

*A survey study of the needs, problems, and wants of students studying
in the World-Class Standard School Program
at Buengkan Secondary School*

Udom Nilsalai¹, Songsri Soranastaporn², Karansupamas Engchuan³

The Faculty of Liberal Arts, Mahidol University

*Nilsalai@hotmail.com*¹

*sctsp@nmahidol.ac.th*²

*fujianmanster@gmail.com*³

Abstract

The purposes of this study were to investigate and clarify the needs, problems, and wants of students studying in the World-Class Standard School Program at Buengkan Secondary School, Buengkan, Thailand. The sample of the present study comprised four groups: students (126), teachers (6), administrators (2), and parents (4). These participants were selected by the purposive sampling technique, and they were all involved in the World-Class Standard School Program. Three research tools were used to collect data: questionnaire, semi-structure interview, and focus group interview. Data were analyzed by using statistical devices and content analysis. The major findings were as follows. (a) The bilingual students needed to use all four English skills. (b) Both students and teachers faced big problems of using English while they were learning and teaching. Subject teachers of mathematics and sciences who were Thai native speakers could not communicate well in English well, so they could not transfer their knowledge efficiently in English. Finally, (c) students expressed the need to be prepared and trained in English well enough before they entered this program so they could understand the contents and participate in any learning activity in English efficiently. This study has implication for curriculum design and instructional delivery for the WCSS level students.

Keywords: *bilingual program, needs analysis, World-Class standard School, Buengkan Secondary School*

1. Introduction

Due to the wide acceptance of English as an international language, English is taught as a foreign language in over 100 countries such as China, Germany, Brazil, and Thailand (Crystal, 2003). In addition, Singapore, Malaysia, India, and the Philippines use English as an official language (Crystal, 2003; Nunan, 2003). Thailand also turns to focus on increasing English ability of Thai students.

In Thailand, students are required to study English as a subject in courses from the primary level until the tertiary level (Office of the National Education Commission, 2007). Presently, the Thai Ministry of Education encourages students to use English more by establishing World-Class Standard School Program (WCSSP). Specifically, the students who enroll in the WCSSP are required to study mathematics and science in English (Ministry of Education, 2010), and they are still required to study the Basic Education Core Curriculum which covers six learning areas: Thai language, social studies and religion and culture, health and physical education, arts, occupation and technology, and foreign languages. In addition, they have to study additional subjects such as theory of knowledge, extended essay, global education, and project-based learning because they are prepared for ASEAN in 2015.

Thai government has invested in and promoted an English program (EP), the Mini English program (MIP), and an International English program (IEP) so that Thai students will be educated internationally. All strong or good points of these programs were selected and used for establishing the new program, WCSSP, so this WCSSP has been set up since 2010 in 500 schools around Thailand. Young and new, unfortunately, WCSSP causes some problems and

difficulties for both students and teachers because English has to be a medium of communication for both science and mathematics. Though these problems were realized, both Thai government and concerns wanted to proceed and hope to correct or solve problems later. Therefore, it is essential for Buengkan Secondary School to explore the students' need in order to improve the WCSSP according to the students' needs and interests.

Thus, the objectives of this study are to investigate and clarify the needs, problems, and wants of the WCSSP students who study in grade 7, 8, 10, and 11 at Buengkan Secondary School in the 2011 academic year. More specifically, the study addresses the following research questions: (a) What are the WCSSP students' needs and problems in using English in their specialized study? (b) What are the students' wants regarding the purpose, content, and methodology of the WCSSP?

Needs Analysis or needs assessment is the process of (a) determining the needs of a learners or a groups of learners required a language and (b) arranging the needs according to priorities. According to Jordan (1997), to develop courses which are focused to learners, the first thing should be done is a needs analysis (NA). Moreover, NA can also be used for improving (a) syllabuses, (b) learning processes, (c) teaching methodology, and (d) course materials. This is in line with Brindley (1989) that to design any program NA is crucial and it should be done first before the language learning objectives are established. To conclude, to improve any language course to be efficient and suitable to students, it is essential to develop the NA. As a result, the conceptual framework of this study is conducted based on three theories: (a) four principles of Tyler (1949): objective, content, organization, and evaluation, (b) the ideas of four commonplaces of Schwab

(1969): learner, teacher, material, and content, and (c) the model of Needs Analysis of Hutchinson and Waters (1987).

