

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes the summary of the study, the discussions of the results and recommendations for curriculum developers, teachers as well as researchers.

1. Summary of the study

1.1 Background

A task-based EFL curriculum at KMUTT had been developed and used for more than seven years. Based on a learner-centered approach, it has its own unique characteristics. For example, it includes three types of analytic syllabuses: task-based syllabuses, project-based syllabuses and content-based syllabuses. The task-based syllabuses focus on the process of learning and on students' needs in order to analyze the language input for understanding specific language points. Each course is organized around goal-directed activities and the language to be learnt emerges from such activities (Watson Todd, 2001). The task-based curriculum was proposed by the change agents who also largely made bureaucratic decisions about the proposed curriculum, but the larger parts of work e.g., creating course outlines, tasks and materials was later completed mainly by the implementers with some input and feedback from the change agents. The process of curriculum renewal, then, became an immanent process. The evaluations initially done in 2001 using action research (Kongchan, 2001; Wiriyakarun, 2001), as well as the teachers' and students' informal reactions, suggested that the first two finished courses, LNG 101 and LNG 102, and teaching materials seemed beneficial, but not yet perfect.

Watson Todd (2006) conducted his research to investigate how and why changes in innovations at KMUTT occurred continually in a situation of immanent innovation where the implementers felt in control of and free to change the innovation. The data came from two sources: documentation concerning the course under investigation –LNG 102— and interviews with teachers who taught the courses regularly. The findings from the interviews revealed the reasons for changes; for instance, teachers' concerns about lack of reliability in terms of assessment and evaluation procedures, incompatibility of students' needs with the course objectives both linguistic and non-linguistic, and the impracticality of learning and teaching methodology, and so on. As a result, attempts to increase explicit teaching of

linguistic objectives and assessment through exams have been made to alter the original version of the task-based curriculum at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi to the 'modified' one which lacks the features of no prespecified linguistic objectives and an emphasis on continuous assessment. These changes are still being questioned by the stakeholders and any people involved whether they could 'improve' or 'fail' the curriculum. As long as no more concrete and reliable evidence of the curriculum's ineffectiveness has been formally reported, i.e. no one can prove how effective it is, the curriculum keeps changing continuously.

Designing clearly targeted methods of obtaining students' and teachers' reactions to a new curriculum should be considered an essential part of the curriculum design process, and procedures for putting these at the centre of any discussions to revise the curriculum need to be set up. Unfortunately, no single current evaluation model would fit the learner-centered task-based learning context. As this type of curriculum has its own characteristics and concepts different from any other kinds of curriculum, it needs a specific evaluation model that can fit its ideology and context.

The IST model is a combined formative-summative approach, in addition to combining the positivistic perspective with a more natural one. The model is based on Robert Stake's responsive approach integrated with Ralph Tyler's objectives-based approach. For formative evaluation, the naturalistic inquiry is utilized to investigate the in-depth information about context, e.g., individuals, groups or institutions, as well as implementations as they naturally occur. For summative evaluation, the positivistic approach is used to examine the student outcomes, such as student achievement and learning process. Therefore, in this study, the effectiveness of the curriculum can be determined on three main features: context, implementation and student outcomes.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a task-based English course provided by School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi based on a set of criteria and the Integrated Stake-Tyler (IST) model specially proposed for this study. The scope of the evaluation was limited to the effectiveness of the evaluated curriculum which was determined on three main features: context, implementation and student outcomes. The three features were further divided into twelve dimensions: (1) needs; (2) goals and objectives; (3) teaching methods; (4) teachers; (5) tasks; (6) teaching materials; (7) resources;

(8) assessment and evaluation; (9) student achievement; (10) students' autonomy in language learning; (11) students' opinions about the evaluated course; and (12) factors affecting students' learning outcome.

1.3 Research design

This research utilized a mixed-method approach— a combination of a positivistic, product-oriented approach and a naturalistic, process-oriented one. A case study was carried out to investigate naturalistic qualitative data. A one-group pretest-posttest design adapted from Lynch's (1996) positivistic design for program evaluation was the measure of collecting quantitative data.

1.4 Samples

In this research, the researcher decided to work with an established class of students, an intact group because it is difficult and impractical to use random sampling design. However, for the reason that the researcher cannot randomly select the subjects, there is a chance that the sample is not representative of the whole population. For example, there may be the possibility that the characteristics of the students in each group may vary in terms of level of proficiency, learning styles and so on. A sampling technique called multi-stage sampling can discount biases in selecting subjects and enhance representativeness of the sample. In this case, cluster sampling was used as the first stage of the process.

At KMUTT, there are four faculties responsible for undergraduate programs: the Faculty of Engineering, the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Industrial Education, and the Faculty of Architecture. Each faculty provides different types of undergraduate programs: regular programs, bilingual programs and international programs. The Faculty of Engineering provides regular and bilingual programs. The Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Industrial Education offer only regular programs. The Faculty of Architecture provides international programs only. The desired sample was the regular program students; so, architecture students were excluded as their English proficiency might be very different from students in the regular programs. For the same reason, the engineering students in the bilingual programs were discarded from the sample.

In semester 2 of the academic year 2006, the LNG 102 classes were divided into 4 clusters (see Chapter III for more detail). Only two clusters were used in cluster sampling. One consisted of engineering students in all departments. The other was composed of a combination of science students and industrial education students

majoring in Printing Technology and Multimedia. Therefore, the total population of this study, consisting of the second and the third clusters, was 1179 students. The optimal sample size is around 285 (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970 cited in Isaac and Michael, 1983: 193). To reach samples that can represent the whole population, six groups -- three from cluster two and another three from cluster three-- were selected for quantitative measure. Initially, each subgroup were supposed to contain around 40-45 students, but after the first two week had passed, it was found that there were only 202 students enrolling in the selected sections. However, a number of students withdrew from the course, as a result, 189 students (112 males and 77 females) were retained in the study. The second stage of the sampling process was undertaken using stratified random sampling (also known as proportional or quota random). It was applied for naturalistic inquiry. Also, 18 students were randomly selected from the two clusters as the subjects for interviews. There were 20 students (10 from each cluster) who were selected to be cases for a case study using portfolio assessment as a measure (see Figure 5.1).

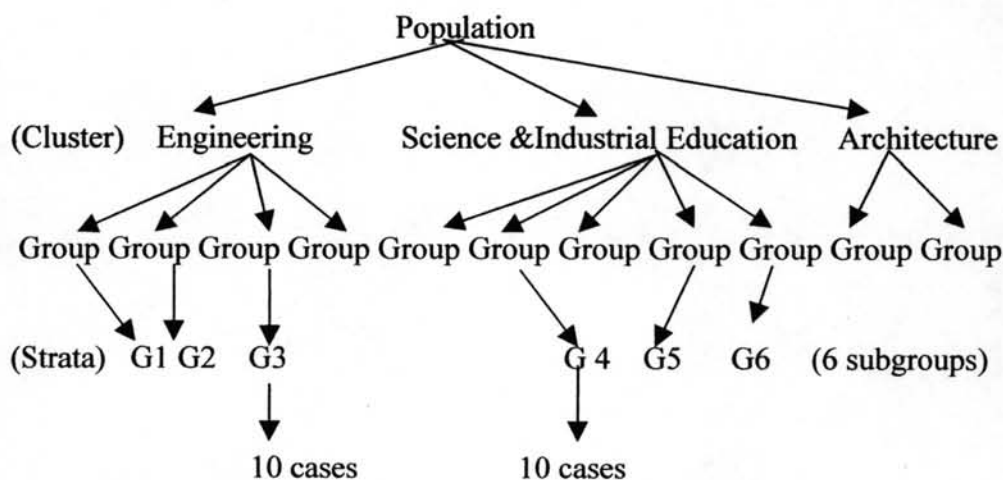


Figure 5.1: Multi-stage sampling

1.5 Evaluation model

The IST model, a combined formative-summative approach, is based on Robert Stake's responsive approach integrated with Ralph Tyler's objectives-based approach. For formative evaluation, the naturalistic inquiry is utilized to investigate the in-depth information about context, e.g., individuals, groups or institutions, as well as implementations as they naturally occur. For summative evaluation, the positivistic approach is used to examine student outcomes, such as student

achievement and learning process. The model also includes some initiatives of the researcher of the study to make it more practical and up-to-date.

