Significance of Generic Skills on Employability

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ABSTRACT

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The purposes of this research were 1) to investigate the students' English problems during their Industrial Placement and 2) to investigate possible learning activities based on a development of Generic skills used in English teaching-learning classroom.

The research samples were 40 students who passed Industrial Placement and enrolled in Academic Reading and Writing course in the third semester, 2012 academic year. The samples were derived from 3 faculties namely Engineering, Business Administration and Information Technology.

The Instruments used for data gathering were an ethnographic interview and trial research project. The activity framework of Generic skills was analyzed through the context of Generic skills in higher education based on teaching-learning methods, techniques and activities.

The research findings were as follows:

1. Speaking skills were the most important problems of the workplace, followed by reading skills, writing skills and listening skills respectively.

2. Research project was used as a trial learning activity to generate the students' four key competencies of Generic skills: working with others; working with information; working with technology; and learning and development.

3. The students' opinions were shown as satisfactory attitude. However, the monitoring process of task distribution should be more concerned.

Keywords – EFL classroom, English teaching-learning approach, Application of Generic skills

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DEDICATED

TO

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research project concerns the development of TNI students' English competency by way of generic skills. The research aims to apply the attributes of generic skills to the fourth year TNI students in order to lay the foundations of English skills attuned to the working situations. In this way it is anticipated that the students' competency might increase. This research topic is embedded in the question "What model of learning activity based on generic skills might develop TNI students' English competency?"

The research is carried out with specific reference to 40 fourth year students who passed Industrial Placement with difficulty in using English in the workplace. The samples were derived from three faculties namely Engineering, Business Administration and Information Technology.

1.1 Background

Thailand has progressively integrated into the global market through regional cooperation with neighboring countries in many aspects under the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) with the goal of achieving an integrated market by 2015. The significance of AEC has been shown as a support towards a free flow of goods, service investment and skilled labor in order to promote equitable development and poverty reduction across the region (THE NATION, 2013). In regard to skilled labor mobility, Wall Street English (2013) highlights that ASEAN member countries shall adopt trade liberalization and remove all barriers to discrimination on employment. However, Unicef Thailand (2013) contends that Thai education and training standards should be revised to upgrade the skills of the labor force in order to achieve in the AEC goals.

Reported by Bangkok Post (2012), it is presented Thai educational system is needed to be improved in the fundamental of teaching foreign language to be a more systematic way. Education First (EF) survey, further, shows that Thailand ranked 42nd out of 44 countries for adult English proficiency which is below Vietnam (39) and Indonesia (34), with Malaysia as

the top of ASEAN country at No. 9. A more radical fact is moreover stated by Test and Score Data (2012) as the average of English skill level of Thai students measured by TOEFL iBT is 76 points out of 120 points, as of the year 2012. When compared to other ASEAN countries, except Brunei Darussalam, Thailand is only ahead of Cambodia and Laos. This means that Thailand lags far behind major ASEAN countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, and Indonesia. As a result, it could be indicated that Thais are required to improve their English skills in order to compete with other ASEAN countries. Otherwise, many might lose their jobs or find it difficult to work when AEC takes effect.

Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology has highly concerned on the significance of preparing students for the workplace. The students are necessitated to be competent both in English and Japanese languages, and working skills. For English language, the students have to learn three core courses of communication with English elective courses such as Academic Writing, Academic Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing in English, English for Management, English for Engineering, English for Information Technology, etc. Before Industrial Placement session, all third-year students have to take TNI English Ability Test which is adopted by the TOEIC test. The students who have high scores in the TNI English Ability Test are privileged to work for a well-known organization.

However, it was found out that most of the students have problems of all four English skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing. Although they get a remarkable score in the exams, they are not able to communicate in a real working situation. Therefore, the new learning activity is compulsory to be studied in order to find appropriate ways to uplift the students' English ability as well as preparing them for a competitive challenge of AEC. Besides, the activity which confronts a development of TNI students in an area of career advancement is highly concern.

1.2 Research Purposes

1) To investigate the students' English problems during their Industrial Placement.

2) To investigate possible learning activities based on a development of Generic skills used in English teaching-learning classroom.

1.3 Research Samplings

The samplings of this study were 40 fourth year Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology students who passed Industrial Placement and enrolled in Academic Reading and Writing course. These students had confronted a difficulty time in using English for communication as well as working system in the workplace.

1.4 Definitions and Explanation of Terms

In this research project, a number of phrases and terms recur. The following paragraphs explain and define these.

1.4.1 Generic skills

Generic skills are a set of skills that are transferable within the Australian workforce. They are also known by many other terms such as soft skills, key skills, common skills, essential skills, employability skills, basic skills, necessary skills, competency skills, and transferable skills.

1.4.2 Initiative

It is an ability to generate an idea which is new to the individual. This includes seeing existing situations in a new way, identifying alternative explanations, seeing links, and finding new ways to apply ideas to create a positive outcome. Initiative requires characteristics such as intellectual flexibility, open-mindedness, adaptability and readiness to try new ways of doing.

1.4.3 Communication

It is an ability to share and discuss understandable and precise information to others. Good communication is a key to success in work. Therefore, without effective communication, a message can turn into error and misunderstanding by being misinterpreted or poorly delivered.

1.4.4 Teamwork

It is an ability to work effectively and productively with others. This includes working in harmony with others, contributing towards common purposes, defining and accepting individual and group roles and responsibilities, respecting individual and group differences, identifying the strengths of team members, and building social relationships.

1.4.5 Technology

It is knowledge, skills and understanding and competence in information management through the use of technology. This includes the ability to evaluate the source, reliability, accuracy and validity of information that abounds in cyberspace.

1.4.6 Problem-solving

This is a range of applied intellectual activities that are involved in using information to achieve outcomes such as thinking critically, making decisions, developing an argument and using evidence to support it.

1.4.7 Self-management

This ability is to focus on taking responsibility for an individual work and learning. This includes managing one's learning, monitoring, reflecting, evaluating, identifying personal characteristics which contribute to or limit effectiveness, planning and undertaking work independently, taking responsibility for one's behavior and performance, and learning from successes and failures.

1.4.8 Planning

It is a basic management function involving formulation of one or more detailed plans to achieve optimum balance of needs or demands with the available resources. The effective planning process requires identifying goals or objectives, formulating strategies to achieve them, arranging and creating the means, and implementing, directing and monitoring all steps in the proper sequence.

1.4.9 Learning

It is knowledge, skills and understanding which need to be used and developed in all learning areas. Initial and major continuing development will be in English, but it will be ensure that this competency is used and developed n all learning areas.

Chapter 2 of this Research Project analyses the literature at the foundation of the research topic to draw a conceptual framework with which to evaluate the research problem "What model of learning activity based on generic skills might develop TNI students' English competency?"

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature underpinning the research topic and derives a framework for evaluating research data obtained in the ethnography detailed in Chapter 3.

