

Preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, Souphanouvong University
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Abstract

The objective of this research aimed to find out the preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry at the Faculty of Economic and Tourism Management (FET), Souphanouvong University (SU). The research consisted of five chapters and the instrument used was a questionnaire which included 60 items to collect quantitative data to find the experiences in using English skills of students, the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry, and the possible ways for improving in using English skills of students with the total 312 participants who studied at Economics, General business administration, Tourism, Finance and Accounting. The data was analyzed by using program SPSS for Windows (Version 17 and Microsoft Excel 2017) to analyze information for frequency, average into percentage, mean value and standard deviation (S.D) of this research project.

The results of this research revealed that collecting quantitative data from students at the Faculty of Economic and Tourism Management (FET). The sample group were students from Economics, General business administration, Tourism, and Finance and Accounting Departments at the FET. The Analysis of the data illustrated that the students at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism had a positive preparing towards speaking, listening, reading, and writing for the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry at FET, SU. However, writing skill is lowest impression from both the situation of using English skills of students and preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry. In addition, the suggestion to the possible ways for improving in using English skills of students; reading skill is also lowest impression from the four skills.

Keywords: *English skills, Careers, Tourist industry*

1. Introduction

Since the Lao PDR (Laos) gained the independence in 1975 and joined as a member of ASEAN on 23 July 1997 English has become very important and is used at every level of education and plays an important role in the country's socio-economic development including tourism industry throughout Laos. The Lao government struggled on strengthening the education from the primary level to the higher level of education. According to the government

policies, Laos has provided more opportunities to access to the education, the number of the students were increasing in all levels (Vongsouangtham, 2014). Ministry of Education and Sports had implemented the national education policies of Lao government by setting the strategic plan on education up to the year 2020. The upcoming of the ASEAN Economic Community will definitely open its doors to more opportunities for Lao people by focusing on expanding higher educational system to meet the needs for new labor market,

training professionals and intellectuals to have the capacity on applying modern science and technology to serve the needs of the social economic development (Souvanhxay, 2012). The Lao government has a good vision and is able to see the future of the ASEAN Economic community as well as the importance of education in order to provide a better educational system for students of all diverse ethnic groups in eight provinces of the northern Laos.

Souphanouvong University (SU) was established in 2003. SU is academically monitored by the National University of Laos (NOUL) in terms of curriculum implementation, and academic and Professional development of the teaching staff. This university consists of six faculties; namely, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Agriculture and Forest Resources, Faculty of Economics and Tourisms, Faculty of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, and Faculty of Languages.

The Faculty of Economics and Tourism, which consists of three departments: economics, general management, tourism management and accounting and finance. The main objectives of this faculty are to build up students' ability and knowledge in both theory and practice in their field of economics and tourism. English language is one of many subjects in the curriculum of the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, which is taught from the first to the final years. The general English is taught in the first year and for English skills in preparing for careers in the tourism industry at Faculty of Economics and Tourism is taught in the second and third year. The students have opportunities to study English for four hours per week. Apart from their subject areas, the English language is often considered the essential tool for the students after they graduated, they could apply it for their real work.

Speaking skill is an important aspect to acquire when learning a second or foreign language, and the success of learning the language is measured from the performance of learners to speak the language learned. However, most people learning a language have a goal to be able to speak so that they can communicate. As Bailey and Savage, (1994) states that speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills. Thus, the demand of speaking

fluently is high rather than other language skills, although the others cannot be underestimated.

Listening is an everyday activity that has an important role in receiving information (Nushi & Orouji, 2020). Rost (2013) stated that listening refers to a complex process that allows people to comprehend spoken language. Not only is it an essential element of producing effective communication, it also helps people to understand the world (Rost 2013). Understanding does not depend just on what speakers say, as listeners have a vital role in understanding the listening process by applying their knowledge to what they hear to understand what speakers mean (Anderson, Anderson, & Lynch, 1988). However, there are several factors that may affect listeners, some of which they may not be able to control such as the background noise which may reduce listening comprehension (Sahlen, et al., 2020). Listeners are not able, for example, to influence the rate at which a speaker speaks, and may not be able to get them to repeat particular words or phrases. Moreover, the size of a learner's vocabulary can play a significant role in the listening process, since a restricted language will undermine comprehension. Finally, a speaker's use of signals or words as they move from one point to another may not be familiar to listeners (Underwood, 1989).

