

## DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE BUSINESS ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN AN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN THAILAND

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to develop a model for effective Business English curriculum in Thailand. This research focuses on Business English curriculum of Assumption University. The subjects of the research includes BE graduates of Assumption University batch thirty-eight, graduate users of BE graduates in Thai employment market, and the Commission of Higher Education's five domains of learning from the Thailand Qualifications Framework for Thailand's higher education. This research used Business English curriculum of Assumption University as major data source since it is the biggest producer of Business English graduates in Thailand employment market. The data was collected by means of questionnaires and interviews which were reviewed by three Business English experts for content validity and reliability. The data collected from the questionnaires was descriptive statistically analyzed by Mean and Standard Deviation method. The mean from the analysis indicated the average level of the respondents' satisfactions towards the current BE curriculum. Standard deviation is used as a measure for analyzing variation or dispersion of the scores around the mean. Content analysis was employed to analyze the interview data. Finally, the results was thoroughly interpreted and analyzed by employing the method of content analysis to reveal the essential elements for developing an effective model for BE curriculum based upon the satisfaction of BE graduates and BE graduate users, the needs of BE graduates and BE graduate users, and TQF's five domains. The finding revealed that the graduates rated the high level in all four Business English effectiveness criteria. The criteria which received the highest effectiveness is 'Degree of learning' (Mean = 3.87), followed by 'Usefulness of Skills' (Mean = 3.76), 'Continuance' (Mean = 3.73), and 'Relevance' (Mean = 3.66), respectively. In addition, the graduate users are highly satisfied with graduates' ability and core character traits with reference to the TQF's five domains of learning (Mean = 4.29, SD = 0.70).

**Keywords:** Content analysis, Effective Business English Curriculum, Assumption University

### Background

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an international organization founded by countries in South East Asian to promote cultural, politics, and economic development. ASEAN was officially created

in 1967 with the mutual agreement of the Bangkok Declaration. Since then, ASEAN has played an important role in its member nations culturally, politically and, most importantly, economically. ASEAN has brought many major changes to Asia, and the biggest change so far is the AEC. In 2015, AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) which is formed by ten countries in ASEAN will be established in order to fulfill the shared visions of the association. At the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN summit, the key characteristics of AEC have been envisaged as follows: a) a single market and production base, b) a highly competitive economic region, c) a region of equitable economic development, and d) a region fully integrated into the global economy.

In addition to the key characteristics of AEC, the ASEAN leaders have also agreed upon AEC areas of cooperation which required not only governments to cooperate but also other sectors, especially, private sectors to cooperate as well. These areas of cooperation include human resources development and capacity building; recognition of professional qualifications; closer consultation on macroeconomic and financial policies; trade financing measures; enhanced infrastructure and communications connectivity; development of electronic transactions through e-ASEAN; integrating industries across the region to promote regional sourcing, and enhancing private sector involvement.

With the key characteristics and areas of cooperation, it is important to all sectors to prepare for this AEC transformation which will allow free flow of goods, services, and skilled workforce. The transformation will bring the biggest change ever to the member nations especially business sectors. There will certainly create a need for skilled labor with international standards. Thus, to produce workforce to cater this transformation, an effective curriculum must be developed in higher educational institutions.

To be more specific, the institutions that provide programs in business. Business English (BE) curriculum in Thailand have long been a major source for workforce in Thailand, but with the arrival AEC, the curriculums need to raise their standards to an international level to ensure that the graduates' qualifications meet the needs of graduate users both in Thailand and other ASEAN countries. BE curriculum incorporates English communicative skills and business competency. Students of Arts majoring in Business English should be equipped with knowledge and competency essential for Arts and Humanity. They also have the opportunities to choose from various aspects of business, or any other languages as their minor. The integration of language and business skills can offer wider prospects for the future career and higher education. The career opportunity for graduates of BE includes business entrepreneurs, airlines and

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hospitality personnel, interpreters and translators, or personal assistants.

