

**AN EXPLORATION OF LANGUAGE BARRIERS AMONG INTERNET USERS:
A CASE STUDY OF THE FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS AT
SRINAKARINWIROT UNIVERSITY**

**A MASTER'S PROJECT
BY
WANNAPA THAMMASANGWAN**

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts degree in Business English for International communication
at Srinakharinwirot University

December 2003

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**AN ABSTRACT
OF
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Advisor : Asst. Prof. Dr. Amporn Srisermbhok.

Internet technology has extended opportunities in business and learning. However, Thai students came across barriers that prevented them from taking advantage of such technology. Objectives of this study were to explore Internet users' behaviors, investigate language barriers among them, and find practical solutions to problems. One hundred and fifty fourth year students were asked to response to a four-part-questionnaire, which included general information, Internet usage behaviors, technical and language barriers, and tests of English. Results indicated that the students in this study did not make use of the Internet adequately for their education because they used Internet mostly for recreation. Grammar and vocabulary were areas of difficulty students encountered.

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ของ

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เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
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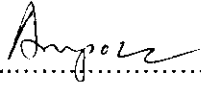
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แม้อินเตอร์เน็ตมีส่วนช่วยขยายโอกาสในการศึกษาและการทำธุรกิจ แต่ยังคงพบว่านักศึกษาไทยประสบปัญหาที่ทำให้ไม่สามารถใช้ประโยชน์จากอินเตอร์เน็ตได้อย่างเต็มที่ จุดประสงค์ในการศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้คือ 1) สำรวจพฤติกรรมการใช้อินเตอร์เน็ต 2) สำรวจปัญหาทางด้านภาษาของผู้ใช้อินเตอร์เน็ต และ 3) เพื่อหาแนวทางการแก้ปัญหาที่เหมาะสม ประชากรในการศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้ประกอบด้วยนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 4 ระดับปริญญาตรีจำนวน 150 คน ประชากรให้ข้อมูลโดยการตอบแบบสอบถามซึ่งมี 4 ส่วน กล่าวคือ ข้อมูลทั่วไป พฤติกรรมการใช้อินเตอร์เน็ต ปัญหาทางภาษาและเทคนิคและแบบทดสอบภาษาอังกฤษ ผลการศึกษาพบว่านักศึกษาไม่ได้ใช้ประโยชน์จากอินเตอร์เน็ตเพื่อการศึกษาเท่าที่ควร การใช้อินเตอร์เน็ตของนักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่เพื่อความบันเทิง การศึกษาพบว่าภาษาอังกฤษเป็นปัญหาสำหรับผู้ใช้อินเตอร์เน็ต ลักษณะทางภาษาที่เป็นปัญหาคือไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษ และคำศัพท์

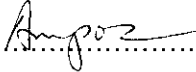
The Master's Project Advisor, Chair of Business English for International Communication Program and Oral Defense Committee have approved this Master's Project as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakharinwirot University.

Project Advisor



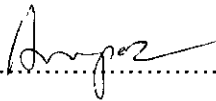
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Chair of Business English for International Communication Program



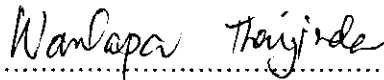
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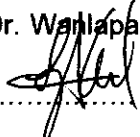
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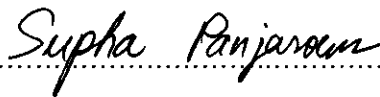
Committee



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Committee

This Master's Project has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakharinwirot University.



..... Dean of the Faculty of Humanities

(Associate Professor Supha Parnjaroen)

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

The second half of the 20th century has witnessed a technological revolution in telecommunication. Communication and transportation developments have led to apparent shrinking of the contemporary world of the global community (Samovar; & Porter. 1985; Barnlund. 1975. *Intercultural Communication*: 3). Barnlund pointed out the ramifications of the global village in terms of the forms and kinds of interactions that necessarily accompany such a new community of people. There has been the emergence of the Internet as a new form of communication (Crystal. 2001). NECTEC (2001) viewed the Internet phenomenon and the turn to the year 2000 as a dramatic change for nations. Some scholars even compared it to the second industrial revolution that facilitated and upgraded the quality of human life.

Communication beyond the frontier of the Internet has been increased in importance in almost every aspect of our daily lives including communication, entertainment, business, and education. During the last ten years, we have seen an amazing growth in the number of resources and activities, events and courses available online. This growth is not only likely to continue but to accelerate as major telecommunications, business, leisure and institutions join forces (Lockwood. 2002: 6-7). It is claimed that the Internet will lead us to a new era of human communications, and revolutionize the way we communicate. It is undeniable that the Internet is the largest and the most powerful network since this is a period where modern technologies make the world smaller and vast distance is no longer a

barrier to communication. The Internet allows efficient communication among millions of geographically diverse people who do share common interests. It is obvious that all business sectors, especially global businesses, make use of Information Technology (IT). IT is necessary because it is fast, informative, and professional. Increasingly, businesses have begun to use the Internet for outreach. A business without a web site is handicapped in today's climate.

In order to fully exploit the Internet, English is a must because it is the most dominant language. The Internet will inspire more people to learn English and thus solidify the role of English as a global language. Nevertheless, Language barriers prevent people from familiarizing themselves with the benefits of the Internet-based information resources, which invariably require an ability to understand International languages, especially English. Language barriers still prevent non-native English speaking users from widely accessing foreign new sources and interacting with foreign Internet users. The vast majority of web sites are available only in English. A staggering 80% of all sites and traffic uses the English language (Nunberg. 2001: online). This tends to exclude a large number of potential visitors who cannot read or understand English. In conclusion, Internet users are supposed to have basic English skills such as vocabulary and grammar in order to read, interpret, and understand English content on the Internet.