2.1 A Significance of English Language in the Workplace

2.2 Definitions of Generic Skills

2.3 Early Generic Competency Framework: A Selective Review

2.4 The Application of Generic Skills with Higher Education Curriculum

2.5 Sectoral and Occupational Shifts for Generic Skills Demand

2.6 Developing Generic Skills in the English Language Education: Key Learning Area

2.7 Cooperative Learning

2.8 Effective Teaching Factors

2.9 Learning Design for Creating Generic Skills in EFL Classroom

2.1 A Significance of English Language in the Workplace

Higher education stakeholders have been increasingly concerned on teaching and learning performance in all areas. The emerging gab between graduate attributes and what industry requires not only refers to the lack of employment readiness of students, but also their generic skills. One technique that can assist in improving students' development of generic skills is called work-integrated learning; that is to support students' learning and their professional lives (Freudenberg et al., 2011).

There are several terms that are used to define generic skills, such as graduate, professional, transferable, work ready and employability (Jones, 2009). For this study, generic skills were defined as a set of project-based activity which had potential broad application to a range of disciplines or circumstances.

According to The SUNDAY TIMES (2011), it is stated English is the most important language used in the workplace because the language is widely used in communicating around the world. Good communication in English, therefore, creates a good ambience and relationship

between everyone in every organization. Further, the study reveals the importance of English language in the workplace is a top concern among employers in Sri Lanka as the majority of employers (95%) believe that better English helps improve the productivity of employees. Moreover, 66% of employers have turned down applicants due to a bad command of English.

Referring to the example of Sri Lanka, it is significance for Thailand to concern on the importance of English as a key success in ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The foremost characteristics of AEC are to envisage four challenges as: single market and production base; a highly competitive economic region; a region of equitable economic development; and a region fully integrated into the global economy (ROBYSCAR, 2012). Consequently, according to AEC, the true importance on the language of trade in the region will be emerged, and the nations that cannot participate in this AEC will be left behind. Over the past decade, countries like Vietnam and Indonesia have spent substantial sums of money in generating language-teaching capacity (The SUNDAY TIMES, 2011). Besides, Malaysia and Singapore are already way ahead of the rest of the ASEAN members. Thus, it is time to uplift Thai educational standard to ensure that the nation is ready to take on the challenges on AEC launched in 2015.

2.2 Definitions of Generic Skills

Generic skills are originally from Australia as a set of skills that are transferable within the Australian workforce (Chiswick et al., 2002). They are also known by many other terms such as soft skills, key skills, common skills, essential skills, employability skills, basic skills, necessary skills, competency skills, and transferable skills (Yassin and Hasan, 2008). According to Nabi (2003), Generic skills are divided into three categories which are personal skills, communication skills and problem solving skills. However, it is asserted by McLoughlin and Luca (2000) that Generic skills are formed into four management areas which are management of self, management of others, management of task, and management of information. This is contrary to Crosbie (2005)'s statement as the skills are listed as collaboration, communication, initiative, leadership, personal development, personal effectiveness, planning and organizing, and presentation.

2.3 Early Generic Competency Framework: A Selective Review

In the late 1980s and 1990s, countries across the world place the identification of generic workplace competencies on their national agenda (Young and Chapman, 2012). A selective review of those countries is demonstrated as follows:

2.3.1 Framework from Australia

Recently, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia (ACCI/BCA) undertakes a comprehensive study to identify the skills required by employees in the changing economy. The competent framework proposed by the ACCI/BCA goes beyond the scope of the key competencies by incorporating both generic 'employability' skills and personal attributes. The eight employability skills in the ACCI/BCA framework are (ACCI/BCA, 2002):

1. Effective communication;
2. Teamwork skills;
3. Problem-solving;
4. Planning and organizing'
5. Self-management
6. Learning skills;
7. Initiative and enterprise; and
8. Technology skills.

The framework includes a number of personal attributes deemed essential for workplace success embracing loyalty, commitment, reliability, adaptability, positive self-esteem and honesty (NCVER, 2003).

2.3.2 Framework from New Zealand

The New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF) provides an overall framework for the New Zealand curriculum and defines eight sets of 'essential skills' deemed necessary to allow students to reach their full potential in society as follows (Kelly, 2011):

1. Communication;
2. Numeracy;
3. Information management;
4. Problem-solving;

5. Self-management and competitiveness;
6. Social and co-operative skills;
7. Physical skills; and
8. Work and study skills.

It is, further, reported by the New Zealand Employment Service survey that technical skills are viewed as less important. Conversely, the key competencies require of entry-level applicants are as (Kelly, 2001):

1. Communication (writing, reading and speaking)
2. Cooperation (teamwork and relating to others);
3. Computer literacy (accessing electronic information);
4. Creativity (thinking laterally); and
5. Critical thinking (evaluating and synthesizing).

2.3.3 Framework from the United Kingdom

The British model comprises three basic competencies: numeracy, information technology, and communication. Each is defined at five levels ranging from Level 1- foundation to Level 5- professional/managerial (NCVER, 2003). Excluding from these three skills, wider key skills are also promoted as teamwork, a commitment to lifelong learning, and problem-solving skills (Turner, 2001).

2.3.4 Framework from Other European Countries

In order to become the most knowledge-based and competitive in the world, the European Council has identified eight generic competencies essential to enhance the competitive status of Europe's economy as (Eurydice, 2002):

1. Communication in the mother tongue;
2. Communication in the foreign languages;
3. Numeracy and competencies in mathematics, science and technology;
4. Information and Communication Technology (ICT);
5. Learning to learn;
6. Interpersonal and civic competencies;
7. Entrepreneurship; and

8. General cultural/cultural awareness.

2.3.5 Framework from the United States

The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) conducts a national study to identify six 'employability' skills deemed essential for graduate success within the workplace as (Overtoom, 2000):

1. Basic competencies skills (writing and arithmetic);
2. Communication skills (speaking and presenting);
3. Adaptability skills (problem-solving);
4. Development skills (setting goals);
5. Group skills (resolving conflicts);
6. Influencing skills (leading teams).

However, in 1990, the Secretary's commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) was established with the goals of identifying the generic competencies that all individuals need to succeed in the workforce. The commission comprised representatives from education, labor, business and the state government. These were given the task of defining a set of generic competencies that constitute 'work-readiness' in the new economy. The skills include three foundation skills necessary for effective work which are (Richens, 1999):

1. Basic skills (reading and writing);
2. Thinking skills (decision making, problem-solving and reasoning);
3. Personal qualities (responsibility, self-management and integrity/honesty)

In addition, for 'higher-performance', five competencies are also commenced for employees as follows (Packer & Brainard, 2003):

1. Interpersonal (leading and negotiating);
2. Systems (identifying trends and improving designs);
3. Planning/managing resources (using materials efficiently and distributing work effectively);
4. Information (using computers); and
5. Technology (applying technology and solving technological problems).

2.3.6 Framework form Canada

The Employability Skill Profile (ESP) divides the necessary for working into three categories as (Conference Board of Canada, 2000):

1. Academic skills (communication, thinking skills, commitment to lifelong learning);
2. Personal management skills (positive attitude, responsibility, adaptability); and
3. Teamwork skills (ability to work with others).

Nevertheless, the Employability Skills 2000+ Scheme has included additional skills to reflect changing demands of the global economy by adding the following skills as (Conference Board of Canada, 2000):

1. Fundamental skills (communicating, problem-solving and management information);
2. Personal management skills (being adaptable, engaging in lifelong learning);
3. Teamwork skills (working well with others, participating actively in projects and tasks); and
4. An orientation towards specific values and attitudes (demonstrating integrity and responsibility).