In addition, according to the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) for National Education Act 1999, each curriculum is to be revised every four academic years to ensure consistency in both standards and award titles for higher education qualifications, and to make clear the equivalence of academic awards with those granted by higher education institutions in other parts of the world. Hence, the Thailand Qualifications Framework (TQF) for higher education system is designed. This Framework will help to provide appropriate aspects of comparison in academic standards for institutions in their planning and internal quality assurance processes, for evaluators involved in external reviews, and for employers, in understanding the skills and capabilities of graduates they may employ. Prior to an implementation of a modification in each curriculum, a need analysis and feasibility study should be conducted as a crucial and necessary procedure to portray an effectiveness of a proposed curriculum.

### Objectives

1. To determine the satisfaction of Business English graduates towards the learning outcomes developed by the current Business English curriculum.
2. To determine the satisfaction of Business English graduate users towards the learning outcomes developed by the current Business English curriculum.
3. To identify the needs of graduates and graduate users regarding the Business English skills necessary to

Framework specified by the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC)

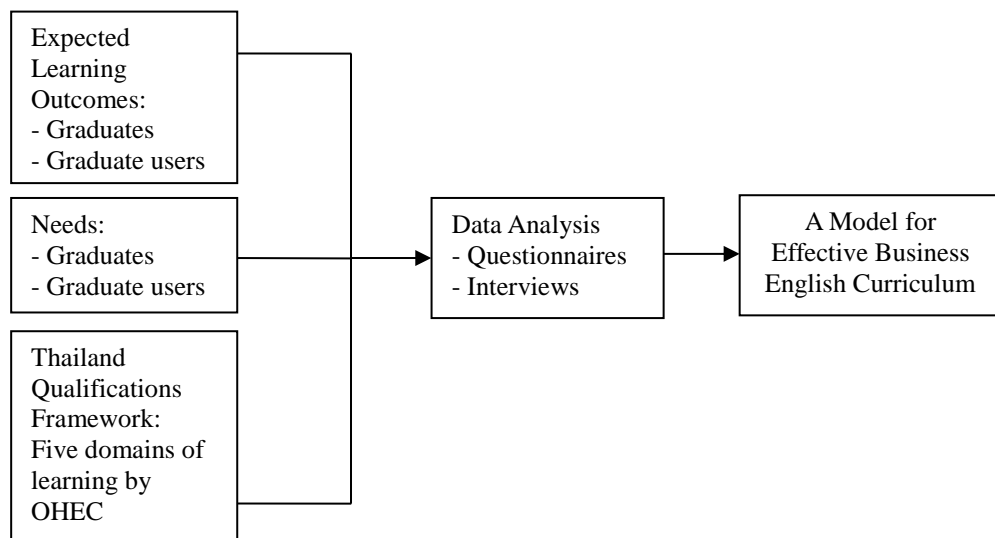
### Scope of the study

This research focuses on Business English curriculum of Assumption University. The subjects of the research includes BE graduates of Assumption University batch thirty-eight or 2010, graduate users of BE graduates in Thai employment market, and the Commission of Higher Education's five domains of learning from the Thailand Qualifications Framework for Thailand's higher education which are as follows:

1. Ethical and Moral Development
2. Knowledge
3. Cognitive Skills
4. Interpersonal Skills and Responsibility
5. Analytical and Communication Skills

### Conceptual Framework

To identify the elements necessary for developing a model for effective Business English curriculum, three significant factors are to be explored. There are, firstly, the satisfactions of BE graduates and BE graduate users, the needs BE graduates and BE graduate users and lastly, the Office of Higher Education Commission's five domains of learning from the Thailand Qualifications Framework for Thailand's higher education. After exploring the aforementioned factors, a needs analysis will be conducted. Finally, the model for effective BE curriculum is developed.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

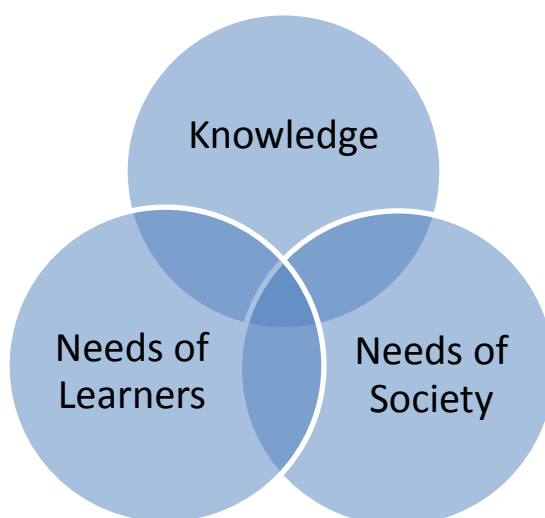
be developed for the effective use in workplace