Rapid technological changes and increasing dependence on technology for our daily lives have resulted in the computer becoming as a necessary tool for one to be an effective and useful individual in today's society. Most jobs require both English and basic computer literacy skills in addition to specialized ability. Even though most Thai students have learned English from primary school to university, many still have problems with English

competency. Prapart (1975: 11) stated that so far as English language teaching is concerned, it has been taught as a subject in Thai schools since 1895. Today, English is the first foreign language; it is compulsory from grade five upwards. According to UNESCO, only one percent of Thais surveyed have the level of reading proficiency that enables them to manage and understand complex texts- to critically evaluate and infer relevant information (BK magazine. 2003: 3). Consequently, educational institutions in the millennium age must implement necessary English and IT skills in learning behaviors to suit market needs because today's college students are tomorrow's knowledge workers (Stratigos. 2001: 65-67). As in the rest of the world, Thailand is also facing the twin challenges of rapid technological changes and the effects of globalization. There is a need to produce workers who are highly technology literate, multi-skilled and instilled with a concept of life-long learning.

All of the reasons mentioned earlier have inspired me, as an English major student to explore English barriers among Internet users. I am interested in exploring how much knowledge users really gain through the use of the Internet and what kind of problems they encounter. This study explores barriers to Internet use, both IT and language barriers. However, the focus is on English language barriers of the fourth year undergraduate students at Srinakarinwirot University because they have studied English for many years and thus are assumed to be able to understand English well. This study is beneficial in discovering English weaknesses of these students in order to eradicate those flaws, improve and supplement the skills they have to enhance their English competency.

Research questions

1. What are the language barriers among Internet users?
2. How to overcome such barriers?

Objectives of the study

1. To explore Internet users' behaviors
2. To investigate language barriers among Internet users
3. To recommend practical solutions to the problems

Scope of the study

The scope of this study covered Internet users' behaviors and English language barriers among Internet users. The test instrument employed in this study was a questionnaire. The populations tested were one hundred and fifty fourth year students at Srinakarinwirot University. The data interpretation and analysis was based on the responses from the questionnaire outputs. The questionnaire was divided into four parts, which included general information, Internet usage behaviors, technical and language barriers, and tests of English. This study was comprised of five chapters. Chapter I dealt with background information and an introduction. Chapter II reviewed the literature. Chapter III focused on research methodology. Chapter IV analyzed data and discussed the findings. Chapter V included a summary, conclusion, and recommendations for further studies.

Research methodology

1. Review related literature and previous research, including printed materials such as magazines, journals, newspapers, and electronic data.

2. Design questionnaire.

3. Observe Internet users' behaviors.

4. Distribute the questionnaire to fourth year undergraduate students at Srinakarinwirot University to get specific data and information.

5. Interview the students.

6. Consult with knowledgeable people.

7. Analyze the collected data and discuss the results.

8. Make the conclusion of the study.

9. Suggest related areas for further studies.

Expected outcomes

It is anticipated that the information from this study may be practical in all of the following aspects:

1. The Internet users understand English language used on the Internet.

2. The faculty concerned should implement and supplement courses to enhance students' English language skills.

3. Self-learning through the Internet will be implemented.

4. Researchers in related areas use this study as a reference.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

In order to study language barriers among Internet users the researcher studied related literature including:

1. The significance of the Internet and Information Technology
2. Internet activities and functions
3. Language Barriers
4. Related research and studies

1. Significance of the Internet and Information Technology

The Internet and Information Technology are significant in our daily lives due to the changing world. The following literature review studied the significance of the Internet and Information Technology in the following aspects; development, business, education, and communication.

1.1 Development

The first International Parliamentarians Association for International Technology viewed the IT revolution as a significant event in history since it is a vital mechanism to develop knowledge in each society. IT is not only a growth determinative in economy and education, but also in public health and the environment because information exchange is necessary to build understanding among different cultures (E-economy. 2000: 26-27).

A necessity to learn computer network is due to the worldwide use in both organizations and households. Computers are likely to be linked together in many forms depending on the needs of users and the nature of the task, budget, speed in connection, and other factors. The Internet has been recognized as a channel that could overcome geographical problems and serve as a possible link for development. Digital technology has been widely acknowledged as a highly beneficial tool of information allowing many development projects to be achieved. The examples are education, information, communications, culture, economy, the environment, health, human development, and trade. The Internet technology revolution has increased interactions of peoples, governments and businesses without limitation. It also provides a tremendous effect on traditional lifestyles as well as great opportunities for development (Boonsiripunth. 2001: 196-213)

1.2 Business

Funatsu & Sallis (1999: online) commented that the World Wide Web has grown rapidly over the last few years. A wealth of information covering virtually every subject is available for an individual to access and contribute to. Companies and organizations are making use of the web's global influence to buy and sell products and provide information in a way never before possible. With the aid of E-commerce, Intranets, and online training courses, geographical and cultural barriers are dissolving. A similar viewpoint showed that the websites act as a 24 hour, 365 day a year "shop window". It provides information, brochures, price lists, shopping, messaging, quotations, search facilities, company histories, and reporting. Anything that a company produces as paperwork can be put on a web site; brochures, pictures, availability of stock and diary dates. With a web site a company can

decide the image on the Internet. Moreover, organizations can decide which markets they wish to attack. A single web site can be viewed all over the world because foreign language versions of web sites can be produced.

