

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Historical Background

Regarding the reform of higher education in Thailand, the goal of the reform is to enable higher education to be an effective mechanism empowering Thailand to become a knowledge-based society. Thailand Quality Framework for Higher Education (TQF) was announced by Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) in July 2009. OHEC supervised colleges and universities in Thailand to set learning outcomes of curriculum according to TQF policy. The framework groups the kinds of learning expected of students into five domains and describes learning outcomes at each level in each of these groupings. The domains are:

- 1) Ethical and Moral Development: Development of: -Habits of acting ethically and responsibly in personal and public life in ways that are consistent with high moral standards. Ability to resolve value conflicts through application of a consistent system of values.
- 2) Knowledge, the ability to understand, recall and present information including: Knowledge of specific facts, -Knowledge of concepts, principles and theories and - Knowledge of procedures.
- 3) Cognitive skills, the ability to - apply knowledge and understanding of concepts, principles, theories and procedures when asked to do so; analyze situations and apply conceptual understanding of principles and theories in critical thinking and creative problem solving when faced with unanticipated new situations
- 4) Interpersonal skills and responsibility, the ability to; -work effectively in groups, and exercise leadership; -accept personal and social responsibility, and -plan and take responsibility for their own learning.
- 5) Analytical and communication skills, the ability to -use basic mathematical and statistical techniques, -communicate effectively in oral and written form, and use information and communications technology.

Sangnapaboworn (2003) said that higher education institutions are highly expected to take leadership in showing right direction for the development of the country, give warning of crisis and solve problems for society. However, the teaching and learning in higher education institutions are perceived as having placed too much emphasis on memorization and contents, which do not relate to the real situation, labor demand and the development policy of the country. Students are not sufficiently cultivated with necessary skills for self-learning, critical thinking, problem solving and creative ability. There should be a reform of teaching and learning as well as curriculum reform to enable the learners to acquire critical thinking skills, problem-solving skill; a desire for lifelong learning; ability to create new tasks; self-adjustment to the world of work; self-dependence; and capability of attaining social benefits (Sangnapaboworn, 2003). The curriculum in higher education should be designed and developed to provide university graduates with desirable balance regarding knowledge, critical thinking, capability, virtue and social responsibility that will prepare them to adapt to a rapidly changing society. Education and work should not be separated from each other, so the curriculum should be work-oriented and tailor-made to suit the interests of students.

In this era of globalization, the most important language being used among countries, institutions and individuals all over the world is the English language. English has come to be considered globally as the international or global language. At the same time, the world trend has become focused on internationalization in almost every area due to the challenges of global competitiveness (John E. Joseph, 2001). Although Thai students have learned English in formal education for at least ten years before they graduate from the universities, recent research on the proficiency of the graduates suggests that the English language curriculum in Thai schools and universities has not been meeting the demands for workplace (Wiriyaichitra, 2002; Keyurawong, 2002). So, the teaching-learning of English at the tertiary level should emphasize learner-centeredness that allows learners to develop according to their own pace and potential. Teachers should be transformed themselves from materials users to teaching material creators in order to promote learners' constructive self-learning (Nonkukhetkhong et al, 2006). With regard to developing academic language, students are expected to access and process information, and to construct knowledge in both spoken and written forms. This includes the use of appropriate learning strategies to acquire, construct and apply academic knowledge, to develop critical skills, and to promote life-long learning (Commission on Higher Education, 2002).

Maejo University, as an institution of higher education that has an important role in building manpower fully equipped to meet employer expectations which conforms to the National Education Act of B.E 2542 (1999). Maejo University policy recognizes the goal of educating students to become life-long learners, productive citizens and leaders in society as well as preparing students for the real world and for employment. Faculty members are encouraged to adopt a student-centered learning approach to improve student learning and develop the quality of graduates that meets the Thai Qualification Framework (TQF) set by the Office of Higher Education Commission.

