

An Investigation of English Usage in Careers of Thai Graduates with a Business Administration Degree

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Abstract

The research study aims to investigate English usage in careers of graduates with business administration degree in seven fields of study: Finance, Management, Marketing, International Business, Hotel and Tourism Management, Managerial Accounting, and Logistics Management. Google apps, Facebook, and LINE were the main instruments to collect the data. The questionnaire was created in a Google Form, then, was distributed and shared via Facebook, Facebook messenger, and LINE. Data were analyzed in the forms of graph, chart and percentages by using Google Data Studio. SPSS was also employed to interpret the 5 rating scale questions. The number of respondents was 221. 41.6% of the respondents were 22 years old and they were fresh graduates. Level of English usage in the workplace was high ($M=3.57$) especially reading skill ($M=3.63$). English speaking was mentioned as the most useful course at work. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses were mentioned in particular careers. Graduates in Managerial Accounting mentioned English for Accountant I and II while graduates in Hotel and Tourism Management mentioned Technical English for Hotel Business, Technical English for Tourism Business, and English for Food and Beverage Service. The most required training topic was English communication, followed by English speaking and English writing. The respondents also perceived that the English language was important for career advancement ($M=3.92$).

Keywords: English usage in careers, English for specific purposes, Bachelor of Business Administration

Introduction

English is a compulsory foreign language in schools in Thailand. It is the language that Thai people use to communicate with foreigners. Moreover, English is one of a must in 'Qualifications' part of various job positions in different sectors. High proficiency in spoken and written English is regarded as the principal prerequisite qualification (Yimon, 2014; Rao, 2016). Therefore, English is important and enhances employability (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013; Wijewardene et al., 2014; Yimon, 2014; Sankar & Kumar, 2016; Rao, 2016; Durga, 2018).

From the 9th edition of the EP's English Proficiency Index (EP EPI, 2019), Thailand is in 74th place non-native speakers indicating very low proficiency. Rao (2016) pointed out that low proficiency in English or lack of English language skills was a barrier to academic success, entry of employment, and workforce accomplishment. He also emphasized that English proficiency was a key factor for employment success.

For Sankar & Kumar (2016), English has become the language of business. It is the language of the information mostly found (80%) on the internet communicating across the world. English is needed to run a smooth business and to deal with customers. English, therefore, is a medium to ensure employability (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013; Wijewardene et al., 2014; Sankar & Kumar, 2016). Wijewardene et al. (2014) pointed out that the 21st-century

graduates should be work-ready with interpersonal skills, teamwork, oral and written English skills. Graduates without English competency will have hard time finding suitable employment. Roshid & Chowdhury (2013) mentioned that English language fluency was associated with a higher salary while a lack of proficiency in English works as an obstacle to the employment market and a disadvantage in careers (Yimon, 2014).

The research study aims to investigate English usage in the careers of graduates from the Faculty of Management Sciences, Kasetsart University. Data from the study will be useful for planning and outlining English language courses at the Faculty of Management Sciences, Kasetsart University Sri Racha Campus.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the English usage of graduates with a business administration degree from the Faculty of Management Sciences.
2. To investigate the topics of English training required by graduates of the Faculty of Management Sciences.

Literature Review

Research studies on English usage in careers have been conducted in different sectors in Thailand. All four language skills were mentioned as important at work (Numbenjapol, 1996; Yimon, 2014) though listening and speaking skills were most used in communicating with foreign customers in the hotel business (Low & Pongsukvajchakul, 2014; Pandumrongsathi, 2013).

Thai graduates in Bangkok mentioned English as moderately high used in careers and the tendency of the use of English at work was at a high level (Yimon, 2014). Moreover, Thai graduates in the business sector mentioned that English skills of reading and translating were mainly used at work (Numbenjapol, 1996). Reading skill increased general and job-related knowledge while translating skills was to report information to colleagues or superiors.

Reading skill was confirmed as most used at work by Thai engineers in managing a Japanese company (Kosashunhanan, 2016) as they had to read e-mails and information on the Internet. The skill was also

mentioned as needed by 30 customer support staff in the production office of an electronics manufacturer, EM (Thailand). The managers also agreed that reading skills was the most needed skill for their staff (Chaiyasit & Thummawongsa, 2017).