1.3 Knowledge and Education

Barzar & Boalch (online) said that in a majority of cases in both industrialized and developing countries, research institutes introduce the Internet. For example, in the USA, the Internet was established by the National Science Foundation. Even in cases where the Internet connection is introduced to a country by universities, the first application is still for research purposes. The next area of application of the Internet in a country is usually educational organizations, specifically, universities. Many within developing countries see the Internet as an opportunity to gain access to knowledge and services from around the world in a way that would have been unimaginable previously. (What is the Role of the Internet and Communications Technology in Globalisation?: online). Littlejohn and Scalter (1998: online) revealed that the University of Strathclyde recently has implemented an initiative to promote good practice in the development and use of new learning technologies to enhance teaching and learning. The educational tools developed through the Internet can be incorporated into a traditional type of international educational program. Funatsu & Sallis (1999: online). Ishikawa viewed that education via the Internet offers wider opportunities and resources for learners.

1.4 Communication

Barnlund (Samovar & Porter. 1985; Barnlund. 1975. *Intercultural Communication*: 5) pointed out that the technological feasibility of a global village is no longer in doubt.

Only the precise date of its attainment is uncertain. The means already exist: in telecommunication systems linking the world by satellite, in aircraft capable of moving people faster than a speed of sound. In computers, which can disgorge facts more rapidly than men can formulate their questions. The methods for bringing people closer physically and electronically are clearly at hand. Morris and Organ (*Journal of Communication*, 1996: 39-49) stated that the computer, as a new communication technology opens a space for scholars to rethink assumptions and categories, and perhaps even to find new insights into traditional communication technology. They conceptualized the Internet as a multifaceted medium that contains many different configurations of communication. Barzar & Boalch (online) declared that rapid development of the Internet has facilitated access to information as well as communication between individuals and groups both within and outside the country at relatively low costs. Ishikawha (*Intercultural Aspects of CMC*: online) said that one of the major technological advances that helps communication among people in various locations and from diverse cultural backgrounds is the Internet. Barak (1999: online) pointed out that computer-mediated communication, using utilities such as electronic mail, open virtual discussion groups (e.g., newsgroups), forums (which usually refers to specified or restricted group), real-time text correspondence (e.g., chat rooms), voice exchange (telephony), and face to face video communications (videoconferencing), has now become a routine and normal part of everyday operations for business, education, and pleasure alike. The evolution and success of multimedia-aided commerce, telemedicine, distance education, newspapers, and play, all using rapidly developing communication technologies that reach out to many individuals, families, and communities, have created an ever-growing, self-reinforcing "magic circle".

2. Internet Activities and Functions

The functions of the Internet can be divided into five categories as follows:

- Communication - E-mail, mailing lists, Web boards, and video on demand
- Business - E-commerce, advertising, market research, business transactions
- Knowledge - E-learning, research, online teaching-learning
- Recreation - Downloading games and music, shopping, games, chatting/ICQ
- Information - News/Timely report, Newsgroups, gopher, World Wide Web

Internet activities and functions according to NECTEC (2002) are e-mail, chat/ICQ, web boards, news/timely reports, information search, shopping, online games, downloaded games, downloaded software, and downloaded music. Functions of the Internet according to 'Functions of the Internet' (online) are accessing remote computing resources, accessing remote information resources, group communication, information dissimulation, research, teaching, advertising, market research, business and other transactions, and audio and video on demand. 'Observer of Business and politics' (2000) reported the same fact that e-mail is the most popular and used feature of the Internet. Other findings revealed that while consumers in Asian region used the Net to collect or receive information (55%) reading the news (53%) or just leisurely surfing of the web (51%), Indians mostly used the Net for getting news (64%) and research for collecting Information (68%). Ishikawa (online) indicated several types of communication practices on the Internet, which are similar to other researchers (e.g. e-mail, chat, discussion boards.) Bazar & Boalch (online) stated that the diffusion of the Internet within a country is believed to follow a pattern consisting of

four areas of application; research, education, commercial, and widespread use by individuals.

3. Language Barriers

'The Internet in South East Asia' (2001: online) showed that language is a barrier to Internet use. Languages continue to play an important role in Internet use. Since the Internet is dominated by the English language content, some countries, where English is widely spoken (such as Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines), have a strategic advantage over their neighbors. One factor that constrains the use of the Internet in developing countries is the domination of the English language on the Net. As a result, not everyone has an equal access to information available on the Internet. The language barrier is considered a problem facing the spread of the Internet in non-English speaking countries (Bazar & Boalch: online). Gandal & Shapiro (2001: online) are concerned that language is a very important factor. While a telephone can be used by anyone speaking any language, the Internet's 'multilingualism' is still limited. What is striking is the breakdown on Internet use by language and the fact that those who do not speak English tend to have a much lower level of usage. 'World Telecommunication Conference' (2002: online) reported that research found Asian web surfers preferred content in their own languages, as opposed to content in English. This is easily explained, as English literacy is not widespread. Ruvalcaba (2002: online) revealed that cultural groups are the ones that are most concerned with English only web sites. Sujan (2000: 21-23) mentioned six characteristics of English vocabulary that are problematic for Thai students. Such

characteristics are polysyms, homonyms, synonyms, parts of speech, idiomatic expressions and collocations.

4. Related Research and Studies

Chinwonno (2001) investigated Thai and English reading comprehension strategies reported by preservice teachers at different levels namely, upper and lower. One hundred and thirty one first-year learners enrolling in the Chulalongkorn University Teacher Preparation Program in Thailand were given tests in Thai and English. The tests were used to measure the learners' first and foreign language reading comprehension proficiency, as well as grouping them into lower and upper levels. The results from English test showed that the subjects had low overall mean scores (46% of the total 25 test items) The subjects in this study cannot be considered as advanced readers; instead, their reading proficiency is at the beginning to intermediate levels.

Kittisophakun (1988) studied relationships between understanding of coherence and reading comprehension ability in English of the first year undergraduate students in private universities in Bangkok. The subjects of this study were three hundreds and five first year students enrolling in English foundation in the second semester in 1980. Three sets of questionnaires were designed to test the coherence and reading comprehension ability. The findings showed that students had low scores on comprehension ability, but the scores for comprehension are higher than the scores of the understanding of the coherence. It was indicated that the coherence was not emphasized in classroom teaching. It was possible that coherence in Thai was less used and this limitation affected students' understanding.