2.4 The Application of Generic Skills with Higher Education Curriculum

The focus on generic skills has illustrated by many organizations and higher education authorities. Take the 1992 ACCI/BCA "Employability Skills for the Future" project, generic skills are identified into eight employability skills: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organizing, self-management, learning, and technology (ACCI/BCA, 2002). Another example is derived from Weisz (2002)'s research. Weisz's study of employers and students participating in a work-integrated learning program presents that employers rate teamwork, initiative and communication skills as important, whilst students rate communication skills and initiative as two of their weakest capabilities.

The implementation of generic skills in the higher education curriculum is critical for a number of reasons. Firstly, students with generic skills have better graduate employment prospects. Numerous reports recognize the employer demand for graduate with generic skills (Jackling & De Lange, 2009). This is supported by Harvey (1999) who verifies the research in the United Kingdom that a graduate's success at work is perceived to be more

influenced by the graduate's generic skills than their specific degree. Secondly, generic skills possess the attribute of transferability. Whilst discipline-based knowledge becomes dated and is not necessarily transferable across different jobs, generic skills rarely become obsolete and can be transferred into new career paths (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008). Finally, professional organizations such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia (ICAA), CPA Australia (CPA) and the Financial Planning Association of Australia (EPA) have established accreditation criteria which require universities to include generic skills development in their programs (Litchfield at el., 2008).

Freudenberg et al. (2011) propose the Professional Degree (PD) program employing in Griffith University, Australia, as the implementation of generic skills and work-based integrated learning in higher education curriculum. The PD program is integrated into a business degree (majors in Accounting and Financial Planning), and is designed to systematically develop students' learning, employment and generic skills while providing students with industry knowledge and exposure to industry. The notion of the PD program, moreover, asserted by Barrie et al. (2009) who add that the PD program is a curriculum structure of which embeds generic skills as a co-curriculum strand alongside disciplinary curricula. Thus, the program is enhanced by a collaborative approach with industry for generic skill development- that is so-called a "full service model" (Atchison et al., 2003, p.3). Atchison et al, further, describe that, as a full service model, it scaffolds generic skills development, industry awareness and exposure, and tailors the program to the unique students' life cycle of the business degree.

2.5 Sectoral and Occupational Shifts for Generic Skills Demand

The kinds of higher-level jobs which are more generally associated with knowledge economy are requiring proportionately more skills of a generic nature. Some reflections of this perspective are illustrated as follows:

HMSO (2005) believes that the global trend away from low-skilled manufacturing jobs does not necessarily mean that demand for relatively low-skilled worker will continue to fall. On the other hand, that will increase shift further towards service sector jobs, such as the hospitality and personal service industries, which place greater emphasis on customer handling, team working and communication skills.

Cairney (2000) highlights that, in their assessment of skill changes in the Australian economy, employment growth is strong not only in managerial and professional occupations, but also in some low skill occupations, while employment is falling in many traditional skilled occupations. Notably, employment is growing rapidly in many person-based or information-intensive occupations not previously regarded as skilled, but which clearly involve 'skills' of value to modern employers.

It might be concluded that there is a widely shared assumption that there will be continue to be demand for relatively low-skilled workers. However, the main difference being that now is increasingly employment in service industries that require a relatively greater emphasis on generic-type skills.

2.6 Developing Generic Skills in the English Language Education: Key Learning Area

In the English language education, there are three key learning areas demonstrated as interpersonal, knowledge and experience. These have been employed as content organizers to reflect its major scope of learning. The inclusion of generic skills in the subject of English language, therefore, is focused on serving the following purposes (Bowen, 2010, p.5-29):

1. To emphasize English as a source of pleasure and aesthetic experience by encourage free and creative personal responses and expression;
2. To contribute to the provision of a broader and more balanced language curriculum, along with interpersonal, knowledge and experience.
3. To offer learners insights into the nature of English language context and prepare them for being relevant to use the language in an authentic situation.

Therefore, it could be pointed out that the component of generic skills is fundamental in helping students learn how to learn. Altogether, nine types of generic skills have been identified in English language implementation.

2.6.1 Collaboration Skills

Problem solving, planning and making decision in a small group require the necessary collaboration skills, namely the skills of listening, appreciation, communication, negotiation,

making compromises, asserting leadership, making judgment, and influencing and motivating others. Learners with these skills will be able to effectively engage in tasks and teamwork as well as working with others. Ultimately, learners will be able to form relationships that are mutually beneficial.

2.6.2 Communication Skills

Communication is dynamic and ongoing process in which two or more people interact in order to achieve a desired outcome or goal. In learning to communicate effectively, learners should learn to speak, listen, read and write effectively. They should learn to select the most appropriate means to convey a message in accordance with the purpose and context of the communication. They should use accurate and relevant information and organize it systematically and coherently for their audience. They should also evaluate the effectiveness of their communication and identify areas of improvement for action.

2.6.3 Creativity

Creativity is an important but elusive concept. It has been defined in a variety of ways. Some people define it as an ability to produce original ideas and solve problems, others see it as a process, and yet others take it as certain personal qualities. In fact, creativity is a complex and multifaceted construct. Within the individual, creative behavior is the result of a complex of cognitive skills/ abilities, personality factors, motivation, strategies, and metacognitive skills. A person's creative performance may not correspond to his/her developmental stages.

2.6.4 Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking is drawing out meaning from given data or statements. It is concerned with the accuracy of given statements. It aims at generating and evaluating arguments. Critical thinking is the questioning and inquiry learners engage in to judge what to do and what not to believe.

2.6.5 Information Technology Skills

IT skills are the ability to use IT to seek, absorb, analyze, manage and present information critically and intelligently. In addition, IT will motivate and empower learners to learn at

their own pace and help them develop habits of self-learning, which will benefit them for life.

2.6.6 Numeracy Skills

Numeracy skills include the ability to perform basic computations, to use basic mathematical concepts in practical situations, to make reasonable estimates, to understand graphs, charts, and numerical concepts in languages, and to manage data.

2.6.7 Problem Solving Skills

Problem solving involves using thinking skills to resolve a difficulty. It assembles facts about the problem and determines the best course of action.

2.6.8 Self-Management Skills

Self-management skills are essential for the building up of self-esteem and the accomplishment of goals. Learners who have mastered self-management skills understand their own feelings and preserve emotional stability. They are positive and proactive towards work. They set appropriate goals, make plans and initiate actions to achieve them. They manage time, money and other resources well. They are able to handle stress and tolerate ambiguities.

2.6.9 Study Skills

Study skills are the basic techniques that help to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of learning. They are crucial to the development of the basic learning habits, abilities and attitudes of the learners that form the essential foundation for lifelong learning.

Fundamentally, these skills are to be developed through the learning and teaching in all areas. However, in English language learning, learners are provided with learning experiences to develop their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes so as to enable them to interact with people and cultures effectively in English and to prepare them for lifelong learning.