However, the report on the satisfaction of stakeholders towards Maejo University graduates of the year 2010 indicated that Maejo University graduates needed improvement in these following areas of learning: professional knowledge and skills, English language proficiency, analytical thinking ability, writing, self-direction, and social responsibility. The stakeholders encouraged the university to develop the curriculum and instruction to enhance the knowledge and abilities of all students and improve the skills and competencies needed in the world of work. Hence, Assistant Professor Dr. Jamnian Yosraj, the President of Maejo University has urged faculty members to improve the academic quality of the courses as well as promote new kinds of learning that include developing skills in communication, teamwork, higher order thinking, moral thinking and lifelong learning. Assessments should demonstrate graduates' ability to apply their learning to real world challenges. The projects or tests should integrate problem-solving, writing, and analytical thinking skills. Most importantly, the MJU president emphasized that English language courses should be developed to enhance students' English language proficiency to prepare them for the ASEAN Community in late 2015.

The researcher, as an English lecturer controlling the English for Social Sciences course offered at for Political Science students at Maejo University – Phrae campus, had found that most students who studied in this course had a low level of English proficiency. Based on the discussion with other English lecturers, it was revealed that the course was not relevant to students' needs. As English for Social Sciences course was regarded as an English for Academic purposes, the course should be designed to provide a group of students a specific range of English skills in order to succeed in their academic or careers. Political Science students learn through English language materials common

rather than specific concerns to society and politics. This failed to arouse the student's enthusiasm. Moreover, some lecturers still possessed more traditional method of teaching. Focus was on language forms and structures. Students sat quietly and took notes, the teacher fully controlled the classroom and learning activities. The multiple-choice tests were usually used to assess student learning. The lecturer said that multiple-choice test was easy to score, and students could guess the correct easily. From the informal interviews with some students, they felt that this course had not prepared them to for their life beyond the classroom. They lacked interest or motivation to learn as they did not know how to use language learned in the real world, they were bored and unwilling to learn.

Besides from the problem of English proficiency, most of students lack analytical thinking skill. This is in line with teachers responding to a Suan Dusit poll which revealed that the weak point of Thai education is that students still fail to develop analytical thinking skills and language proficiency. (MCOT.net 8 January, 2013). Although critical thinking is essential and must be instilled in the curriculum at all levels, it has not been taught extensively; the teaching methods do not foster critical thinking in the students. Many students do little to analyze a text or transfer their analysis to their writing. In today's media environment that is heavily influenced by political ideology, and students often unconsciously adopt positions without exploring alternative interpretations.

In response to the problem mentioned, the curriculum of English for Social Sciences course needed to be developed to meet students' needs and support their continued development. Students should be provided with academic English skills, analytical thinking ability, as well as value and attitude important for their life, their work, and their personal, social and cognitive growth (Mollaei. F. & Rahnema,H., 2012, p.2696). Faculty roles are changing from lecturing to being primarily "designers of learning methods and environments" (Barr and Tagg 1995, cited in Fink 2003). Brookfield (1985) argues that the role of teachers is to "facilitate" the acquisition of knowledge, not "transmit" it, and recommends that the goal of education shift from an emphasis on comprehensive coverage of subject matter to helping students develop their own intellectual tools and learning strategies.

Recent approaches to foreign language education emphasizes the significance of the students' own contributions to their language learning through initiative-taking and active involvement. Students need to take charge of their learning in order to enhance their autonomy as students and language users (Kohonen, V., 2001). Students need to be facilitated to develop a basic reflective orientation by working on their experiences, beliefs and assumptions of language and learning. Students become active learners through a hands-on approach to their disciplines. Experiential learning was considered as one approach with great potential to be applied for developing the curriculum of English for Social Sciences. Experiential learning approach involves teaching and learning by experience and generally through the dynamics of a group process. Outcomes are defined in the existential moment of learning.

Experiential learning is based on the principle theories supporting student- centered learning that included: constructivism learning theory, constructionism, and humanistic learning theory. Constructivism views learning as an active knowledge construction process. The constructivism learning theory argues that learning is an active process of constructing knowledge based on personal experiences in a specific context. Learners continuously test these hypotheses through social negotiation and bring past experiences and cultural factors to any situation. Learners produce knowledge and form meaning based upon their experiences (Teachnology.Inc. , 2014). Constructionism asserts that knowledge is not simply transmitted from teacher to student. Instead, student must build their own knowledge and meaning through experience. Moreover, constructionism suggests that new ideas are most likely to be created when learners are actively engaged in building some type of external artifact that they can reflect upon and share with others. (Seungyeon Han and Kakali Bhattacharya, 2001). Humanistic learning theory assumes that each individual is unique and each has a desire to grow positively. In experiential learning, based on humanistic psychology, learning is founded on the experiences and self-reflection of the learner (Von Wright 1997).

