An Ongoing Investigation into Actual Conditions of English Education at the University Level in Thailand and the Philippines

-Research Striving for an Ideal English Program for Small and Medium-Sized Universities in Japan-

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Introduction

This paper is another step written to report our investigations into actual conditions of English education in four Asian cultures. The first paper focused on three universities in Korea and Taiwan as the initial step in comparative studies in the English education systems of universities in developed Asian countries, based on our research trips conducted from November, 2018 to March, 2019. In this paper, the same investigation was done at a public university (known in that country as a "local national university") in central Thailand, and an observation from another angle at a large private university in the Philippines[1]. From these cumulative research trips, the final goal of this study is to identify the key components of an ideal English program to build communicative competence in students at medium and small liberal arts universities in Japan, some ideas of which were submitted in a previous paper (See Shigesako, Mosher, and Chapman, 2020).

Chapter 1 reports findings of the investigation at one university in Thailand (hereinafter "university A"), conducted by Damon E. Chapman from February 10th to 13th, 2020. Noted in the earlier work, the specific concerns in this research are based on three questions: (A) What is the structure and curriculum of English education at the Thai university? (B) How is English competence evaluated at that university? (C) What out-of-class support does the university offer students who study English? As with Korea and Taiwan, a list of questions[2] was sent to the university before the investigation trip. On site, Chapman had meetings with the persons in charge of the English curriculum, observed some English classes, and interviewed some English teachers. The investigation report of this research step follows the previous research. Information from that will be included in a revised final step of this longitudinal work, in the form of a proposal to improve the English-education environment at Hijiyama University as an example of a small or medium-sized university in Japan.

Chapter 2 delivers an observational report on one university in the Philippines (referred to as "university B"), conducted by David M. Mosher during the brief study abroad course of Hijiyama University from February 17th to March 10th, 2020. This report is based on a short tour of University B's Educational Technology Center (EdTech Center) in early March of 2020, and information researched from University B's EdTech Center Web page, Facebook page and Twitter account. The Center is located on the university's main campus. It is quite large and takes up the entire floor of a modern high-rise building and houses a senior high school which is also served by the Center. The Center serves not only the main university campus, but its wider academic community in the integration of digital technologies for instruction, research and community development.

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Chapter I

Thailand Report

Thailand Educational Research Trip: (February 10th – 13th, 2020)

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This chapter will discuss what was learned at the Thai university, focusing on three topics: the structure of the English curriculum, the evaluation of English competence, and out-of-class support available to Thai students.

(A) What is the structure and curriculum of English Education at the Thai university?

The English Major is in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The department currently has 10 full-time professors and/or assistant professors. In the current academic year (2019-2020), the student enrollment is approximately 80 students per academic year, for a total of 320 full-time diploma earning students. Semesters in Thailand are 16 weeks and begin in mid-August to November (1st semester) and mid-January to April/May (2nd semester). *Lecture* classes (L) are held three hours a week and *Practice* courses (P) are four hours per week (See notes 1-3 below regarding those two types of classes). The 4-year curriculum for English majors at the Thai university is as follows:

1st Year / Semester 1

Course Type	Course Title	Credit
General Education Courses	English for Communication Ayutthaya Study Science and Technology in Daily Life General Education Course General Education Course	3 (L) 3 (L) 3 (L) 3 (L/P) 3 (L/P)
Compulsory Courses	Basic English Forms and Usage	3 (L) Total: 18

1st Year / Semester 2

Course Type	Course Title	Credit
General Education Courses	General Education Course General Education Course General Education Course General Education Course	3 (L) 3 (L) 3 (L) 3 (L)
Compulsory Courses	Advance English Forms and Usage English Listening and Speaking English Reading Skills	3 (L) 3 (P) 3 (L) Total: 21

2nd Year / Semester 1

Course Type	Course Title	Credit
Core Course	Public Mind and Social Working	3 (P)
Compulsory Courses	Adv. English Listening and Speaking Basic English Writing English Critical Reading Introduction to English Linguistics English for Tourism	3 (P) 3 (P) 3 (P) 3 (L) 3 (L)
Elective Course	(Student choice) (1)	3 (L) Total: 21

2nd Year / Semester 2

2nd Year / Semester 2

Course Type	Course Title	Credit
Compulsory Courses	English Essay Writing English Phonology Introduction to Literature English to Thai Translation English for Careers English for Local Tour Guides	3 (P) 3 (L) 3 (L) 3 (L) 3 (L) 3 (P)
Elective Course	(Student choice) (2)	3 (L/P) Total: 21

