

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Lampang is a medium-sized province in the north of Thailand. It is about 94 kilometers from Chiang Mai, and about 600 kilometers from Bangkok. The symbol of Lampang is a white rooster which can be seen in front of the Municipality Office. Lampang is famous for horse carriages, its lignite mine, the royal projects, and the elephant conservation center.

Regarding education in Lampang, there are many institutions that provide formal and informal education. These institutions provide education from kindergarten up to university level. There are five vocational institutes which are under the vocational education system; two of them are private-owned while the other three are governmental.

Development of the College

Education in Lampang in the past thirty years was prestigious and centralized. Students who completed high school in Lampang often chose to go to Bangkok or Chiang Mai to further their studies.

This decision drove them to cope with competition and struggle to survive living in big cities with high expenses. Being far away from home, parents, and friends could cause a lot of depression that these students needed to restrain. That was why Mr. (now Dr.) Nimit Jivasantikarn came up with an idea of giving the educational opportunities to students in Lampang and other nearby provinces.

In 1971, Dr. Nimit founded the first private vocational school in Lampang, Lampang Commercial College. His declared aim was to provide quality vocational education for young people in Lampang and other neighboring provinces. The school which focuses on business administration studies has grown steadily from 50 students to more than 4,000 students in May 2004. Students major in accounting, computing, marketing, and secretarial studies. By 1979, the college expanded to serve the demand of the labor force in early industrial age of the nation. The college offered courses in industrial practice for the first time and changed its name to Lampang College of Commerce and Technology (LCCT).

In 1980, Dr. Nimit recognized the needs of the students in the province to learn new languages with native speakers. He started to recruit native English speakers to teach English at LCCT. By 1986, Dr. Nimit developed the exchange programs with southern China by bringing in Chinese teachers from Hunan Normal University and

sending some students to study in China. The college also started offering Chinese courses to the students.

One year later, Dr. Nimit developed another connection with Enman Language School of Japan under the same condition as the school's cooperation with China. LCCT also offered Japanese as the third option of foreign languages to learn. In 1994, LCCT set up a program with the Bournemouth and Poole College of England and offered the courses for a diploma in business. It was a significant development of the school of Business Administration Studies. The college introduced this program as an international program.

The college offered courses in accounting, computing, and marketing. English was the medium of instruction for business subjects and vocational subjects excluding Thai and social studies. The college provided intensive English courses taught by native speakers and Thai teachers for the students in the program. The proportion of hours taught by the native speakers of English to those taught by Thai teachers was four to one. The idea was that Thai students need support from Thai teachers in explaining some difficulties in learning the language.

In 2000, the international program offered a business languages course for the higher vocational certificate level. This attracted students who wanted to study English for business purposes. During this time, the international program changed its

name to the International Center. A recent development in the academic year 2003 was an introduction of a tourism industry course. This course serves the needs of students who want to specialize in travel and tourism.

The International Center

The International Center was a significant development of the school of Business Administration. It accepted students to two program levels: Language Vocational Training (LVT) and Intensive English Program (IEP). Students who want to enroll for the LVT level should finish Grade 9 from the secondary school. Students who finished Grade 12 or the vocational certificate level can enroll in the IEP level.

There are five majors in the International Center: accounting, marketing, computer business, business language, and tourism industry. The teachers of the International Center teach these business subjects and vocational subjects in English. The enrolled students can choose one major as their vocational major and two foreign languages, one as their major language, and the other as their minor language. For example, a student majoring in accounting chooses English as her major language and Chinese as her minor language.

It is, Dr. Nimit, LCCT president's philosophy that a strong English language provision is important. This belief is reflected in the college's statement of vision and mission, 1999 (see Appendix A) and 2002 (see Appendix B). Therefore, he set up three foreign language centers: the English Center, the Chinese Center, and the Japanese Center. Each Center is responsible for developing their language program for both LVT students and IEP students in the International Center.

The English Center developed four English courses for the students who chose English as their language major. Likewise, the Japanese Center developed a Japanese program for the students who chose Japanese as their language major. The Chinese center also developed Chinese program for those who took Chinese as their language major.

The English Program

The English program (also known as "an intensive English program") provides two levels of English. The first one is an English program for the LVT students, namely the three-year English program for the vocational certificate students. The other one is a two-year English program for the higher-vocational certificate level.

Since the school of Business Administration adopted the curricula designed by the Ministry of Education, the English Center, which is under this school, has to follow the same concept.

However, developing an English program which is taught intensively to those students in the International Center is a big change. The students in the Center get more advantages than those who are studying in the regular program: the amount of time they study English, the contents of their courses, the instructors, and the size of the classes. Because of these advantages, the English program of International Center is superior to its regular program.

English Time Allocation

In the college, there are eighteen weeks in one semester. The students in the English program in both levels study English for two periods a day which is 10 periods a week. The students have 180 periods per one semester. This means that they have more time (233.3%) being exposed to English than the students in the regular program. On the contrary, the students in the regular program study English for three periods a week, which makes 54 periods per semester. This is only one-third of the students in the international program's study time (see Table 2).

Table 2

English time allocation

	English for the International program	English for the Regular program
Time allocation	two periods a day 10 periods / week 180 periods / semester	3 periods / week 54 periods / semester

Contents

The contents of the English program vary. The first two courses are general English. The other two are Business English (see Table 3).