Experiential learning models owe much to Dewey (1938), who included a cycle of learning and experience in his scientific method. According to Dewey, learners become aware of a problem, develop an idea to solve it, try out a response, experience the consequences, and confirm or modify their previous knowledge (Lewis& Williams,

1994 cited in Fleming, D. & Walter, P.,2004)). Experiential learning is based on students being directly involved in a learning experience rather than their being recipients of ready-made content in the form of lectures. It involves observing the phenomenon and doing something meaningful with it through an active participation. It emphasizes learning in which the learner is directly in touch with the phenomenon being studied, rather than just watching it or reading, hearing or thinking about it (Kolb 1984; Kohonen 2001).

The most well-known model of experiential learning is based on Kolb's learning cycle (1984) which contains four phases of learning. A learner should experience all four phases, in sequence, but the start of the sequence can begin anywhere in the cycle. The four phases are: 1) concrete experience (learning by experience). It begins with doing something in which the individual, team or organization are assigned a task. Therefore, key to learning is active involvement; 2) reflective observation (learning by reflecting) . This means taking time-out from doing and stepping back from the task and reviewing what has been done and experienced. At this stage lots of questions are asked and communication channels are opened to others members of the team; 3) abstract conceptualization (learning by thinking) is the process of making sense of what has happened and involves interpreting the relationships between them. At this stage the learner makes comparisons between what they have done, reflect upon and what they already know. They may draw upon theory from textbooks for framing and explaining events, models they are familiar with, ideas from colleagues, previous observations, or any other knowledge that they have developed.; 4) active experimentation (learning by doing). The final stage of the learning cycle is when the learner considers how they are going to put what they have learnt into practice. Planning enables taking the new understanding and translates it into predictions as to what will happen next or revise the way a task is to be handled (Richard Mobbs).

Experiential learning is a well-known model in education and also contributes to language learning. Teaching practices derived from experiential philosophy have the potential to give public voice to those who have been marginalized, to empower those who are fearful or shy, and to increase learners' ownership and responsibility for their

own learning (Wallerstein, 1983). Through adapting experiential learning methods to current ESL teaching situations, teachers can help learners to form positive identities of themselves as successful language- learners and thus perhaps ease the often frustrating task of learning a new language. Kohonen (1992) applied Kolb's (1984) classic general model of experiential learning and developed a second language acquisition pedagogy around it. In Kohonen's cycle of experiential language learning which applied from Kolb's experiential learning model, students progress through an experiential second language learning cycle where they a) are exposed to meaningful use of language in natural context, b) make their own observations and reflect on possible rules or generalizations of language usage (awareness of the rules), c) are formally presented with correct usage rules (explicit rules), and d) experiment with new aspects of language usage employing these rules (new experiential data). Taken together, these processes comprise intake and lead to input (Fleming, D. & Walter, P., 2004).

To prepare graduates for living and working in a diverse society, curriculum should empower students with proficiency in reading and writing in English language in order that they could read, write, research and organize information in English. However, as students are getting exposed to a vast amount of information at an increasing rate, they must develop skills not only examine logical relationships between statements but also construct argument, respect different points of views and be flexible to change their way of thinking. One of the abilities that students need to develop in order to succeed in the information age is analytical thinking. Students need to think deeply about issues, solve problems creatively, work in teams, communicate clearly in many media, learn ever-changing technologies, and deal with information. Experiential learning is an approach that can enhance students' language ability and analytical thinking ability. When a person engages in an activity, reviews the activity critically, abstracts some useful insights from the analysis, and applies the results in a practical situation, experiential learning occurs. It allows students to explore the analytical thinking process and not just right or wrong answers by participating in and reflecting on the process by which they weigh evidence and information and reach conclusions. Experiential learning prepares students to function more effectively in careers and communities after graduation

because students encounter real-world scenarios that often involve complex scenarios that require adaptable application of fundamental concepts (Kolb, 1984, Eyler, 2009).