3rd Year / Semester 1

Course Type	Course Title	Credit
Compulsory Courses	Language of Literature Thai to English Translation	3 (L) 3 (P)
Elective Course	(Student choice) (Class 3) (Student choice) (Class 4) (Student choice) (Class 5) (Student choice) (Class 6) (Student choice) (Class 7)	3 (L/P) 3 (L/P) 3 (L/P) 3 (L/P) 3 (L/P) Total: 21

3rd Year / Semester 2

Course Type	Course Title	Credit
General Education course	English for Standardized Tests	3 (L)
Elective Course	(Student choice) (class 8) (Student choice) (class 9) (Student choice) (class 10) (Student choice) (class 11) (Student choice) (class 12)	3 (L/P) 3 (L/P) 3 (L/P) 3 (L/P) 3 (L/P) Total: 18

4th Year / Semester 1

Course Type	Course Title	Credit
Compulsory Courses	Independent Studies	3 (P)
Professional Practice	(Choose *one* of these:) Pre-Cooperative Education OR Preparation for Field Experience in English (in next semester)	1 (450 hours) 2 (90 hours)
Free Elective Courses	Free Elective Course Free Elective Course	3 (L/P) 3 (L/P) Total: 10-12

4th Year / Semester 2

Course Type	Course Title	Credit
Professional Practice	(Choose *one* of these:) Cooperative Education OR Field Experience in English	6 (640 hours) 5 (450 hours) Total: 5-6

Note 1: All courses have 3 units earned toward the diploma. Courses with (L) are *Lecture* courses, while courses with (P) are *Practice* courses.

Note 2: The number of compulsory courses vs. the number of elective courses each year is based on the number of students enrolled in the English Major, as well as the number of teachers on staff that year. The above curriculum is from 2020.

Note 3: A total of 127 units is required to graduate.

(B) How is English competence evaluated at the Thai university?

In the 1st year, an English "interview" placement test (10-15 minutes) is given to all incoming English majors. Based on student results, two sections of classes are made each year, with students ranked based on "communicative ability". Under the 2020 curriculum, there are no English tests required to move up to the next academic year. However, there is an overall GPA requirement (for all majors) at each level:

Academic Year	GPA Required
1st	1.6
2nd	1.8
3rd	1.8
4th	2.0* (min. 2.0 is required to graduate)

Currently, teachers choose their own textbooks. From August, 2020, a level of CEFR A2 will be the minimum level of text allowed for use in English classes. From 2021, all textbooks will also be CEFR ranked, chosen through consultation with each teacher and staff in the English Major. Under that new curriculum, all English Majors will need to achieve CEFR C1 level in order to graduate. Non-English majors will need to achieve CEFR B2 in order to graduate (managed by the Language Center, explained below). After the 2021 curriculum reform, CEFR levels will be reset for English Majors and will be a requirement in order to move up to the next academic year.

Currently, the Language Center (as of winter, 2020) is developing 4 courses to let the students enroll to help them acquire the CEFR level as B2 for non-English majors and C1 for the English Major. Those include: *English for Communication* (A2), *English for Study Skills* (B1), *Advanced English Skills* (B2), and *Academic English* (C1). If the students pass those courses, they "can claim that they have achieved a sufficient English level."

Such curriculum reform will take place every 5 years. The stated goal of those regular reforms is to "improve teacher/student ratios" and to ensure that students "graduate with a better quality of education" based on a "Thai framework" of educational philosophy.

(C) What out-of-class support does the Thai university offer students who study English?

In the words of the Thai professors in the English Department, out-of-class support is "rare." The university does, however, have a Language Center which is controlled and managed by the Department of Management (Facebook: University A's Language-Center) where students can enroll in English classes. The center is staffed by five full-time native-English speaking teachers. None of the classes at

the Language Center can be used for class credit or diploma credit. There is also a maximum number of classes students can take, which is set by the Center.

The Language Center has traditionally used TOEFL ITP as well as TOEIC for English evaluation but those tests are optional for students, and such tests are independent from the English Major. Now, in order for students to access English classes at the Language Center students must achieve a CEFR level of B2 (confirmed by the Language Center). When a student does take classes there, individual teachers *may* offer rewards in their class (such as more points, absence make-ups, etc.) but it is up to the teacher. There is no system in place for all teachers to follow.

The English Major does have a required internship program (although other non-English majors can join). It takes place in the 2nd semester of the 4th year, and lasts a minimum of two months, often more. Such internships are paid for by the student, but sponsored by an off-campus company, sometimes out of the country. The administration for these internships is handled by an outside agency (off-campus) in coordination with the Student Affairs office. Previous internships have taken place at fast-food companies in Thailand, or amusement parks outside the country (e.g., a 3-month internship at Six Flags Amusement Park in the USA).