Reading is one of the four skills which needs to be learned besides listening, speaking, and writing. Reading has a considerable role in language teaching to strengthen the skills which are acquired by the students in listening, speaking, and writing (Maxom, 2009: 139). Reading skill affects the other skills' learning process. Besides, the students have to be able to achieve reading competencies as urged by the national curriculum.

Brown (2004: 187-188) says that explicit reading skills consist of two big elements, namely micro-skills and macro-skills. The micro-skills are presented below:

- 1) Discriminating among the distinctive graphemes and orthographic pattern of English.
- 2) Retaining chunks of language of different length in short-term memory.
- 3) Processing writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.
- 4) Recognizing a core of words and interpreting word order patterns and their significance.

5) Recognizing grammatical word classes (noun, verb, etc.), system (e.g., tense, agreement, and pluralization) patterns, rules, and elliptical forms.

6) Recognizing that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms.

7) Recognizing cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.

Voo Foo (2007) Writing in English language seems to be the most difficult language skill for EFL learners to acquire in academic contexts. English writing skill is complex one that needs not only time and practice in order to produce but also an interaction of various skills and knowledge; Moreover, Heaton stated that writing skills are complex and difficult to teach. It requires skill from five main areas: grammatical knowledge, mechanical skill, treatment of content, stylistic skill and judgment skills.

From the reasons mentioned above, the research team have set three objectives in this research 1) to find out the situation of using English skills of students at Faculty of Economics and Tourism Souphanouvong University. 2) To investigate preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry regarding speaking, reading, listening, and writing. 3) To suggest the further improvement of using English skills of students at Faculty of Economics and Tourism Souphanouvong University.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Instrument of the research

This questionnaire was employed to collect the data for this study. The questionnaire was developed based on the students' learning – teaching towards preparing the use of English for careers on tourism industry at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism. A set of questionnaires was translated into the Lao version in order to get accurate data from the participants. The questionnaire consisted of four main parts of collecting data. Part one, captured personal information, Part two, the situation of using English skills of students. Part three, preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry. And part four, suggest the possible ways for improving in using English skills of students. The data was calculated based on the five scales of score level of Likert: 5=strongly

agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree.

2.2 Data collection

The data collection was carried out as the following: First, the researchers wrote a request letter to the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Tourism to ask for permission to conduct the survey at Sounphanouvong University. After that, the researchers started to pilot the questionnaire with 32 students at the Department of Management at Faculty of Economics and Tourism on November 9th, 2022. After checking the results of piloted questionnaire for the reliability and validity, the researchers made some modification based on the results and conducted the survey by distributing the questionnaire to students in the Economics and Management Departments, Faculty of Economics and Tourism on December 7th, 2022. When the students returned the questionnaires, the researchers coded the questionnaires and inputted the data. Then the researchers analyzed the data based on the research questions.

2.3 Data Analysis

The researchers employed descriptive method to analyze the data. The data was manipulated for mean score, standard deviations, and percentages by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17 and Microsoft Excel 2017.

3. Results

3.1 Overall Results of situation of using English skills of students

Base on table 4.2.6 the respondents seemed to have a positive situation of using English skills towards speaking, listening, reading and writing as shown in table 4.1.6 It could be clearly seen that the mean score of each component was over 3.58. Particularly, listening and reading were rated high with mean score of 3.67 and 3.67 respectively. The other two aspects such speaking and writing were also rated high with the mean score of 3.53 and 3.44. However, the writing had the lowest mean score out of the other three aspects. This means that students that students use writing skill less from learning and daily life.