Anusakul (2000) studied attitude and behavior of Internet use of students at Srithana Commercial Technology College Chiang Mai. The purpose of this research was to study the attitude and behavior of the Internet use of students at Srithana Commercial Technology College Chiang Mai and to compare them between genders. The sample for this study consisted of 327 students. The findings were as follows: The students' attitude toward Internet use and Internet use behaviors were at good and medium levels. In general, attitude between genders did not differ. Regarding Internet use behavior, there was overall difference. In details, it was found that male and female students differ in regard to using e-mail in place of telephone, domestic e-mail, e-mail after school hours, and educational communication with friends.

NECTEC (*Internet User Profile of Thailand, 2002*) conducted a survey of Internet user profiles of Thailand 2002. It was reported the digital divide between urban and rural areas was evident. Internet use in Bangkok and its suburbs was decreasing from the year 2001, (50.2% from 52.2% in Bangkok, and 62.5% from 66% in suburbs.) The most popular activities online were e-mail (37.9%) and information searching (33.8%). The age group below 20 was reported using the Internet for recreation such as games and chat, while the age group above 30 used the Internet to search for information and follow news. The three most perceived problems were slow connections (62.5%), junk mail (38.5%), and network reliability (28.1%).

Stratigos (2001: 65-67) discussed research conducted by her and other researchers on 'Functional Group of Users' (FGUs). They wondered if they could find some early trends in information delivery and usage preferences sprouting the squad. What happened on campus is an important early indicator of future knowledgeable workers will use information.

The findings found that the students used the Internet heavily for recreation and work respectively.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

1. Subjects

A hundred and fifty fourth year students at Srinakarinwirot University were the population of this study.

2. Material

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was designed, implemented, and revised to cover every aspect needed for this study. It was divided into four parts as follows:

Part I composed of general information

Part II contained questions concerning Internet users' behaviors

Part III questioned technical and language barriers

Part IV tested and examined language barriers.

In order to bring the greatest benefit to fourth year students, the test instruments were selected from many sources to prepare students for examinations such as TOEFL, TOEIC, and Master's degree entrance exam. The test instruments were extracted from www.englishclub.com, Compact English by Somporn Lertkum, and English Handbook of the Opinion institution to examine students' English competency and areas of difficulty they encountered.

3. Procedures

3.1 Accumulation of data

The data were collected in the first semester, during July - August, 2003. The researcher observed the Internet users' behavior in the self-access room located on the second floor of the Faculty of Humanities, central library, and computer center. Then, the questionnaire was distributed to the fourth year students. The students were interviewed with some questions about English barriers.

3.2 Data analysis

The completed and valid questionnaire was analyzed to study Internet users' behaviors, and language barriers focusing on:

3.2.1. Internet users' behaviors

The responses in part II of the questionnaire were explored in order to find out the Internet users' usage behaviors.

3.2.2. Language barriers among Internet users

To analyze language barriers, the answers from parts III and IV of the questionnaires were investigated.

3.3 Data interpretation

To interpret the data correctly and get more intensive and extensive viewpoints, the researcher consulted with knowledgeable professors throughout the study.

The findings of the analysis were presented in percentage and tabular forms. Then, the results were discussed and summarized with some suggestions and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The results are presented in tables with some explanation.

Findings

Table 1. Gender

Gender	0-22		23-45	
	No.	%	No.	%
Male	41	41.84	10	19.23
Female	57	58.16	42	80.77
Total	98	100.00	52	100.00

One hundred and fifty students were divided into two groups depending on their scores of the tests. The students who got the scores from 0-22 were classified in a lower level and the students who got the scores from 23-45 were in a higher level. There were 41 males and 57 females in the lower level and 10 males and 42 females in upper level. The numbers of students in the lower level were nearly two times more than the numbers in the upper level.

Table 2. Computer ownership

Computer ownership	0-22		23-45	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	92	93.88	50	96.15
No	6	6.12	2	3.85
Total	98	100.00	52	100.00

Approximately 94 per cent of the lower level and 96 per cent of the upper level were reported to have computers at home. Only 6 percent of the lower level and 3.85 per cent of the upper level did not have computers at home. It showed that most of the students had opportunity to use the computer technology at home.

Table 3. Year on the Internet

Year on the Internet	0-22		23-45	
	No.	%	No	%
<1	0	0	1	1.92
1-3 years	35	35.71	19	36.54
3-5 years	36	36.73	24	46.15
>5	27	27.55	8	15.38
Total	98	100.00	52	100.00

Approximately 36 per cent of the lower level used Internet for one year to three years, 37 per cent used Internet for three years to five years, and 28 per cent used the

Internet for more than five years. While 2 per cent of the upper level used Internet less than one year, none of the lower level was reported to use Internet less than one year. 37 per cent of the upper level used Internet for one to three years, 46 per cent used Internet for three years to five years, and 15 per cent used Internet for more than five years.