A multitude of researcher in TESOL emphasize that students' critical thinking skills can be foster through writing assignments (Talha Abdullah Al Sharadgah, 2014). Writing is a vehicle through which students can express their critical thinking. Olson (1984) proposed that by helping students become better thinkers, they should be enabled to become better writers and vice –versa. Writing in the disciplines of Social Sciences demands many distinct form of writing. Some assignment calls for persuasion of some kind. Some assignment asks students to describe the facts of a case and the issue at hand. The other assignment asks students to explain “why” the outcome occurred. Some assignments call for prescriptions to formulate a course of action. So, writing in Social Sciences involves data collected and analysis. However, since there is little help available to assist students in learning to integrate the new language and knowledge of their varying disciplines with the different structures and mechanics required in the diverse genres and rhetorical modes they meet in their disciplines, students have difficulty in writing essays, and in expressing themselves coherently. They have problem in expressing one's thoughts when purposes and audiences vary. Hence, experiential learning model should be used to facilitate students' cognitive development and enhance their paragraph writing ability, especially a cause and effect paragraph, a problem – solution paragraph, a persuasive paragraph, and a conflict –resolution paragraph. Since writing is a process that implies a thinking process and presenting the product of such thinking development. By exercising writing, students gave the opportunity to empower their thinking skills as they must analyze and solve the problem of how to give coherent meaning to their ideas when communicating them. Students who develop thinking skills can communicate their ideas and their perceptions of the world effectively (Valeska, H. & Corrales, L., 2010).

Today, there is a trend for incorporating technology into the classrooms to support instructional learning methods. Communication and information technology can be a useful tool in the development of autonomous learning. Integrating e-learning applications in experiential learning process helps motivate students because they actively engage with the content, the instructor, their peers, and themselves in an

ongoing process of meaningful discovery (The Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo). Technology is becoming more widespread in the language learning classroom. It encourages students to learning by collaboration and participation and students become really engaged when they use a real-life method of learning (Saxena,S. 2013). Social networking tools, such as Google Docs and Facebook are effective e-learning tools that help encourage an autonomous learning within a social environment for students. Google Docs, a free word document service provided by Google, facilitates students' collaborative writing in English language classroom. Students can all write at once in the body of the document, and can use the comment features or chat function to talk to each other and plan their ideas. With the use of Google Docs, students not only have stronger motivation to write collaboratively, but also their higher order thinking skills, such as evaluating and commenting on peers' written work can be enhanced (Chi Cheung Ruby Yang, 2010). Facebook, an online social networking service that allows users to connect with friends and family and make new connections, facilitates information sharing, interaction and collaboration among their users. Facebook can be a very useful tool in the classroom as they promote both target language use while also promoting learner autonomy among language students (Promnitz-Hayashi, L. ,2011). Facebook can help keep topics grouped together in one place. Students can read, discuss, attach links, share photos and videos, send private messages, or chat online synchronously. As a result of students forming their own discussions on Facebook this enabled the learning to become student-centered and students are able to develop not only their computer literacy but also their social competencies. According to a Baylor University study, students who participated in the Facebook group scored higher on quizzes, wrote stronger papers and did better on exams than classmates who did not take part. Facebook group helped transform students from anonymous spectators into a community of active learners (Baylor University, 2014). The use of online discussions promotes the development of analytical thinking skills (MAcKnight,2000). Internet-based communication provides a social context for learning that gives students time to think about their contributions and organize their thoughts before responding. It is believed that developing students' ability to reflect on their own learning process can help them progress in learning, thinking, and enable

them to reach higher levels of language proficiency (Talha Abdullah Al Sharadgah, 2014).