2. Methodology

To collect comprehensive data, both qualitative and quantitative method were used.

2.1 Participants

The participants of this study were classified into four groups: students (126), teachers (6), administrators (2), and parents (87). These four groups were selected by the purposive sampling technique. All of them were asked to fill out the questionnaires. To provide further in-depth information four students who were the leaders of each class were selected to participate in semi-structure interview. Six of teachers, an administrator, and ten parents were also selected to participate in both semi-structured interview and focus group interview.

2.2 Instruments

In the present study, the mixed methods were employed; questionnaire, semi-structure interview and focus group interview were used as research tools.

The questionnaire used in this study was a modified version (Samawathdana, 2009) and permission was granted. Some questions were adapted and improved so that the new version would be suitable for the Buengkan Secondary School context. Two thesis advisors verified validity of this questionnaire. Then focus groups of students (8), parents (4), and teachers (4) were piloted and they were not representative of the actual participants of this study. Based on the results and the students' comments, the questionnaire was modified and finalized for large-scale data collection. This questionnaire was examined by the thesis advisors and experts.

According to Gillham (2005) and Creswell (2008), focus group interview refers to a small group of people, generally about 4 to 10 people, who come to have a meeting together and share their ideas or understanding for any purpose. In this study, the focus group interview was used to collect in-depth data from four stakeholders: students, teacher, administrators, and parents. Focus group interview was taped by a recorder and transcribed on the same day. See examples of questions as follows: To what extent are the communicative skills for students in the WCSSP needed? - What are the problems caused by students learning every subject in English while in the WCSS program? - What are the parents' expectations for the program?

Regarding the semi-structure interview, according to Gillham (2005), semi-structured interview refers to kind of an interview that can be flexible interview as it is balanced by structure and quality data are obtained. Two interviews in this study were conducted by face to face and telephone interviews. The semi-structure interview data obtained was used as (a) a guideline in drafting questionnaires and (b) in gathering in-depth data for analyzing the needs, problems, and wants. The interviews were voiced-recorded and then transcribed. The semi-structured interview questions were constructed following the framework derived from literature review (Tyler, 1949) for curriculum design which is composed of learning objectives, subject matter, teaching process, and assessment process. The questions for the semi-structured interviews were divided into three parts: (1) language skills needs, (2) language problems, and (3) learning objectives, contents, a teaching process, and an assessment process.

2.3 Validity and reliability

In this study, two types of validity were determined: content validity and

construct validity. For content validity, the questionnaires were constructed based on semi-structured interviews and literature review. It can therefore be claimed that this questionnaire is valid in terms of content validity. For construct validity, it is demonstrated by the creation of the instruments which were built from theoretical framework from the literature review. In order to ascertain its reliability of questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was employed, and its reliability was 0.91. Moreover, in order to increase the reliability of the qualitative data, the semi-structured interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim (Kirk, 1982; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997)

2.4. Distribution and Collection

There were three ways of gathering the data in this study. First, the semi-structured interview was taped by an audio recorder. The researcher interviewed the participants face to face or by telephone. Second, the questionnaires were given to students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Finally, a focus group interview was conducted and taped by the audio recorder. The location of the interview was in a school conference room. Date and time of interview were set by the participants. Each interview lasted thirty minutes. After the interview, the audio tape was transcribed and analyzed immediately on the same day.

2.5 Data analysis

All data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics: percentage, frequency distribution, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and weighted scores. The researcher also analyzed the data by using the three competencies for the interview analyst which were identified by Henderson (1995): organize disparate information into write and (b) they have to be good at grammar, structure, vocabulary. Students

categories, analyze key points that will support decision making, and detach self from the finding and report negative finding as good data for decision making.

3. Results

Three major results: needs, problems, and wants of the WCSS students in using English at Buengkan Secondary School are illustrated in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3.

According to Table 1, students considered all macro skills of learning English are their most needs. Particularly, they expressed that speaking and writing were their most needs, and listening and reading was the least. This result corresponded to the interview results that all macro skills are necessary because students had to answer questions in class and to write their homework.

According to Table 2, students rated that they have problems in using English for all four macro skills at the extremely level. Particularly, they expressed that speaking was their most problem, and reading was the least. The interview results revealed the same problems. Students said that they have problems in using all four English skills especially in the first semester because only English was used as a medium for communication in class. Later, in the second semester, both Thai and English were used as a medium for communication in class, and then students felt better and understood a little more.