2.7 Learning Environment for Creating Generic Skills in EFL Classroom

Luca and Oliver (2002) point out that teaching and learning process for Generic skills are developed as the need for learning environment that concerns on dialogue, feedback, reflection, and task-oriented activities. Thus, learning activities are needed to be situated in a contextual environment as in a 'real-world activity'.

2.7.1 Motivation

Students' confidence in language use is reflected in whether they are willing to communicate (Badcock at el., 2010). However, students often decline to use English because they are embarrassed about their lack of fluency (Precision Consultancy, 2007), or because of conflicts and misunderstanding about the language and the culture (Patrick & Crebert, 2004).

Hence, it could be addressed that motivation, confidence, and ability are interrelated and interact with each other (Hughes & Moore, 1999). All three learning variables- motivation, confidence, and ability- are the result of the cumulative experience of the students, both in and out of the classroom. All three variables improve or decline as the consequence of positive or negative experiences that motivate or de-motivate the students (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008). As a result, EFL teachers have the unique opportunity to improve students' motivation through fostering desirable student goals, stimulating active learning, and leading dialogue about the purpose of learning.

2.7.2 Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning has been proved to be an effective teaching strategy to both the teacher and learner. It encourages learning to take place and allow communication skills to foster among learners (Jacob & McCafferty, 2006). Moreover, it provides a non-threatening learning environment which encourages EFL learners to overcome their apprehension in communicating and expressing their points' of view in a foreign language (Slavin, 1995).

According to Gillies (2007, p.4-5), cooperative learning has five elements are important aspects which are crucial to enhance both the social and learning processes among the participants as follows:

1. Individual Accountability. This involves students' understanding that they will be held accountable for their individual contributions to the group.
2. Social Skills. This refers to interpersonal and small group skills such as effective communication which are needed to cooperate successfully.
3. Face-to-face Interaction. This involves working in small groups where students can see each other and are engaged in face-to-face interaction.
4. Positive Interdependence. This encourages students to understand other group members in order to help the group to achieve its goal.
5. Group Processing. This refers to the assessment of cooperative learning. Its formative assessment is to focus on students' feedback on the learning process, including the students' reflection on what they still need to do to accomplish their objectives.

In order to implement cooperative learning in the EFL classroom, there are five considerations need to be emphasized as follows:

2.7.2.1 Group size

Group size is an important factor when applying cooperative learning methods in the EFL classroom. The optimal size varies from four to five. As the circumstances change, then the size of the group changes. However, it is significant to remember that the effective group size might depend on the age of the student and their experience in working cooperatively (Jacob, 2006).

2.7.2.2 Group Formation

EFL teacher should consider the members in each group. They are encouraged to use heterogeneous groups in cooperative learning. In addition, the cooperative learning teams should be a composition of one low-ability student, two medium-ability students, and one high-achievement student (Huss, 2006).

2.7.2.3 Teacher's Roles

In a cooperative learning class, teachers are facilitators who should guide their learners on how best to achieve educational objectives. Teachers are also required to provide their learners with a model answer to encourage further learning (Zhang, 2010).

2.7.2.4 Students' Roles

According to Zhang (2010), there are five roles which EFL learners have to perform during a cooperative learning activity as:

1. Facilitator: This is the member who coordinates the group's works.
2. Recorder: Recorder's responsibility is recording what the group has accomplished.
3. Reporter: This is to tell others about the group's work;
4. Timekeeper: This is to help the group be aware of time constraints, keep the group on tasks and fill in for missing group members; and
5. Observer of collaborative skill. This is to check if group members are using a particular collaborative skill deemed important to the group's interaction.

2.7.2.5 Individual and Group Assessment

Johnson & Johnson (1999, p.2) define assessment as "to judge the quality and quantity of learning and award grades." Assessment helps to achieve the following purposes as: (a) diagnosing students' present level of knowledge and skills; (b) monitoring students' progress towards learning goals to help form the instructional program; and (c) providing data to judge the final level of students' learning. (Jacob, 2006)

Consequently, it could be proposed that cooperative learning creates great opportunities for the EFL classroom. For EFL learners, cooperative learning creates a positive learning environment for students to practice their English. It can help students develop skills in communication and improve their motivation to learn. Cooperative learning also has positive effects on student achievement, increases students relationships and increases self-esteem. These benefits of cooperative learning help EFL learners improve efficiency in their language learning.

2.8 Effective Teaching Factors

According to Alton-Lee (2003, p. vi-x), there are ten definitions perceived by research-supported characteristics of quality teaching. Alton-Lee's ten point model covers the following areas:

1. A focus on student achievement;
2. Pedagogical practices that create caring, inclusive and cohesive learning communities;

3. Effective links between school and the cultural context of the school;
4. Quality teaching is responsive to student learning process;
5. Learning opportunities are effective and sufficient;
6. Multiple tasks and contexts support learning cycles;
7. Curriculum goals are effectively aligned;
8. Pedagogy scaffolds feedback on students' task engagement;
9. Pedagogy promotes learning orientations, student self-regulation, metacognitive strategies and thoughtful student discourse; and
10. Teachers and students engage constructively in goal-oriented assessment.

It is further indicated by Gurney (2007) who creates five key factors to create an effective learning environment as: (a) Teacher knowledge, enthusiasm and responsibility for learning; (b) Classroom activities that encourage learning; (c) Assessment activities that encourage learning through experience; (d) Effective feedback that establishes the learning processes in the classroom; and (e) Effective interaction between the teacher and the students, creating an environment that respects, encourages and stimulates learning through experience.

In this way, it could be summarized that developing the learner's ability to use a real world language is a crucial element of any language program. Authenticity of language produced by the students must be promoted through and supported by authenticity of learning context of situation.

2.9 Learning Design for Creating Generic Skills in EFL Classroom

According to AC Nielsen Research Services (2000), employers are now explicitly demanding both generic skills and discipline knowledge from new graduates. Higher education institutions are, therefore, required to adopt new strategies to help promote the development of these skills to satisfy industry demand. Conventional approaches to teaching need to be reviewed in the light of new learning technologies and pedagogical viewpoints to help promote the development of generic skills "where pedagogical aspects need to be strengthened in the line with technological changes to achieve a synergistic relationship with learning and technology" (Kearns, 2001, p.3).

2.9.1 Learning Objectives and Assessments

2.9.1.1 Learning Objectives

The first step of learning design is to set learning objectives and assessment criterial. Learning objectives are statements describing what learners will be able to do upon completion of a unit of instruction. They can also be called instructional objectives, behavioral objectives, performance objectives, or learning outcomes. Learning objectives are typically created at the beginning of the 'design' phase of the following instructional design model (Harden, 2002).

Anderson et al. (2001), moreover, support that a learning objective is an outcome statement that captures specifically what knowledge, skills, attitudes learners should be able to exhibit. Thus, well-defined and articulated leaning objectives are important as they provide students with a clear purpose to focus their learning efforts; direct the students' choice of activities; and guide the students' assessment strategies (Simon & Taylor, 2009).Without learning objectives, it is difficult for students to know what they are supposed to be learning. Students can waste a great deal of time studying things that are not necessary, to the detriment of their learning as a whole. The uncertainty also causes unnecessary anxiety.