Currently, there are no English-based overseas programs offered to students. University A did host students on a 1-week overland trip to a local university in Cambodia, which was for NON-credit and was not for English majors. The English teachers did express an interest in possibly sending University A's students to Hijiyama University, depending on the availability of financial support.

Lastly, there are no formal English-based events (i.e., movie dubbing, musical events, etc.) sponsored by the English Major. Students do have an English Club/Activity, which is not formally guided by a teacher and clubs do not receive any financial support from the university.

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Chapter II

The Philippines Report

The Philippines Educational Research Trip: (February 17th – March 10th, 2020)

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This part of the report will disucuss what was learned from Mosher during his visit to a large private university in the Philippines (hereinafter referred to as "University B"). It will disucuss three areas: the Educational Technology Center, the E-Learning Access Program, ans some general technologial/digital tools available to students at University B.

(A) Educational Technology Center (EdTech Center) in University B

Tour of the Facilities

The tour guide for Mosher's March visit was a member of the EdTech Center training and management team with expertise in high school history, social science and educational technology. He provided the author a tour of the facilities which include, five study rooms for small groups, e-learning recording studios, Macintosh computer labs, Chrome Book labs, and the university radio and TV facilities. Both students and professors can reserve the various study rooms, labs and recording studios for study or for class sessions. The guide explained that the university has used the Blackboard[3]

language learning management system (LMS) since 2002. He said that there are approximately 2,000 faculty members, and it is a challenge to motivate and educate them to use educational technology in their teaching; however, he said, things are getting easier because more recent editions of Blackboard, the main LMS used, is easier to use even for technology resistant professors.

EdTech Center Staff

According to the EdTech homepage, the Center has a total staff of 58 when faculty e-learning specialists are included. More specifically, there are six administration and team leaders (a director, assistant director and four technical team leaders and managers with various areas of academic expertise), 44 university and senior high school teaching faculty, and eight non-academic staff (two clerks, one multimedia programmer, one learning studio technician and four technical support staff). Among these staff members, there are at least twelve full-time e-learning specialists who provide professional development training programs, and mentoring and consultation sessions to educators in the area of digital instruction, ranging from face-to-face to fully online learning environments.

One of the most interesting features of the EdTech Center is the requirement that each college must designate one or more faculty members as e-learning specialists. These faculty members spend six hours a week at the Center learning about educational technology, and best practices for material development. These specialists are, in turn, responsible for training and assisting faculty in their colleges on the best use of educational technology in their specific content areas.

Wide Range of Services

The EdTech Center's mission is to draw on expertise in both technology and pedagogy, and to lead, support and advocate innovative and meaningful ways to engage students' learning in computer-enabled learning environments amidst converging and emerging digital technologies. Here is a list of twelve services provided to University B's faculty, students and the wider university community that illustrate the scope of Center activities.

1. ICT-based Teacher Training – offers both formal and informal Teacher Capacity Building Programs on ICT Integration across various delivery modes from face-to-face to virtual learning environments;

2. Media Production Services – comprised of a team with different media specializations in the areas of audio-visual production, audio recording/editing, graphic arts, multimedia programming, scriptwriting, and video coverage. The production team specializes in the following services:
   ○ Customized Audio-Visual Presentations
   ○ Instructional Videos
   ○ Instructional Multimedia Material
   ○ Learning Objects
   ○ Desktop Publishing Materials
   ○ Animation
   ○ Audio-Production

3. Web-based Seminars – offers workshops or seminars that are transmitted over the Web or local network using *Blackboard Collaborate;*

4. Mobile Learning – offers support to students and faculty members in the school policy framework, Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) via Blackboard Mobile to access course materials through smartphones and other mobile devices;

5. Digital Learning Recording Sessions – offers services in assisting faculty members in recording and deploying their learning materials through its various recording studios using advanced e-learning tools;

6. Learning Space Design – offers consultative services in redesigning 21st century classrooms for integrating the right fit of pedagogy, technology and architecture;

7. Production of documentary films, instructional videos and other dynamic audio-visual presentations;

8. Development of interactive media materials, kiosks, and multimedia learning objects;

9. Online Course Site Development and Deployment;

10. Conduct of Instructional Technology Integration Training Programs;

11. Broadcasting of curriculum-based radio and TV production programs;

12. Video documentation and web-streaming services of curricular events.

Recent educational technology courses for faculty also include courses in how to use Blackboard Learn Ultra to deliver on-line courses, a course that explores the benefits of Blackboard training for synchronous instruction and a course in the development of e-learning course sites.