Nowadays, the inflow of foreign culture through mass media and information technology, with no filtering and selection of what is good, result in a decline of morality of Thai students. It is found that university graduates have faced with their emotion and ethics (Bangthamai, E., 2010). They cannot control their self-temper and unable to adapt themselves to work with others. Public consciousness of tradition and hospitality have declined, causing problems of discipline, social cohesion, respect of the rights of others and civic mindedness (Summary of the Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan, 2012-2016). The primary goals of education should be enabling students to gain knowledge and moral awareness. Students need to prepare themselves to be good citizens in society. Experiential learning is an approach that helps enhancing educational experience as well as moral thinking and action. As experiential learning emphasizes direct, hands-on involvement as a catalyst to learning, this gives students a real awareness of relevant social issues. It provides a setting for student to share ideas on how to provide and share meaningful experiences that will not only prompt learning but will challenge our actions in relation to the world. Students will learn best when they are put into applied situations rather than passively receiving information (Kelli J. Schutte, Lori Wetmore, 2012). The real-world situation that students experience and engage helps students to identify deeply with what they are learning, contributing to their development as persons who demonstrate a commitment for the shared values that lead to a students' personal growth (Glennon, 2004). Students will increase their self-esteem, confidence, personal responsibility, and sense of personal efficacy through the learning that happens in their experience.

There are evidences that show the effectiveness of experiential learning for example, Sirikhan, S. (2001) had developed English experiential learning lessons using experiential learning stages to enhance English writing skill of 34 students at Nawamindrachutit Payap school. The findings revealed that the English experiential learning lessons were very effective. Students' writing ability was at the high satisfactory level. In 2008, Matthew L. Bernacki and Elizabeth Jaeger conducted a research on service-learning's (SL) impact on students' moral development with 46

students at a northeastern Catholic university. It was found that students reported becoming more compassionate and more sensitive, having a greater understanding of and ability to solve social problems, and possessing a greater efficacy to make the world better. Moreover, Soontornwipast, K. (2008) conducted a study to investigate the use of the experiential learning model in training English teachers at a Thai University. The results showed that the participants recognized the benefits of the model in promoting their higher-order thinking skills.

The researcher viewed that language course should not only provide language skills needed for students, but the elements of analytical thinking, problem-solving and moral awareness or social responsibility should be incorporated to train students in new easy to think and learn. Integrating experiential learning into English for Social Science curriculum would contribute the development of student in all aspects: knowledge, skills, and morality. Google Docs, and Facebook are selected to support reflection opportunities, collaborative learning, and interpersonal connections. Experiential e-learning through mobile phone provides a range of opportunities for students to connect, experience, reflect, and create together. Prepare students for global society. Students learn to learn, to think, and to communicate. Learning is an activity that can happen anywhere. The researcher was interested in developing the curriculum of English for Social Science course by using experiential learning with e-learning. Students could benefit more from authentic content integrates into language materials. The written assignment also enabled the students to express their viewpoints on socio-political matters and at the same time improve their paragraph writing ability , analytical thinking ability and moral awareness. The results of the study will be a guideline for development of other courses offered at Maejo University and its campus as well.

1.2 Research Questions

- 1.2.1 Is the curriculum of English for Social Sciences course developed by using experiential learning with e-learning effective?
- 1.2.2 Does the curriculum of English for Social Sciences course using experiential learning with e-learning help enhance students' paragraph writing ability?

- 1.2.3 Does the curriculum of English for Social Sciences course using experiential learning with e-learning help increase students' analytical thinking ability?
- 1.2.4 Does the curriculum of English for Social Sciences course using experiential learning with e-learning help increase students' moral awareness?

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of this research were as follows:

- 1.3.1 To develop the curriculum of English for Social Sciences course using experiential learning with e-learning;
- 1.3.2 To investigate students' paragraph writing ability after learning through the English for Social Sciences course using experiential learning with e-learning;
- 1.3.3 To investigate students' analytical thinking ability after learning through the English for Social Sciences course using experiential learning with e-learning;
- 1.3.4 To investigate students' moral awareness after learning through the English for Social Sciences using experiential learning with e-learning;

1.4 Scope of the Study

1.4.1 Target Group

The target group of this research was a group of 88 students majoring in Political Science enrolled in GE-245 course in the first semester of the 2013 academic year at Maejo University – Phrae Campus.