A learning objective, however, is different from a learning goal. Learning goals are what the students hope to accomplish in the course; it is not necessary for the overall goals to result in products of observable and measurable behavior. Learning objectives, on the other hand, are brief, clear statements about what students will be able to do when they complete instruction (Anderson et al., 2001).

Therefore, it could be concluded that creating learning objectives is an essential step in designing instruction of any kind. Since they describe exactly what learners will be able to do, the objectives help define the scope of an instructional project, and guide project teams through the development of instructional content.

2.9.1.2 Assessment Criteria

Assessments would go through the learning objectives to make sure they were assessed. This way the assessment is fair and applied to the course. If it was found that the assessment is difficult to assess a learning objective, it is important to rethink about the learning objective, and what it is we really want the students to be able to do (Academic Handbook, 2012/13). This is similar to Cowan (2005) who describes that assessment activities or tests should also be developed directly from learning objectives to ensure that these activities are properly focused on what learners are meant to take away. According to Race et al. (2005), learning assessment focuses on the opportunities to develop students' ability to evaluate themselves, to make judgments about their own performance and improve upon it. Well-designed assessment, therefore, can encourage active learning, especially when the assessment delivery innovative and engaging. Peer and self-assessment, for instance, can foster a number of skills, such as reflection, critical thinking and self-awareness- as well as giving students insight into the assessment process. (Cowan, 2005).

Consequently, it could be said that learning outcomes and assessment criteria are an essential part of curriculum design and need to be written in the planning stages. Well written outcomes and criteria enable higher level skills and a learner-led curriculum to be developed.

2.9.2 Problem-Based Learning

The notion of problem-based learning is an educational approach whereby the problem is the starting-point of the learning process. The type of problem is dependent on the specific organization. Usually, the problems are based on real-life problems which have been selected and edited to meet educational objectives and criteria. It is crucial that the problem serves as the basis for the learning process as this determines the direction of the learning process and places emphasis on the formulation of a question rather than on the answer. This also allows the learning context which promotes students motivation and comprehension (Kolmos & Algreen-Ussing, 2001).

Arts et al. (2002) define the learning process of problem-based learning is developed into 'Seven Step' method to help students analyze the problem as: (a) Clarify the concepts; (b)

Define the problem; (c) Analyze the problem; (d) Find the explanation; (e) Formulate the learning objective; (f) Search for further information; and (g) Report and test new information.

Therefore, problem-based learning is a total learning approach that involves in a constructivist approach to learning. It is a well-known alternative approach to traditional disciplinary-based professional educational program in higher education. The emphasis of problem-based learning is that students learn through the process of solving so called 'real-world' problems. The features of problem-based learning regarded as essential for enhancing student learning are learning in context, elaboration of knowledge through social interaction, emphasis on metacognitive reasoning and self-directed learning (Harper-Marinick, 2001; Bond & Feletti, 1991; Norman & Schimidt, 1992). In addition, problem-based learning is a curriculum development and instructional system that simultaneously develops both problem-solving strategies and learning by placing students in the active role of problem solvers confronted with practical problems in the workplace (Poon et al., 1997).

2.9.3 Case-Based Learning

Case-based learning has been extensively used in various areas of professional education such as law, medicine, clinical health, and business as an alternative to the traditional lecture. However, several research have mainly focused on applying case-based learning with business context (Artan, 2007). Example of case-based learning method in business learning is defined by Helms (2006, p.68) as follows:

> "involve studying actual business situations- written as an in-depth presentation of a company, its market, and its strategic decision- in order to improve a manager's or a student's problem-solving ability. Cases are typically used to investigate a contemporary issue in a real-life context. There are multiple issues to consider many correct or viable alternatives to solve the case issues are presented."

Williams (2004, p.20), further, summarizes the key benefits to case-based learning towards education purposes and learning activities as it allows learners to:

- apply theoretical knowledge to real school contexts;
- reason critically about complex situations and recommend course of actions;
- develop self-knowledge and recognize own assumptions;

- clarify personal beliefs about teaching;
- compare and evaluate their own and other's perspectives; and
- develop the practice of reflection.

A more essential approach is indicated by Garvey et al. (2000) as the positive roles of case-based learning are to demonstrate under authentic learning environments in which learning is situated in real business contexts. Therefore, this could be maintained that case-based learning is a core pedagogical method to create extensive applications of knowledge and skills across all business disciplines.

2.9.4 Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning blends traditional subject-matter goals and objectives with authentic learning environments. The primary rationale for using authentic activity as the model for appropriate learning activities is the enhanced understanding that develops through application and manipulation of knowledge within context. Finding solutions to a problem whether posed by the teacher or a new social environment, more likely develop generic, as well as subject specific skills when using project-based curriculum (Downing et al., 2009).

Project-based learning is also based on the constructivist principles of collaboration, personal autonomy, mentoring from older generations, reflection, active engagement in community needs, and personal or professional relevance (Boss & Krauss, 2007). According to Thomas (2000), there are five key criteria of project-based learning as:

1. Projects are central, not peripheral to the curriculum;
2. Projects are focused on questions or problems that drive students to encounter and struggle with the central concepts and principles of a discipline;
3. Project involves students in a constructivist investigation;
4. Projects are student-driven to some significant degree; and
5. Projects are realistic.

It could be reconfirmed that the method by which features of project-based learning should be implemented to have its full impact on learning. The most valuable finding from the project-based learning approach is to observe the production of new knowledge derived from students' own investigation and exploration.

2.9.5 Inquiry-based learning

Inquiry-based learning can provide valuable opportunities for students to improve their understanding of both science and scientific practices. However, the implementation of inquiry learning in classroom presents a number of significant challenges (Edelson, 1998). In the concept of learning from inquiry, students can discover scientific principles through their inquiry activities, but discovery is not the only mechanism for learning from inquiry. Hiebert et al. (1996, p.12-21), therefore, demonstrate that inquiry can contribute to the development of science content understanding in all of the following ways:

2.9.5.1 Problematize

Inquiry activities can lead learners to confront the boundaries of their knowledge or recognize gaps in that knowledge. The limits of one's knowledge are often revealed by the failure of an expectation about a particular situation leading to curiosity. The curiosity elicited by such problematic situations creates a focused motivation to learn.

2.9.5.2 Demand

Successfully completing a scientific investigation requires science content knowledge. The design of an inquiry activity can, therefore, place a demand for knowledge on the part of a learner that will require him or her to acquire it to complete the investigation successfully.

2.9.5.3 Discover and Refine

By providing learners with the opportunity to pursue answers to questions, inquiry activities enable learners to uncover new scientific principles and refine their pre-existing understanding of scientific principles in the answers that they construct.

2.9.5.4 Apply

Inquiry activities can give learners the opportunities to apply their scientific understanding in the pursuit of research questions. The need to apply scientific knowledge can require a learner to re-organize and re-index it in ways that will support its future use. The application of existing knowledge can also reinforce it and enrich its connection to other knowledge.