1.6 Instruments

The research instruments used in this study consisted of: (1) curriculum-based achievement tests, (2) student portfolios, (3) self-assessment checklist, (4) semi-structured interviews, (5) classroom observations, and (6) materials evaluation.

Curriculum-based achievement tests

A curriculum-based achievement test was developed by the researcher of this study to serve in pre-testing and post-testing. It includes two equivalent forms of the test: Form A and Form B. The test is composed of 3 main parts: Dictionary, Getting main ideas and related details, and Note-taking and summary writing. There is also a variety of test types e.g., gap-filling, short response, multiple choice, and matching. The content validity index of the test was 0.85. The reliability of the test was 0.82.

Student portfolios

Student portfolios refer to collections of their self-study work, including self-evaluation and reflection. There were two types of portfolios: product portfolios (Appendix R) and process portfolios (Appendix S). Twenty students were randomly selected to be case studies. Individual students submitted two pieces of product portfolios together with their process portfolios, describing how they worked on each assignment. The portfolios were then rated by three raters using two types of rubrics as scoring criteria for assessing students' learning product and process. The index of content validity of the product portfolios was 0.78, and that of the process portfolios was 0.77.

Self-assessment checklist

A self-assessment checklist was developed to examine the students' learner autonomy in language learning. It was adapted from Barnett's Attitudes questionnaire for self-access in Wenden (1991). Its content validity was 0.76. The reliability of the self-assessment checklist was 0.79.

Semi-structured interviews

In the semi-structured interviews, four sets of questions were designed to ask different groups of participants for different purposes. English teachers were asked about the rationale, scope, activities of the program, as well as student needs. Audiences were questioned about the purposes of the study. Subject teachers were asked to identify students' target or real-world needs. Students were inquired about

their perceptions of the course as well as their own performance. All of the questions were translated in to Thai. The content validity index of the interview questions was 0.77.

Classroom observations

The researcher observed three classes, and three lessons of each class were video-taped: (1) the first lesson when the task is introduced, (2) the during-task lesson, and (3) the final lesson when students present task outcome. A classroom observation checklist, designed using Willis (1996)'s model for task-based learning framework as a guideline, were used as instruments. The content validity index of the checklist was 0.76.

Materials evaluation

Course materials were reviewed and analysed using an objective grid to investigate whether they were consistent with the goals and objectives of the evaluated course. The content validity index of the objective grid was 0.75.

1.7 Procedure

The data were collected throughout the 15-week course. In week 1, the achievement test (Form A) was administered to the subjects as a pretest. Classroom observations, material evaluation and portfolio assessment were carried out during weeks 2-14. The data were then analyzed using thematic analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, recorded, and analyzed in week 14. The subjects were posttested (using Form B) in week 15. They were also asked to fill out the self-assessment checklist to find out how they perceived self-directed learning and learner autonomy in the same week.

1.8 Results

The results and findings of the study were presented as follows:

1. Results from the interviews showed that 50% of the stakeholders thought that the goals and objectives of the course met the students' target needs. Results from the Chi-square test by Fisher's Exact test revealed that, in general, the opinions of different groups of stakeholders were not significantly different. It was only the audiences who had different views from the others.

2. Results from the interviews showed that majority of the stakeholders (69.2%) thought that the goals and objectives of the LNG 102 course were appropriate for specified groups of students, i.e. undergraduate KMUTT students. The Chi-square

analysis using Fisher's Exact test showed that there were no significant differences in the stakeholders' opinions.

3. Results from the Chi-square test showed no significant difference in the teaching methods of the three teachers participating in the study, except for three teaching techniques: allowing students to ask questions, having students answer questions and correct their own mistakes. Results from classroom observation also revealed that 66.7 % of the task-based teaching techniques were utilized in the 'real' classroom situations. However, some important techniques relevant to task-based teaching methodology were neglected, for example, describing the goals and outcomes of the task, encouraging the students to ask and answer questions, as well as encouraging the students to correct their own mistakes and evaluate their own performance.

4. Results from the classroom observation showed that generally, the English teachers were moderately skillful in task-based instruction. The Chi-square test revealed no significant difference in the observed teachers' performance.

5. Results from the interviews reported that most of the English teachers (66.7%) thought that the tasks of the LNG 102 course were consistent with the course objectives, excluding the note-taking from listening task. However, results from the Chi-square test showed no difference in their opinions.

6. Results from material evaluation showed that the two objectives that were covered in every set of teaching materials were teaching cognitive strategies (100%) and teaching English for academic purposes (100%), followed by teaching critical thinking (88.9%) and teaching English for future careers (88.9%) in the same rank. Additionally, 7 out of 9 sets (77.7%) of the teaching materials for the LNG 102 course matched the course objectives. The perfectly-matched ones were those on *Presentation Skills*. The only set of materials that needed revising were the ones on *Introduction to Resourcing Task*.

7. Results from the interviews with English teachers and students revealed that everyone (100%) thought that the resources provided were sufficient.

8. Results from the interviews with English teachers and students reported that most of them (61.9%) thought the assessment procedures were appropriate to the prespecified objectives. The Chi-square test (Fisher's Exact test) revealed that the opinions of the two groups of stakeholders were significantly different at the 0.05

significance level. However, the problem of subjectivity in scoring was mostly raised by both parties.

9. Results obtained from the achievement tests (pre- and post-tests) showed that the students made significant gains in their language abilities after taking this course. The students' gained scores were 10% higher than those they gained on the pretest. The students' scores on the pretest and the posttest were significantly different at 0.05 level ($t=.001, p < 0.05$) with a very large effect. Among the three parts of the achievement tests, students' highest gains were score on note-taking and summary writing task.

10. Results from the Chi-square test revealed that students' overall perceptions towards self-directed learning and learner autonomy were significantly different at the 0.05 level. The students seemed to agree that they did not have enough choice about how to study and that CDs were their best resource for learning English. The current students' perceptions towards self-directed learning were neutral. The three top-rated statements were: (1) most class were mixed-ability classes, (2) computers were their best resources for learning English, and (3) they were able to figure out their own problems.

Results from portfolio assessment revealed the students' moderate performance on portfolio tasks. The students performed on the product portfolios far better than on process portfolios. Also, there was a positive relationship between the two sets of scores.

Results from the interviews with the ex-students expressed that all of them (100%) realized the importance of self-study tasks for their current study and future careers. However, only one of them kept on doing self-study mostly for his own pleasure. None of them still kept portfolios for practising English.

11. Result from the interviews with the students showed the students' different opinions on the appropriateness of the LNG 102 course. About 50% of them thought that it was appropriate. The rest thought that it needed improvement. The Chi-square test revealed that the proportions of their responses were not different.

