USING E-LEARNING TO IMPROVE ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF THAI UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

BY

NATTAPHON PHANCHANIKUL

AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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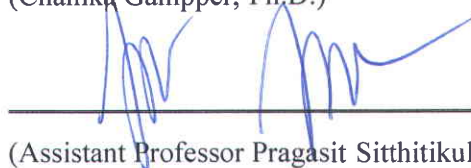the degree of Master of Arts in English for Careers

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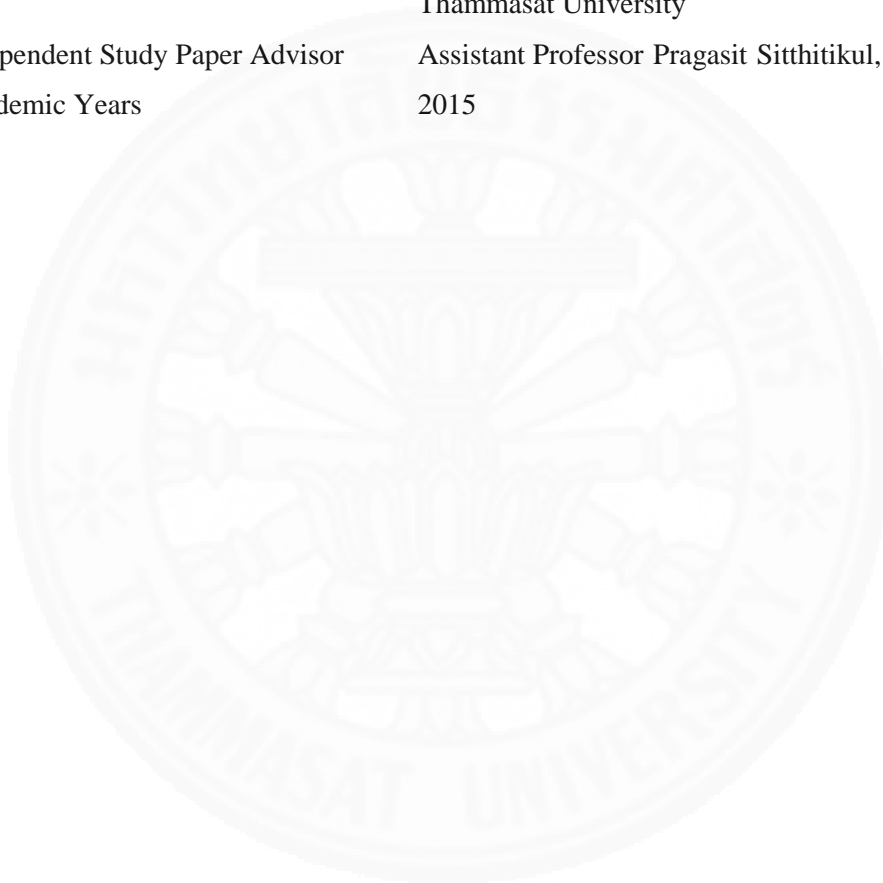
Abstract

In Thailand, e-learning is considered as a new way of learning that is involved with a set of processes and applications related to learning and training through computer-based, online study, virtual classrooms, and other digital collaboration learning.   This study focused on online English courses. E-learning applies the most modern technology, focusing on communication skill development by encouraging students to practice speaking with English teachers on a daily basis, following topics which are related to life and work. The main goals in this study are to explore how e-learning outside the classroom enhances the communicative English skills and to study students' attitudes towards English learning after e-learning. This research involved a mixed methodological approach of quantitative and qualitative research. A questionnaire survey with close-ended questions and open-ended questions was considered as the most appropriate research method for collecting the data with the major advantages of being an efficient, inexpensive, fast, and accurate technique. The population is described as undergraduate students in Thailand with the sample size of 50 students. In this study, non-probability method of convenience sampling was applied. The descriptive analysis of mean was used to interpret the results.

Based on the descriptive analysis of mean, the results from self-evaluation indicated that there was a success of e-learning in improving the students' English skills. Also, the finding indicated that undergraduate students had very high satisfaction towards online English courses, which is the type of e-learning explored in this study.   Further, respondents mostly viewed that studying English through online English courses is new and very interesting and that they like speaking and listening to English teachers during online English courses. They viewed that studying English through online English courses allows them to practice listening and speaking skills. In addition, the result indicated that undergraduate students had positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of online English courses in meeting their expectations and learning goals. They liked the ways of English learning through online English courses and would try to spend more time to take online English courses. With the use of online English courses, they also indicated that their English

communication skills are equal or better than their friends on average, based on their self-evaluation. However, there were also some major barriers for them to adopt e-learning to improve their English skill. They suggested that there was a limited number of online e-learning courses.

Keywords: English language skills, E-learning, Students' Attitudes in Language Learning

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 demonstrates the background of the study, statement of the problem, research aims and objectives, the research question, significance of the study, and the definition of terms that are relevant to the issue of this study.

1.1 Introduction and Research Background

One extraordinary image of our modern age is the technologies. Education has unquestionably been affected by the digital world. The quick moving innovation gives individuals in the area of instruction boundless open doors. Innovative teaching and learning methods have been provided to remote learning situations. Promsurin and Vitayapira (2015)

In Thailand, Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai (2012) mentioned that there has been wide recognition and acceptance towards the important of English as an international language in facilitating foreign trade and investments, economics, sciences, businesses, technologies, education, and communication. They further explained that Thailand's neighboring countries have used English as their second official language, particularly those who were former colonies. In this sense, their people are better using English in their daily lives (Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai, 2012). As mentioned in Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai (2012), the Thai government has made a serious attempt for improving English learning and teaching in educational institutions and trying to make English as the key international language.   In Thailand's education, students typically have learnt English in the primary level, as English is a compulsory subject for students in the primary level to high school level (Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai, 2012). Also, Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai (2012) observed that a number of foreign teachers have been hired in both government and privately-owned schools for teaching English in Thailand.

Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai (2012) stated that better understanding and speaking of English would help the enhancement of the country's competitiveness in relation to the trend of globalization and internationalization that have forced countries across the globe to engage in a global community for various goals. Dornyei (2001) pointed out that foreign language learning is more than simply learning about language skills, and/or grammar, but it also involves a change in self-image, new social and cultural behavior and lifestyles, in which the success in a second language requires a certain level of motives.