3.2 Overall Results of preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry towards Four Components.

Base on table 4.3.11 The respondents seemed to have a positive preparing of using

English skills towards speaking, listening, reading and writing as shown in table 4.5. It could be clearly seen that the mean score of each component was over 3.01. Particularly, listening and reading were rated high with mean score of 3.80 and 3.78 respectively. The other two aspects such speaking and writing were also rated high with the mean score of 3.74 and 3.72. However, the writing had the lowest mean score out of the other three aspects. This means that students that students use writing skill less from learning and daily life.

3.3 Overall Results of the further improvement of using English skills of students

Base on table 4.4.16 the respondents seemed to have a positive further improvement of using English skills towards speaking, listening, reading and writing as shown in table 4.16. It could be clearly seen that the mean score of each component was over 4.01. Particularly, speaking and writing were rated high with mean score of 4.20 and 3.98 respectively. The other two aspects such listening and reading were also rated high with the mean score of 3.94 and 3.91. However, the writing had the lowest mean score out of the other three aspects. This means that students that students could improvement writing skill because they have to use write e-mail, massage and letter in daily life.

4. Discussion

This research aims at the preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, Souphanouvong University. Therefore, the finding of the study can be discussed as the detail below:

The result revealed of the general information asked about the preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism found that reading skill was the highest impression from listening, speaking, and writing skills towards the situation of using English skills of students and preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry; The result is consistent with past research works, Hammer (1993) Reading skills become very important in the world of education. By reading, students may get beneficial information that is not given by teachers in the classroom. Furthermore, almost 50 percent of the national final examination

items consist of reading skills. Therefore, the students should be trained in order to have good reading skills. Harmer states that, reading is useful for language acquisition, because it is needed for a career, for study purposes, or simply for pleasure. Reading and understanding are the important things that we need to use in our daily life. Hudson explains that: Only by reading, people can acquire the speed and skill he will need for practical purpose when he leaves school. In our literate society, it is so hard to imagine any skilled work that does not require the ability to read. In other word, reading skill is very crucial to be mastered by language learners, especially for the junior high school students because it will be useful for them when they decide to continue their study.

In addition, the result was consistent with theoretical Grabe and Stoller (2002, p. 30) demonstrate the process of reading by indicating the basic steps involved in it. They examine reading comprehension under four subcategories namely 'purposes for reading', 'definitional processes involved in reading', 'processing components of reading', and 'models of reading'. Although readers' purposes may differ for reading, each reader is required to have at least one purpose to get involved in reading. Chastain (1988, p. 30-31) reveals that readers recreate the writer's intended meaning by activating their Reading Process 31 background and linguistic knowledge. This enables them to go beyond the text with the help of a variety of clues; therefore, they are able to see beyond the literal meaning of the words (Harmer, 2001). The result revealed that improving reading skills was suitable for the students' need as vocabulary, grammar, and syntax are all advanced by reading, which enhances one's ability to speak and write.

5. Conclusion

The study was carried out in order to find out the situation of using English skills of students at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, Souphanovong University". The results illustrated that the students at the Faculty had a positive response in preparing the use of English skills. However, most respondents claimed that they had Intermediate level, beginner and the Middle-aged level. For the situation of using English skills of students, the majority of the respondents agreed that the listening and reading used in learning and daily life and they

had basic English as it gained respectively. The other two aspects such speaking and writing were also rated high. For the preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry, the majority of the respondents agreed that the listening and reading used in learning and daily life and they had preparing English language skills for careers in the tourism industry as it gained respectively. The other two aspects such speaking and writing were also rated high. And the further improvement of using English skills of students towards preparing the use of English skills for careers in the tourism industry, the majority of the respondents agreed that the speaking and writing should practice all skills through speaking and writing to English by conversation with teacher and their friends in the classroom and foreigners. The participants should study by themselves in order to help them to learn better because four hours in class each week would not be adequately provided for them to improve their learning as it gained respectively. The other two aspects such listening and reading were also rated high.