Lack of English vocabulary knowledge was a serious problem to communicate at work (Low & Pongsukvajchakul, 2014; Pandumrongsathi, 2013; Kosashunhanan, 2016; Yomyao, 2018). English training on-site, therefore, was preferred regularly (Low & Pongsukvajchakul, 2014; Pandumrongsathi, 2013). As for professional nurses (Yomyao, 2018), the listening skill was the most serious problem and speaking skill was the most needed skill.

Research Methods

The study started with an online questionnaire in Google Form. The questionnaire was sent and shared by application programs: Facebook, Facebook messenger, and LINE.

Subjects

Subjects of the study were all graduates of the Faculty of Management Sciences with a Bachelor of Business Administration in 7 fields of study: Finance, Management, Marketing, International Business, Hotel and Tourism Management, Managerial Accounting, and Logistics Management.

Instruments

The research study employed Google, Facebook, Facebook messenger, and LINE programs. SPSS program was also used to interpret the data.

Facebook is a social networking website. It was the most popular social networking applications in Thailand or 28 million users in 2014 (Raphiphan, 2014), and Facebook Messenger was the second leading app used in 49 countries (Schwartz, 2016).

LINE is a mobile messaging service. It is widely used in Thailand and makes Thailand the second-largest market in the world after Japan (Phoosuphanusorn, 2017).

Google is a free web-based program. The vital role is to facilitate work performance on mobile devices (Al-Emran & Malik, 2016). Google Forms is a free online survey application. For Haddad & Youakim (2014), Google Forms is a very simple,

systematic, and easy to implement the approach. Vasantha Raju & Harinarayana (2016) pointed out that the anywhere-anytime-access and unlimited surveys of 100% free have made Google Forms a popular product in online survey research. For Google Data Studio, the application helps visualize data with adjusted color and style options of charts and tables.

The research study used Google Form to create an online questionnaire and distributed via Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and LINE. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part required personal and career information. The second part consisted of 10 questions about English usage and English language skills in careers with 5 rating scales from 1 to 5. The third part was for opinions on useful English language courses and the required topics on English training in careers. Google Data Studio and SPSS were employed to report the collected data.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in the forms of charts and graphs with percentages. Google spreadsheet, then, was created and exported into Microsoft Excel format to be analyzed by Google Data Studio and SPSS. General background of the subjects, factors affecting English usage in careers and opinions on English usage and training topics were described in percentages.

Findings

The total number of respondents was 221: 177 females (80.5%), 43 males (19.5%), and 1 person without an answer on sex. The youngest respondent was 21 years old, while the oldest respondent was 33 years old. 41.6% of the respondents were 22 years old and they were fresh graduates. Figure 1 shows the age range of the respondents.

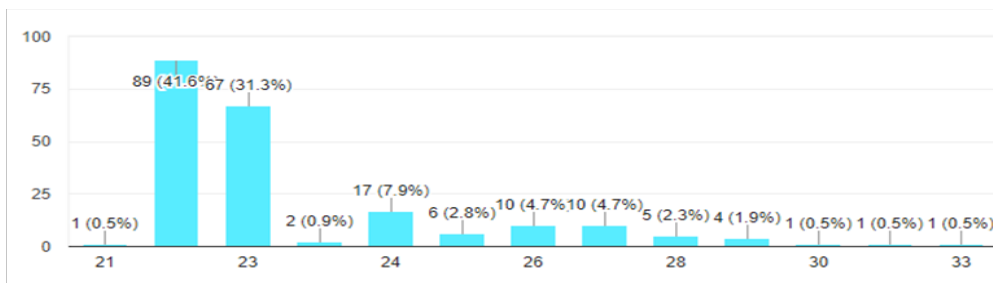


Figure 1: Age range of the respondents

Respondents in Managerial Accounting (26.4%) were the most followed by respondents in Hotel

and Tourism Management (25.5%). Respondents in Marketing (2 respondents) were the least.

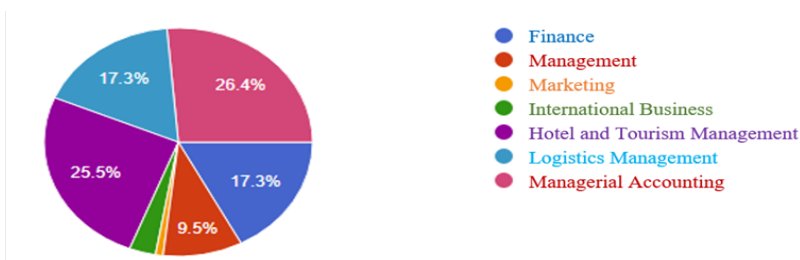


Figure 2: Respondents from the seven fields of study

There were 111 respondents working for Thai organizations, 53 respondents in international organizations, 48 respondents in foreign private organizations, and 9 respondents without work type indications. In terms of the workplace, Bangkok was the place where most of the respondents worked (56.9%), followed by Chonburi (16.1%) which is

the province where Kasetsart University Sri Racha Campus is situated.