In Thailand, e-learning is considered as a new way of learning. Beamish et al. (2002) described the process of e-learning as a set of processes and applications that relates to learning and training through computer-based, online, virtual classrooms, and other digital collaboration learning. Homan and Macpherson (2005), meanwhile, defined e-learning as the learning that involves electronic learning materials, intranet/internet networking systems in learning, as well as those with interactive and downloadable materials. According to Hall and Snider (2000), e-learning is further explained as the learning process taking place over electronic devices over intranet or internet. In this study, e-learning is determined as the process of interactive learning with real time responses in learning activities between teachers and students over the internet.

In the context of Thai society, there are many reasons, according to Jamlan (2004), Thais should adopt and implement e-learning for English. First, e-learning has become an ideal engine for driving the expansion of learning and education in response to the rapid growth of information technologies. Second, e-learning offers rich information for both students and teachers for access anytime and anywhere. Third, e-learning can be promoted as alternative learning that can reach those previously denied access such as students with disabilities and limitations. Finally, e-learning can change the traditional educational system where almost all learning processes are made in a classroom, and thus it can better utilize the valuable resources

and expand high quality of learning to a larger number of students. In addition, Zhang et al. (2004) argued that the major advantages of e-learning are that it contributes to the creation of student centered and self-paced learning, flexibility in terms of location and time, it is potentially available to distance learners, it is a cost-effective learning method, it provides unlimited access to knowledge, and the encouragement of knowledge transfer and sharing. Further, Newton (2003) mentioned that e-learning can contribute to the development and improvement of accessibility to training and education, and the improvement of learning and teaching quality, in which the adoption of e-learning will offer the educational institutions strategic opportunities for entering the new area of education, particularly in non-formal ways such as distance learning and life-long education.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to a report by Zoom (2013), Thais seemed to have very weak English skills as the country ranked 53rd from 54 countries where English was not the formal language, which was better only than Libya. On average, Zoom (2013) also mentioned that TOEFL tests of Thai students going to study abroad were lower than 500, which was worse than students from Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, or even Cambodia. In this sense, Thailand should develop English skills of people urgently, so that the country can fully benefit from the implementation of AEC to expand our trade and for the creation of a sustainable knowledge-based society. Although many internet users in Thailand are taking advantage of using the internet, there are only a small number of them that have fully used the internet for educational purposes (ETDA, 2016). Thus, the investigation of this study is whether or not students experiencing e-learning have better English for communication based on their self-assessment. The study also sought to determine if students who experience e-learning express more positive attitudes than those who have not studied using e-learning. This study suggests several implications for students who are interested in

learning English themselves for the further improvement of English skills outside of their classes.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study explores undergraduate students' communicative skills as well as their attitudes towards using e-learning for English learning. The main objectives of this study are as follows:

1.3.1 To explore how e-learning outside the classroom enhances the communicative skills.

1.3.2 To investigate the students' attitudes towards English learning.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study aims to investigate the using e-learning to enhance undergraduate students' English communicative skills through online English courses over the internet. The findings of this study may prove to be useful to students who are considering the use of learning methods to improve their English communication skills in their free time. As mentioned in Newton (2003), the adoption of e-learning can lead to the improvement of access to educational system and training process, the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning, and the improvement of higher education institutions to maintain the competitive advantages in a changing marketplace for students. This is crucial for the development and use of e-learning for English skill, which in turn will benefit Thai society by the establishment of a sustainable knowledge-based society.

1.5 Definitions of Terms

1.5.1 E-learning

E-learning is a learning and training process with the used on technology such as the internet and computer-based learn. In this study, the e-learning is to focus on the use of online English conversation courses.

1.5.2 English language skills

English is considered as an international language that could support graduated students for further study in higher level or taking advantage in applying for a job. In general, English language skills involve with four areas for communication, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In this study, the main emphasis is to focus on the improvement of listening and speaking skill that are used in verbal communication.

1.5.3 Communication Skills

Communication relies on the four skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing, in which the English communication skills refers to ability and proficiency in using English language in such activities. These communication skills are developed in a series of communications during the language learning process.

1.6 Organization of the study

Chapter 1: Introduction composed of the background of the study, questions, objectives, definition of terms, scope of the study, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review and relevant concepts relating to the study

Chapter 3: Research methodology including research approaches, population and sampling, research instrument, questionnaire testing, data collection and data analysis method.

Chapter 4:   Results from the survey

Chapter 5:   Conclusion, discussion of the findings and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter II provides the review of literature for the development of the conceptual framework and research hypotheses.

2.1 English Learning in Thailand

Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai (2012) mentioned that there has been wide recognition and acceptance towards the significance of English as an international language in facilitating foreign trade and investments, economics, sciences, businesses, technologies, education, and communication. The Thai government has made serious attempts in improving English learning and teaching in educational institutions and trying to make English as the main international language (Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai, 2012). In the educational system of Thailand, students typically have learnt English in the primary level as English is a compulsory subject for students in the primary level to high school level (Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai, 2012). Also, Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai (2012) observed that a number of foreign teachers have been hired in both government and privately-owned schools for teaching English. Apart from English learning in the Thai educational system, Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai (2012) mentioned that students can further learn to improve their English language from private tutoring schools. With the rapid development of IT, e-learning is considered as a new way of learning over the internet.

Brown (2001) and Spolsky (2000) define students' attitudes as feelings, fears and prejudices about learning English as a second language. Cambridge Dictionary of English gives the meaning of attitude as "a feeling or opinion about something or someone, or a way of behaving that is caused by this." Lambert (1967) states that attitudes consist of three elements: cognitive, affective and conative.Cognitive is an individual's conviction structure. Affective means enthusiastic responses. Conative

means a propensity to carry on towards attitude. Chamber (1999) explains that attitude in learning language is important because positive attitudes towards language contribute to easier learning. Similarly, Positive attitude attributes the English language studying (Ellis, 2008). Brown (2000) explains that positive attitudes benefits to second language learners, whereas the motivation and attention to study language proficiency can be reduced by negative attitudes. However, negative attitudes can be changed by learners when they experience reality or a person from another culture. Learners of second languages can change their negative stereotypes about the language. Instructor should be aware that both positive and negative attitudes exist in students' perspective; therefore, replacing their negative attitudes with a realistic understanding of the language (Brown, 2000). In conclusion, it is clear that attitudes influence students' opinions towards learning language.