2.10 Related Research

Luca and Oliver (2008) have done a research on *"Developing an Instructional Design Strategy to Support Generic Skills Development"* for Edith Cowan University, Australia. Their research proposes an instructional strategy to help develop students' generic skills through a combination of face-to-face and on-line delivery. By investigating the nature of generic skills and contemporary methods of teaching and learning, an instructional framework is proposed to help prepare students for the workplace by promoting generic skill development as well as subject-specific knowledge.

Yassin and Hasan (2008) demonstrates a significance of generic skills through their research for Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia, on *"Implementation of Generic Skills in the Curriculum"*. In their research, it is highlighted that the issue of incorporating generic skills into the curriculum taught to students in higher learning institutions has gained momentum in recent years. The raison d'être to inculcate generic skills among students is to enable the country to meet human resource requirements which will be more competitive in the advent of a borderless world. Growing concerns of the employability of graduates and the expansion in the size and diversity of student populations also form the basis to implement the generic skills program in universities. All undergraduate programs offered in public higher learning institutions in Malaysia are now required to incorporate generic skills in the curricula. Hager et al. (2002) has done a research on *"Enhancing the Learning and Employability of Graduates: The Role of Generic Skills"* for University of Technology, Sydney, Edith Cowan University, and University of Melbourne, Australia. Their research is concluded that generic skills and graduate attributes have emerged as vital issues for both educational institutions and the communities that they serve, including students, employers and governments.

CHAPTER 3

RESEACH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

It will be recalled that this research aims to apply generic skills to 40 fourth year TNI students in order to realize the goal of enhancing the students' English competency and working skills. This Chapter describes the research methodology employed to resolve the research question based on a framework derived from the literature of Chapter 2.

3.2 Ethnographic Methodology

Ethnographic research is defined by Saville-Troike (2003, p.4) as a research methodology that immerses the researcher in the life of the people studied. It aims to understand the social and cultural context of their behavior and decisions as

> "Ethnographic research is a descriptive account of social life and culture in a particular social system based on detailed observations of what people actually do (Saville-Troike, 2003, p. 4)."

Ethnography is a description of events that occur within the life of a group concerning both social structure and individual behaviors relevant to group membership and culture (Bloor, 1997). Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) defines ethnography as a written description based on information collected through the study of a particular culture - customs, beliefs, and behavior. Ethnography aims for an in-depth understanding of people, organizations, and the broader context within which they operate. Thus, it could be said that ethnography emphasizes qualitative rather than quantitative research during which the researcher commits to a period and degree of immersion in the social setting being studied.

Ethnography has five essential characteristics: the element of surprise (grounded theory); observing and understanding action in context; understanding the symbolic meaning of actions; situated participation (first-hand experience); and a theoretical framework for interpretation (Mayring, 2000). Collectively, these five characteristics enable the emergence of data from the ground up rather than being imposed by the expectations and assertions of

the researcher. The observation and the interviews should produce grounded theory upon which the ethnographer can derive meaningful research.

> "Grounded Theory is most accurately described as a research method in which the theory is developed from the data, rather than the other way around. That makes this is an inductive approach, meaning that it moves from the specific to the more general. The method of study is essentially based on three elements: concepts, categories and propositions, or what was originally called "hypotheses". However, concepts are the key elements of analysis since the theory is developed from the conceptualization of data, rather than the actual data." (de Certeau, 1993, p. 159)

Data collection and analysis are consciously combined to increase insights and clarify the parameters of the emerging research outcomes. The analysis of the research outcomes incorporates new literature to ensure that the pre-existing constructs of the literature contained in Chapter 2 of this research project do not stifle the analysis and the subsequent formation of the model posited in Chapter 6. As such, there is no simple cognitive map to guide the research project.

3.3 Research Samplings

Samplings of this research were forty fourth year students who passed Industrial Placement and enrolled in Academic Reading and Writing course in the first semester of 2013 academic year.

3.4 Research Design

The research design for this study comprised five phases:

1. Interviews with forty fourth-year TNI students
2. The collection of site documents and associated materials
3. Analysis and synthesis of data derived from the ethnography
4. The interpretation and tabling of findings from the ethnography
5. The assessment of trail research project based on generic skills

The interviews and observations were used as the main data collection for the research. The effectiveness of this ethnography, open-ended interview questions and observation, allowed the researcher to investigate and understand the participants' points of view.

3.5 Interviews and Observations

The primary data of the ethnographic research was obtained in three phases:

Phase 1: Interviews were conducted with forty fourth year students. The interviews comprised two main open-ended questions 1) to investigate the students' English problems during their Industrial Placement; and 2) to investigate possible learning activities based on development of generic skills employed in EFL classroom.

Phase 2: Set of observations was undertaken of the interaction among students in each group. This phase was to monitor how the students worked together.

Phase 3: Assessment of effectiveness and satisfaction of research project based on generic skills through the students' presentations and interviews.

The purposes of the in-depth interviews were to investigate the real problems of the students in using English in the workplace, and found out the potential learning activity to enhance the students' competency both in English skills and working skills. Moreover, the observations aimed to student behavior and interaction among their friends relevant to the development of generic skills in the EFL classroom.

3.6 Conclusion

The ethnographic method of data collection was selected for the research project because it provided the opportunity for the researcher to observe and understand the development of students' English skills "up close and personal" in EFL classroom.

Chapter 4 tables the data derived from the ethnography.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION

This chapter presents the responses derived from the ethnography of in-depth interviews and observations with 40 fourth year students in Academic Reading and Writing in English course.

4.1 Phase 1: The results of demographic variables of TNI undergraduate students

Table 1 The results of demographic variables of TNI students

Demographic data of respondents	n	%
1. Genders		
1.1 male	23	57.50
1.2 female	17	42.50
Total	**40**	**100**
2. Faculties		
2.1 Engineering	19	47.50
2.2 Information Technology	11	27.50
2.3 Business Administration	10	25.00
Total	**40**	**100**

The table presented that there were 40 participant students which consisted of 23 male students (57.50%) and 17 female students (42.50%) from 3 faculties. There were 19 Engineering students which were 47.50%, 11 Information Technology students and 10 Business Administration students which were 27.50% and 25.00% respectively.

4.2 Phase 2: The results of students' English problems during Industrial Placement

Table 2 The results of students' English problems

Students' English communication problems	n	%
1. Speaking skills	14	35.00
2. Reading skills	11	27.50
3. Writing skills	8	20.00
4. Listening skills	7	17.50
Total	**40**	**100**

The table presented that the highest English communication problem of the participants towards their career advancement was speaking skills (35.00%), followed by reading skills (27.50%), writing skills (20.00%) and listening skills (17.50%).

According to an ethnographic interview, the main results were ranked as follows:

4.2.1 Problems of speaking skills

The majority of the participants revealed that they completely forgot a sentence structure, grammar rules and vocabularies when they had to speak with their employers. Thus, they mostly just used word by word instead of making a sentence.

Some of the student participants indicated that speaking with foreign teachers and classmates were much easier because they thought that their teachers and friends would try to understand what they were saying. However, talking with their employers and co-workers was more problematic. They had to think of a correct grammar and using a formal vocabulary.

Few students, however, contended that they did not want to make mistakes in front of their teachers and friends. They, moreover, added that they chose to keep silent when foreign teachers asked them to discuss or share their opinions. They were not confident when speaking English with their employers as well.