1.4.2 Variables

Independent variable in this study is experiential learning with e-learning.

Dependent variables are:

1. Students' paragraph writing ability which included these following paragraphs: a cause and effect paragraph, a problem – solution paragraph, a persuasive paragraph, and a conflict – resolution paragraph.
2. Students' analytical thinking ability
3. Students' moral awareness

1.4.3 Content

The content used in this research derives from various texts and websites such as Andrew Goatly. (2000). *Critical Reading and Writing: An Introductory Coursebook*. London: Routledge; *Principles of Critical Reading and Writing*. (Online). Available <http://www.criticalreading.com/principles.htm>; Daniel J. Kurland, (2010). *How the Language Really Works: The Fundamentals of Critical Reading and Effective Writing*. (<http://www.criticalreading.com/>); Larry Wright. (2001). *Critical Thinking: An Introduction to Analytical Reading and Reasoning*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

1.5 Definition of Important Terms

Development of English for Social Sciences curriculum refers to the process of the curriculum development of English for Social Sciences which is a compulsory course in general education group to meet the needs of students in Political Science major of Maejo University. The process of curriculum development is based on Taba's curriculum development model that comprises of seven major steps: 1) diagnosis of need; 2) Formulation of objectives; 3) selection of content; 4) organization of content; 5) selection of learning experiences; 6) organization of learning activities; and 7) evaluation of the English for Social Sciences curriculum.

Experiential learning refers to a learning process which students develop knowledge, skills and values through the transformation of experience. Students are encouraged to engage actively to learn through doing, and reflect on the activities, which empowers them to apply what they learn in the classroom in a real world setting. The experiential approaches focused in this study include: 1) problem-based learning; 2) service learning; and 3) active learning. The experiential learning model used is from Kolb's experiential learning cycle which comprised 4 phases: 1) concrete experience, 2) reflective observation, 3) abstract conceptualization, and 4) active experimentation.

E-learning refers to the use of electronic technology to enhance experiential learning or to facilitate personal experiential learning activities. In this study, the researcher uses Facebook and Google Docs for enhancing student engagement and encouraging experiential learning either with their mobile phones or personal computers.

Paragraph writing refers to cause and effect paragraph, problem – solution paragraph, persuasive paragraph, and conflict –resolution paragraph. Students are asked to write these paragraphs during learning through experiential learning with e-learning.

A cause and effect paragraph is assessed by using a cause and effect paragraph rubric developed by rcampus.com.

A problem – solution paragraph is assessed by using a problem – solution paragraph rubric developed by rcampus.com.

A persuasive paragraph is assessed by using a persuasive paragraph rubric developed by cpalms.org

A conflict- resolution paragraph is assessed by using a rubric for conflict resolution developed by the Utah Education Network

Analytical thinking ability refers to the ability to define problem, to choose the information concerning the problems, to formulate hypothesis, to conducting the analysis, and to develop the solution. Students' analytical writing ability is assessed from individual essay writings and project reports using analytical thinking scoring rubric that the researcher adapted from the assessment of critical thinking skills – holistic rubric developed by the University of Texas of the Permian Basin, and the rubric for analytic scoring of critical thinking developed by Winona State University.

Moral awareness refers to process of identifying the ethical issues involved, the parties who have a stake in the action, what is at stake, and what the action options are. Moral awareness consists of two factors that include: 1) students' reflective assignments on moral issue given. Students were provided reflection prompts and they were required to write a reflection to demonstrate their moral awareness on the issues. Students' reflective assignments were assessed by using the moral awareness rubric developed by University of Charleston (2007). 2) moral behavior is assessed from observing students' behavior. The researcher tracked and recorded students' moral behaviors while they engaged in the learning activities: in-class activities, outside the classroom activities, online discussion and online individual assignment. The researcher made a list of behaviors to be observed in 4 morals that included honesty, public mind, discipline, and responsibility.

1.6 Expected Outcomes

1.6.1 Students can develop their paragraph writing ability.

1.6.2 Students can develop their analytical thinking ability.

1.6.3 Students become more aware of moral awareness.

1.6.4 The results from this research will provide the guidelines for the curriculum development of other courses.



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