According to the English curriculum in the Thai language classroom, English is taught for communication through the communicative approach (Ministry of Education, 2001). Richard-Amato (1996) points out that those language skills are naturally integrated. Teachers should increase opportunities for students to communicate in the classroom. He adds that when a student is listening, an opportunity for writing is gradually developed. When a learner is reading, an opportunity for speaking is growing naturally. Wallace, Stariha, and Walberg (2004) claim that in the classroom students experience a diversity of circumstances which requires language abilities. For this reason, confronting a variety of speaking, reading and writing activities can assist learners to succeed in using language. Genc and Bada (2005) state that language activities encourage students to communicate and interact with foreigners confidently, understand foreign cultures and have positive supportive attitudes towards English. Bailey and Savage (1994) explain that when learners speak English in everyday life, the speaking skill has a spontaneous effect on their reading and writing. Rubin (1990) argues out that the listening skill is the basis of every language learner. Learners must start with listening to a language in order to develop

other language skills. Meanwhile, learners who lack listening skills are not able to acquire further skills.

Zancanaro (2005) agrees that listening is the most basic and important communication skill that plays a significant role in achieving language communication. Listeners must comprehend what a speaker says. If he is skillful at listening, he will not miss the point of conversation (Doff, 1988). Harmer (2007) explains that the more students have chances to listen, the more they are skillful in listening, understanding pronunciation and speaking appropriately. Communication skill emphasizes the use of language. It enables students to develop language in use, with every skill related to each other. Thus, teachers' major concern is to give students opportunities to use language rather than emphasizing examination scores.

2.2 E-Learning

According to Spender (2001), e-learning is an innovative way of delivering knowledge, which in turn offers students more control over the process of learning. Beamish et al. (2002) described the process of e-learning as a set of processes and applications that are related to learning and training through computer-based, online, virtual classrooms, and other digital collaboration learning. Homan and Macpherson (2005) defined e-learning as the learning that is involved with electronic learning materials, intranet/internet networking systems in learning, as well as those with interactive and downloadable materials.   Meanwhile, Hall and Snider (2000) explained e-learning as the learning process over electronic devices over the intranet or internet. In this study, e-learning is determined as the process of interactive learning with a real time response in learning activities between teachers and students over the internet, in which the e-learning for learning English language focuses on the services provided by online private English teaching schools in Thailand.

There are several reasons for the adoption of e-learning, according to Jamlan (2004). As suggested by Jamlan (2004), e-learning has become an ideal engine for driving the expansion of learning and education in response to the rapid growth of information technologies. It also offers rich information for both students and teachers for access anytime and anywhere (Jamlan, 2004). E-learning can be promoted as alternative learning that can reach those previously denied access such as students with disabilities and limitations. Further, Jamlan (2004) stated that e-learning can change the traditional educational system where almost all learning processes are made in a classroom, and thus it can better utilize the valuable resources and expand the high quality of learning to a larger number of students.

Zhang et al. (2004) argued that the major advantages of e-learning are that it contributes to the creation of student centered and self-paced learning, flexibility in terms of location and time, it is potentially available to distance learners, it is a cost-effective learning method, it provides unlimited access to knowledge, and the encouragement of knowledge transfer and sharing. Further, Newton (2003) mentioned that e-learning can contribute to the development and improvement of access to training and education, and the improvement of learning and teaching quality, in which the adoption of e-learning will offer educational institutions strategic opportunities for entering a new area of education, particularly in non-formal ways such as distance learning and lifelong education. On the other side, Zhang et al. (2004) argued that there are disadvantages associated with e-learning, which are the lack of immediate response in asynchronous e-learning, potentially more anxiety, confusion and frustration, and that it is not appropriate for some people. According to Hebel (2004), e-learning could lead to information overload, too many observers but not participants, and difficulties in encouraging senior people to get involved.

Decebo (2014) mentioned that Asia is the region with the strongest growth of e-learning, in which the revenues from e-learning services had reached more than $5 billion in 2011 and are expected to reach about $11.5 billion by 2016. As suggested by

Decebo (2014), the market was fueled by the governments' initiatives for promoting e-learning in response to the rapid growth of information technologies, the shortage of quality education, as well as affordability and convenience factors. In Thailand, English is undeniably the dominant international language, in which the extraordinarily widespread use of daily international communication after the implementation of AEC means that English as the dominant language at present is going to be used on a much more universal and widespread scale than ever before. Given the dominant position of English, the adoption of online English conversation programs will further help the country for the improvement of people's international language skills in an efficient and effective manner.

2.3 Determinants of Students' Adoption of E-learning

Proffitt (2008) wrote that there have been many researches that have investigated the impact of factors affecting student's acceptance and adoption of online technologies, in which "students' preference for an online delivery system could be attributed to their perceived ease of use which would be evident from their competence in using internet and electronic communication, alongside their ability to engage in autonomous learning". Proffitt (2008) further described that the perception of individuals toward the benefits of e-learning is an attribute that may increase their success in education in an online setting. In addition, Bertea (2009) suggested that students' social influence from their reference groups, and their attitudes toward e-learning are other influential factors affecting their decisions and behaviors toward e-learning. According to Sumak et al (2011), students' actual adoption of e-learning is typically explained by their behavioral intention, which is affected by one's past experiences and knowledge about such technology. In other words, they explained that the perception of students about the ease of use and usefulness, social influence, and attitudes are considered as the key determinants in explaining the acceptance and adoption of e-learning, following the technology acceptance model or TAM as proposed by Davis (1989).

Following the suggestion of Davis (1989), TAM has been widely recognized and applied for explaining the determinants for a wide range of end-user computer-based technologies across user populations, which is considered as "parsimonious and theoretically justified". In other words, the key contribution of TAM is to offer the fundamental for tracing the impact of external factors toward internal attitudes, beliefs, and determination to perform a particular behavior, which is determined by one's perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989). Clement and Bush (2011) suggested that intention strongly relates to one's actual behavior in that if one intends to do something, then it is more likely to be performed. Further, Venkatesh et al. (2003) modified TAM for explaining technology acceptance and adoption, specifically for the area of e-learning, into the Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology or UTAUT. Under this model, Venkatesh et al. (2003) suggested that the acceptance and adoption of e-learning can be explained through four constructs, including performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions.