E-Learning Access Program (eLeAP)

The "e-Learning Access Program" (eLeAP) is the focal program of the EdTech Center. It supports the e-learning activities of the university in partnership with the respective colleges. Its aim is to increase the availability of knowledge resources and revolutionize teaching-learning opportunities among faculty members and students in the digital world.

Having a centralized and dedicated EdTech Center allows University B to administer faculty and student support to over 44,000 students, 2,000 faculty and the wider educational community. eLeAP has a cloud-based infrastructure powered by the Blackboard learning management system, enhanced by Google for Education and enriched by Adobe Creative eLearning Solutions and access to Microsoft 365. It provides an integrated learning environment which provides opportunities for faculty members across a range of subject areas and specializations to improve their specific skills in:

1. Designing meaningful e-learning classroom experiences;

2. Developing customized interactive multimedia content;

3. Enhancing their productivity by participation in other non-curricular activities related to technology;

4. Providing faculty members with a secure and reliable alternative learning environment to augment existing face-to-face classes in the form of web-presence, web-enhanced or fully-online course sites;

5. Improving lesson delivery by providing anytime/anywhere online learning opportunities through teacher-centered, student-centered and team-centered approaches;

6. Mirroring and enhancing the existing classroom delivery lesson cycle (motivation, content delivery, assessment, discussion, and reinforcement of lessons) through a variety of appropriate e-learning

practices;

7. Training and mentoring faculty members continually in their e-learning practices and needs;

8. Enriching learning experiences of students through well-designed web-based activities; and

9. Facilitating community-based projects, such as surveys or elections which are non-curricular in nature through the creation of community sites.

In sum, the mission of eLeAP is to strengthen the academic programs by promoting the appropriate integration of educational media for the enhancement of instruction, research, and community service to the entire academic community.

(B) Main Technological and Digital Tools for Students

Currently, within the "University B Cloud Digital Environment,"[4] University students have many technological and digital tools at their disposal via the Cloud. They have free Blackboard Learn accounts including email accounts, access to several electronic research data bases, Google Suite for Education accounts with unlimited G-drive storage, Microsoft 365 accounts with unlimited OneDrive storage, as well as an examination security application developed by the university. These various tools are considered student perks.

There are also various modes of technical support. There are support pages for specific applications, such as Blackboard. There is a hotline telephone number for students to get quick support over the telephone. Students can also email questions to the EdTech Center as well as schedule face to face help sessions at the Center.

Since the author's visit to the Center last March, COVID-19 seems to have dramatically accelerated University B's development of their educational technology infrastructure due to the lock down of the university in mid-March of 2020 and the need to do classes remotely. Previously, the university did not even provide on campus WiFi for students out of the fear it would distract them from their studies.

(C) Areas of Particular Interest for Hijiyama University

First, the faculty training program is of great interest. Future research should explore in detail the types of educational technology courses offered to faculty, and the e-learning specialists training program as well as how e-learning specialists implement what they have learned in their own departments and colleges.

Two additional areas of interest are the support systems provided for students described above, and the notion of student perks, such as unlimited G-drive and One-drive storage. Providing Hijiyama students with such perks could be used positively for recruiting students, increasing overall student satisfaction, for motivating student learning and for better preparing them for the post-COVID workforce.

Conclusion

As another step in our ongoing research (following Korea and Taiwan the previous year) this paper seeks to learn from English language curriculums in a university in central Thailand (a small "local national university"), and from the educational technology support system at a university in the Philippines. This was done in order to build upon programs in multiple Asian populations and improve

the current English curriculum at the home university of the authors. To do so, the same questions from work in Korea and Taiwan were posed in this focus on English education in Thailand: What can Hijiyama learn from English Education at the Thai university and the educational technology program of the Philippine university? What, if anything, can or should Hijiyama change based on what was observed at these two universities? Previous suggestions from Korea and Taiwan curriculums included the following (summarized only briefly here):

(1) Hijiyama could make a 4-year English language curriculum based on measurable goals (such as CEFR levels) for *each* academic year.

(2) Hijiyama could define and publish "can do" statements for each academic year so students and faculty know what is expected by the end of each term.

(3) These "can do" statements could be in conjunction with a revised goal statement of the core competencies the curriculum is focused on. Previous research (Shigesako, Mosher, and Chapman, 2020) gave a long list of "can do" statements specifically for Hijiyama students).

(4) Make a list of features for Hijiyama's English language program that clearly state the support and services provided to enable students to reach their goals. The same research cited above gave six specific and detailed features that Hijiyama could begin with and/or improve.