4.2.2 Problems of reading skills

The majority of the participants stated that the reading passages taught in the class were more varied and understandable. However, they had a huge problem when they had to

analyze or summarize information given by their employers. One Business Administration student revealed that her employer asked her to summarize a company financial report as well as suggest the possible solutions to save more company budget. She said it was really difficult as she spent almost a week to try to understand the report and find out the best solution for the company. It seemed that a real problem of the students' reading skills was to analyze and to comprehend a reading detail.

Some students, however, asserted that the vocabularies used in their workplaces were a lot more difficult than the vocabularies they had learnt in the class. The participants confirmed that they had to spend many hours to look up for the meanings which most of them were technical terms, and could not find out in the ordinary dictionary. Further, this caused them to spend too long to read and could not submit their task on time.

Few students opposed that English reading was the most boring in their life. It was really difficult for them to try reading things that were not interesting. When comparing with listening and speaking skills, these two skills were more challenging and attention-grabbing.

4.2.3 Problems of writing skills

The participant answers were shown at the same direction. All of them had problems of a writing organization, grammar, vocabulary and spelling. Before finishing their Industrial Placement, all of them had to write a report to their employers.

Although there were several problems in students' writing skills, the significant obstacle was grammatical structure. The majority of the students had no idea what tenses they had to use in their writing. Most the students, therefore, used 'present simple tense' when they describe something. However, it was found that a number of students interviewed did not know a correct structure the present simple tense.

Vocabulary was the second highest problems of the students interviewed. The students revealed that their knowledge of formal vocabularies for writing official paper was less. They had to open up the dictionary to check for the right meaning of the technical terms.

Wring organization was one of the students' difficulties in a form of re-arranging their ideas into a formal essay or report. The students agreed that writing skills were not sufficiently taught in English courses as the courses mainly focused on grammar and reading skills.

Few students, however, contended that their problem was vocabulary spelling. Most of them always used Microsoft Word Program to type a writing assignment. When they typed a wrong word, the program would automatically correct that word to be a right one. However, during their Industrial Workplace, some employers asked them to submit the writing in a form of handwritten which became extremely difficult for them.

4.2.4 Problems of listening skills

The majority of the participants agreed that listening skills were their least problem because all of them took Industrial Placement in Thailand, so the language mainly used in their workplaces was Thai language. However, some of them said that they worked for Japanese organization, but it was not a problem because they could understand Japanese. Although their employers spoke English with them, their accent was easy to understand. Moreover, their employers avoided using difficult vocabularies to make a clearer understanding.

4.3 Phases 3: The results of students' trial research project of Generic Skills in Academic Reading and Writing course

Generic skills can be developed among students through many types of activities. In Academic Reading and Writing course, great emphasis was placed on developing the collaboration skills, communication skills, creativity and critical thinking skills through a project-based learning. Thus, the students had an experience of cooperation with team members and develop their own learning skills. They also can learn to control their emotions when facing unfavorable situations, and thus improve their ability to solve problems. The characteristics of Generic skills used in research project activity were demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 Characteristics of generic skills used in research project

Working with others	**Working with information**	**Working with technology**	**Learning and Developing**
Communicating ideas and information	Collecting, analyzing and organizing information	Using technology to search for information from websites and search engines	Planning and organizing
	Using statistics		Self-management
	Solving problems		Learning to learn

Through the research project, the students' main task was to focus on collaboration. They had to discuss about research topic, research methodology, results, discussion and conclusion with their team. The theme of research project was to study the problems of English learning of TNI students, and then find out the possible solution to solve their problems. Therefore, the project required a hard work of English skills as the source materials for project, such as article, journal, books and interview, were collected only in English language. The students had to interview at least 20 students from different faculties and majors, and then report their findings in a formal written form. Finally, they had to present their research project by PowerPoint Presentation, and be ready to be asked for questions. At the end of the project, the students had to submit all evidences- recording of an interview, journals and articles used as project references. In addition, all students were required to share and express their experience towards a research project they had done.

Table 4 Possible learning outcomes gained from research project

Initiative	The ability to assess and initiate things independently.
Communication	the sharing or delivering of information or news through verbal and non-verbal forms
Teamwork	The combined actions of a group of people to work together to achieve a goal or complete task
Technology	The use of scientific knowledge to achieve practical outcomes
Problem-solving	The use of skills, knowledge and/or experience to formulate a solution to a problem

Self-management	The ability to complete an unsupervised task
Planning	The ability to decide or organize a task in advance
Learning	The ability to gain new skills and knowledge

It was presented in Table 4 that the students had an impressive experience in eight key areas of generic skills which were initiative, communication, teamwork, technology, problem-solving, self-management, planning, and learning.

According to students' reflections, it was found out that the project was an impressive learning experience because they were given invaluable opportunities to use English in an out of the classroom. The experience reinforced their confidence to use both written and spoken English to communicate, and helped them understand more about other students' English problems. Moreover, they had to work as a team in order to synthesis and analysis all information they received from various sources, and information from an interview stage. However, the most difficult parts of the research project from the student interview were an introduction part and a discussion part. For an introduction part, the students were confused how to search for information, as well as how to avoid plagiarism it. Similarly, for the discussion part, the students had spent most of their time to analyze the results as well as find out the best solutions with lots of theories to support their ideas. Finally, almost all of the students from an interview said that it would be a good experience if they could do the research project in other subjects as well.

On the contrary, there were some points needed to be solved and concerned by teachers such as follows:

1. Imbalance of the students' work distribution;
2. Variation of IT skills among students;
3. The dominant students who took control over introvert students;
4. The students who had poor English skills; and
5. The students who did not help and support other team members.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study of the attributes of generic skills to the fourth year TNI students in order to lay the foundations of English skills attuned to the working situations. The ethnography revealed that the most important problem of English skills derived from the students who had experience of Industrial Placement was speaking skills, followed by reading skills, writing skills and listening skills respectively. Therefore, the objective of this study was to investigate the learning activities to support the students to prepare them for career advancement, and to endorse the nation prosperity.

The notion of generic skills, hence, is demonstrated as one of the contemporary learning techniques based on the development of collaboration skills, communication skills, creative and critical skills, management skills and problem-solving skills. Through a form of research project activity, 40 students who passed Industrial Placement and enrolled in Academic Reading and Writing course were required to demonstrate four characteristic of Generic skills as 1) to work with others 2) to work with information 3) to work with technology and 4) to learn and develop their own knowledge. Excluding a written submission, the final stage of the project was a PowerPoint presentation. The vital outcome gained from the project was the students' abilities to work effectively in authenticity. However, to be a students' successful learning experience, teachers should be more concern on students' monitoring as the value of working collaboratively is as important as getting the job done.

This study highlighted the impact that an integrated and continuous orientation activity in terms of their generic skills can have on a cohort of students. In a wider context, generic skills delivered an effective learning outcome to the students facing the challenges of retention and engagement, and industry demand for employment-ready graduates. While it appeared that generic skills can convey a number of benefits to the students' performance, it remains to be seen whether the stakeholders involved have the commitment and vision to see these potentials realized.

5.2 Recommendation

The development of English competencies and career advancement through generic skills are demonstrated by way of recommendations based on the synthesis of data contained in Chapter 5.