2.4 E-learning Activities and Resources

According to Chhabra (2012), educational institutions cannot remain mere venues for the transmission of an endorsed set of data from teacher to students over a fixed period of time, rather educational institutions must promote "learning to learn" such as the acquisition of knowledge and skills that conceivable consistent learning over a lifetime. So it becomes the responsibility of the students themselves to shape up accordingly to meet the demands of the day that people are required to be proficient in the English language and this is possible only with a proper blend of edification and e-learning tools (modern technologies). Traditional teaching and learning paradigms have been shaken by the impact of the integration of e-learning tools into educational practices. E-learning is a diverse range of technological tools and systems that can be utilized by capable and creative teachers to enhance teaching and learning situations.

As suggested by Soliman (2014), e-learning has two main components, namely activities and resources. E-learning activities may include chat, databases, forums, lessons, quizzes, and workshops. Meanwhile, some e-learning resources may include e-books, files, contents, URLs, social media, and computer software.

In this study, the e-learning focus is on the online English courses. It applies the most modern technology, focusing on communication skill development by encouraging students to practice speaking with English teachers on a daily basis, following topics which are related to life and work. With the traditional method, students start with a theory lesson (Lecture), followed by discussion with classmates (Interactive), then practicing with teachers (Practice) and testing (Exam). But the adoption of online English courses would offer a different way of learning, in which students get to practice (Practice) with English teachers even when they have not thoroughly understood the theory, followed by exchange and discussion with classmates and teachers (Interaction) that will help them recognize their mistakes, then the teacher will evaluate (Evaluation) their performance in class. After that, the teacher will summarize the lesson (Lecture) and finally, students will take periodical tests (Exam) to determine their current English level.

2.5 Students' Attitudes in Language Learning

Brown (2001), as cited in Tongboonyoung (2013), explained attitudes as feelings, fears and prejudices about learning English as a second language. Lambert (1967) suggested that attitudes consist of three elements, including cognitive or an individual's belief structure, affective or emotional reactions, and conative or a tendency for attitude to affect behavior. Chamber (1999) explains that attitude in learning language is important because positive attitudes towards language contribute to easier learning. Similarly, positive attitudes encourage students to learn English (Ellis, 2008). Brown (2001) explains that second language learners benefit from positive attitudes, whereas negative attitudes may reduce motivation and cause students to fail to attain language proficiency. However, negative attitudes can be

changed by learners when they experience real life language situations or a person from another culture. Learners of second languages can change their negative stereotypes about the language. Teachers must be aware that every student has both positive and negative attitudes and replace their negative attitudes with a realistic understanding of the language (Brown, 2001). For students, many occupations require an individual who can write and speak well, solve problems, learn new information quickly, and work well with others on a team. This means that teachers may need to describe the benefits of English as being very important for their future careers or further study in a higher level.

In the context of e-learning, web-based learning approaches were found to be a promising alternative to conventional language learning process. Parker (2003) argued that the learners who are comfortable with technology and have a positive attitude towards it are more likely to succeed within an e-learning environment that offers individual empowerment with greater control over their own language learning.

2.6 Previous Studies

Wang and Chou (2014) proposed a model to develop a multi-dimensional set of criteria for English instructor to assess the standard of e-learning English listening and speaking courses. These criteria can help English instructors in planning effective English listening and speaking courses to enhance students' English ability. The formative exploration connected in their paper constructed and refined the assessment criteria using literature review, procedure, experts' reviews and document analysis. These evaluation guidelines were based on the aspects of a) information for e-learning courses, b) English teaching, and c) listening and speaking teaching. In order to accomplish this objective, the researcher utilized a four-phase method to refine and frame the assessment criteria. In the first stage, the 98 preliminary criteria were conducted based on general information of e-learning courses, English teaching and teaching English listening and speaking related researches. The second stage focused on experts' opinions for the preliminary criterion through online Google Docs with a five point Likert scale. The third stage was to determine both experts' and learners'

opinions according to the results of stage two. The last stage was to finalize the criteria based on quantitative and qualitative surveys. 90 items were finalized in the criteria for evaluating the English listening and speaking e-learning courses.

Srichanyachon (2010) studied "Key Components of E-Learning Readiness" and indicated that there are various aspects involving the success of e-learning, in which human resources, technology, and culture are the key components of e-learning readiness. According to Deerajviset (2014), the researcher investigated the adoption of IT in English learning as a foreign language (EFL) education in higher education and suggested that teachers had positive attitudes towards e-learning. Further, the finding of this research also revealed that the major barriers for taking-up e-learning in Thai EFL higher education may include insufficient IT facilities and needed skills, a shortage of technical support, and resistance to changes. These factors were pointed out as the key factors that are required to be eliminated for creating richer e-learning environments and developing the best possible EFL teaching and learning practices in Thailand. However, there was no research that investigated the students' attitude toward the adoption of e-learning in English language learning.

Tongboonyoung (2013) studied students' attitudes towards their English lessons after learning English through film clip instruction. The participants of the study were eighth grade Thai students who were selected by using the simple random sampling method to draw from among 410 students in 11 classes. They were divided into the experimental and control groups with 30 students in each group. The research instruments consist of English for communication test which was used as a pretest and a posttest and a questionnaire surveying students' attitudes towards learning English through film clips. The result of this study showed that the English communicative skills of students taught through film clip instruction was significantly higher than that of students taught through regular instruction at the .05 level of significance. Additionally, the data from the pre- and the postquestionnaire surveying students' satisfact ion were statistically analyzed by t-test for correlated means. The mean score of post-questionnaires was higher than that of prequestionnaires.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 describes the research methods used in this study. It comprises the details about research approaches, population and sampling, research instrument, questionnaire testing, data collection and the data analysis method.

3.1 Research Approaches

Creswell et al. (2003) and Forthofer (2003) suggested that the mixed-methodological approach combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches with the combined use of both research approaches' methods, which has emerged in social science from pragmatic knowledge to reduce the limitation of a single approach. This research approach, which combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single research, which is the so called "hybrid model" (Shulman, 1986), is defined by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) as inclusive, complementary, and expansive research methods compared to traditional ones, which can be conducted by the methods of sequential, concurrent, and transformative processes within the same study ranging from the research objective, types of data and operations, analysis, to types of inferences (Creswell, 2003). According to Greene and Caracelli (1997), research methods and approaches under mixed methodological researches are not selected based on the researcher's desire from a foreordained worldview of quantitative and/or qualitative researches, but is based on research issues.