12. Results from the interviews with the students concerning factors affecting their learning outcome reveal that two-thirds of the students accepted their language

abilities having improved after taking the LNG 102 course. With regard to the factors they thought helped improve their learning, more than 50% of the students accepted that the top-ranked factor was in-class instruction. Background knowledge and self-study were the second and third factors respectively.

Table 5.1: Summary of the Evaluation

Evaluative Dimensions	Results	Evidence
1. The goals and objectives of the course meet the needs of the stakeholders.	Agree	About 50% of the stakeholders agreed with this statement.
2. The goals and objectives are appropriate for the specified groups of students.	Agree	About 69.2% of the stakeholders agreed with this statement.
3. The teaching methods are relevant to the prespecified objectives.	Agree	About 66.7% of the task-based teaching techniques were used in class.
4. The teachers are skillful in task-based instruction.	Agree	The English teachers were moderately skillful in task-based instruction.
5. The tasks are related to the course objectives.	Agree	About 67% of the English teachers agreed with this statement.
6. The teaching materials are relevant to the prespecified objectives.	Agree	About 77.7% of the teaching materials matched the course objectives.
7. The resources are adequate.	Agree	About 100% of the stakeholders agreed with this statement.
8. The assessment procedures are appropriate to the prespecified objectives.	Agree	About 61.9% of the stakeholders agreed with this statement.

Evaluative Dimensions	Results	Evidence
9. The students make significant gains in their language abilities after taking this course.	Agree	The students' scores on the posttests were 10% higher than the scores on their pretests.
10. The students develop their autonomy in language learning during and after taking this course.	Agree	The students had neutral attitudes towards self-directed learning and learner autonomy. Their performances on the portfolio tasks were rather moderate.
11. The learners think the course is appropriate.	Agree	About 50% of the students agreed with this statement.
12. The student learning is the result of instruction other than extraneous factors	Agree	About 55.6% of the students thought that their learning was the result of instruction.

As shown in Table 5.1, results from the evaluation were very positive; however, it seems that a number of dimensions fulfilled the criteria with indistinctively high scores. Therefore, to determine the extent of effectiveness of the evaluated course, the overall score was calculated by combining the percentage scores of the evaluative dimensions, excluding dimensions 4, 9 and 10, and then, dividing them by 9 (the numbers of dimensions). The result which equals 67.70% was compared with the grading criteria for undergraduate courses at Chulalongkorn university (CULI, 2007) as follows:

85%-100% = very successful

75%-84% = successful

65%-74% = fairly successful

55%-64% = partially successful

0%-54% = fail

Based on the established criteria, it can be concluded that the LNG 102 course is fairly successful. This can also be evidence that proves the appropriateness of the

IST model as an evaluation model for examining the effectiveness of a task-based English course that aims at promoting students' learning product and process.

However, some interesting questions arise from the findings:

1. Why did only 50% of the stakeholders agree that the goals and objectives of the LNG 102 course met the needs of the students?
2. Why did only 50% of the students think that the LNG 102 course was appropriate for them?
3. Why did 55.6% of the students think that their learning outcome was the result of in-class instruction, rather than their background knowledge and self-study?
4. Why was LNG 102 just fairly successful?
5. Should the teachers use the mother-tongue (L1) in task-based language teaching? If so, how much L1 should be used?
6. Should grammar be taught explicitly in task-based language teaching? If so, how and when should it be presented?

2. Discussions

2.1 Why did only 50% of the stakeholders agree that the goals and objectives of the LNG 102 course met the needs of the students?

Results from the interviews with different groups of the stakeholders reported that only half of them agreed that the goals and objectives of the LNG 102 course were congruent with students' needs. This may be due to the following reasons:

1. Needs analysis was not done formally and substantially in the curriculum renewal process. According to Watson Todd (2001b: 100-102), prior to the development of task-based English curriculum, the curriculum renewal process was conducted using top-down approach. At that time, there were two separate departments: Department of Language that was responsible for English support courses for both undergraduate and graduate students, and Department of Applied Linguistics, taking charge of MA. Programs in Applied linguistics (note: the former Department of Applied Linguistics and the Department of Language are currently combined into a single department called the Department of Language Studies). Initially, the decision concerning the changing of the existing curriculum was done solely by the change agents -- the senior staff at the former Department of Applied Linguistics. The Language staff were not involved at this stage. Later, the Language

staff became more involved by attending a series of input sessions held by the change agents to provide requisite knowledge of task-based instruction. A pilot study of task-based instruction was also done to help the Language staff understand how it works. The Language staff were then assigned to set up reading groups to review literature related to task-based teaching, and conduct action research to investigate key points of the task-based curriculum. At these stages, the change agents provided occasional guidance to the Language staff to aid them in completing their work. After that, outlines of the courses LNG 101 and LNG 102 were designed, followed by materials development.

Obviously, in the process of curriculum renewal at KMUTT, need analysis was conducted by only two groups of stakeholders: the change agents and the language staff. They used existing information, like literature review, as a source for formulating students' target needs. In fact, a literature review will seldom uncover a program that has precisely the same types of students with exactly the same situation and language needs...(Brown, 1995:47). Little action research was completed due to the time constraint. These procedures, therefore, could not provide sufficient information about the students' needs. As a result, a lot of concerns were raised by different groups of people involved. The audiences were worried that the course goals and objectives may not meet the students' real-world needs. Even though the majority of the teacher participants (both subject and English teachers) agreed that the course goals and objectives fitted the students' academic needs, there was still a contrary opinion. One teacher believed that the course goals and objectives did not meet the needs of the students since the students were not involved in the process of needs analysis. She said: "Needs are not originally derived from students."

Needs analysis refers to the "identification of the language form that the students will likely use in the target language when they are required to actually understand and produce the language," which is typically conducted in the initial stages of curriculum development (Brown, 1995:20). Normally, needs analysis should be done with the three concerned parties: students, teachers, and audiences, including the institution, authority, sponsor, or company. Types of needs are divided into different categories: objective needs or perceived needs (not necessarily felt by learners), subjective needs or felt needs (internally felt by learners) (Johnson, 1982:55), target situation needs or target needs (what learners need to do in the target situation) and learning needs (what learners need to do in order to learn) (Hutchinson

and Waters (1987: 55-57). There are a number of instruments for gathering needs analysis information; for example, existing information, tests, observation, interviews, meetings, and questionnaires (Brown, 1995:46).

In the process of curriculum renewal at KMUTT, based on what they had learnt from literature review and action research, the curriculum developers who were also teachers brainstormed ideas about what students needed to do in the target situations -- their current study and future careers. Then, they selected tasks that they thought could fulfill such perceived needs. At this stage, the students and other stakeholders were not involved. This caused a lot of concerns about the consistence of the profile of learners' needs and the scope of the objectives of the course and the content to be learnt.