Recommendation 1: A shift from traditional classroom learning to collaborative learning environment

It is recommended that to enhance collaborative classroom fosters a culture of learning. In EFL Classroom, those who have experience of collaborative learning activities will ensure both individual development and knowledge creation as sharing knowledge and skills among members of the community and making learning processes visible and articulated.

Recommendation 2: A formation of lifelong learning into the students

It is recommended that learning is not something that just happens in a classroom with young people. Learning actually starts with the day a child is born and continue till the life ends. Thus, lifelong learning should be constructed into the students by encompassing the full range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, social or employment perspectives.

Recommendation 3: Recognition on significance of English and its usage;

It is recommended that the use of English is especially widespread in the international organizations as English has become the standard language of the global communication. Many companies, therefore, require high English proficiency employees in order to survive in today's competitive world. In globalized situation, English is recognized as essential within companies, and individuals who have high level of English proficiency are regarded as an important asset. Thus, effective learning approach and strategies are required to construct in EFL classroom in order to establish high quality graduates who have high command and capability of English.

Recommendation 4: Emphasis on preparing students for the global stage

It is recommended that the development of language learning equates to success in the multilingual 21st century economy. The universities are required to generate students' communication skills that can translate into international opportunities, such as extending language learning beyond the classroom walls- with availability on any device, anywhere, at any time, and building language skills necessary in the project-based and blended-learning models. Further, Global R&D networks, along with new technologies for collaboration, should be stimulated as it benefits multiple countries and regions.

Recommendation 5: A training to use Internet technology to access sources of knowledge, and connect with knowledge hub

It is recommended that the higher education should be the place of mass adoption of teleconferencing and distance learning to leverage expert recourses. Significant numbers of learning activities should be transited to a 'hybrid' classes that combine online learning components with less-frequent on-campus, in-person class meetings. Thus, the university's assessment of learning might take into account more individually-oriented outcomes and capacities that are relevant to subject mastery.

Recommendation 6: A role of teacher to generate human capital in the students

It is recommended that teachers should address an active learning environment which supports critical thinking applied creatively to theoretical and practical contexts. A Classroom should be a place where students make mistakes without fear, combine pieces of knowledge in new and innovative ways, and provide solutions to problems. Thus, students' achievement levels in language are closely related to ability of teachers to help them acquire basic knowledge and engage in advanced and analytical thinking and problem solving.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this study should be viewed in light of several limitations, including the short-time frame of the analysis. Longer period of study might enable more definitive findings to be made regarding the influence of generic skills on students' English competency development. Further, the research was conducted only for the fourth year students. Therefore, it could be questionable to what extent first, second and third year university students can make meaningful judgments of their capabilities. This could be further investigated with more objective measures.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Research Project

Course: Academic Reading and Writing (ENL-415)

Project: Investigation of TNI Students' English Language Anxiety

Description:

The research project is to seek for problems of TNI students in learning English language through:

- **Design and Create** the project with all of the team members.
- **Identify** project components and needs.
- **Locate** place where project is studied.
- **Use technology** to research websites, make videos and recordings, and use computer programs.
- **Reading and Research** relevant background materials.
- **Interview** at least 20 TNI students who are studying in Faculty of Business Administration, Faculty of Information Technology and Faculty of Engineering.
- **Measure and Calculate** all math and numbers needed for project.
- **Assemble** required materials.
- **Apply** scientific method where required.
- **Write** introduction, findings, statements and summary with critical thinking.
- **Present** the research findings to teacher and classmates.

Learning Objectives:

The project seeks to

- develop students' capabilities to use English to:
  - converse and exchange points of views.
  - find out, interpret, organize and present information.
  - respond to team members and interviewees effectively.
- develop students the generic skills, values and attitudes as follows:

Generic Skills	Personal and Social Values and Attitudes
Initiative	Independence
Communication	Open-mindedness
Teamwork	Co-cooperativeness
Technology	Knowledge sources
Problem-solving	Critical and creative thinking
Self-management	Responsibility
Planning	Respect for different ways of life, beliefs and opinions
Learning	Lifelong learning

- develop students English language and attitudes as:
  - four English communicative skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing
  - active participation and collaboration with team members to accomplish the project
  - respect for different ideas and opinions

Learning Assessments:

The project is evaluated by:

- Working with others:
  - communicate ideas and information
- Working with information:
  - collect, analyze and organize information
  - use statistics
  - solve problems
- Working with technology:
  - use technology to search for information from websites and search engines
- Learning and Developing:
  - plan and organize the project
  - self-management
  - learning to learn

Appendix 2: Generic skills and PD Program activities for the first year students of Griffith University, Australia

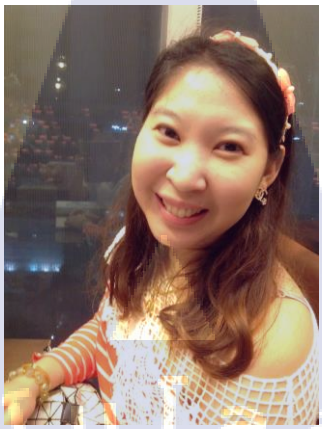
Table 6 Generic skills and PD Program activities

	Generic Skills	PDP#1	PDP#2	PDP#3
1	Interpersonal	- Business breakfast (I) - Pods - Campus trivia tour	- Networking lunch (I) - Interview skills workshop - Pods	- Dealing with clients (I) - Pods - Student industry
2	Self management	- Academic planning - Personal planning (I) - Goal setting (I) - Networking skills (I) - Time management	- Internship opportunities (I)	- Student industry conference (I)
3	Learning & adaptability	- Counseling services - Goal setting (I) - What makes a good student		- Student industry conference (I)
	Generic Skills	**PDP#1**	**PDP#2**	**PDP#3**
4	Problem-solving	- Study skills sessions		- Advanced research skills workshop - Professional framework of practice (I)
5	Concept & analysis			
6	Oral communication	- Business networking (I)	- Professional presentation (I) - Speed dating interviews (I)	- Student industry conference
7	Team	- Pods	- Pod Olympics	- 8Relationship Building (I)

8	Information literacy	- timetabling, getting online, library databases	- Advanced Excel workshop	- Advanced Research workshop
9	Written communication	- Academic writing workshop	- Writing CVs and cover letters workshop	
	Generic Skills	**PDP#1**	**PDP#2**	**PDP#3**
10	Career & vocational	- What makes a successful graduate (I) - Business attire (I)	- What firms are looking for (I) - Different roles in the profession (I)	- Industry speakers and displays at the student industry conference (I)

Note: This table contains example activities (not an exhaustive list) in each of the professional development programs (PDP) that run at the start of each of the three trimesters in the first year of the degree. Pods are mentoring groups and consist of students, industry and academics. (I) indicates that this was an industry conducted session.

Bio Data



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She also completed two master degrees in Master of Education (Educational Administration) in 2012 from Naresuan University and Master of Arts Administration in 2006 from Central Queensland University, Australia. Her research areas of interest are new English teaching-learning approach/strategies, English teaching technique, English learning activities, Knowledge economy, Human capital, and Creative Class.