For the working department section, auditing (16.675) and accounting (9.8%) were indicated most by the respondents. Though Marketing was the field of study with the least response, the sales and marketing department was mentioned by 11

respondents from respondents in other fields of study.

Although there were 221 respondents, only 217 respondents rated the 5 rating scale questions on levels of English usage and skills in the workplace

and questions on English communication and English usage in the workplace. The respondents rated the level of English usage in the workplace as high ($M=3.57$), especially reading skills ($M=3.63$).

Table 1: Level of English usage and Language Skills in the Workplace

	n		M	Std. Error of M	SD
	Valid	Missing			
Level of English usage in the workplace	217	3	3.57	.068	1.007
Listening skill in the workplace	217	3	3.25	.074	1.091
Speaking skill in the workplace	217	3	3.10	.077	1.138
Reading skill in the workplace	216	4	3.63	.072	1.052
Writing skill in the workplace	217	3	3.38	.080	1.177

English usage on documents was mentioned as high ($M=3.65$). The respondents perceived that the English language was important for career

advancement ($M=3.92$). Table 2 shows English communication and English usage in the workplace.

Table 2: English Communication and English usage in the Workplace

	n		M	Std. Error of M	SD
	Valid	Missing			
English communication with customers organizations	216	4	3.24	.081	1.195
English usage on documents	217	3	3.65	.079	1.156
English usage in meeting	217	3	2.80	.084	1.234
English usage in job presentation	217	3	2.79	.086	1.272
English language and career advancement	217	3	3.92	.078	1.148

Two open-ended questions were employed for the graduates to express their opinions on useful English language courses and the required topics on English training in careers.

1. Which English courses are useful for you? Why?
2. What topics should be in English training for careers?

There were 175 answers for the first question. English speaking course was mentioned as the most useful (by 32 respondents) followed by Speech Communication course (by 24 respondents). They mentioned that the speaking course and speech communication course helped communicate with their colleagues, supervisors, and department heads. Eighteen respondents mentioned that all English courses were important and useful for them. However, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses were also highly useful in their careers. Graduates in Managerial Accounting major mentioned English for Accountant I, II (by 20 respondents) while graduates

in Hotel and Tourism Management mentioned three ESP courses: Technical English for Hotel Business (by 12 respondents), English for Food and Beverage Service (by 3 respondents), and Technical English for Tourism Business (by 3 respondents).

There were 166 answers to the second question. English communication was the topic mentioned most (by 45 respondents), followed by speaking (by 26 respondents) and writing (by 20 respondents). Other required topics were English for presentation (by 12 respondents), English for a job interview (by 10 respondents), E-mail writing (by 6 respondents) and formal English language (by 3 respondents).

Discussion and Conclusion

The finding that 41.6% of the respondents were fresh graduates was not a surprise as they still had close contacts with lecturers who helped share the online questionnaire.

The finding that auditing (16.675) and accounting (9.8%) were indicated most as the working departments of the respondents was in line with the fact that most respondents were in Managerial Accounting major (26.4%).

Reading skill was mentioned as high (M=3.63). The finding confirmed the importance of reading skills as found in previous studies (Numbenjapol, 1996; Kosashunhanan, 2016; Chaiyasit & Thummawongsa, 2017). The skill was related to English usage on documents which was also high (M=3.65). Other required English training topics were E-mail writing and formal English language. These mentioned courses will enhance job performance, job satisfaction, and career development (Yomyao, 2018).

Apart from general English courses, ESP courses were mentioned. These ESP courses are compulsory courses for the related fields of study. English for Accountant I, II was mentioned because most respondents were graduates in Managerial Accounting (26.4%). Three ESP courses for Hotel and Tourism Management major were also mentioned as 25.5% of the respondents were graduates in Hotel and Tourism Management. These courses which focus on English communication skills in particular professional fields, enable graduates of the faculty to master relevant English communication and professional skills in the workplace. Formal English language and English vocabulary in specific business situations are needed in outlining the course syllabuses. The findings help implement and develop English courses to enhance the English proficiency of future graduates.

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