4. To analyze the essential skills needed to be developed in the Business English curriculum

5. To propose a model for effective Business English curriculum based on the satisfactions and needs of Business English graduates and Business English graduate users with the respect to Thailand Qualifications

The theory involved in the research is the Tyler Model. Ralph Tyler published his work on curriculum and instruction called *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* in 1949. He tied the matters of curriculum and instruction together by applying principles of formulating, organizing, and evaluating the expected learning objectives of the curriculum. He also suggested that the curriculum development is a continuous cyclical process

which consists of redesigning, redevelopment, and reevaluate. Madeus, G. F., & Stufflebeam, D. L. (1989) simplified the model of Tyler that the curriculum models should be based on teaching and learning; targeted on needs and characteristics of learners; outlined implementation process. In an attempt to elaborate the Tyler Model, Madeus, G.F., & Stufflebeam, D.L. (1989) specified the needs of learners in five aspects: cognitive development, linguistics development, psycho-social development, moral/affective development, and vocational focus. These five aspects are similar to ethical and moral development, knowledge, cognitive in TQF domains of learning. The concept is presented based on the Tyler Model in the following figures



**Figure 2: The concept of Tyler Model of Curriculum Design**

Source: Madeus, G. F., & Stufflebeam, D. L. (1989). *Educational evaluation: The work of Ralph Tyler*. Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Press.

### Research Methodology

The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Each instrument applied in this research will be developed to ensure that each instrument best suit the research objectives, best appropriate for the population and sample and effectively reflect all necessary factors needed for developing Business English curriculum.

#### Questionnaires for graduates

This Questionnaire for Graduates was used to determine business English graduates' satisfaction towards the learning outcomes developed by the current Business English curriculum. The questionnaire was designed with reference to the expected learning outcomes offered from each course. The objectives as stated in the course syllabus of each course in Business English curriculum were observed and categorized into groups of expected learning outcomes in four subject areas as follows:

1. General education courses
2. Faculty core courses
3. Major requirement courses
4. Major elective courses

The graduates were asked to rate the following aspects:

1. Degrees of Learning: the extent to which the graduates have learned from the program
2. Usefulness of Skills: the extent to which the skills that the graduates have learned benefit to their career
3. Continuance: the extent to which the graduates believe the skills should be continued in the program
4. Relevance: the extent to which the skills are relevant to their career

#### Questionnaires for graduate users

The questionnaire was categorized into five learning domains related to the TQF as follows.

- Ethical and Moral Development
- Knowledge
- Cognitive Skills
- Interpersonal Skills and Responsibility
- Analytical and Communication Skills

Each category measured the satisfaction of graduate users towards the BE graduates regarding the five domains of TQF. Graduate users were requested to determine of the degree of their satisfaction towards business English graduates based on graduates' ability and characteristics with reference to the TQF's five domains of learning.

#### Interviews for graduates and graduate users

The graduate interview closely resembled the questionnaires for graduates; however, respondents' expanded comments were encouraged to provide greater depths and understanding into the data collected from the questionnaires for graduate users.

The graduate interview was used to identify the

needs of graduates regarding the Business English skills necessary to be developed for the effective use in workplace. The questions were designed with reference to the expected learning outcomes offered from each course.

#### Interviews for graduate users

The graduate user interview resembled the questionnaires. The respondents' answers were encouraged to reveal greater depths and understanding into the data collected from the questionnaires for graduate users. The interview was to probe further into graduate users to elaborate their responses regarding their needs from the graduates of the current Business English curriculum.

The questionnaires were mailed online to 387 BE graduates batch 38 of Assumption University. The

essential elements for developing an effective model for BE curriculum based upon the satisfaction of BE graduates and BE graduate users, the needs of BE graduates and BE graduate users, and TQF's five domains.