2. Even though needs analysis was not formally conducted as it was supposed to be at the initial stage of curriculum development, fortunately, the perceived needs agreed with the students' real-world academic needs. Watson Todd (2001:7) claimed that the tasks specified for LNG 102 course based on the students' immediate academic needs were "relevant, motivating and meaningful to the students". It was also explained that the criteria for selecting tasks were clarity, flexibility, feedback and challenge (Van Lier, 1996 cited in Watson Todd, *ibid.*). They included task-based language teaching literature, the KMUTT students' "perceived needs" identified by curriculum development team, as well as the opinions of teachers and change agents. Using the library and the Internet for resourcing, presenting research in English, solving problems, promoting self-discipline and involving students in the local community were examples of the selected tasks. Such tasks are very useful, because they included study skills and learning strategies the students needed to be able to do for learning English, as well as their own specific fields of study. In addition, a report on the Needs for English Use of Thai Society, Concerning Standards and Quality of English of Thai University Graduates (Wongsothorn et al., 2002) reveals that their most needed English skill is reading, followed by translating, listening, speaking, and writing respectively. Even though the LNG 102 course is task-based, it provides integrated skills needed for completing each task. Reading and writing are the two skills involved in every task. Regarding the report mentioned earlier, some of the skills Thai university graduates are expected to be able to do are reading for main ideas and supporting details, understanding academic vocabulary in specific contexts and summarizing from reading, using the

Internet as a resource, and giving oral presentations. These are all integral parts of the course content. The fact that writing is needed less for Thai university graduates than listening and speaking can explain the concerns of the audience and one of subject teachers in this study that speaking and listening skills are needed more than writing skill. Thai graduates need to be able to communicate with their clients, colleagues, business partners, or bosses in English, as well as comprehend everyday English conversations. Since society has become more globalized and English has become an international language, Thai university students need to be trained to be more efficient in using English.

In sum, needs assessment is a very important feature of task-based courses. No matter what type of course (e.g., EAP, EOP, or ESP) they are, needs analysis should be undertaken at the initial stage of course design, as it is closely related with other elements of a course. Goals and objectives are derived from needs. Tasks must be selected in accordance with goals and objectives of the course. It is worth noting that since these course elements are inter-related, needs assessment should not be neglected. Moreover, a formal and systematic needs analysis can lead to a well-established program. Learners' needs for using English outside of the classroom setting are not clear-cut in most EFL settings. Teachers, therefore, cannot base the course on needs that don't exist (Graves, 2000:105). It is suggested that in any context that needs cannot be formally identified due to any unpredictable constraints, identifying perceived needs based on existing information may be an interesting alternative.

2.2 Why did only 50% of the students think that the LNG 102 course was appropriate for them?

Results from the interviews with the students showed the students' different views on the appropriateness of the LNG 102 course. Only half of them thought that it was appropriate. The rest thought that it needed improvement. This may be due to the following reasons:

1. Some student participants showed their dissatisfaction at three elements of the course: teaching methods, assessment criteria and course content.

1.1 The top-ranked issue is teachers' differences in teaching methods. Results from classroom observation showed no significant difference in the performance of the observed teachers. Overall, the English teachers were moderately skillful in task-based instruction. All of the observed teachers employed the following techniques in

class: (1) introducing the topic and task, (2) giving clear instructions, (3) allowing enough preparation time for each task, (4) allowing students to ask when they got stuck, (5) talking in English and Thai, (6) allowing students to talk in Thai, (7) allowing students to use both Thai and English in communication, and (8) giving specific language guidance. The reason why the observed teachers were moderately skillful in task-based language teaching was that all of them have more than 5-year experience in teaching task-based courses at KMUTT and be involved in a curriculum renewal team, as a result, they knew how to teach task-based lessons.

Even though the teaching techniques used in their classrooms were mostly task-based, individual teachers had different ways of implementing them. Results from interviews with students and English teachers could confirm this fact. One student said:

My friends [in another class] told me that their teacher is very kind and easy-grading. Mine is more strict. Their teacher just teaches the lessons in the handouts and corrects the students' mistakes by explaining complicated rules when giving grammar feedback. My teacher likes her students to figure out how to self-correct their own mistakes.

The English teachers admitted that they implement task-based instruction differently. One teacher said:

Implementing the course depends on teachers' views towards it. Some teachers think that the course content was too much. Some think that there should be some more supplements for students to practice.

Another teacher agreed: "Teachers find their own ways of implementing the course."

The problem concerning teaching methods can be solved by providing well-designed materials equipped with detailed course guides including aims and objectives, assessment procedures, recommended materials and methods, and suggested learning activities. Course orientations should be also provided to teachers who have to teach task-based courses, particularly part-time teachers so that they will be clear about what they are going to teach. A buddy or mentoring system which matches new or less-experienced teachers with old or experienced teachers for

mentoring and support is an interesting method for reducing teachers' differences in the implementation of task-based teaching.

1.2 The second-ranked problem is unfairness of assessment criteria. Regarding the assessment procedures, results from the interviews with English teachers and students reported that the majority thought the assessment procedures were appropriate to the course objectives. However, both parties raised their concerns about teachers' subjectivity in scoring all tasks, particularly portfolios. English teachers were also worried about portfolio assessment as it was considered less important and reliable than objective testing. A number of students showed their dissatisfaction with teachers' subjective judgements. According to Watson Todd (2006), English teachers reported that one of the reasons for curriculum change was lack of reliability e.g. subjective marking by some teachers. As a result, more marks were gradually given to the quizzes to increase the objectivity in scoring. The most concerned task was the portfolio.

Portfolio assessment is a type of alternative assessment which is known as a systematic assessment procedure used to plan, collect, and analyze the multiple sources of data maintained in the portfolio (Moya and O'Malley, 1994). Another definition of portfolio assessment is the systematic use of student self-assessment along with the participation of practicing professionals as a means to ensure appropriate objectives and standards. There are five stages of portfolio development: (1) development of goals and objectives; (2) instrument development; (3) data collection; (4) data analysis; and (5) use of data (Knight and Gallaro, 1994). Portfolio assessment is a very crucial assessment tool as it can evaluate the process as well as the product of learning and promote autonomous learning and self-directed learning (Tzagari, 2004:119). The fact that scoring portfolios involves the extensive use of subjective evaluation procedures, such as rating scales and professional judgements leads to limitation of reliability.

Criteria for assessing and interpreting portfolio information should be clearly defined to avoid subjective marking. Standardisation of assessment judgements should be conducted to increase the reliability of portfolio assessment. For instance, to examine consistency in assessment standards (inter-rater reliability), each piece of portfolio should be assessed by more than one staff member. To measure individual raters' agreement on scoring (intra-rater reliability), the individual raters should rate the same portfolio independently and periodically.

Results from portfolio assessment showed a significant relationship between the two types of portfolios: product and process portfolios. Further, scores obtained from the same scoring schemes (e.g., analytic procedure for product portfolios and holistic procedure for process portfolios) were examined using Pearson-product moment to investigate the relationship between the scores rated by three raters. The data from the two sets of scores were analyzed separately.

Table 5.2: Correlation Matrix for Total Scores on Product Portfolios for the Three Raters

	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
Rater 1	1	0.53*	0.26
Rater 2	0.53*	1	0.22
Rater 3	0.26	0.22	1

* $p < 0.05$

Note: All of the three raters are Language staff. Raters 1 and 3 have more teaching experience than rater 2. Rater 1 is the researcher who designs the rubrics for assessing portfolio tasks. Rater 3 is the subjects' teacher.

Table 5.2 shows that there was significant agreement in the scoring of the product portfolios between raters 1 and 2 ($r = 0.53$), indicating that there was a moderate relationship between the scores rated by the two raters. They might have followed the same marking criteria. The correlation coefficient for raters 1 and 3 was very low ($r = 0.26$). The scores assigned by rater 3 did not correlate significantly with those of the other raters indicating that rater 3 interpreted the marking scheme differently from the others.