Compared to either quantitative or qualitative research alone, however, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) pointed out that this research approach demands more resources in conducting research in terms of money, time, as well as efforts. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) and Maxwell & Loomis (2003) suggested that mixed methodological researchers select the most proper methodologies taking into account the characterized research issue with various circumstances and settings, as there is no single superior approach between quantitative and qualitative ones. This research

applies partially mixed methods that involve the use of both closed-end questions and open-end questions in the same questionnaire in concurrent or sequential manner before mixing the results for the research process of interpretation. The major aim of the quantitative research was to analyze the students' attitudes towards online English courses and their effectiveness. The descriptive analysis of mean was used to interpret the self-evaluation to measure the effectiveness of e-learning in improving the students' English skills, while the qualitative question would allow respondents to express their feelings and opinions freely.

3.2 Populations and Samples

Zikmund (2003) stated that a research population is "a particular completed group associated with the issues being studied in the research". Based on the research scope, the population is described as undergraduate students in Thailand. The sample size was determined as 50 students, with regard to the time and cost constraints. According to Zikmund (2003) a "sampling unit is a single element or group of elements subject to selection in the sample from the group of population". In this study, the non-probability technique that offers all elements the unequal chance for being selected was applied in this study, in which the sampling strategy involves with convenience sampling that was considered as an appropriate sampling technique in this study.

The important demographic information of the students was utilized assess who met the criteria sampling and how to breakdown the overall survey response data into significant groups of participants; both assessments are based on demographic considerations. Choosing the proper demographic questions will provide noteworthy, actionable and meaningful results.

3.3 Research Design

Firstly, the quantitative approach was applied to collect the data from undergraduate students through the closed-end questions in the questionnaire survey to collect the data about the demographic information, perceptions towards e-learning, and self-evaluation. There are many reasons for the researcher to select this approach. It is considered to be an effective method and it is popular since it is used by most field researchers. It also consumes less cost and is simple to conduct. Also, this approach allows the researcher to process the study with less or no concern on the time and cost constraints, as suggested by Zikmund (2004). All the questionnaires were distributed to collect the information from participants directly by hand.

Then, the qualitative research was in the last section of the questionnaire with the use of two open-ended questions to explore the major motivations for the adoption of e-learning for the improvement of participants' English skills as well as the major barriers for the adoption of e-learning for the improvement of their English skills. Qualitative research, as pointed out by Merriam (2009), is the research approach that is characterized as "discovery-oriented research that the outcomes are not predetermined", which in turn will allow the participants to explain their full beliefs and opinions (Bonita, 2008). However, there were no follow-up questions asked after the primary question for exploring additional information, as suggested by Creswell (1994), due to limited time in the data collection process.

3.4 Research Instrument

For the quantitative research, a questionnaire was used as the research instrument for gathering the data with the major advantages of being an efficient, inexpensive, fast, and reliable tool to collect data, as cited in Zikmund (2003). The questionnaire was developed through the adoption of measurement scales that were used in the study of Maina and Nzuki (2015). With the use of closed-end questions, the response process was simple with clear and precise choices provided to minimize the

respondent's effort and time in participating in this research in that they only have to select the answer that can best describe their opinions.

There were two main parts in the questionnaire, comprising demographic information of respondents such as gender and age, with the use of multiple choices questions; and attitudes toward each e-learning activity and resource with the use of Likert scale questions for each statement. Each Likert scale question asks the respondents to give their degree of agreement toward the question based on the 5 point scales ranging from "1" strongly disagree, to "5" for strongly agree. According to Zikmund (2003), Likert scale questions are considered as a reliable measurement to provide the direction to the respondents in relation to some specific attitudes.

Table 3.4 Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Components	Level of measurement	Question NO.
Gender	− Male − Female	Nominal	Q.1 Part I
Year Level	− First year − Second year − Third year − Forth year or more	Ordinal	Q.2 Part I
Cumulative GPA	− Less than 2.00 − 2.00 – 2.50 − 2.51 – 3.00 − 3.01 – 3.50 − 3.51 – 4.00	Ordinal	Q.3 Part I
Type of Educational Background	− High school − Vocational certificate	Nominal	Q.4 Part I

Self-evaluation of English Skills	– Listening – Speaking – Reading – Writing	5 Point Likert scale	Q.2.1 Part II
Needed Skills for Improvement	– Listening – Speaking – Reading – Writing	Nominal	Q.2.2 Part II
Attitudes toward E-learning (Tongboonyoung, 2013)	– I like speaking and listening to English teacher over the online English courses. – Studying English through online English courses is new and very interesting. – I am interested in studying and doing exercises through online English courses. – I can apply English from the online English courses to real life situation. – Studying English through online English courses will make me more interest in learning English than before – Studying English through online English courses will offer me to practice listening and speaking skills. – I am interested in listening, reading, listening and	5 Point Likert scale	Part III section I

	writing activities if I study English through online English courses.		
	− I will have fun with studying English if I study English through online English courses.		
	− I feel I would like to follow up the lesson from online English courses.		
	− I will learn English better if I learn English through online English courses.		
	− I would like to learn English in the regular class in the same as in the online English courses.		
Self-evaluation of effectiveness (Tongboonyoung, 2013)	− Online English courses meets my expectation and learning goal.	5 Point Likert scale	Part III section II
	− My English communication skill is equal or higher than my friends in average.		
	− I like the ways of English learning through online English courses		
	− I would try to spend more time to take online English courses.		

3.5 Data Collection Process

The questionnaire was distributed to 50 undergraduate students based on convenient sampling. The respondents were selected nearby Thammasat University in Bangkok. The screening question was applied to assure that they were undergraduate students and had experienced online English course, which is a type of e-learning that was focused in this study.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Data Analysis for Quantitative Data

Descriptive statistics described and summarized the results in the form of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation that are easy to use to interpret the demographic characteristics of respondents and the results of variables. The mean scores were interpreted as follows.

Table 3.6.1 Mean Interpretation

Scale	Levels of satisfaction	Mean Range
5	Very Good	4.51 - 5.00
4	Good	3.51 - 4.50
3	Fair	2.51 - 3.50
2	Poor	1.51 - 2.50
1	Very Poor	1.00 - 1.50

3.6.2 Data Analysis for Qualitative Data

The data from the open-ended questions were reviewed twice before translating from Thai into English. The data were processed to form wording clusters for each question and then further described the results in text form.

Qualitative content analysis was utilized to analyze text data. Qualitative content analysis goes beyond simply checking words to inspecting the language

intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that present similar significances, as suggested by Weber (1990).

