

Thai Language Course in General Education and the Development of Professional Competence for Practicing Graduates in the Era of Artificial Intelligence: A Case Study of Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Khon Kaen Campus

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the role of Thai language courses in the general education curriculum of Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Khon Kaen Campus, in developing the professional competencies of students in the Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Industrial Education, and Faculty of Business Administration and Information Technology. The analysis found that Thai language courses play a crucial role in developing communication skills, analytical thinking, and language use for professional practice, which are fundamental to becoming practical graduates. In the era of artificial intelligence, Thai language skills remain important as they are competencies related to understanding context, society, and human relationships, which technology cannot fully replace.

Keywords: 1. Thai language; 2. general education; 3. practical graduates; 4. artificial intelligence

1. Introduction

In the era of artificial intelligence, where technology plays a crucial role in daily life, education, and work, the structure of the labor market and the demand for workforce have rapidly changed. Higher education institutions worldwide are therefore facing the challenge of producing graduates who not only possess specialized knowledge but can also adapt, learn continuously, and work effectively with technology (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Khon Kaen Campus, as a higher education institution aiming to produce "practical graduates," has defined the identity of its graduates as individuals possessing professional knowledge and skills, along with ethics, morality, and effective communication abilities, to ensure they can work and live appropriately in society (Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, 2022).

The development of graduates with such characteristics does not rely solely on learning professional disciplines but also requires communication skills and language use as essential tools for learning, knowledge transfer, and building interactions with others. Therefore, Thai language is not just a basic subject but a crucial mechanism in developing competencies necessary for professional practice and living in contemporary society. This aligns with Norton's (2013) concept that views language as a tool for creating identity and social meaning, and Gee's (2015) idea that language learning is a process of identity construction thru social practices in various contexts.

Currently, Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Khon Kaen Campus, comprises three faculties: the Faculty of Engineering, the Faculty of Industrial Education, and the Faculty of Business Administration and Information Technology. Each discipline has its own professional characteristics. However, all professions require the use of the Thai language for communication, document preparation, information presentation, collaboration with others, and knowledge dissemination to society.

For this reason, the Thai language course in the general education group plays an important role in developing students' professional competencies and supports the creation of a practical graduate identity that aligns with the needs of society and the labor market in the era of artificial intelligence. This article aims to analyze the role of the Thai language course in developing students' professional competencies within the context of the three faculties, in order to reflect the value and importance of the Thai language course in producing quality graduates in the 21st century.

2. Thai Language and the Development of Professional Competence in Engineering Students

The engineering profession, while focusing on knowledge in science, technology, and engineering design, does not rely solely on technical expertise for success. It also requires effective communication skills. Engineers need to communicate with various groups, including team members, contractors, managers, clients, and the general public, most of whom do not have a direct background in engineering. Therefore, using clear, correct, and appropriate Thai language helps reduce communication errors, which can affect the quality, safety, and efficiency of the work.

Moreover, engineering work also involves the preparation of numerous professional documents, such as test reports, damage logs, purchase requisitions for materials and equipment, project progress reports, project proposals, as well as operation manuals and work

standards. All of these require the ability to write clear, concise, and formal Thai, so that the practitioners can use the information accurately and effectively.

At the same time, engineers must have the ability to present projects to executives, investors, or stakeholders by summarizing key points from complex technical data, organizing it in an easily understandable manner, and communicating it logically and credibly. These skills are crucial for decision-making, project management, and fostering collaboration in operations.

For this reason, the Thai language course plays a crucial role in developing the professional communication competencies of engineering students, including report writing, technical document preparation, organizational communication, teamwork, and systematic presentation skills. This helps learners effectively translate engineering knowledge into practical work.

In the era of artificial intelligence, where technology can quickly analyze data, perform calculations, and design preliminary work, communication skills remain a capability that humans must continuously develop. Engineers who can explain technical concepts, convey complex information in an easily understandable manner, and communicate effectively with stakeholders will have an advantage in the workplace over those who possess only technical expertise. Therefore, learning Thai is not just about developing language skills, but also about enhancing professional potential that is essential for success in the modern work environment.

3. Thai Language and the Development of Professional Competence of Industrial Education Students

The profession of a vocational teacher relies heavily on language as an essential tool for conveying knowledge, developing skills, and fostering understanding among students with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and experiences. Therefore, effective learning management does not solely depend on technical expertise but also requires accurate, clear, and context-appropriate communication skills.

In teaching and learning management, technical teachers need to explain complex technical content, work processes, and engineering principles in a way that students can understand and apply. The choice of explanations, examples, questions, and systematic organization of thoughts are all linguistic skills that directly impact the effectiveness of learning. Additionally, creating classroom interactions, discussions, and exchanging opinions also effectively promote students' analytical thinking and proactive learning.

In addition to their teaching role, vocational teachers must also prepare various types of educational documents, such as lesson plans, knowledge sheets, work sheets, teaching media, as well as learning outcome reports and other academic documents. All of these require the correct, clear use of the Thai language and adherence to professional teaching

standards, so that students can study and practice correctly, reflecting the quality of systematic education management.