Table 4. Point of access

Point of access	0-22		23-45	
	No.	%	No	%
Home	87	39.91	48	40.68
Computer Center	42	19.27	26	22.03
Self-Access	40	18.35	21	17.80
Library	41	18.81	20	16.95
Others	8	3.67	3	2.54
Total	218	100.00	118	100.00

Both upper and lower level used Internet most frequently at home, (for 40.68%, and 39.91%) Both groups were also reported to use Internet at the Computer Center, (22.03% for the upper level and 19.27% for the lower level) 18.81 per cent of the lower level used Internet at the library and 18.35 per cent used at the Self-Access. 17.80 per cent of the upper level used Internet at the Self-Access, and 16.95 per cent used at the library. Other places both groups used Internet were the project room and Internet café, (2.54 % for the upper level and 3.67% for the lower level)

Table 5. Frequent activities

Frequent activities	0-22		23-45	
	No.	%	No.	%
E-mail	69	70.41	42	80.77
Information Search	10	10.20	4	7.69
Chat	8	8.16	4	7.69
News	3	3.06	0	0.00
Web Board	3	3.06	1	1.92
Games	1	1.02	0	0.00
Download Software	2	2.04	0	0.00
Download Music	2	2.04	1	1.92
Total	98	100.00	52	100.00

The three most frequent activities both groups had when they used Internet were E-mail, information search, and chat, (80.77%, 7.69%, and 7.69% for the upper level and 70.41%, 10.20%, and 8.16% for the lower level) 3.06 per cent of the lower level used Internet for reading news and 3.06 % of them used Internet for web board. 2.04 per cent of them used Internet to download software and 2.04 % used Internet to download music. Finally, 1.02 per cent was reported to play online games. 1.92 per cent of the upper level used Internet for web board and 1.92 per cent of them used Internet to download music. None of them used Internet to read news, play games, or download software.

Table 6. Frequency of searching Information

Frequency	0-22		23-45	
	No.	%	No.	%
Always	9	9.18	10	19.23
Often	50	51.02	18	34.62
Sometimes	39	39.80	24	46.15
Never	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	98	100.00	52	100.00

9.18 per cent of the lower level always, 51.02 per cent often, and 39.80 per cent sometimes searched for information through the Internet. 19.23 per cent of the upper group always, 34.62 per cent often, and 46.15 per cent sometimes searched for information through the Internet.

Table 7. Types of information searched

Types	0-22		23-45	
	No.	%	No.	%
Entertainment	52	53.06	31	59.62
Education	25	25.51	14	26.92
Sports	10	10.20	2	3.85
News	8	8.16	2	3.85
Lifestyles	3	3.06	2	3.85
Others	0	0.00	1	1.92
Total	98	100.00	52	100.00

Types of Information both groups searched for most were entertainment (59.62% for the upper level and 53.06% for the lower level), education (26.92%, and 25.51%), sports (3.85%, and 10.20%), news (3.85% and 8.16%), lifestyles (3.85% and 3.06%), and arts (1.92% for the upper level)

Table 8. Technical problems

Technical problems	0-22		23-45	
	No.	%	No.	%
Slow connection	40	40.82	20	38.46
Lack Skills	24	24.49	18	34.62
Cannot connect	21	21.43	7	13.46
High Cost	6	6.12	3	5.77
No Computer with Internet	5	5.10	2	3.85
Security and privacy	2	2.04	2	3.85
Total	98	100.00	52	100.00

The most serious technical barrier for both groups was slow connection (38.46% for the upper level and 40.82% for the lower level) Lacking computer and Internet skills was the second most serious barrier (34.62% for the upper level and 24.49% for the lower level) 13.46 per cent of the upper level and 21.43 per cent of the lower level could not connect to the Internet. 5.77 per cent of the upper level and 6.12 per cent of the lower level had a problem with high cost of service. 3.85 percent of the upper level and 5.10 per cent of the

lower level had no computer with Internet. 3.85 per cent of the upper level and 2.04 per cent of the lower level concerned about security and privacy.

Table 9. English proficiency

Proficiency	0-22		23-45	
	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	0	0	0	0
Good	35	35.71	31	59.62
Fair	59	60.20	21	40.38
Limited	4	4.08	0	0
Total	98	100	52	100

None of the both groups rated themselves to have excellent English skills. 35.71 per cent of the lower level had good English skills, 60.20 per cent had fair English skills, and 4.08per cent had limited English skills. 59.62 per cent of the upper level had good English skills, 40.38 per cent has fair English skills, and none of them has limited skills.

Table 10. Problem with English

Problem with English	0-22		23-45	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	86	87.76	43	82.69
No	12	12.24	9	17.31
Total	98	100.00	52	100.00

87.76 per cent of the lower level had problems with English content on the Internet, and 12.24 per cent of them did not have. 82.69 per cent of the upper level had problems with English content on the Internet, and 17.31 per cent did not have.

Discussion

The findings from the study revealed a shocking fact about Thai students learning English as a second language. They have learnt English from primary school to university, but they still could not overcome English barriers and use English language efficiently. Undergraduate students who were Non-English majors had to take English courses for 6 credits, while English majors had to take English courses not less than 72 credits. Thai students were unsuccessful in learning English might result from an inappropriate curriculum or teaching and learning methods. From the findings, more than half of the participants were classified into lower level since their score was less than twenty-three points, which was half of the overall score. Even though most of them rated their English as good, they still admitted to having some problems with English content on the Internet. The subjects in this study used Internet for recreation and work respectively, which was true according to Stratigos (2001: 65-67) They often searched for Information on the Internet, but the type of Information they searched for most was entertainment. *'The Internet User Profile of Thailand 2002'* conducted by NECTEC reported that the most popular activities online were e-mail (37.9%) and information searching (33.8%) It can be concluded that the online activities, length of time and usage frequency, were not factors that benefited students' English proficiency. In other words, students in upper and lower levels had similar

online activities, length of time and usage frequency, but different English scores. In addition, students in this study did not make adequate use of the Internet for their education.

Most of the subjects had computers at home and they mostly had an access to the Internet at home. Other points of access to the Internet were at the educational institute. It showed that educational institute was another major place where students often use technology. Three most serious technical problems found in this study were slow connection, lacking of computer and Internet skills, and cannot connect to the Internet. These problems were slightly different in order from the findings of NECTEC. Three most perceived problems found from the study of NECTEC were slow connection, junk mail, and network reliability.