Table 3 illustrated that students wanted reading most and speaking as the least. They wanted to be proficient in English. Referring to the objectives, content, and methodologies, they were rated at strong level to very strong level.

According to interview results, students need teachers to train writing for them because (a) students need to know what they are going to wanted both Thai and English to be used equally as a medium for communication in

class. After English ability of students was increases, English would play more roles than Thai for communication in class. Finally, after students are competent and proficient in English, then only English will be used in class. Students wanted Thai teachers who are able to use English as near native English speakers to teach subject such as mathematics, science, and others because if students did not understand, they could ask

and Thai teachers could explain in their mother language. Moreover, students wanted the contents of subject matter from knowledge teachers. Students also wanted native English speakers to teach only English subjects because native English speaker teachers were not trained or educated on other subject matters such as mathematics and science.

Table 1 The needs of the WCSS students in using English at Buengkan Secondary School

Present needs for	Mean	SD	Needs
1. Speaking	4.39	0.97	VE
2. Writing	4.33	1.04	VE
3. Listening	4.24	1.06	VE
4. Reading	4.23	1.08	VE
Present need for listening to			
○ Presentation	4.07	1.08	E
○ Lectures	4.06	1.05	E
○ News or Documentaries	3.89	1.13	E
○ Music and Movies	3.69	1.14	E
○ Telephone	3.66	1.16	E
○ You Tube	3.6	1.27	E
○ Advertisements	3.41	1.17	E
○ Chat	3.34	1.26	M
○ Skype	3.22	1.32	M
Present need for speaking to			
○ Skype	3.27	1.28	M
○ Chat	3.52	1.16	E
○ Asking /Answering in class	4.13	0.99	E
○ Discussing in Class Especially With Foreign	4.24	1.07	VE
○ Presentation in class	4.28	0.86	VE
○ General Conversation	4.3	0.97	VE
Present need for reading to			
○ Questions on the test or Exercises	4.38	0.91	VE
○ Textbooks	4.36	0.95	VE
○ Novel, short stories, advertisement, or News	3.87	1.12	E
○ News or Magazine	3.86	1.12	E
○ Internet Information e.g. website, Blog, MSM	3.84	1.17	E
○ E-mail	3.71	1.19	E
Present need for writing			
○ Wh-&Yes/No Questions	4.32	0.97	VE
○ Compound & Complex sentences	4.27	1.02	VE
○ Simple Sentences	4.1	1.09	E
○ Taking Note	4.05	1.17	E
○ Summary	4.03	1.16	E
○ Letters	3.87	1.17	E
○ Report/Project	4.13	1.1	E
○ Essay	4.08	1.13	E
○ E-mail	3.8	1.12	E
○ Blog	3.63	1.16	E
○ MSM	3.61	1.2	E

(N=221)_Note: VE= Very Extensive, E = Extensive, M = Moderate

Table 2 The WCSS students' problems in using English at Buengkan Secondary school

Problem for	Mean	SD	Needs
1. Speaking	3.67	1.23	E
2. Listening	3.59	1.21	E
3. Writing	3.58	1.23	E
4. Reading	3.38	1.26	E
Problem for listening to			
○ Lectures	3.61	1.27	E
○ Presentation	3.57	1.27	E
○ News or Documentaries	3.32	1.3	M
○ Telephone	3.19	1.28	M
○ Skype	3.15	1.27	M
○ Advertisements	3.13	1.28	M
○ Chat	3.08	1.27	M
○ Music and Movies	3.02	1.29	M
○ You Tube	2.95	1.35	M
Problem for speaking to			
○ Asking /Answering in class	3.51	1.15	E
○ Discussing in Class Especially With Foreign	3.87	1.12	E
○ Presentation in class	3.64	1.12	E
○ General Conversation	3.52	1.2	E
○ Chat	3.25	1.17	E
○ Skype	3.16	1.26	M
Problem for reading to			
○ Textbooks	3.44	1.19	E
○ Questions on the test or Exercises	3.43	1.2	E
○ News or Magazine	3.43	1.24	E
○ Novel, short stories, advertisement, or News	3.34	1.3	M
○ Internet Information e.g. website, Blog, MSM	3.29	1.26	M
○ E-mail	3.23	1.28	M
Problem for writing to			
○ Wh-&Yes/No Questions	3.5	1.2	E
○ Simple Sentences	3	1.23	M
○ Compound & Complex sentences	3.95	1.15	E
○ Report/Project	3.86	1.19	E
○ Essay	3.77	1.31	E
○ Summary	3.68	1.26	E
○ Letters	3.58	1.29	E
○ Taking Note	3.46	1.33	E
○ E-mail	3.41	1.21	E
○ Blog	3.31	1.25	M
○ MSM	3.2	1.29	M