Table 5.3: Correlation Matrix for Total Scores on Process Portfolios for the Three Raters

	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
Rater 1	1	0.75**	0.57**
Rater 2	0.75**	1	0.67**
Rater 3	0.57**	0.67**	1

* $p < 0.05$

All of the correlation coefficients reported in Table 5.3 were statistically significant, indicating agreement in the scoring of the process portfolios by raters 1, 2 and 3. The correlation coefficient for raters 1 and 2 was very high ($r = 0.75$). The correlation coefficient for raters 2 and 3 was quite high ($r = 0.67$). The correlation coefficient for raters 1 and 3 was moderate ($r = 0.57$). To further, investigate any differences between the mean scores of each pairs, one-way ANOVA was employed. To do this, the researcher had to make sure that the basic assumptions of ANOVA were not violated. Results from a test of normality showed that the scores on both types of portfolios were normally distributed (Appendix T). The test of homogeneity of variance (Appendix U) revealed that the scores obtained from the product portfolios could not assume equal variances ($p > 0.05$), therefore, the Brown-Forsythe statistic was used instead of the F statistic. However, the scores from product portfolios assumed equal variances ($p < 0.05$), so the F statistic was employed.

Table 5.4: Robust Tests of Equality of Means of Product Portfolios

	Statistic	df1	df2
Brown-Forsythe	8.91*	2	41.48

* $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 5.4, the p value was lower than the critical value set at 0.05, indicating that there was at least one pair of scores that was significantly different. The data were further calculated using the Games-Howell test to find out which pairs were different.

Table 5.5: Results from a post-hoc comparison of the three raters marking the same product portfolios

Game-Howell	Mean	Mean Difference		
		Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
Rater 1	14.05	-	2.65*	0.10
Rater 2	11.40	-2.65*	-	-2.55*
Rater 3	13.95	-0.10	2.55*	-

* $p < 0.05$

Results revealed that the two pairs of means were significantly different at an alpha level of 0.05. These were: (1) Rater 1 scored higher than rater 2; and (2) Rater 3 scored higher than rater 2. It can be concluded that the results from the post-hoc analysis reveal that rater 1 scored the highest followed by rater 3 and rater 2 respectively. This may be because rater 1 was the designer of the portfolio tasks, and so she knew how to use the rating scales far better than the other raters.

Table 5.6: Comparisons of mean scores on the process portfolios assigned by three raters

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	52.03	2	26.02	2.62
Within Groups	566.70	57	9.94	
Total				

$p > 0.05$

According to Table 5.6, the one-way ANOVA was computed to examine whether the mean scores for process portfolios were different or not. With the *F* value of 2.62 ($p > 0.05$), it showed that there was no significant difference among the scores for the process portfolios rated by the three raters. On other words, they had followed the same marking scheme.

Table 5.7: Results from a post-hoc comparison of the three raters marking the same process portfolios

Scheffe	Mean	Mean Difference		
		Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
Rater 1	11.45	-	2.00	0.05
Rater 2	9.45	-2.00	-	-1.95
Rater 3	11.40	-0.05	1.95	-

Results revealed that none of the means were significantly different at an alpha level of 0.05. However, rater 1 scored higher than the others. Rater 3 scored higher than rater 2. As mentioned earlier, rater 1 scored the highest because she knew the rating scales very well, having developed them herself.

Results from the portfolio assessment revealed that the scores for the product portfolios assigned by the three raters were remarkably different, even though one pair of them was significantly correlated. It seemed that rater 1 and rater 3 who have more teaching experience, scored the product portfolios higher than rater 2, the less experience. The product portfolio aims at assessing students' writing abilities through a summary-writing task. The rubric consists of three attributes: format, accuracy and communicative ability. Rater 2 showed her concern about the accuracy attributes. She explained that it is very difficult to differentiate between copied writing and writing in phrases and chunks. The analytic scoring rubric for assessing product portfolios should, therefore, be revised by providing more information about each attribute. However, the three raters' scoring of the process portfolios was not significantly different. Their relationship ranged from moderate to high. This suggests that the holistic scoring rubric for process portfolios are reliable and suitable for measuring students' learning process. Additional training in the scoring should be conducted to increase the reliability of measures, the fairness of the assessment procedure, as well as the task.

1.3 The third-rated element of the course that most students thought should be improved is course content, which includes tasks and teaching materials. In this study, the effectiveness of the teaching materials for the LNG 102 course was determined in terms of coverage and relevance to the course objectives, rather than their quality. The content of the task presented in the teaching materials is concerned with cognitive strategies, critical thinking and English for academic purposes and future careers. All tasks are relevant to students' real-world academic needs. Most of the course handouts are very long, some of them with supplements; as a result, they cover many of the specified objectives of the course. The only one set of materials that needs revising is the *Introduction to Resourcing Task*. It is a one-page handout describing the objectives and procedure of the resourcing task. The handout can be revised by adding some parts to the existing materials or producing supplementary materials. For example, new handouts on *How to Select a Topic*, *Forming Pre-questions* and *Searching Information* should be made to provide more concrete guidelines for students on how to perform the resourcing task. An explanation on how the project is assessed should be clearly stated.

There are two large-scale tasks in the LNG 102 course: the resourcing task, which is the main task, and the portfolio task, the course adjunct. Some small-scale tasks relevant to the two tasks were selected and sequenced. Every sub-task was selected based on the students' real-world academic needs. Some of them, such as the resourcing and the presentation tasks cover all the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Many of the sub-tasks present integrated skills; for instance, note-taking from listening, note-taking from reading, getting main ideas and related details, summary writing and using a dictionary. Most of the course materials are teacher-made, except for the dictionary task which was extracted from a commercial coursebook.

Tasks are goal-oriented, i.e. they have a specific objective that must be achieved, and each task contains lessons specially designed for skills (Willis, 1996:25). A number of dimensions that influence the use of tasks in language teaching include goals, procedures, order, pacing, product, learning strategy, assessment, participation, resources, and language (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 539-540). In task-based teaching materials, at least four dimensions -- goals, procedures, product, and assessment -- should be presented to facilitate the students in completing the assigned tasks. Goals refer to the kind of goals teachers and learners identify for a

task. Procedures are the operations or procedures learners use to complete a task. Product is the outcome or outcomes students produce, such as a set of questions, an essay, or a summary as the outcome of the reading task. Assessment refers to how success on the task will be determined. The following table shows the extent to which each set of materials for the LNG 102 course cover the four dimensions.

Table 5.8: Task Dimensions in Teaching Materials

Teaching materials	Task Dimensions			
	Goals	Procedures	Product	Assessment
Introduction to resourcing task	√	√	√	-
Guidelines for portfolio task and self-study	√	√	√	-
Dictionary task	√	√	√	-
Getting main ideas and related details	-	√	-	-
Note-taking from reading	-	√	√	-
Note-taking from listening	-	√	-	-
Summary writing	-	√	√	-
Grammar mistakes	-	√	-	-
Presentation skills	√	√	√	-

Considering as to how much each task covers for the four task dimensions, it can be seen that the two most neglected dimensions are goals and assessment. To make the teaching materials more effective, the missing dimensions should be included in the existing materials or added as supplements. Every task should consist of goals, procedure, product and assessment. In the assessment part, students should be informed on how teachers assess their work, and they should be allowed to do self-evaluation (note: it is mentioned in the handout on *Note-taking form Reading* only). Moreover, it should be made aware that the more supplements provided, the more activities students would have to do and the more time they would have to spend for each task. To solve these problems, all the tasks in the LNG 102 course should be linked to some certain degree. The product or outcome of a preceding task can be the input for a following task. For example, in the resourcing task, after the students have selected their topic for the project, they could form at least 3 pre-questions. In the next stage they should find information from different sources to answer the questions. The

students may collect any printed-texts available on the Internet or from a library. The texts will be analysed using the dictionary. Then, the same texts will be analysed to find the main ideas and related details. The students make notes of the texts, and finally write a summary of those texts. Linking sub-tasks together will reduce the burden on both the teachers and the students. The teachers will spend less time on marking, and the students will spend less time on performing each task.