In the context of training and developing the industrial workforce, vocational teachers also play a role in presenting curricula, explaining training project details, and communicating with businesses or relevant agencies to foster understanding and cooperation in personnel development. Professional communication and rational presentation are therefore essential competencies that vocational teachers should possess.

At the same time, vocational teachers must communicate with parents, the community, businesses, and government agencies as representatives of the educational institution. Using the Thai language appropriately, politely, and credibly is therefore a crucial factor that affects the institution's image, credibility, and the good relationships between the institution and various sectors of society.

In the era of artificial intelligence, the role of vocational teachers has shifted from merely transmitting knowledge to facilitating learning and developing students' thinking skills. Teachers must therefore use language to stimulate analytical thinking, discussion, questioning, and reflection among students, enabling them to use technology and artificial intelligence in a conscious and creative manner.

Therefore, the Thai language course plays a crucial role in developing the professional communication competencies of industrial education students, including learning management, academic document preparation, communication with stakeholders, and the development of students' thinking skills. This will help prepare them to become skilled teachers and trainers who can work effectively and meet the demands of society in the digital and artificial intelligence era.

4. Thai language and the development of professional competencies for business administration and information technology students

In today's business world, the success of an organization does not solely depend on the quality of products and services, but also on the effectiveness of communication in all dimensions of operations. Thai language thus becomes an essential tool that helps entrepreneurs, managers, and business personnel convey ideas, build credibility, and establish relationships with stakeholders effectively.

Students of the Faculty of Business Administration and Information Technology need to use Thai language skills to prepare business plans, performance reports, financial statements, project proposals, and various business documents. This requires systematic data

organization, the use of correct, clear, and persuasive language to instill confidence in executives, investors, partners, and related agencies.

In addition to communication thru documents, business operations also involve continuous interpersonal communication, whether it be negotiations, building business networks, coordinating with customers and partners, or resolving conflicts. All of these require appropriate communication skills that take into account social and cultural contexts to build trust and cooperation in operations.

In terms of marketing and public relations, the Thai language plays a crucial role in creating content to communicate with consumers, whether it be writing advertisements, public relations content, communicating thru social media, or presenting the value of products and services to meet the needs of target groups. The ability to creatively and appropriately use language is therefore an important factor that helps enhance competitive advantage in business.

At the same time, the Thai language is also important for organizational management, including internal communication, task delegation, motivation building, organizational culture development, and customer service. Using polite, clear, and context-appropriate language helps foster mutual understanding, reduce conflicts, and enhance organizational work efficiency.

In the era of artificial intelligence, while technology can quickly create marketing content, analyze data, or prepare business documents, the choice of language appropriate to the target audience, culture, and social context still relies on human knowledge, understanding, and judgment. Those with strong Thai language skills can therefore use AI as a tool to enhance work efficiency, create quality content, and communicate more effectively than those lacking such skills.

Therefore, the Thai language course plays a crucial role in developing the business communication competencies of students in the Faculty of Business Administration, including writing, presenting, negotiating, marketing communication, and managing relationships with stakeholders. These skills are essential foundations for preparing to become managers, entrepreneurs, and business professionals who can create value for organizations and compete in the digital economy and the age of artificial intelligence.

5. Conclusion

The Thai language course in the general education curriculum of Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Khon Kaen Campus, plays a crucial role beyond being a basic language course. It is an essential mechanism for developing communication skills, analytical thinking, and language use for professional practice, which aligns with the university's identity

of producing practical graduates who are knowledgeable, capable, and ready to adapt to societal and technological changes.

From the analysis of the role of the Thai language course in the context of each faculty, it was found that language skills are a crucial component of professional success in all fields. Engineering students need to use Thai to communicate technical knowledge, prepare professional documents, and present engineering projects. Industrial education students must use Thai to convey knowledge, manage learning, produce teaching media, and develop learners' potential. Meanwhile, business administration and information technology students need to use Thai for business communication, negotiation, data presentation, and content creation to add value and competitive advantage.

In the era of artificial intelligence, where technology can rapidly support tasks such as data analysis, content creation, and information processing, the skill of using the Thai language remains an irreplaceable human competency. This is because effective communication relies on understanding social contexts, culture, emotions, feelings, and interpersonal relationships, as well as exercising judgment in choosing language appropriate to the situation and the audience.

Therefore, the teaching and learning of the Thai language at the higher education level should focus on developing students' ability to use the language effectively for communication, learning, and professional practice, alongside promoting the creative and ethical use of technology and artificial intelligence. Additionally, Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Khon Kaen Campus, should develop Thai language courses that connect with the professional contexts of each field, integrate learning with real-life situations, and encourage students to recognize the value of the Thai language as an essential tool for self-development, creating value for organizations, and driving Thai society in the digital and artificial intelligence era sustainably.

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