In this study, the researcher started with a brief review of the qualitative content with the history and definitions of content analysis followed by explicitly studying the issues. A summative content analysis, comprised of checking and examinations of keywords or content was then followed by the interpretation of the underlying context.

CHAPTER 4

Research Finding and Analysis

The chapter 4 presents the results and analysis, including the demographic profiles of respondents, descriptive analysis of graduated students' attitudes, and effectiveness based on self-evaluation.

4.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

Table 4.1.1 Respondents' Demographic Profiles

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	13	26.0
Female	37	74.0
Year Level:		
1st year	8	16.0
2nd year	5	10.0
3rd year	13	26.0
4th year or more	24	48.0
Cumulative GPA:		
2.00 - 2.50	2	4.0
2.51 - 3.00	6	12.0
3.01 - 3.50	17	34.0
3.51 - 4.00	25	50.0
Occupation:		
High school	47	94.0
Vocational education	3	6.0

From the table 4.1.1, the data was collected from 50 respondents who were undergraduate students in Bangkok. Of 50 respondents, 74% of them or 37 persons were female, and another 26%, or 13 persons, were male. Most respondents, 24 persons or 48%, were in the fourth year or higher; while 13 persons or 26% were in the third year; 8 persons or 16% were freshmen; and another 5 persons or 10% were the second year students. Respondents' cumulative GPA ranged from 2.00 to 4.00. Most of them, 25 persons or 50%, achieved the cumulative GPA of about 3.51 – 4.00; while 17 persons or 34% achieved the cumulative GPA of about 3.01 – 3.50; 6 persons or 12% achieved the cumulative GPA of about 2.51 – 3.00; and the remaining 2 persons or only 4% got the cumulative GPA of about 2.00 – 2.50. None of them got the cumulative GPA of lower than 2.00. Regarding the educational background of respondents, the majority of them, or 47 persons or 94%, had graduated from high school; and another 3 persons or 6% had graduated from vocational education.

4.2 Self-Assessment toward English Skills and the Needed Skill for Improvement

The respondents were asked to assess their English skills in four areas, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, from 5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, and 1 = very poor. The interpretation of mean are as follows.

Table 4.2.1 Interpretation of Mean of English Skill Assessment

Scale	Levels of satisfaction	Mean Range
5	Very Good	4.51 - 5.00
4	Good	3.51 - 4.50
3	Fair	2.51 - 3.50
2	Poor	1.51 - 2.50
1	Very Poor	1.00 - 1.50

The descriptive results for students, English skills based on self-evaluation were in table 4.2.2.

Table 4.2.2 Self-evaluation of English Skills

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Interpretation
Listening	50	2.00	5.00	3.04	0.450	Fair
Speaking	50	2.00	5.00	2.72	0.757	Fair
Reading	50	2.00	5.00	3.64	0.631	Good
Writing	50	2.00	5.00	3.78	0.616	Good

From the table 4.2.1, the English listening skill of respondents was considered as fair (mean = 3.04, s.d. = 0.450). The English speaking skill of respondents was considered as fair (mean = 2.72, s.d. = 0.757); the English reading skill of respondents was considered as good (mean = 3.64, s.d. = 0.631); and the English writing skill of respondents was considered as good (mean = 3.78, s.d. = 0.616). Among these four English communicative skills, respondents seemed to have strongest skill in English writing, followed by reading, listening, and speaking. In other words, English speaking skill was the weakest skill of them.

Table 4.2.2 English Skills Classified by Students, Gender, Year Level, and GPA

		Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
		Mean	**Mean**	**Mean**	**Mean**
Gender	Male	2.85	2.46	3.46	3.54
	Female	3.11	2.73	3.70	3.86
Year level	1st year	2.63	2.63	2.88	2.88
	2nd year	3.00	2.00	3.60	4.00
	3rd year	3.38	3.62	4.00	4.15
	4th year or more	3.00	2.29	3.71	3.83
Cumulative GPA	2.00 - 2.50	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00
	2.51 - 3.00	2.83	2.83	2.83	2.83
	3.01 - 3.50	3.00	2.18	3.71	3.82
	3.51 - 4.00	3.20	3.12	3.84	4.04

From table 4.2.2, the results from self-assessment showed that the English skills of female undergraduate students was perceived as better than those of male undergraduate students in all four areas, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, given the highest means. Male undergraduate students seemed to have the strongest English skill for writing; while they seemed to have the weakest English skill for speaking. Similarly, female undergraduate students seemed to have the strongest English skill for writing; while they seemed to have the weakest English skill for speaking. Based on year level, the English listening skills for the first year students was lowest, which was perceived as fair (mean = 2.63). The English speaking skill for the second year students was lowest, which was perceived as poor (mean = 2.00). The English reading skill for the first year students was lowest, which was perceived as moderate (mean = 2.88). Also, the English writing skill for the first year students was lowest, which was perceived as moderate (mean = 2.88). Classified by students' cumulative GPA, the English listening skills for students with cumulative GPA of 2.00 to 2.50 was lowest, which was perceived as poor (mean = 2.00). The English speaking skill for students with cumulative GPA of 2.00 to 2.50 was lowest,

which was perceived as poor (mean = 2.00). The English reading skill for students with cumulative GPA of 2.51 to 3.00 was lowest, which was perceived as moderate (mean = 2.83). Meanwhile, the English writing skill for students with cumulative GPA of 2.51 to 3.00 was lowest, which was perceived as moderate (mean = 2.88).

Table 4.2.3 Most Needed English Skill for the Improvement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Listening	13	26.0	26.0	26.0
Speaking	24	48.0	48.0	74.0
Reading	8	16.0	16.0	90.0
Writing	5	10.0	10.0	100.0

The area of English skills that the majority of respondents wanted to improve most were English speaking skill at 48%, followed by English listening skill at 26%, English reading skill at 16%, and English writing skill at another 10%, respectively.

4.3 Attitudes of Undergraduate Students towards E-learning

The questionnaire was used to study students' attitudes towards e-learning. It aimed to reveal the point of view that students gave after learning English through online English courses. The mean scores were interpreted as follow.

