve or better their communication skills (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Thai people were the poorest of proficient in English when compared with other Asian countries (Khamkhien, 2010). Moreover, students cannot know how to establish effective methods of speaking in terms of communication. Likewise, teachers have to elaborate their knowledge of technology by carrying out how to help students achieve their goals for example using the internet for communication and edutainment (Prapphal, 2003; Zhiying, Teo & Laohariryanon, 2007). Moreover, an insufficient technological teaching aid is a big problem because some school lacks budget to provide it. The fact that technology is used as a modern facilitator which empowers teachers to establish new methods for teaching English.

### **The importance of English in technology**

#### **Information Technology (IT)**

It is true that information technology (IT) has supported many people's activities for many years. The use of the Internet is an interlinked network which is used for various functions such as transmitting updated data via search engines throughout the world. Social networking has occurred from the diversity of websites that make a social group of people via online communication. Moreover, many websites are designed by using colorful pictures and cartoon according to persuade all modern users. They are necessary to write in English language to facilitate international users (Zhiying, Teo & Laohariryanon, 2007). Therefore, if users do not have enough knowledge of a foreign language, they will have difficulty comprehending all websites and do not enjoy surfing the internet. Apart from that, young generations who have sufficient knowledge of language skills can enjoy their favorite online game (Wiriyachitra and Keyurawong, 2002). From this point of view, social media users are accustomed to learning English automatically which is derived from many sources of

information via the internet which is natural as a tool to access information and people's network (Teeler & Gray, 2000). Students not only can enhance their knowledge via academic websites such as [www.encyclopedia.com](http://www.encyclopedia.com) but they can also elaborate on the kinds of edutainment and entertainment via the most popular websites such as [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Lalana, 2010).

### **CALL (Computer-assisted language learning)**

Due to the importance of technology mentioned earlier, the CALL program which is a kind of the most popular technological teaching aids is acknowledged for teaching foreign languages around the world. To achieve English language teaching (ELT), the teachers must be a moderator to organize and know how to use CALL both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, they should create modern techniques instead of only chalk, and board as old teaching aids and also realize applying benefits of technology from the internet and CALL. On the other hand, to know the needs of users who are teachers, it is necessary to carry out teachers' experiences and teachers' attitudes toward CALL before transferring it into the language classroom (Bordbar, 2010). From this viewpoint, the teachers who believe in the value of CALL can facilitate it and understand how to control the process of a program when using it. CALL is available outside the classroom such as self-access learning centers (SAC) in some schools and universities (Intratrat, 2004). Hence, autonomous learners have to force themselves in language learning without being forced by teachers. It means that students build up mastery of language by acquiring it in their interests and also enhance knowledge from modern learning (Pinner, 2012).

According to enhancing English through CALL, it still has some limited access to this program such as computer, network, and IT knowledge which is the obvious major problem in some rural schools. Thus, the students who study there, do not have a chance to study English language with modern techniques such as e-learning or CALL. Teachers should be trained before applying CALL because there are many of students encounter the difficulty in using CALL and they reflect their needs about more descriptions to wrap up with the use of the program (Prapphal, 2003). Otherwise, the teachers have to solve the problems all the time because the students still need their teachers to help them when encounter problems with technological teaching aid in English language learning (Hashemi & Aziznezhad, 2011).

### **Ubiquitous education**

Ubiquitous education refers to the knowledge which is certainly derived from mobile learning that comes up with instructional package or equipment which can carry on the certain

circumstance of different contexts and situations. In addition, Tablet is typically designed to be a flat and slim tool rather than a notebook computer to make it easy for people who want to take it everywhere. To illustrate, users use the internet via tablets everywhere to serve their needs such as knowledge development, online communication, social network, or business. Materialistic person believes that tablet is a perfect communication tool to facilitate updated information via social media. According to the importance of ubiquitous education, OBEC (Office of the Basic Education Commission) realizes beneficial ways of enlarging lifelong learning of the students by including tablets in the policy of education. Thus, OTPC (One Tablet Per Child) is the first venture that focuses on increasing knowledge of world vision and modern learning via technology. The OTPC venture starts with the beginner level grade 1 students who are the first target group (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2012). In contrast, many problems are associated with tablets such as limited access to internet connection as wireless in some areas. Many of the teachers lack knowledge of tablets used as technological teaching aids. Hence, they should be trained on how to use tablets. They must enrich skillful knowledge of technology and classroom management before teaching the English language in the classroom (Teeler & Gray, 2000). However, Tablet for education is still a new venture, and also a lack information showing the significance of tablets used for teaching English in the modern world to fit the gap in Thai EFL learners learning.

## Conclusion

In the ASEAN community, English is various advantages by connecting people in the speech community and modern learning. Thus, English is an international language for people who appreciate having effective communication with foreigners. At present, English is used by Thai people in a society that has a lot of exchanges and wider communication. According to the important role of English, it not only influences on education but is also needed for people who use English as a tool for many purposes in their works. Nowadays, technology has revolutionized the progress of education. Moreover, the varieties of technological teaching aids such as CALL and tablets become significant tools to help students to be successful in English language skills from modern learning. Thus, if the teachers have enough knowledge of IT, they will find out what are appropriate technological teaching aids for teaching English language. However, various people either in Thailand or other countries should realize both benefits and problems of technology used in various contexts.

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