(N=221)_Note: VE= Very Extensive, E = Extensive, M = Moderate

Table 3 Wants of the WCSS students at Buengkan Secondary School in using English

Wants for	f	%	Rank	
○ Reading	68	31	1	
○ Writing	58	26	2	
○ Listening	50	23	3	
○ Speaking	45	20	4	
Wants for objectives	Mean	SD	α	Wants
○ To use English language as the native English	4.67	0.6	0.8	VS
○ To be able to pass the entrance examination	4.66	0.6	0.8	VS
○ To use English as a medium of learning	4.48	0.7	0.8	VS
○ To be able to study in an international	4.44	0.8	0.8	VS
Wants for content				
○ From Thai and foreign texts (cover of	4.29	1	0.6	VS
○ Culture of native speaker should be added	4.25	0.9	0.6	VS
○ History or Knowledge on native speaker of	4.19	0.8	0.6	S
○ From foreign texts relating with curriculum of	4.04	0.9	0.6	S
○ From Thai textbooks only	3.84	1.1	0.6	S
Wants for methodology				
○ Learning by doing	4.42	0.8	0.8	VS
○ Intergraded across subjects	4.35	0.9	0.8	VS
○ Class discussion	4.08	1	0.8	S
○ Searching information to prepare presentation	3.89	0.9	0.8	S
○ Lecturing	3.83	1	0.8	S
○ Experiential learning from outside the	4.39	0.8	0.8	VS
○ Problem-based	3.97	1	0.8	S
○ Project-based	3.77	1	0.8	S
Wants for learning activities				
○ Group work	4.38	0.8	0.7	VS
○ Outside classroom activities	4.35	0.9	0.7	VS
○ Inside classroom activities	4.23	0.8	0.7	VS
○ Pair work	4.07	1	0.7	S
○ Individual work	3.58	1.3	0.7	S
Wants for teaching techniques				
○ Telling joke to relaxing during the instruction	4.45	0.8	0.8	VS
○ Computer aid instruction	4.28	1	0.8	VS
○ Using song to memorizing vocabularies	4.2	1	0.8	S
○ Role play	4.19	0.9	0.8	S
○ Using drama/play	3.95	1.1	0.8	S
Wants for assessment and evaluation by				
○ Deciding the learners performance by	4.42	0.9	0.9	VS
○ Considering corporative learning among the	4.38	0.7	0.9	VS
○ Testing	4.33	0.8	0.9	VS
○ Tasks, worksheet and portfolio	4.33	0.8	0.9	VS
○ Deciding the learners performance by using	4.24	0.9	0.9	VS
○ Observing learners development	4.14	0.9	0.9	S
Wants for instructors				
○ Want Thai teacher and foreigner teachers to	4.39	0.9	0.7	VS
○ Want the teacher to use English ...% while	4.36	0.9	0.7	VS
○ Want the teacher to use English 50% while	4.29	0.9	0.7	VS
○ want native English teacher to teach grammar	4.13	0.9	0.7	S
○ Want Thai teacher who are able to use	4.11	1	0.7	S
○ Want Thai teacher to teach grammar	3.89	1.2	0.7	S
○ Want only native English teacher to teach	3.83	1.1	0.7	S
○ Want only native English teacher to teach	3.78	0.9	0.7	S
○ Want the teacher to use English 100% while	3.73	0.9	0.7	S

(N=221)_Note: VE= Very Extensive, E = Extensive, M = Moderate

4. Discussion

Buengkan Secondary School carried out NA in order to design a curriculum and provide learning and teaching processes which need to meet students' needs and interests. According to Hutchison and Waters (1987), if students' needs can be met, the students can learn faster and better.

Needs: The overall results for students' needs were found that students needed all four major skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) at very high level. This results are congruent with previous studies (Khemateerakul, 1996; Samawathdana, 2009; Sai-Ngam, 2010, Eslami, 2010). All of four skills are equally important for them. In addition, the teachers, from focus group interview, agreed that student are always required to practice all four skills in order to understand lectures, answer questions, read textbooks, and take note in English. This might be explained by the fact that students in the WCSSP have to use all communicative skills to learn English and other subjects in English.