Table 3

Contents of English program

	English for the International program	English for Regular program
Contents	- General English - English for daily used - English for socializing - Business English	- General English - English for daily used

Instructors

The students in the International program study English with both native English and non-native English speakers. Students in this program have more opportunities than those in the regular

program to practice their language skills with their native English teachers in and out of class time. They are familiar with the instructors. This makes them gain more self-confidence in speaking the language and develop their risk-taking in using the language.

At the same time, the International program students have a chance to study with Thai teachers teach them English. This is because of a belief that Thai teachers had better understanding about the obstacles that Thai students face in learning a foreign language than foreign teachers. On the other hand, only Thai teachers from the English Department teach English to the vocational certificate level and first year of higher certificate level students in the regular program.

Class Size

The proportion of the teacher and students in a language class is crucial. The class size of the English program is small. There are not more than 25 students in one class. Conversely, the class size of students in the regular program is big. There are from 35 students up 50 students in one class.

Philosophy and Methodologies

The major purposes of the English program are: 1) to provide effective English courses for students in the English program, 2) to help the students feel more comfortable in language learning atmosphere, 3) to help them cope with English and improve their English at their individual paces, and 4) to help them feel more confidence and be able to communicate with the foreigners in their future workplace.

Teachers in the English program are the most significant people driving these students to these goals. Setting a good program is not enough, but having good teaching and learning strategies or methodologies, good attitudes towards the program, good atmospheres, and also good resources are important factors that help the students achieve the goals.

As stated, the English program provides general English and business English for the students who want to study English intensively and who want to be able to use the language in their future. In order to help the students achieve the program's goals, foreign teachers should understand the nature of Thai students especially the LCCT students.

The LCCT students are totally different from students in the west. They are very quiet, do not re-act much in the English class

time, quite shy. Some like to talk, ask, discuss with each other in Thai especially when their teacher asks questions. These make the teacher annoyed and feel more frustrated. At the same time, students also get more frustrated. They do not understand why their teachers do not allow them to discuss or talk to each other when they were asked questions. They do not know how to express their ideas.

In the English program, foreign teachers, Thai teachers, and students set rules and regulations for English classes so as to make an understandable and acceptable agreement for both parties. This is 'do and don't rules and regulations' which are applied for all courses in the English program. This strategy not only helps the foreign teachers manage their language class easily but also helps the students to behave well and understand their roles. Moreover, it is an appropriate way to introduce some basic cultural and social issues that the students need to know for example to be punctual, to be able perform some social skills.

Students

The students enrolled in the International Center are from different background. Most of them are 18-20 years old. There are three different groups of the students come into the program.

The first group, the majority of the students, finished the LVT level. Their English are supposed to be better than students from other programs since they have studied English with foreign teachers and Thai teachers for three years. The second group is the students who finished the vocational certificate level from the regular program. The English ability of these students are very low. Last group is students who finished Grade 12 or the vocational certificate level from different schools. They are the minority group. Some of these students are average in English, some are very poor.

Staff

There was a long tradition of having foreigners working at LCCT, with native speakers of English, Chinese, and Japanese joining the International Center staff each year, usually on one-year contracts. This created some problems in teaching English. First, there was no continuity. Some foreign teachers came for one academic year then leave the college. Some wanted to finish the contract before the due date. Only a few number of teachers renewed their contracts. Second, recruiting native speaker was difficult. There were few foreigners who were interested in teaching at LCCT. Since Lampang is a small, quiet province, the cost of living is not too high. The offered salary posted in the job ads was a

bit lower than other schools in other parts of Thailand. However it was enough for a foreigner could stay in Lampang with a good quality of life. Third, it was difficult to hire a qualified person. Dr. Nimit declared that native speakers of English should get a Certificate of English Language Teaching (CELTA). In practical, although some teachers did not have the certificate, the school had to hire them. After that the college sent them to seminar in TEFL or set up workshops at school. These workshops were conducted by native speakers of English who had master degree in TEFL or sometimes by the native speakers who had taught at LCCT more than one year.

Having native speakers of English turn in and out also gave some advantages to the students. They could practice their speaking and listening skills with different teachers from many parts of the world. These students also learned more about culture from their teachers.

Summary of the Chapter

In 1971, Dr. Nimit Jivasantikarn founded Lampang College of Commerce, which is now Lampang College of Commerce and Technology (LCCT). He aimed to give the educational opportunities to the students in Lampang and other nearby provinces.

Later, English becomes an important language that people use as a tool to communicate all over the world. Dr. Nimit made a dominant development in LCCT that was developing the LCCT international program in year 1994. His paramount concern was to give the students in Lampang and neighbor provinces opportunities to learn English in their hometown in stead of going to Bangkok or aboard.

As a significant development of the school of Business Administration, the International Center developed its English program for the students. This program is superior to the LCCT regular program. There are many aspects of the English program that are different, for instance the amount of time, contents of their courses, teachers and class size.

The goals of the LCCT English program are to provide effective English courses for students in the program and help them feel more comfortable in language learning atmosphere. The program also helps students cope with English and improve their English at their own paces. This will make students feel more confidence and be able to communicate with the foreigners in their future career.