2.3 Why did 55.6% of the students think that their learning outcome was the result of in-class instruction rather than their background knowledge and self-study?

Concerning the factors the students thought helped improve their learning, more than 50% of the students thought that in-class instruction was the best. This may be due to the following reasons:

1. Most of the students regarded themselves as 'weak' students because of their limited proficiency in English. Results from interviews with students revealed that they thought that they were very weak in English. Most of them said that they have poor background knowledge of English. Few of them had had task-based learning in their previous English-learning experience. Some used to do portfolio tasks in their high schools, but those had been very different from these of the LNG 102 course. Results from interviews with English teachers showed that they also agreed with the students' opinions. One teacher said that "My students are weak in every skill." Another teacher added:

The students have poor background knowledge of English. They are not mentally mature enough to take responsibility for their own learning.

However, taking the LNG 102 course enabled them to improve their English skills, particularly note-taking and summary writing. Results on the students' product obtained from the achievement tests (pre- and post-tests) showed the students' significant gains (10%) in their language abilities after taking this course. Among the three components of the achievement tests, students' highest gains were in note-taking and summary writing task. Since the scores indicated a positive change in the students' behaviour, this represented evidence that the course attained its objectives. However, the fact that only 40% of the students increased in their achievement, which is rather

low, has led to the question: What are the variables affecting their linguistic improvement? The data were, then, further examined to investigate whether there were any differences among the posttest scores of the six intact groups.

Table 5.9: Means, standard deviations, and ranges of scores from the posttest performed by the six intact groups

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Range
Group 1	36	36.11	12.05	12	67	55
Group 2	33	42.39	8.29	27	67	40
Group 3	37	39.24	12.97	11	63	52
Group 4	24	35.33	8.85	11	53	42
Group 5	25	41.92	9.60	21	57	36
Group 6	34	34.58	11.89	12	56	44
Total	189	38.22	11.25	11	67	56

Note: Groups 1-3 = engineering students

Groups 4-6 = science and industrial education students

As shown in Table 5.9, among the six intact groups, Group 2 obtained the highest scores whereas Group 6 gained the lowest. All groups had high standard deviation which means that they had more variability from the central point in the distribution.

Table 5.10: Comparisons of mean scores on the posttest made by six subgroups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	1764.45	5	352.89	2.93*
Within Groups	22021.65	183	120.34	
Total	23786.11	188		

* $p < 0.05$

According to Table 5.10, the one-way ANOVA was computed to examine whether the mean scores for the posttest of the six subgroups were different or not. The *F* value was 2.93 and its *p* value was 0.014, which is lower than the critical value set at 0.05. That means there was a significant difference among the subgroups in doing the posttest ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5.11: Results from a post-hoc comparison of the six intact groups

LSD	Mean	Mean difference					
		G.1	G. 2	G.3	G.4	G.5	G.6
G. 1	36.11	-	-6.28*	-3.13	0.77	-5.80*	1.52
G.2	42.39	6.28*	-	3.15	7.06*	0.47	7.80*
G.3	39.24	3.13	-3.15	-	3.90	-2.67	4.65
G.4	35.33	-0.77	-7.06*	-3.90	-	-6.58*	0.74
G.5	41.92	5.80*	-0.47	2.67	6.58*	-	7.33*
G.6	34.58	-1.52	-7.80*	-4.65	-0.74	-7.33*	-

*p< 0.05

A post hoc test was applied to determine that differences exist among the group means of the six intact groups. According to a test of homogeneity of variance using the Levene statistic in SPSS, which was greater than 0.05 (see Appendix T), it was assumed that the six groups had equal variances. Based on the assumption that the six intact groups were unequal in size but had equal variances, the Scheffe test, was utilized. However, the results from the Scheffe test revealed no significant difference between each pair of means at an alpha level of 0.05. The post-hoc comparison was performed again using the LSD (least significant difference) statistic test that has the same assumption as Scheffe. The results show that six pairs were remarkably different: (1) group 2 performed better than group 1, (2) group 5 performed better than group 4, (3) group 2 performed better than group 4, (4) group 2 performed better than group 6, (5) group 2 performed better than group 5, and (6) group 5 performed better than group 6.

It can be concluded that the results from the post-hoc analysis revealed that group 2 performed the best, followed by group 3, group 5, group 1, group 4, and group 6 respectively.

Table 5.12: Comparisons of mean scores on the posttest made by subjects in three indifferent faculties

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	1929.969	2	964.985	8.212*
Within Groups	21856.136	186	117.506	
Total	23786.136	188		

* $p < 0.05$

To find out whether there were any differences among the posttest scores performed by students from different faculties, one-way ANOVA was employed. The *F* value was significant ($\alpha = 0.05$). Test of homogeneity variance also reported that the test statistic's significance was greater than 0.05, so equal variances were assumed. Consequently, the Scheffe Test was applied to find out whether any of the pairs of means were significantly different.

Table 5.13: Post-hoc comparisons of mean scores on the posttest made by the subjects in three faculties

Sheffe	Faculty	Mean	Mean difference		
			Engineering	Science	Industrial Education
	Engineering	36.93	-	0.013	11.83*
	Science	36.76	-0.013	-	11.81
	Industrial Education	21.95	-11.83*	-11.81*	-

* $p < 0.05$

Table 5.13 shows that the engineering students did not perform differently from the science students. However, the two groups' performances on the posttest was significantly different from that of the industrial education students ($p < 0.05$). With regard to the group means, the students in the Faculty of Engineering performed slightly better than the students in the Faculty of Science, but the two groups did

much better than those in the Faculty of Industrial Education. This may be because the sample sizes of both the science and engineering students were larger than that of the industrial education ones.

To summarize, the subjects made significant gains after having taken the LNG 102 course, but the percentage of the number of the students whose posttest scores were markedly higher than their pretest scores were less than 50%. The factor that may have influenced their gains is their academic fields of study. It can be assumed then that this course is more suitable for engineering and science students than industrial education students.

2. Most of the students are teacher-dependent. Results from interviews with the students and the English teachers showed that the students could not learn independently. They still needed teacher support. One student said:

The teacher tried to encourage us to correct our own mistakes by using the dictionary. Sometimes, it didn't work. I still didn't know how to correct them. I needed advice from the teacher.

One English teacher showed her concern about students' lack of self-study:

They rarely spend time doing self-study tasks. Autonomous learning seems to be out of their attention.

However, taking the LNG 102 course enables the students to develop their autonomy in language learning to some degree. Though the results from the self-assessment checklist revealed the students' neutral perceptions towards self-directed learning, more than half of them (54.49%) reported that they were not be able to learn without teacher support. About 62.9% thought that they could not develop their techniques to improve their grammar. Also, 58.06% of them admitted that they could not correct their own mistakes. These results show that the students know how to learn English independently, but they still wanted teacher support. They were not confident enough to work on their own.