Problems: All four macro skills are problems and difficulties for students, and this result is matched to Khemateerakul (1996) and Samawathdana (2009). This may be cause by lack of preparation. Students are not prepared well in English before they enter this WCSSP. They just graduated from Thai regular program, and then they jumped into WCSSP according to the policy of Thai government. This policy aims to prepare students to enter ASEAN. To do so, English language ability of Thai students is crucial because English is an official language for communication. Thus, the first thing to be done is to increase English proficiency of students. This WCSSP is launched in a short time, so many things need to be

improved and changed to solve problems and make it better. For example, provide chances to practice all four skills both inside and outside classroom for students.

Wants: The results of the students' wants revealed that reading was ranked as the most important skill, and the second one was the writing. This can be explained that among the four macro skills, students may think that reading was easier than other skills because when they are assigned to do homework or any reading assignment, they just read and answer the questions. On the other hand, listening skills are considered as more difficult because students have to be familiar with tone, with sounds, and they have to know vocabulary and master English usage. Students wanted to speak well, so they can communicate well. Thus, students have to practice pronunciation, know a lot of vocabulary, and be confident in speaking. Students wanted to write well, and they cannot learn or master by themselves because writing is a complex and difficult process for both native English and non-native English students.

5. Conclusion

Needs analysis is an essential step for planning any educational program or course syllabus because the results of NA will be used as a guideline for teachers, course developers, or administrators to plan, design, and construct the most suitable program or syllabus for any specific group of learners. Therefore, NA is encouraged to be conducted first, and then courses are developed.

6. Reference

- [1] Brindley, G. (1984). *Needs analysis and objective setting in the adult migrant education program*. Sydney: N.S.W. Adult migrant education service.
- [2] Brindley, G. (1989). *The role of needs analysis in adult ESL program design*. In R.K. Johnson (ED), *The second language curriculum*, (pp.63-78). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- [3] Cresswell, J. W. (2008). *Education research: plan, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, N. J: Pearson/Merril Prentice Hall.
- [4] Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- [5] Eslami, R. (2010). *Teachers' voice vs. Students' voice: A Needs Analysis Approach to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in Iran*. Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture. Texas A & M University College Station, Texas, U.S.A.
- [6] Gillham, B. (2005). *Research interviewing: the range of techniques*. Maidenhead: Open University.
- [7] Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [8] Jordan, R. R. (1997). *English for academic purpose: a guide and resource book for teachers*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- [9] Khemateerakul, B. (1996). *Needs Analysis as a basic for improvement of intensive English courses of the international program at Bangkok University*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Mahidol University, Nakhonpathom, Thailand.
- [10] Kirk, R. E. (1982). *Experimental design: Procedures for the behavioral sciences*. CA: Brooks/Cole Belmont.
- [11] McMillan, H. J., & Schumacher, S. (1989). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction*. Glenview, IL: Scott. Foreman.
- [12] McMillan, H. J., & Schumacher, S. (1997). *Research in education: a conceptual introduction*. USA: Addison Welsley Longman.
- [13] Ministry of Education. (2010). *The World-Class Standard School*. Thailand.
- [14] Nunan. D. (2003). *The Impact of English as a Global Language on Educational Policies and Practices in the Asia-Pacific Region*. The University of HongKong, HongKong, Special Administrative Region. China.
- [15] Office of the National Education Commission. (2007). *Education in Thailand 2007*. Retrieved June, 30, 2008, from http://www.moe.go.th/icpmoe/twolan_guage_school/policy.

[16] Samawathdana, R. (2009). *A study of the needs, problems, and wants of students studying in the bilingual program at Winit Secondary School*. Published Master's Thesis, Faculty of Graduate studies, Mahidol University, Nakhonpathom. Thailand.

[17] Sai-ngam, K. (2010). *Needs Analysis of business Korean as a specific language course for Thai students*. Published Master's Thesis, Faculty of Graduate studies, Mahidol University, Nakhonpathom. Thailand.

[18] Schwab, J. J. (1969). *The practical: A language for curriculum*. *School Review* 78(10), 1-3.

[19] Tyler, R. W. (1949). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Acknowledgement: Researchers would like to thanks Assistant Professor Maurice Broughton for correcting language.