English barriers found in this study were grammar and vocabulary. Points of grammar, which were often a problem for learners, were:

1. Conditional sentence

i.e. **If** Muriel had come, she **would** have won.

2. The modal

i.e. He **may** go to work.

Your eye, for example, **might** tell your brain that a tree is in your path.

3. Relative clause

i.e. A music box with Snoopy dancing on its lid, **which** tinkles a tune...

4. Parts of speech

4.1 Verb

i.e. It **enables** you to learn, remember, and imagine.

4.1.1 Confusing verbs such as **to lay** and **to lie**

4.1.2 The meaning of the different verb forms

i.e. Madame Triaiviey **has lived** nearly 115 years

4.1.3 Passive form

i.e. Work **is divided** among three classes

4.2. Adjective

i.e. The thundering mass leapt upon the **snow-covered** houses.

i.e. They look rather like very **flat brown leathery** kites.

4.3. Adverb

i.e. She can **hardly** see it.

i.e. **Slowly** it began to shift.

5. 'Used to'

i.e. She **used to** smoke cigarette.

6. 'Either'

i.e. **Either** teacher knows the answer.

7. 'Would rather'

i.e. I'd **rather** be a millionaire.

These characteristics of grammar hindered students to interpret and understand reading materials.

Nist and Simpson (1993: 21) put a new word we encountered when we read or listened into one of these categories: (a) we have never seen this word, (b) we probably have seen this word, but have no idea what it means, (c) we can place the word in a broad classification, but still do not know exactly what it means, and (d) you know the word accurately. Sujan (2000: 21-23) mentioned six characteristics of English vocabulary that caused Thai students difficulties in learning English. Such characteristics included (1) polysyms, (2) homonyms, (3) synonyms, (4) parts of speech, (5) Idiomatic expressions, and (6) collocations. After the students filled up the questionnaire, the answers of the tests were explained to them, and they were welcomed to ask any question about the tests. The researcher interviewed them about the difficulties they encountered while they did the tests. There were three main problems, which fall into some of Nist and Simpson's, and Sujan's categories, found in the vocabulary test. First, students have never seen the vocabulary before so they did not have any clue about the meaning. Second, they have seen the vocabulary before but did not know their exact meaning. Third, they knew the word accurately but they could not put it in the context due to characteristic of synonyms. Therefore, they could not make a decision which word should fit in the context because all choice had the same meaning in Thai language. This issue was a serious problem for non-English speakers since they could not differentiate the subtle meaning of words. From the interview with the subjects they were taught to memorize definition of vocabulary alone so they did not know their grammatical features. Consequently, it can be concluded that teaching and learning vocabulary in Thailand was not successful because the students were taught word isolated from actual reading.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Summary

In the digital era, computers and IT are necessary since they are used to expand opportunities in business and learning. However, English has dominated most of the contents on the Internet and thus limit those who are non-English speakers to have an access to a pool of data available online. Moreover, English is one barrier that prevents people from fully taking advantage of new technologies. Consequently, the objectives of this study were to:

1. To explore Internet users' behaviors
2. To investigate language barriers among Internet users
3. To recommend practical solutions to the problems

One hundred and fifty fourth year students at Srinakarinwirot University were selected randomly to be subjects of the study. They were asked to respond to a four-part-questionnaire that was comprised of (1) general information, (2) Internet usage behaviors, (3) technical and English barriers, and (4) the tests of English.

The findings showed that the most frequent activity they did online was e-mail and the type of information they searched for most was entertainment. The two most obvious technical barriers found were slow connection and the lack of computer and IT skills. The characteristics of English that often caused difficulties for students in this study were grammar and vocabulary.

Suggestions

1. It can be concluded that the Internet users in this study did not make a good use of the Internet for their education, as the finding showed that they accessed the Internet most of the time for personal communication and entertainment. Teachers played an important role to increase the use of Internet for education. Giving an assignment that encouraged students to search for more knowledge through the Internet.

2. It is found that the students in this study often used Internet at home and educational institute. However, one of the most critical problems that prevented students to use Internet was the lack of computer and Internet skills. Educational Institutions could solve this problems by providing professional technicians and special courses to help students learn to use and understand basic features of new technologies. There was a good example of how to implement computer and IT skills on students.

In the case of Ashley Robinson and Elizabeth Nelson (*Online Magazine*, July-August, 2002: 29-32) they used the Tek.Xam test devised by the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges to provide assessment of course-curricular problem solving and technology skills. It is a means of accrediting those skills of students of all disciplines for future employers. Students in majors that do not necessarily have the opportunity to demonstrate computer-based skills became widely accepted by employers.

These tools could be used to demonstrate basic proficiency in the following areas: General Computing Concepts, Knowledge and Use of the Internet, Word Processing, Spreadsheets, Presentations, Databases, and Web Authorship. There was a separate 35-minute module for each of the areas of technology literacy. The modules might be

combined according to the needs of the Institution, to create a single test event. Immediately after students completed an assessment, they would receive a report that identified their results including their strengths and weaknesses. This report could serve as a tool to focus on areas in need of improvement.