#### Findings

From the data analysis, it is learned that the skills which are offered by the AU's BE are highly effective. The results of the research objectives are as follows:

1. The graduates rated the high level in all four Business English effectiveness criteria. The criteria which received the highest effectiveness is 'Degree of learning' (Mean = 3.87), followed by 'Usefulness of Skills' (Mean = 3.76), 'Continuance' (Mean = 3.73), and 'Relevance' (Mean = 3.66), respectively.

**Table 1: The Effectiveness of Business English Courses**

BE Courses	Degree of Learning		Usefulness of Skills		Continuance		Relevance	
	Mean	Results	Mean	Results	Mean	Results	Mean	Results
General Education Courses	3.58	High	3.52	High	3.45	Neutral	3.36	Neutral
Faculty Core Courses	4.03	High	3.90	High	3.81	High	3.74	High
Major Requirement Courses	3.99	High	3.79	High	3.90	High	3.81	High
Major Elective Courses	3.89	High	3.83	High	3.76	High	3.70	High
<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>3.76</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>3.73</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>High</b>

researcher then contacted 40 BE graduates users in Thai employment market which were categorized into four groups; namely, Government sector, Private sector, State-Enterprise sector, and Self-employed sector. The questionnaires and letter informing the research objectives were mailed online to 10 respondents of each group. The online mailing addresses of BE graduates and BE graduate users were available on the online database of Faculty of Arts, Assumption University. Later, the researcher sent a consent letter requesting for a permission to conduct interview to graduates and graduate users. Finally, the researcher conducted interviews of 4 graduate users, one from each employment group, on a convenience sampling.

The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed to indicate the level of the respondents' satisfactions towards the current BE curriculum. As for the interview data, it was analyzed by means of content analysis.

After the analysis of data collected from the questionnaires of BE graduates, questionnaires of BE graduate users, and graduate user interviews, the results were thoroughly interpreted and analyzed again by employing the method of content analysis to reveal the

2. The graduate users are highly satisfied with graduates' ability and core character traits with reference to the TQF's five domains of learning (Mean = 4.29, SD = 0.70). The graduates' ability to 'communicate effectively both orally and in writing, selecting and using forms of presentation appropriate for differing issues and audiences' is earned very high satisfaction level and also earned the highest satisfaction level among all the abilities in five domains (Mean = 4.50, SD = 0.68) while the ability 'investigating issues and problems can identify relevant statistical or mathematical techniques and apply them creatively in interpreting information and proposing solutions' earned the lowest satisfaction level (Mean = 4.00, SD = 0.83), yet it still indicates that the respondents are highly satisfied with this ability. Among the five TQF domains, 'Interpersonal Skills and Responsibility' received the highest satisfaction level of graduate users towards BE graduates' qualifications (Mean = 4.37, SD = 0.71) while 'Cognitive Skills' received the lowest satisfaction level (Mean = 4.20, SD = 0.68). The other domains also earned the high satisfaction level between 4.29 – 4.31.

**Table 2: The Degree of Satisfaction of Graduate Users towards Business English Graduates with reference to TQF**

TQF's Five Domains	Mean	SD	Degrees of Satisfaction
Ethical and Moral Development	4.29	0.63	High
Knowledge	4.29	0.75	High
Cognitive Skills	4.20	0.68	High
Interpersonal Skills and Responsibility	4.37	0.71	High
Analytical and Communication Skills	4.31	0.73	High
<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>	<b>4.29</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>High</b>

3. The needs of graduates and graduate users regarding the Business English skills necessary to be developed for the effective use in workplace the results from the interviews are elaborated in the following.

- Needs in terms of “skills learned in BE but they are obsolete to the current business situations” which are needed to be eradicated from the current BE curriculum.
  - Linguistics
- Needs in terms of “skills learned in BE and they are still useful in the current business situations” which are needed to be maintained in the current BE curriculum.
  - Listening and speaking
  - Understanding and summarizing
  - Presentation
- Needs in terms of “skills needed in the current business situations, but are not provided in the current BE curriculum” which are needed to be added to the current BE curriculum.
  - Cross cultural communication
  - AEC awareness
  - Computer skills
  - Personality trainings
  - Collaboration among institutions, students, graduates, graduate users, and community