6. Conflict of Interest

On behalf of researchers. We swear that all information contain in this journal is not conflict of interest with any party and does not benefit for any party, in case of any breach, we will be solely responsible.

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Table 4.2.6 Overall results of the four key components

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Speaking skill	48	117	108	33	6	3.53	0.93
2	Listening skill	32	123	121	30	6	3.67	1.22
3	Reading skill	52	143	85	27	5	3.67	0.88
4	Writing skill	42	110	117	39	6	3.44	0.92

Table 4.2.7 Distribution rates of response towards speaking skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Communicate in English with teachers and peers during the classroom activities	17	43	27	11	2	3.63	0.94
2	Question - answer in English when participating in student exchange meetings	12	35	43	9	2	3.46	0.86
3	Suggest guests about tourist attractions, food, drinks and accommodation in English	19	38	31	12	1	3.61	0.94
4	Communicate through the phone in English	14	34	37	14	2	3.43	0.95
5	Communicate, give information and advertise about tourism in English	15	38	35	8	4	3.54	0.96
Total		15	38	35	11	2	3.53	0.93

Table 4.2.8 Distribution rates of response towards listening skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Listen and understand the explanation of teacher towards lesson in English language	13	46	34	6	1	3.63	0.83
2	Listen to the news and understand well in English	7	42	40	9	2	3.54	1.86
3	Listen to the accent of guests speaking in English	11	37	39	11	3	3.42	0.91
4	Listen and understand the presentation about tourism	10	38	38	12	2	3.42	0.89
5	Can be able to listen and understand the conversation of tourists	10	36	43	10	2	3.41	0.87
Total		10	40	39	10	2	3.48	0.90

Table 4.2.9 Distribution rates of response towards reading skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	can be able to read the lesson in English	100	25	49	20	5	3.93	0.81
2	Read information about tourism in English through internet	17	47	28	8	1	3.70	0.87
3	Read the magazine of international conference in English	12	38	36	12	3	3.44	0.94
4	Read the brochures and billboards in English	14	47	30	7	2	3.64	0.86
5	Read story books and other books in English	15	49	23	11	2	3.65	0.92
Total		32	41	33	12	3	3.67	0.88

Table 4.2.10 Distribution rates of response towards writing skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Write some home works or presentations in English	15	41	33	9	1	3.59	0.90
2	Write/Respond E-mail/Messenger, WhatsApp, message, or Line in English	15	41	32	11	1	3.58	0.91
3	Write a report paper in English	3	14	40	29	13	3.33	0.98
4	Write an introduction about tourism site, description, and information in English	2	12	39	38	9	3.41	0.87
5	Write advertising brochures in English	3	15	42	29	11	3.29	0.95
	Total	8	25	37	23	7	3.44	0.92

Table 4.3.11 Overall results of the four key components

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Speaking	19	44	28	8	1	3.74	1.18
2	Listening	19	48	32	9	1	3.78	0.84
3	Reading	23	44	26	6	1	3.80	0.88
4	Writing	19	45	29	6	1	3.72	0.87

Table 4.12 Distribution rates of response towards speaking skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Prepare to practice the skill of speaking English fluently with correcting English accent, especially words related to tourism	23	45	27	4	1	3.84	0.86
2	Prepare to practice the presentation about the tourism in the meeting in English	17	40	33	9	1	3.63	0.89
3	Prepare to practice introducing guests to tourist attractions, food, drinks and the accommodation in English	19	45	27	7	1	3.87	2.39
4	Prepare to practice talking to guests over the phone in English	18	46	28	7	1	3.72	0.86
5	Prepare to practice welcoming guests, communicating, giving information, and advertising about tourism in oral English speaking	18	43	27	11	1	3.65	0.92
	Total	19	44	28	8	1	3.74	1.18