In addition to those suggestions, following the format at the Thai university where classes were observed and the teaching staff was consulted, the authors propose these additional changes/additions to the English curriculum at Hijiyama University:

a) Make courses that are clearly grouped into categories such as *Lecture* (L) courses, compared to *Practice* (P) courses where the skills are used. The best comparison under the current Hijiyama system would be *Active Learning* courses (AL), in which students are expected the actually use the target skills in class (as well as via homework). Over the 4-year diploma plan, the student should easily be able to see which courses are (L) or (P/AL).

b) Make clear the English courses and the specific skills/competencies for each course that *both* language majors *and non-language* majors will develop. Those skills should also include the appropriate CEFR levels. For example: non-language majors (outside of the Language and Culture department) will aim for a A2/B1 CEFR level (including the corresponding "can do" abilities). On the other hand, language majors (in the Language and Culture department) should aim for B2/C1 CEFR level (and relevant higher "can do" skills.)

c) Any English major could have a *required* internship program, (although non-English majors should be able to join). It could take place in the 2nd semester of the 3rd year, and last a minimum set amount of time, as little as 3 weeks, but longer is always better. Such internships could be paid for by the student, but sponsored by an off-campus company/organization. Allowing students on such internships to earn money must be discussed, but the incentives would be clear: improve English competence (because the internship must be in an English-speaking environment) as well as gain valuable "real world" work experience.

d) Make all textbooks CEFR rated and require all teachers in the same level course to use the same textbooks. This maintains consistency and keeps students aiming for the same skill levels.

The authors also propose, several areas in which we can learn from University B's educational technology program:

a) Given the difference in scale between University B and Hijiyama, we cannot imitate their program in its entirety. We can, however, and should use their program as a reference point to develop an on-going year-round training program for Hijiyama faculty that takes account of the different needs of each department's academic program.

b) Likewise, University B's student support systems are highly relevant. We should consider establishing Web support pages for the various applications students must use, such as Google Classroom. Also, we should consider establishing e-mail, telephone and face-to-face support systems for students.

c) Hijiyama should consider a basic package of technological and digital tools for all of its students, such as Google Suite for Education, unlimited G-drive storage, Microsoft 365 accounts, unlimited OneDrive storage and discounted prices on computers and peripherals with a four-year service plan. These could be advertised as Hijiyama student perks.

d) Establish a one-stop learning resources home page. University B provides some hints for how to do this as does one of our Taiwan partner universities.

Finally, further research is needed into the details of University B's e-learning specialist training program, especially as regards to English language education.

Notes

[1] Further detailed investigation was going to be done at the universities in the same areas (Korea and Taiwan), with an initial investigation in Thailand added to deepen our understanding of actual conditions of English education at Asian universities from February to March in 2020. Unfortunately, however, we had to cancel our trips to Korea and Taiwan because of COVID-19. Consequently, this paper includes just the investigation at the university in Thailand by Damon E. Chapman, and the observation at the university in the Philippines by David M. Mosher. This paper was prepared under the general editorship of Kazumi Shigesako.

[2] Our overall approach to learning about English Education at the Thai university (just like the universities in Korea and Taiwan) comes from this key question: *What are the key components of an ideal English program for a small liberal arts university that will motivate and give beginner and/or low-intermediate level students sufficient input, practice and experience to obtain a high level of English communicative competence in all four areas of communicative competence: linguistic (grammatical), sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic?* The questions in the following list are based on this key question:

On-Campus English Curriculum Questions

·What specific areas of English education lead to *measurable* communicative competence? How is that success measured?

·Which language teaching methods are currently in ESL classes at your university? (e.g., *Communicative* Language Teaching?)

·What are the English goals (levels of English competence) in each academic year? (e.g., What specific language goals are taught at each year of university? Do 1st-year students focus on academic

writing, 2nd-year students on speaking, etc.?)

·How are these skills measured?

·How many hours of English-language class time is administered in each year?

·How is the overall English competence measured? CEFR? TOEIC? IELTS?

·Do you have target scores for each academic year?

·Is any proficiency test required each year (or each semester)?

·Are freshmen required to take an English evaluation before classes begin (e.g., TOEIC? CEFR?)

Outside the Class Curriculum Questions

·What out-of-class English learning is available, and how effective is it in achieving competence? (e.g. English village, International Language Center, online courses, etc.)

·What steps are taken to increase student motivation (such as scholarships, etc.)?

·What associations are in place between overseas training and home university English learning programs?

·What kind of support do students need to study outside of the curriculum?

[3] Blackboard is an online teaching, learning, knowledge sharing system designed for educational institutions which was founded in 1997 in the USA. It can be used for both on- and off-line learning.

[4] Source University B's Educational Technology Center (July 28, 2020) Facebook post.

Works Cited

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