4. The essential skills needed to be developed in the Business English curriculum are listed below.

- To develop the ability to communicate in oral and written Thai, and also to obtain the knowledge of Thai language for basic communication, Thai culture, traditions and ways of life
- To obtain a general knowledge of science and technology emphasizing scientific inventions and their applications to business and also to include discussion about the effects of modern technology on man and his physical environment

- To help students discover themselves and develop their potential in order that they are able to effectively deal with their own reality and others in their society
- To help students discover themselves and develop their potential in order that they are able to effectively deal with their own reality and others in their society
- To develop library skills in general
- To obtain the knowledge of Thai civilization in terms of social structure and social development: way of life, ideas, the prosperity of the various aspects of Thai culture including its application on business practice and impact upon Thai community
- To obtain the knowledge of the application of reasoning, fallacy, syllogism, the Deductive method, the Inductive method, proof and its values
- To obtain the knowledge of the development of Western Civilization from the Greek and ancient Roman era till now through historical events, social and institutional core character traits, philosophical schools, religions, the development of science, accomplishments in the arts, literature, music
- To obtain the knowledge of concepts and principles of phonetics as well as practice in pronouncing English sounds and using the IPA (International Phonetic Association)
- To obtain the knowledge of the core character traits, functions, concepts and principles of the human language
- To obtain the knowledge of the relationships between language, culture and behavior in attempt to understand different language uses in an international environment
- To interpret the structure and objectives of research materials and articles on current issues related to business and to develop outlines and short synopses of reading materials
- To develop skills in using English for business communication by choosing correct and appropriate means of communication
- To develop skills in analyzing sentence patterns of the foreign language and the use of correct words, idioms and structures to convey the accurate meaning and style of the original document
- To practice and express their thoughts in conversation on topics related to everyday life and business in business settings both in group and panel discussions
- To be able to analyze various forms of journalism and to enhance skills in understanding and debating articles

- To develop critical and analytical abilities through reading and evaluating texts identify various types of rhetorical strategies
- To be able to understand, take notes, outline and summarize the contents and essence of spoken texts related to business
- To obtain the knowledge of the methodology and tools in executive research
- To obtain the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing within the framework of various business industries, namely; secretarial work, travel and tourism, hotels and hospitality, international trade, property development, airlines and aviation, and music industry
- To be able to overcome English pronunciation difficulties and speak English correctly and naturally
- To be able to deliver and evaluate speeches according to international requirements with attention to the speech components
- To offer theoretical and practical aspect of popular articles of various media with readings in the fields of various knowledge
- To introduce public relation writing as used in business enterprises
- To be able to analyze the various forms of academic writing and to practice in writing for academic purposes
- To offer a survey and study of British and American works of literature
- To be able to read and discuss texts representing thoughts and views in the human civilization
- To acquaint students with recent literary works by Thai authors writing in English
- To obtain the knowledge of various features of American culture

The graduates earned all these expected learning outcomes at a high level of learning. In other words, these expected learning outcomes are effectively equipped to the graduates. They agreed that the university should continue offering these expected learning outcomes in the curriculum. In addition, most of the graduates and graduate users found these outcomes very useful to their careers and even their future study. Furthermore, the expected learning outcomes from BE courses are highly related to their job descriptions and study. However, there are some expected learning outcomes which are suggested to add into curriculum as follow:

- To be able to use appropriate vocabulary in various business contexts
- To be able to listen with empathy and read between the lines
- To be able to filter out clustering information

- To be able to write in business context with professional touch
- To be able to act appropriately in various business contexts

If these expected learning outcomes are added into the curriculum, the BE curriculum could even be more effective

5. The results suggested that the content of all BE subjects are as important as the skills. The expected learning outcomes must combine both content of the subject and the BE skills. Since the major purpose of BE curriculum is to equip graduates with both knowledge and skills to prepare them for their future. It is essential that the skills or competence are emphasized as much as the knowledge or content. The graduates' knowledge would be useless if they do not know how to actually employ and apply the knowledge in different business contexts. The instruction should be based upon not only knowledge but also activities to train students to know-how which could eventually transfer into skills. The skill training should be conducted along the line with the regular lecture. The students should be trained on a regular basis both inside and outside the classroom. However, the content should also be updated and revised to best suit the needs of all stakeholders

Besides the significance of content and competence, the research analysis also unveiled another intrinsic factor influencing graduates' potentialities which is core character traits. According to the findings, graduate users recommended that for a graduate to be an excellent employee, only know-how is not enough. Good core character traits are also crucial for every employee. Many employees are very good at doing their jobs, yet they could not be successful in their careers because they do not possess the right core character traits. Graduates must have positive core character traits such as endurance, creativity, open-mind and teamwork. The data analysis clearly revealed that appropriate core character traits must also be instilled in students as much as content and competence in order to drive students to their highest potentials.