Scale	Levels of satisfaction	Mean Range
5	Highest satisfaction	4.51 - 5.00
4	High satisfaction	3.51 - 4.50
3	Neutral	2.51 - 3.50
2	Low satisfaction	1.51 - 2.50
1	Lowest satisfaction	1.00 - 1.50

The descriptive results of undergraduate students' attitudes towards online English courses, which is a type of e-learning, as well as the interpretation of their level of satisfaction are demonstrated in table 4.3.2 below:

Table 4.3.2 Students' Attitudes towards E-learning

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Agreement Level
I like speaking and listening to English teachers over the online English courses.	4.62	0.70	Very High
Studying English through online English courses is new and very interesting.	4.72	0.67	Very High
I am interested in studying and doing exercises through online English courses.	3.94	0.37	High
I can apply English from the online English courses to real life situations.	4.52	0.71	Very High
Studying English through online English courses will make me more interested in learning English than before	4.02	0.51	High
Studying English through online English courses will offer me practice in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.	4.62	0.70	Very High

I am interested in listening, reading, listening and writing activities if I study English through online English courses.	4.12	0.52	High
I will have fun with studying English if I study English through online English courses.	4.06	0.55	High
I feel I would like to follow up the lesson from online English courses.	4.16	0.47	High
I will learn English better if I learn English through online English courses.	4.2	0.45	Very High
I would like to study English in the regular class the same as in the online English courses.	3.74	0.53	High
Satisfaction	4.25	0.41	Very High

Table 4.3.2 revealed that undergraduate students had very high satisfaction towards online English courses, which is the type of e-learning explored in this study. The mean score was at 4.25. The result indicated that undergraduate students had positive attitudes towards learning English through online English courses. The students had the highest satisfaction towards "Studying English through online English courses is new and very interesting" (mean = 4.72). The second highest score was for "I like speaking and listening to English teachers over the online English courses" (mean = 4.62). The third highest score was for "Studying English through online English courses will offer me practice in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills" (mean = 4.62).

The descriptive results of undergraduate students' attitudes towards the effectiveness of online English courses and its interpretation are demonstrated in table 4.3.3 below:

Table 4.3.3 Students' Attitudes towards E-learning's Effectiveness

|	Mean	Std. Deviation	Agreement Level
Online English courses meet my expectation and learning goal.	4.48	0.71	Very High
My English communication skill is equal or higher than my friends on average.	4.18	0.63	High
I like the ways of English learning through online English courses	4.36	0.56	Very High
I would try to spend more time to take online English courses.	4.2	0.57	Very High
Effectiveness	4.31	0.47	Very High

Table 4.3.3 revealed that the effectiveness of online English courses is very high with the mean of 4.31. The result indicated that undergraduate students had positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of online English courses. The students had the highest satisfaction towards "Online English courses meet my expectation and learning goal" (mean = 4.48). The second highest score was for "I like the way of English learning through online English courses" (mean = 4.36). The third highest score was for "I would try to spend more time to take online English courses" (mean = 4.2).

4.4 The Results from the Open-End Questions

The open-end questions asked respondents to further explore the motivations and barriers for the adoption of e-learning by undergraduate students. Most respondents indicated that the use of e-learning would allow them improvement of English skills for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The major advantage of e-learning were that it would help students to plan for the specific area of skill

improvement themselves and at the flexible time and place. Some participants also mentioned that the use of e-learning allows them to have more practice to improve their English language skills as they can engage in listening, speaking, reading, and writing through participating in online English courses through their PCs or notebook computers. However, there were also some major barriers for them to adopt e-learning to improve their English skill. They suggested that there were a limited number of online e-learning courses.
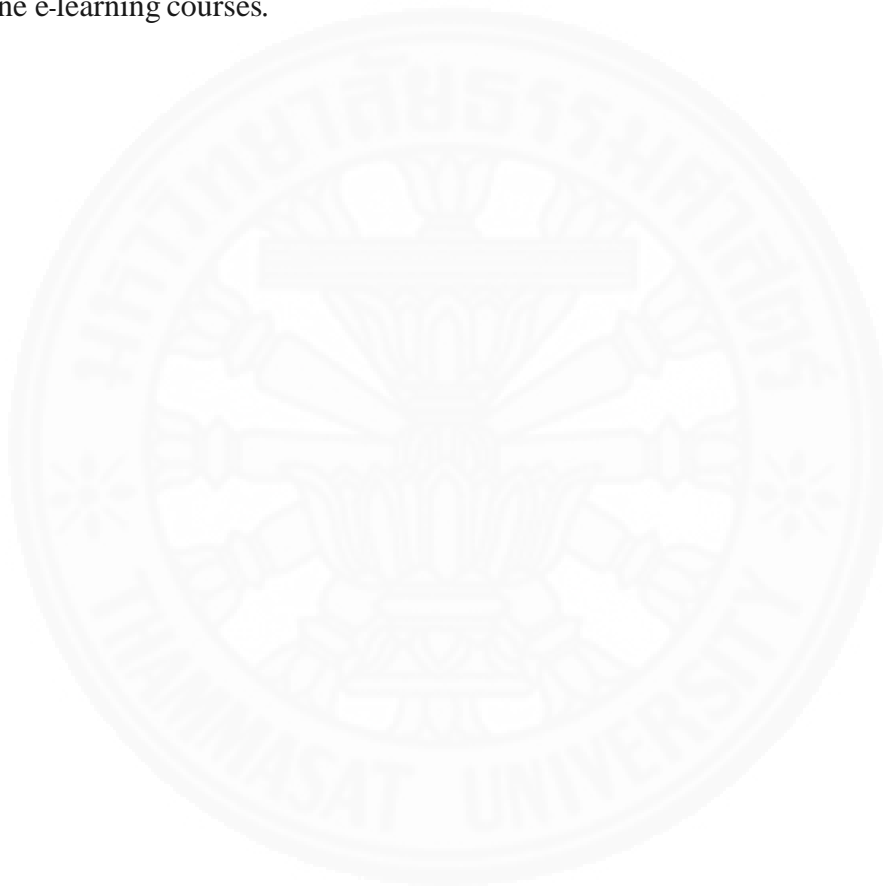
CHAPTER 5

Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendation

Chapter 5 presents the summary of the finding, discussion, and recommendation from the finding.

5.1 Summary of Finding

From 50 respondents who were undergraduate students in Bangkok, 74% were female, and another 26% were male. Most respondents were undergraduate students in the fourth year or higher. Their cumulative GPA ranged from 2.00 to 4.00. Most of them achieved the cumulative GPA of about 3.51 – 4.00. Regarding the educational background of respondents, the majority of them had graduated from high school. The results from self-assessment showed that the English skills of female undergraduate students was perceived as better than those of male undergraduate students in all four areas, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, given the highest means. Most respondents were most weak in English speaking skill (mean = 2.66); while they were most strong in writing skill (mean = 3.78). The area of English skills that the majority of respondents wanted to improve most were English speaking skill at 48%, followed by English listening skill at 26%, English reading skill at 16%, and English writing skill at another 10%.