Results from portfolio assessment conducted with a case study confirmed that the students' competence in performing the portfolio tasks was mostly moderate. Snadden (Snadden and Thomas, 1998) describes portfolio as a learning tool that can

stimulates reflective, experiential and deep learning, and it also can judge progression towards or achievement of specific learning objectives, competence and/or fitness to practice. To investigate whether there is a relationship between the three pairs of scores on the three test tasks: (1) product portfolio and achievement test, (2) process portfolio and self-assessment checklist, and (3) product portfolio and process portfolio, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated.

The results showed no significant relationship between the product portfolio and the achievement test ($r= 0.29$, $p>0.05$). This may be because they are different types of tests. The achievement test is an objective test, whereas the product portfolio involves essay writing. There was also no significant relationship between the process portfolio and the self-assessment checklist ($r= 0.22$, $p>0.05$). These two measures test the same construct: autonomous learning. The process portfolio expresses the students' behaviour when performing portfolio tasks. The self-assessment checklist reflects their perceptions toward self-directed learning and learner autonomy. It can be interpreted that what the students think about their autonomy in language learning is not consistent with what they actually do. However, it was found that the relationship between product portfolio and process portfolio was significant ($r=0.57$, $p<0.05$). This can be interpreted to mean that developing learner autonomy may enable the students to increase their language abilities. The scores on the self-assessment checklists were compared to the posttest scores ($n = 189$), the correlation coefficient was 0.57 ($p<0.05$) indicating that there was a moderate relationship between the two sets of scores. That means the student outcome may be related to their perceptions towards self-directed learning and learner autonomy. To maximize the reliability of the scoring rubrics for portfolio assessment, a generalisability coefficient was calculated, as it could explicitly examine different sources of error. The results showed that a high generalisability coefficient could be obtained by using three raters for product portfolios and four raters for process portfolios.

To summarize, the task-based course can help students improve their language abilities to some degree. It seemed to be more appropriate for the students whose English proficiency ranged from intermediate to advanced. The 'weak' students were likely to encounter more problems when completing tasks. Task-based language teaching encouraged the students to think and learn independently, however, Thai students are still rather teacher-dependent. They realize the importance of self-study

in improving their English skills, but in practice, they cannot control their own learning. Motivation is another crucial factor. Most of the Thai students, even in the university level, have little exposure to an English-speaking environment; as a result, they are not motivated enough to develop their own self-study plans. The results from the case study may not be sufficient to prove that portfolio assessment can be used as a high stake assessment.

2.4 Why was the LNG 102 course just fairly successful?

Even though all of the evaluative dimensions in this study met the criteria set, some of them did not show distinctively high scores. They are needs, students' opinions about the evaluated course, and factors affecting students' learning outcome (see Table 5.1 for more details). That has considerably influence on the effectiveness of the LNG 102 course which was, eventually, judged as fairly successful. The reasons may be described as follows:

1. The LNG 102 course was not carefully planned at the initial stage of curriculum development. As mentioned earlier, only two groups of stakeholders--change agents and implementers-- were included in the needs analysis process which was conducted informally using only existing information. Opinions of other stakeholders, like the audiences, the subject teachers, as well as the students who were the target groups, were neglected. That caused a lot of concern among the people involved. Needs are interrelated with other course elements. They have dramatic effects on how to identify goals and objectives, to select course content (or tasks), to implement teaching method, and to design materials. In other words, well-specified needs will lead to a well-established course. Brown (1995: 189) points out that needs assessment, goals and objectives, testing, teaching materials and program evaluation can all be supported by a sound curriculum development process designed to make the individual teachers' job easier.

2. Teachers implemented task-based language teaching differently.

Results from classroom observations reported that all of the teachers implemented task-based language teaching differently even though they were supposed to have used the same method, task-based instruction. This had strong effects on their students' performance. Teacher C was less skillful in task-based instruction than the other teachers, but her students performed very well on their

posttests regardless of what faculty they belonged to (note: each teacher was responsible for two classes from different clusters. One consists of engineering students. The other is composed of science and industrial education students.). The following figure shows the means of students' posttest scores classified by different teachers

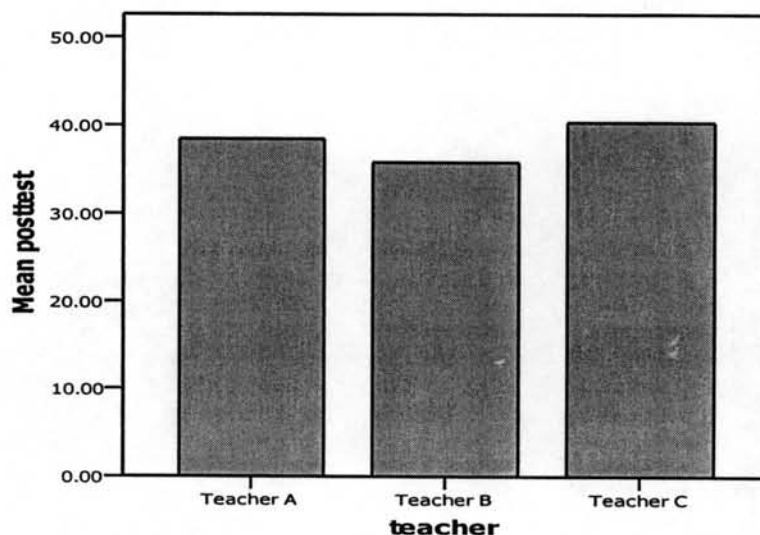


Figure 5.2: Students' means of posttest scores classified by different teachers

Figure 5.2 shows that teacher C's students in both groups performed the best on their posttest were students. For other teachers' classes, the engineering students seemed to perform better than the science and industrial education students.

However, teacher C is the person who gained the lowest score on teaching practice related to task-based instruction. She used Thai in class more extensively, as well as provided more grammar feedback to her students than the other teachers did. Results from classroom observation showed that she seemed to use Thai extensively in class especially when giving instructions and explaining the meaning of unknown vocabulary and providing grammar feedback. She reported in the interview that she do so because her students were very weak. "The students have poor background knowledge of English. They are not mentally mature enough to take responsibility for their own learning", she said in the interview. Teacher C was also concerned about the course content whether it was too difficult for her students. She said. "Personally, I don't like this course. The course content is very difficult, especially the resourcing task." As a result, she tried to use the teaching method that she thought best fit her students' needs and proficiency level.

In Thai EFL contexts, some teachers showed concerns about their own ability to implement a task-based course, as they needed time to prepare become accustomed to the learner-centeredness of a task-based approach (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol 2007:120). Teachers may have interpreted it differently depending on internal factors: (1) beliefs and principles, (2) teaching styles, (3) teaching experience, (4) skill and expertise, (5) training and qualifications, (6) morale and motivation, and (7) language proficiency (Richards, 2001:99). Other factors that may strongly affect teachers' different implementations of task-based instruction are external factors: students' English proficiency, learning styles, and beliefs concerning language learning. Students who prefer a teacher-led handout-based approach think that learning a language means learning grammar. Since task-based language teaching has a non-linguistic outcome, some students may perceive that grammar instruction is not sufficient (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol 2007:118). This has led to two important questions concerning the place of the mother tongue and explicit grammar teaching in task-based language teaching in Thailand.