The curriculum could apply Schweizer's lessons. Schweizer (1998:online) wrote a textbook for his own students when he was teaching English in Japan: *Internet Basics for ESL Students, A14-Lesson Introduction to Using Computers and the Internet for Student of English as a Second Language*. The lessons were:

1. Basic Computer Terms and the History of the Internet: Basics of the web browser
2. Hardware and Internet Software: ESL home pages
3. Computer Problems and Peripherals: Boolean search methods/search engines
4. Operating Systems- Window 95: Introduction to UNIX
5. Using Email (1): Send email to the teacher, cc and bcc friends
6. Multimedia: Search the Internet and identify 6 file types
7. Internet Service Providers: View 4 Okayama ISP's home pages
8. Using Email (2): Join a mailing list (Read the ML replies)
9. Communication: Email and Internet search
10. The Net: Write a basic web page
11. Mailing Lists: Find a mailing list
12. Ethics and Privacy: Examine cookie files and visit commercial sites
13. Newsgroups: Find newsgroup archives
14. Business on the Internet: Take a quiz and show the class your favorite Internet

site

3. Students in this study were not beginners but not yet expert in English. In other words, students still could not master some grammatical topics. Points that were often a problem for learners, such as parts of speech, conditional sentence, relative clause, and etc, should be given special attention. Students should be taught to use a grammar book written by an acceptable and a well-known grammarian or institution. A good grammar book should provide explanations, examples and a number of exercises. The grammar book was easy to access because it was not intended as a material that student should work through from the beginning to end. Students should use the book to get help with any point of grammar, which they needed to learn more about, or which gave them problems.

4. Vocabulary was also a barrier for the students. An extensive knowledge of vocabulary would improve reading comprehension. A large vocabulary would increase effectiveness in reading, writing and speaking. However, students could not improve their vocabulary if they only memorized definitions to new words. Moreover, words should now be taught isolated from context because word alone has little or no meaning. Thus, in addition to learning new words students could also learn information about grammatical features.

5. Non-English major undergraduate students took English courses for 6 credits or one English course for each semester in the first year, which was not enough for them to continue practicing their English skills. Therefore, the authorities concerned should put at least one English course in each semester for those who did not take English as their major or minor subject to practice and improve their English skills.

Recommendations for further studies

1. This study was conducted with only one hundred and fifty fourth year students. Therefore, further studies should be expanded to include students from other levels of study, and studies should be conducted with a larger number of students.

2. There should be a comparative study of such elements as genders, ages, or majors of the subjects in order to explore similarity and differences of their English ability and areas of difficulty.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

The questionnaire below is designed to explore Internet users' behaviors and investigate language barriers among them. The population would be one hundred and fifty fourth year students at Srinakarinwirot University. Your cooperation would be appreciated and your responses would be kept confidential.

The questionnaire was divided into IV parts as follows:

Part I: General information (2 items)

Part II: Internet usage behaviors (6 items)

Part III: Barriers (3 items)

A. Technical barriers (1item)

B. English language barriers (2 items)

Part IV: The test of English

A. Reading comprehension (10 items)

B. Vocabulary test (10 items)

C. Cloze test (5 passages: 25 items)

Part I. General Information

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Computer Ownership: Yes No

Part II. Internet Usage Behaviors

These questions will explore your Internet usage behaviors. Please tick the most accurate answer.

1. How many years have you been using the Internet?

Less than 1 year 1 year - 3 years 3 – 5 years More than 5 years

2. Where do you usually access to the Internet? (can tick more than one)

Home Self-access Computer Center Library Others (Please identify).....

3. Please tick the most frequent Internet activity. (Tick only one)

E-mail Information search News, timely report Web board

Shopping Chat Games Down load software

Download music Download games Others (Please specify).....

4. Have you ever searched information through the Internet?

Yes No (If no, please go directly to part III)

5. How often do you use the Internet to search information for your study?

- Always Often Sometimes Never

6. What kind of information do you search for most? (Please tick only one choice)

- Education Entertainment Sports Business
- News Job classified Lifestyles Others.....

Part III. Barriers

A. Technical Barriers

1. Please rank 3 most serious problems with number 1-3

- Lack of computer and Internet skills Cannot connect Slow connection
- High cost of services No computer with Internet Security and privacy
- No technical support assistant Others.....

B. English language barriers

1. English Proficiency: Excellent Good Fair Limited

2. Do you have any problems with English on the Internet? Yes No

Part IV: The Test of English

A. Reading Comprehension

This test will examine your response to the statements provided to check your comprehension. In order to know how much time you spend on the test please write down the starting and finishing time in every part. The time you spend does not affect the test.

Please cross (X) the choice that has the closest meaning to the original reading comprehension.

1. He hopes to go home, but he may go to work.

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. He'll be at home before the office. | b. It is possible that he will go to work. |
| c. He's allowed to go to work. | d. He always goes home after work. |

2. She used to smoke cigarettes.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| a. She is used to cigarettes. | b. She smoked before, but she doesn't now. |
| c. She usually smokes cigarettes. | d. She used two cigarettes. |

3. Mirana remembered to phone the doctor.

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. She remembered phoning the doctor. | b. Mirana forgot to remember to phone. |
| c. She didn't forget to phone the doctor. | d. She remembered that she phoned her. |

4. Madame Traiviey has lived nearly 115 years.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| a. She was very old. | b. She is very old. |
| c. Madame Traiviey has many more years. | d. She died when she was nearly 115. |

5. She can hardly see it.

- a. She sees very hard. b. She is hard with it.
c. It is hard to see her. d. She cannot see it very well.

6. Yeuk Yee had her house painted white yesterday.

- a. She had to paint her house white yesterday. b. Her house was not blue last week.
c. They painted her house white for her yesterday. d. She painted her house yesterday.

7. Either teacher knows the answer.

- a. No teachers know the answer. b. Both teachers know the answer.
c. Any teacher can answer. d. All the teachers know the answer.

8. I'd rather be a millionaire.

- a. I've been a millionaire. b. I'd better be a millionaire.
c. You have more millions than me. d. I'd prefer to be a millionaire.

9. You don't have to do this test.

- a. You can choose not to do this test. b. You have no desire to do it.
c. You can't do this test. d. You mustn't do it.

10. If Muriel had come, she would have won.

- a. If she hadn't won, she'd have come. b. Muriel didn't win because she didn't come.
c. When Muriel came she always won. d. She didn't come, but she won anyway.