### Discussions

Evidently, content, competence, and core character traits must be a center focus of the BE curriculum as they should be perfectly equipped in the students and the students are the center of the curriculum. The next challenge for curriculum developer is what are the necessary content, right competence, and appropriate core character traits to be inserted in the curriculum. The answers lied within the community and its circumstances. The findings from the interviews surprisingly led to the same direction, AEC. As the AEC is approaching, every organizations, not only government but also private sector, is getting ready for the challenges which come with AEC. Certainly, the new needs arose in all stakeholders. It is the responsibility of the curriculum developer to create a curriculum to cater these needs. A

curriculum developer should carefully and thoroughly consider the community circumstances and decide what are the necessary content, right competence, and appropriate core character traits for the curriculum. It is unarguable that whenever a community changes, a curriculum also changes.

Without a strong collaboration, curriculum developers may not be able to fully actualize their developed curriculum. All stakeholders must collaborate together. For a curriculum to be effective, a strong collaboration is obligatory. For example, some competence or core character traits are not possible to be earned in classroom; students may need to earn this competence in a real business lace. In this case, collaboration from a business organization is required.

However, the finding of this research suggested content (knowledge), competence (skills), and core character traits are the core of curriculum model. The core of the curriculum is shaped by the needs of community or society. Lastly, the effectiveness of the BE curriculum must be supported and enhanced by the collaboration of all stakeholders.

All in all, each of the factors is closely related to one another, so it is important that these factors are taken into a consideration of BE curriculum developers and involved in the development of a model for effective BE curriculum for an international university in Thailand. The following figure represents the relationship of each mentioned factors.

According to the research findings and analysis, it is proposed that a model for effective BE curriculum emphasize upon 5 C's factors.

**Content**

Content of the subject matters must base upon the knowledge of both English and business. Every BE major subject should always update the subject content to best satisfy the needs of students and graduate users.

**Competence**

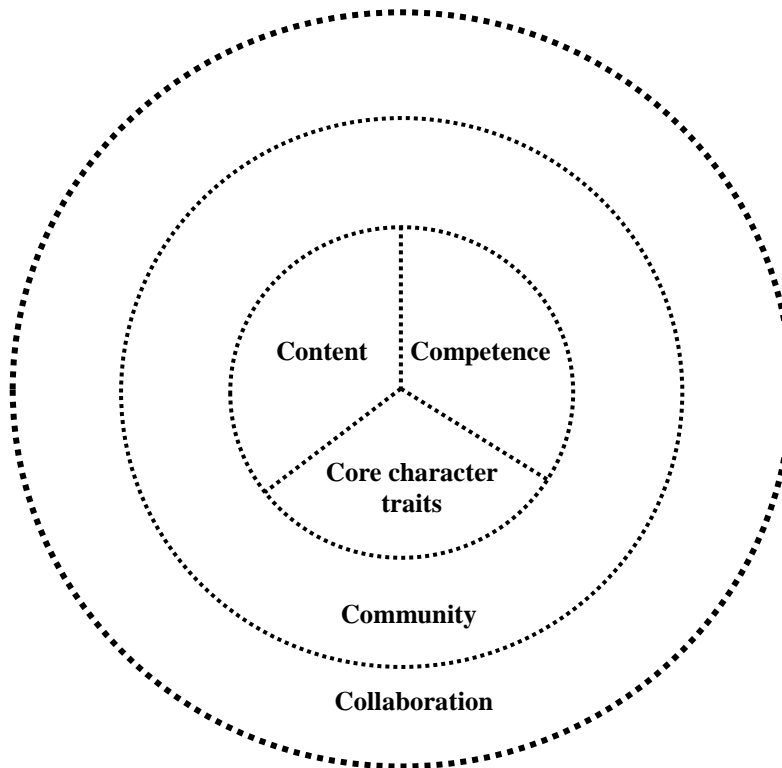
In addition to BE content, students must also be equipped with the skills in five BE performance areas; meetings and discussions, giving information, telephoning, business correspondence, and socializing. Moreover, a task-based approach which students could improve their business English knowledge and at the same time develop their skills shall be employed.