Table 4.14 Distribution rates of response towards reading skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Prepare to practice reading skill to pronounce correctly and fluently	30	42	24	3	1	3.98	0.85
2	Prepare to practice reading information on the Internet about tourism in English	20	46	27	6	1	3.76	0.87
3	Prepare to practice reading the journal of the international conference on tourism in English	20	42	29	9	1	3.70	0.92
4	Prepare to practice reading brochures and billboards in English	18	45	29	6	2	3.70	0.89
5	Prepare to practice reading English words, expressions, topic sentences about tourism	26	45	23	5	1	3.89	0.87
	Total	23	44	26	6	1	3.80	0.88

Table 4.15 Distribution rates of response towards writing skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Prepare to practice writing sentences, paragraphs, articles with correct structures and grammars	24	44	27	5	0	3.85	0.85
2	Prepare to practice responding E-mail/Messenger, WhatsApp, message, and Line in English	19	50	24	7	1	3.78	0.84
3	Prepare to practice writing skill about summary report in English	17	42	33	7	1	3.65	0.88
4	Prepare to practice writing skills for suggesting sites, describing introductions and providing information in English	16	45	32	6	1	3.68	0.83
5	Prepare to practice writing brochures about hotels and restaurants in English	18	43	28	8	3	3.66	0.94
Total		19	45	29	6	1	3.72	0.87

Note: 5= strongly agree; 4=agree; 3= neutral; 2=disagree; 1=strongly disagree

4.4 Overall Results of the further improvement of using English skills of students

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Speaking	41	42	14	2	0	4.20	0.79
2	Listening	31	42	23	4	1	3.94	0.83
3	Reading	26	48	22	4	0	3.91	0.80
4	Writing	29	45	21	4	1	3.98	0.84

Table 4.17 Distribution rates of response towards speaking skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Learn and practice pronunciation correctly	43	41	13	3	1	4.22	0.81
2	Practice speaking with English native speaker	39	41	17	2	0	4.16	0.80
3	study more new words and expressions	41	43	13	3	0	4.22	0.79
4	Practice listening a lot to understand how to speak	40	44	14	2	0	4.21	0.76
5	Practice speaking English in every day	41	43	12	3	0	4.21	0.80
Total		41	42	14	2	0	4.20	0.79

Table 4.18 Distribution rates of response towards listening skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Make eye contact with the speaker while listening	25	48	21	5	2	3.90	0.87
2	Imagine on what the speaker is saying while listening	27	48	22	4	0	3.98	0.79
3	Practice listening all the time	30	47	20	3	1	4.02	0.81
4	Listening time, do not interrupt until stop and question again	44	23	27	6	0	3.84	0.84

5	Listening time need to focus on speaker	30	43	23	4	0	3.98	0.82
	Total	31	42	23	4	1	3.94	0.83

Table 4.19 Distribution rates of response towards reading skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Practice reading by convenience	26	49	21	5	0	3.96	0.80
2	Do the general research before reading a book	26	47	23	5	0	3.93	0.81
3	Prepare to take notes on reading time	27	50	19	3	1	4.00	0.79
4	Take notes and make questions after reading	27	47	22	3	0	3.79	0.80
5	Summarize on what you have done on reading	23	47	26	4	0	3.88	0.8
	Total	26	48	22	4	0	3.91	0.80

Table 4.20 Distribution rates of response towards reading skills

Items	Contents	Rate of response %					Mean	SD
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Practice reviewing basic grammar and spelling English words	31	42	23	3	1	4.00	0.84
2	Practice reading English stories about what we are going to write	26	53	17	4	1	3.99	0.79
3	Practice re-reading several times each after writing	33	42	22	3	0	4.06	0.80
4	Writing time, need to think about the structure of English writing	27	47	21	6	0	3.93	0.85
5	Practice learning English words that necessary to write properly	30	42	22	5	1	3.93	0.90
	Total	29	45	21	4	1	3.98	0.84

Note: 5= strongly agree; 4=agree; 3= neutral; 2=disagree; 1=strongly disagree