2.5 Should the teachers use the mother-tongue (L1) in task-based language teaching? If so, how much L1 should be used?

One of the most interesting points arising from the findings of this study is the use of the mother-tongue. It seems that teachers' use of the mother-tongue differ depends on many factors, such as time constraints, students' language abilities, and their beliefs about task-based instruction, the most important factor. Teachers who believe that task-based instruction is not suitable for the weak students are more likely to focus on language form than meaning. They may spend a lot of time providing grammar feedback, teaching discrete points of grammar, or preparing supplement materials on grammar. These teachers tend to use L1 more often and extensively than L2, particularly in giving instructions, and explaining grammar points. Those who advocate task-based instruction may encourage students to work independently to achieve the set goals, have the students take risks with linguistic challenges, giving language support only when it is needed. These teachers tend to use L2 more often and extensively than L1 as they want the students to be exposed to the target language as much as possible.

Toapichattrakul (1991) portrayed the role of Thai in an English class that some Thai in the English class can develop students' positive attitudes to the use of English,

particularly in the transition from a totally Thai learning context to an English learning one. Moreover, some thought that Thai teachers, being non-native speakers of English, may have had difficulties in using L2 when explaining very complicated or unexpected issues.

Willis (1996) points out that in task-based language teaching, mother-tongue use is not totally banned. In circumstances when banning mother-tongue in group work causes students, especially the weak ones, to have shorter, more stilted and less natural interaction, the teacher should allow students to communicate in their mother tongue. Learners with lower English proficiency have expressed reservations about interacting in the target language (Tsui, 1996 cited in McDonough and Chaikitmongkol 2007).

However, as the goal of learning a language is to enable students to communicate in a target language, there should be a consensus between the teacher and students about the degree of mother-tongue use. The following are rules on mother-tongue use (Willis, 1996:49):

1. The mother tongue can only be spoken if a student has a question to ask the teacher but cannot do so in English.
2. The mother tongue can only be spoken if the teacher asks how they would say a word or phrase in their language, to check that it has been understood correctly.
3. The mother tongue can only be spoken if the teacher needs to explain something quickly.
4. The mother tongue can only be spoken if students are comparing the target language with mother-tongue use.
5. The mother tongue can only be spoken if students are doing tasks involving translation or summary of a target language text.

After the agreement have been made, the teacher gradually introduces useful expressions in the target language, such as *Sorry, what did you say?*, or *Wait a minute*. The mother-tongue use may eventually decrease. This is known as scaffolding. Nunan (2004:5) stressed that the learning process will 'collapse' if the scaffolding is removed too early. On the other hand, if it is maintained too long, the learners will not develop their autonomy in using a target language. Providing more simple tasks that

require more spoken language also helps increase students' confidence in using the mother-tongue.

2.6 Should grammar be taught explicitly in task-based language teaching? If so, how and when should it be presented?

The other interesting point to be discussed is explicit grammar teaching. At KMUTT, grammar is not explicitly taught in task-based English courses except for the handout on *Grammar Mistakes* that presents common grammatical mistakes and suggestions on how to correct them.

However, the results from the interviews with the students and the teachers showed that some teachers still thought that the existing materials were not enough; so, they prepared supplements, especially on grammar for their own students' use only. That caused many students to prefer studying with the "devoted" teachers to those who used only the existing materials. Explicit teaching of linguistic objectives was included both in specific lessons separate from any tasks and more pre-task language preparation was provided.

In the past two decades, some linguists viewed the focus on form as unnecessary for learners to develop their ability to use a second language automatically if they focused on meaning in the process of completing tasks (ibid., p. 9). However, in recent years, it has been accepted that grammar is an essential resource in making meaning. Nunan (ibid., p.37) proposes that learning should be taught to understand the relationships between linguistic form, communicative function and semantic meaning.

Fotos and Ellis (1991 cited in Skehan 1998: 123) propose structure-oriented task-based instruction from which some particular structures were identified as a result of task design. They claimed that learners who formulate their own hypotheses from structured materials can learn certain structures as efficiently as those who receive explicit grammar teaching. Meaning is not primary in structure-oriented task-based instruction. Willis (1996: 127) presents five principles for the implementation of a task-based approach that put more emphasis on language form varying at different stages and having cyclical qualities:

1. There should be exposure to worthwhile and authentic language.
2. There should be use of language.
3. Tasks should motivate learners to engage in language use.
4. There should be a focus on language at some points in a task cycle.

5. The focus on language should be more and less prominent at different times.

Willis (*ibid.*) also suggested that some degree of language forms be engaged in the third phase of a task-based learning framework (see Chapter Two). However, focus on language should come after a task has been done and be relevant to learners and required for a communicative purpose. She proposes so-called “language analysis activities” which should not present discrete points of language forms but involve learners in studying the language forms for which they had already learnt the meaning in the task cycle phase. Examples of language analysis activities are consciousness-raising activities, language awareness activities, and meta-communicative tasks, i.e. tasks that focus explicitly on language form and use (for reviews see Willis, 1996).

To summarize, ideally, in task-based learning, students should be provided opportunities to use the target language rather than their mother-tongue. In reality, mother-tongue use is acceptable in task-based learning if it can help students complete tasks more effectively. Teacher and students should make an agreement on how much the mother-tongue should be used. Balancing the mother-tongue with the target language is a teaching technique that teachers involved with task-based language teaching should practise. In addition, explicit grammar teaching is not prohibited in task-based learning if it comes after tasks and for students to practise the language forms they have already studied in the previous stages of the task-based learning framework. Extra materials for the LNG 102 course that include language analysis activities should be prepared by the curriculum renewal team to be used with every group of students.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Recommendations for curriculum developers

1. It is recommended that curriculum developers should undertake formal and systematic needs analysis in the process of curriculum renewal by using multiple measures and involving all parties of stakeholders to avoid any kind of resistance from any who have been neglected.
2. It is recommended that curriculum developers provide course orientations to teachers -- no matter who they are: new or old, full-time or part-time teachers--if the curriculum is changed. As a result,

they will understand concepts underpinning task-based language teaching, and then, know what they should do to achieve the course objectives.

3. It is recommended that curriculum developers include task components: goals, procedures, outcomes and assessment in every set of teaching materials so they can aid students in completing tasks more effectively.
4. It is recommended that curriculum developers should present strategies, such as setting goals and objectives, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation more explicitly in the teaching materials, since they can encourage students to develop learner autonomy as a long-term goal of task-based learning.
5. It is recommended that curriculum developers should undertake a formal evaluation using the proposed model in every four-year cycle to determine the effectiveness of the LNG 102 course and other fundamental task-based courses in the four-course series.

3.2 Recommendations for teachers

1. It is recommended that teachers provide orientations to students at the pre-task stage of every task. Learner preparation will give the students a better understanding of goals, objectives, procedures, assessment criteria and expected outcomes.
2. It is recommended that grammar teaching should be taught explicitly in the language focus stage of every task. Teachers should train their students to pay attention to language forms after they have conceptualized their meanings in the previous stage.
3. It is recommended that teachers should make an agreement with students about the amount of the mother-tongue to be used in class.

3.3 Recommendations for researchers

1. Replication of this study should be done on other task-based courses at KMUTT to investigate the effectiveness of other task-based EFL courses. The information obtained will be used in making judgement on the quality of the evaluated task-based EFL courses, i.e. what elements in the curriculum should be retained, improved or eliminated.

It will also provide empirical evidence for curriculum renewal at KMUTT.

2. The proposed model should be applied to the evaluation of any EFL task-based courses in more or less similar contexts to find out whether the results obtained will be similar or different from those in the present study. If the results are consistent with those of this study, then the validity of this research will be confirmed.