**Core character traits**

Extracurricular activities could be added in order to instill good core character traits of the students. Those activities should promote student's teamwork spirit, caring, sharing, and endurance. Moreover, characteristic training, such as internship, could yield great benefits to BE curriculum.

**Community**

BE curriculum developers should consider the changing circumstances of institutions. These changes tremendously affect the curriculum structures and employment market. For example, AEC will create both opportunities and threats in all employment aspects. BE students must be aware of these opportunities and threats



**Figure 3: A Model for an Effective Business English Curriculum for an International University in Thailand**

so that they can prepare themselves to cater the changes  
Collaboration

All stakeholders must collaborate to develop an effective curriculum since curriculum could not be developed overnight. Curriculum requires gradual development; this could only be done with understandings and collaboration of all concerned parties.

As seen for the proposed model, it is elaborated the Tyler Model of Curriculum Designs and layered differently. The Tyler Model emphasized on the knowledge, needs of learners, and needs of society; the 5 Cs Model offered a new perspective to Tyler Model. The 5 Cs Model viewed content, competence, and core character traits as the core of curriculum with the same level of emphasis because the 5 Cs Model used TQF as one of the key benchmarks, TQF focuses on the core character traits of students and is learner-centered. It is appropriate that the core of the curriculum is learners. Thus, the content, competence, and core character traits which must be perfectly equipped in the learners are the center of the model.

The criteria in selecting content, competence, and core character traits are shaped by the needs of community. The Tyler Model viewed needs of community as one of the main pillars in the core of the curriculum, yet the 5 Cs Model perceived community as an influencing factor shaping the other three intrinsic factors; content, competence, and core character traits. Community guides the directions of the curriculum. It indicates what the content should be, what the necessary competence is, and what the appropriate core character traits of the learners are.

The 5 Cs Model also introduced the collaboration as one of the important factors which drives the curriculum to its best effectiveness. Collaboration is required at all stages of a curriculum development. The research considered collaboration as a major tool in curriculum development. Collaboration delivers needs of community to the content, competence, and core character traits. It facilitates the flows of all factors within the model.

### Recommendations

For the application of the 5 Cs Model, curriculum developers should carefully observe the current expected learning outcomes offered in the BE curriculum whether they are aligned with the expected learning outcome proposed in the 5 Cs Model (See Appendix K)

After aligning the expected learning outcomes, it is necessary to review the emphasis on the outcomes. The emphasis should be equally placed upon all factors. As for the collaboration, a network or relationship among all stakeholders needed to be established.

These research findings could also be used in TQF 3 which is involved with specifications of a courses and course outlines.

This research only emphasized on universities in

Thailand which offer Business English program in English language, yet there are other universities which offer Business English program in Thai language. Other factors affecting respondents' perspectives such as age, GPA, various types of working environment, relationship between graduates and graduate users were not considered. Hence, the research results may be limited and varied. In addition, the sample population of this research represented only the perspectives of graduates and graduate users; therefore, the perspectives of teachers and parents, and current students could be added to provide a better picture of effective BE curriculum. It is recommended that more research of the similar aspects should be conducted.

The purpose of this research is to develop a model for effective Business English curriculum in Thailand. It is recommended for all educational leaders, especially those who greatly involve with business English curriculum design, to take this research result into consideration when developing, reviewing, or modifying curriculum. Due to the high satisfaction level from both graduates and graduate users of Business English curriculum of Assumption University, it is strongly recommended that other educational institutions employ similar curriculum by integrating the subject content of Assumption University's BE curriculum and the other 4 Cs; Competence, Core character traits, Community, and Collaboration, as suggested in the proposed model.

For vocational institutions or other institutions which offer professional development program, this 5Cs model could also be applied with some adjustment.

In conclusion, it is aimed that the model could be beneficial for all educational institutions not only in Thailand but also in other countries as well.

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