(Extracted from www.englishclub.com 7/30/2003)

B. Vocabulary Test

Please cross (X) the correct answer

1. The driver was.....by the bright headlights of the approaching car

- a. dribbled b. drizzled c. dazzled d. dabbled

2. The train, slowing down at the sharp curb, was in the utmost danger.

- a. greatest b. courageous c. gross d. sudden

3. He spent half of his money and then gambled and lost the other half so that he was soon.....

- a. penniless b. pensionless c. pennyless d. without pension

4. My friend had not put enough stamps on his letter to me, so I had to pay..... postage

- a. excess b. addition c. increased d. plus

5. The boy had been sent into the village on a (an)....which would take him about half an hour

- a. errand b. error c. earring d. duty

6. It is customary for a man to give up his seat to a lady.

- a. polite b. habitual c. usual d. traditional

7. Your thesis is absolutely perfect; it is done.

- a. favorably b. formidably c. fatally d. flawlessly

8. The scene was..... described; everyone got a clear picture of it.

- a. vitally b. vividly c. vaguely d. visually

9. She has nothing to do now; she just sits.....

- a. righteously b. slyly c. busily d. idly

10. Can you discriminate between good and bad books?

- a. distinguish b. compare c. explain d. separate

(Extracted from Compact English: Somporn Lertkum)

C. Cloze Test

Please cross (X) the correct answer.

Passage I.

Your brain controls almost everything you do. It is a source of your thoughts. It...1....., remember, and imagine. It also helps regulate everything that happens in your body.

Part of your brain is like a telephone switchboard. Messages are sent to your brain from every part of your body, and other messages go from your brain to the rest of your

body. Your eye, for example,.....2..... your brain that a tree is in your path. Your brain sends a message to your legs and feet, so you walk around the tree.

Another part of your brain is like a computer. Information comes in to this part of the brain through.....3....., and your brain stores it away.....4..... you need that information again. When you learned that $2+2=4$, your brain finds this.....5..... and now you can call on your brain to give you this bit of information again and again.

1. a. is able to learn b. enables you to learn
 c. is enable you to learn d. enables you to learning
2. a. might tell b. might say c. might talk to d. might announce to
3. a. one of senses b. one of your senses c. one sense d. one of your sense
4. a. although b. as though c. until d. until then
5. a. truth b. reality c. fact d. sincerity

Passage II.

Many books have been written about or around Snoopy. The gospel According to Peanuts, for instance, has sold a remarkable two millionplus copies, lining the pockets of.....1..... author, Methodist minister Robert Short, with.....2..... peanuts. Snoopy has started in a score of television "specials," in a hit Broadway musical, and a full—length film. Now he has taken to the London stage in a3....., Snoopy.

At One Snoopy Place hit spirit is omnipresent. He and.....4..... the Peanuts. Gang—stuffed, painted, framed, shaped into beanbags and pillows—stare from every nook. In the cozy outer office, a smiling secretary shows a new peanuts toy, a music box with Snoopy dancing on its lid,5..... tinkles a tune from a Beethoven concerto.

1. a. its b. their c. his d. our
2. a. anything more b. something more
c. anything more than d. something more than
3. a. musical new play b. new musical play
c. music new play d. new music play
4. a. the rest of b. the remain c. rest of d. remaining of
5. a. which b. which he c. which it d. who

Passage III.

Honeybees are like people, they are.....1.....animals that live and work together in groups, or colonies. Life inside a honeybee hive is nearly.....2.....life in a city. In each colony, work.....3.....among three classes—a queen, workers, and drones. The queen is larger than the other bees. Her job is.....4.....eggs. The drones are males whose only task is to mate with queen.....5.....they have done their duty, they die.

1. a. socially b. social c. society d. sociable

2. a. as complicating as b. as complicated as
 c. so complicated as d. such complicated as
3. a. divided b. is divided c. are divided d. be divided
4. a. to lay b. to lie c. to be laid d. to be lay
5. a. Soon after b. Sooner c. No sooner d. Sooner or later

Passage IV.

And then it happened. In the middle of the night, Just below the top of the Kuhelihorn a great mass of snow broke loose with a crash like an explosion.....1.....it began to shift, it seems to hesitate, but only.....2..... A few seconds later the avalanche hurtle own, its path growing wider and.....3....., the force of the air driven before it blasting the village even before the thundering mass leapt upon the4.....houses and sheds like a wild beast. It lasted.....5..... time than anyone could have believed.

1. a. Slow b. Slowly c. With slowness d. With slowly
2. a. a little b. a few c. for a little d. for a few
3. a. wider b. wider than c. widest d. the widest
4. a. snow-covering b. covering-snow c. snow-covered d. covered-snow
5. a. far short b. a far short c. far shorter d. a far shorter

Passage V.

One of the strangest inhabitants of this watery world of creeks was the Pipa toad. I caught some of these strange creatures in a small leaf-choked channel leading off one of the big main creeks. They were so very like the messy decomposed leaves that at first sight I did not recognize them as anything.....1..... They measure about five inches long and look rather like very.....2..... kites with a leg at each corner.

One of the specimens I caught was a female with eggs, and I was particularly.....3..... this, as it gave me a chance to watch the astonishing hatching of the baby toads. When the female.....4..... her eggs, the male presses them into the skin on her back which has grown soft and spongy.....5.....receive them.

1. a. alive b. living c. lively d. life

2. a. flat leathery brown b. flat brown leathery

c. leathery brown flat d. brown flat leathery

3. a. pleased with b. pleasing with c. pleased by d. pleasing by

4. a. lies b. lays c. laid d. lied

5. a. in order to b. so as that c. so that d. hardly

(Extracted from English Handbook of the Opinion institution)

VITAE

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