The finding indicated that undergraduate students had very high satisfaction towards online English courses, which is the type of e-learning explored in this study. They mostly perceived that studying English through online English courses is new and very interesting and that they like speaking and listening to English teachers over the online English courses. Further, they perceived that studying English through online English courses allows them to practice listening and speaking skills. In addition, the result indicated that undergraduate students had positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of online English courses in meeting their expectation and

learning goal. They liked the way of English learning through online English courses and would try to spend more time to take online English courses. With the use of online English courses, they also indicated that their English communication skills are equal or better than their friends on average. However, there were also some major barriers for them to adopt e-learning to improve their English skill. They suggested that there were a limited number of online e-learning courses.

5.2 Discussion

This study focused on e-learning for online English courses. It applies the most modern technology, focusing on communication skill development, by encouraging students to practice speaking with English teachers on a daily basis, following topics which are related to life and work. It is different from traditional methods, in which students start with a theory lesson (Lecture), followed by discussion with classmates (Interactive), then practicing with teachers (Practice) and tests (Exam). In online English courses, students would be offered a different way of learning, in which students get to practice (Practice) with English teachers even when they have not thoroughly understood theory, followed by exchange and discussion with classmates and teachers (Interaction) that will help them recognize their mistakes, then the teacher will evaluate (Evaluation) their performance in class. After that, the teacher will summarize the lesson (Lecture) and finally, students will take tests (Exam) to determine their current English level. The finding from self-assessment showed that most respondents were most weak in English speaking skill, the area of English skills that the majority of respondents wanted to improve most was also English speaking skill, followed by English listening skill, English reading skill, and English writing skill. The use of online workshops and online courses would allow both teachers and students to collaborate with each other anywhere in the world. It provides immense opportunities for the Thai students to connect with classes in other locations across the globe to practice their language skills (Chhabra, 2012).

In this sense, it can be concluded that e-learning such as online English courses has become an ideal engine for driving the expansion of English learning that offers rich information for both students and teachers for improvement of the English learning process outside the regular classroom or even for future adoption in the regular classroom. As suggested by Zhang et al. (2004), the finding proved that e-learning contributes to the creation of student centered and self-paced learning, flexibility in term of location and time, it is potentially available to distance learners, it is a cost-effective learning method, it offers unlimited access to knowledge, the encouragement of knowledge transfer and sharing between student-student, teacher-students, and students-teacher. Further, Newton (2003) mentioned that e-learning can contribute to the development and improvement of accessibility to training and education, and the improvement of learning and teaching quality, in which the adoption of e-learning will offer the educational institutions strategic opportunities for entering the new area of education, particularly in non-formal ways such as distance learning and lifelong education. However, there were also some major barriers in the context of Thai society to adopt e-learning to improve English skill due mainly to the limited number of online English learning courses.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

This research aimed to study students' attitudes towards the adoption of e-learning for studying online English courses using the case of Thai undergraduate students. Therefore, the generalization of the findings is limited and unable to be applied to students in other levels, or other areas of e-learning. Future research thus is recommended to study the other methods of e-learning, and the use of e-learning for English language learning by students in other levels or other geographical locations to further expand the generalization of the study. Further, this research involved the sample size of 50 undergraduate students due to limited time. The researcher suggests that further research should also study a larger number of students

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APPENDICES

The questionnaire is a part of a research paper as partial fulfillment of the requirement for Master of Arts in English for Careers, Language Institute, Thammasat University. This questionnaire consists of five sections. Please give the truthful information to the accurate survey results.

Questionnaire is divided into five parts which are:

Part I: General information

Part II: Self-Assessment toward English Skills and the Needed Skill for Improvement

Part III: Students' Attitudes towards Learning English through Online English courses

Part IV: Students' Self-evaluation towards the Effectiveness of E-learning

Part V: Open End Questions

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR KIND COOPERATION

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I: General Information

Explanation: Please tick √ in a blank which applies to you most

1. Gender

□ Male   □ Female

2. Year Level

□ First year   □ Second Year

□ Third year   □ Fourth year or more

3. Cumulative GPA

□ less than 2.00   □ 2.00 – 2.50

□ 2.51 – 3.00   □ 3.00 – 3.50

□ 3.51 – 4.00

4. Type of Educational Background

□ High School

□ Vocational Certificate

Part II: Self-Assessment toward English Skills and the Needed Skill for

Improvement

2.1 Self-evaluation toward English Skills

1 = Very Poor; 2 = Poor; 3 = Fair; 4 = Good; 5 = Excellent

English Skill	1	2	3	4	5
Listening					
Speaking					
Reading					
Writing					

2.2 In your opinion, which area of English skills do you want to improve mostly?

□ Listening   □ Speaking

□ Reading   □ Writing

Part III: Students' Attitudes towards Learning English through Online English courses

(5 = Strongly agree   4 = agree   3 = neutral   2 = disagree   1 = strongly disagree)

E-learning Activities	1	2	3	4	5
I like speaking and listening to English teacher over the online English courses.					
Studying English through online English courses is new and very interesting.					
I am interested in studying and doing exercises through online English courses.					
I can apply English from the online English courses to real life situation.					
Studying English through online English courses will make me more interest in learning English than before					
Studying English through online English courses will offer me to practice listening and speaking skills.					
I am interested in listening, reading, listening and writing activities if I study English through online English courses.					
I will have fun with studying English if I study English through online English courses.					
I feel I would like to follow up the lesson from online English courses.					
I will learn English better if I learn English through online English courses.					
I would like to learn English in the regular class in the same as in the online English courses.					

Part IV: Students' Self-evaluation towards the Effectiveness of E-learning

(5 = Strongly agree   4 = agree   3 = neutral   2 = disagree   1 = strongly disagree)

Effectiveness	1	2	3	4	5
Online English courses meets my expectation and learning goal.					
My English communication skill is equal or higher than my friends in average.					
I like the ways of English learning through online English courses					
I would try to spend more time to take online English courses.					

Part V: Open End Questions

1. In your opinion, what are the major motivations for the use of e-learning for the improvement of your English skill?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. In your opinion, what are the major barriers for the use of e-learning for the improvement of your English skill?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

BIOGRAPHY

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