

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this study was to observe and document the process of negotiating a syllabus with a beginner English class in Thailand. Many instruments were employed to give as big a picture as possible. The study lasted for all of second semester, approximately seventeen weeks. During this time documentation was analysed and used in the class in the hopes of improving and fine-tuning the process. It was noted whether or not something fell under one of the research questions or if anything seemed unexpected. In this chapter I will present the results of this extensive data collection. I will begin with a description of the dataset. I will follow that with a description of those involved in the study. Next, I will present the data to answer the research questions and reveal other findings or themes that emerged that were not evident prior to the study.

4.2 Description of the Dataset

School documents

Student applications and initial interviews for acceptance to the school

The student applications consisted of demographic information including name, age, tribe, personal rating of language ability, medical information, and a series of questions about their interest in the school and their reasons for wanting to learn English. The applications were filled out by me as I asked them the questions in English. Students would respond in English until they did not understand me. Then they responded in Thai, Lahu, or Burmese. Typically a second or third year student helped to translate. (See Appendix E for an example of the application and interview questions.)

English proficiency exam

This English proficiency exam was produced by a former teacher at the school to give to students when they entered the first year class. The exam only tested reading and writing and was entirely in English. It was noted, however, during the interviews, how much English students seemed to understand. Daw, Aye, and Sunee did not take the proficiency exam because they were not here for orientation.

Questions on student motivation and interests

The first day of the second semester students were asked to write the answers to three questions in their journals (see Appendix I for the Journal Topics Chosen.). These questions were: What do you want?/Why are you here? What is a student's job? What

is a teacher's job? I asked them these questions about their views on English, hoping to get insight into what motivated them. The next class students were asked to: Write three things you want to know/do at the end of the semester. Write three topics you want to know about/are interested in. I gave a personal example of the first one on the board using Thai as an example. I asked these questions to get open-ended responses, which I then used as part of the questionnaire. There is no data for Virote or Daw, since they took their journals when they left.

Syllabus questionnaire

After getting an idea of what the students might be interested in, I made the syllabus questionnaire. It was translated into Thai by a former student and the two non-Thai speaking students used the questionnaire in English. All ten students filled it out. There were five sections. The first asked whether or not they wanted quizzes. The second asked them to weight five areas that would be part of their overall grade. The third part had them check topics they were interested in. The fourth section asked them to check books they would like to use for the class. The last section asked if they had any comments. There were a couple problems with this questionnaire on execution. The word that was used for journal referred to academic journals in the Thai translation. I intended for it to be synonymous with a diary. This may have negatively impacted the percentages students put for assessment. Also, two of the topics were not put on the Thai version, geography and money/finances. I do not feel that negatively impacted the outcome because there were so many categories that students had plenty to choose from. Personal experience also leads me to believe that these are not often popular categories for students learning English for general purposes. (See Appendix F for the Syllabus Questionnaire.)

Observations

In the middle of the term, I had a fellow teacher here at the school and one of the employees simultaneously interview my class. The teacher is a native English speaker who also had these students in a different class. The office worker is Thai and holds a degree in education, but was not currently teaching. They observed for about an hour and fifteen minutes. The students had silent reading that day for the rest of the class. (See Appendix D for the Observation Form and Appendix G for the Lesson Plan.) After the class and reading the responses I felt like this was not representative of the average class. During the class I was surprised at how well it was going. Students participated better than usual and were engaged the whole time. This was reflected very positively in the responses. I feel it was useful to see the ability the students had when they knew outsiders were watching them.

Mid-semester Evaluations

In the middle of the semester I had the students evaluate themselves and me. The evaluation was in English and all ten students filled it out. It was meant to get students thinking about the class and to give me information about what they were thinking. I also was interested in finding out how I could help them better, and one aspect of this was that I felt they did not ask me questions and I wanted to get to why.

End semester students' self evaluations

At the end of the semester I had students evaluate themselves. The evaluation included how well the students felt they did with their journals, participation, homework, quizzes/test, and country presentations. I also evaluated them before I looked at theirs, so that I could compare the responses. (See Appendix H for the Semester Self-Evaluation.)

Interviews

There were four informal, unstructured interviews. The first interview was in a more formal setting at a table in the main room. The questions, however, were about their families and their vacation they had just returned from. It was to get an idea of their listening and speaking. Although the questions were not difficult, they all seemed a little nervous, so the last three were very informal and done on the front steps of the teachers' house. No data was collected from the first interview, the second interview was recorded, during the third interview the recording did not work, and during the fourth interview I took notes.

Journals

Copies were made and reviewed of the journals for 8 of the students. The other two students, Virote and Daw, took their journals when they left. There were fifteen journal entries of which eleven were topics chosen by the students or questions about the class. (See Appendix I for the Journal Topics Chosen.)

Lesson plans

Lesson plans were recorded for fifty-one classes. The lesson plans include a brief outline of what is done in class, and some notes of what did or didn't work.

Teacher reflections

I wrote teacher reflections for every class except one. There were 34 entries which included classes and anecdotal references. Some entries included the reflections for more than one class or anecdote. Usually the reflections were done the afternoon after the class finished. Sometimes I took notes in class if there was something I wanted to write about later. The teacher reflections also include side notes about the students outside of class (ie in study hall). Many of the reflections, especially those done right after a class are emotional responses to how things went. Often my frustrations are recorded. These could be frustrations with the students for their lack of participation or myself for my lack of preparation or knowledge of how to deal with the class. There were rarely if ever classroom management issues, but I didn't know how to communicate with the students. This was as a result of them speaking both Thai and Burmese and me only speaking in English in class. Every sixth entry is included in the Appendices to give the best representation of my experience (see Appendix M). These entries include more than one class and range from difficult to good days. They also cover challenges and some of the negotiated elements.

4.3 Participant Demographics

4.3.1 The Teacher-researcher

I remember wanting to be a teacher when I was seven. I had an amazing second grade teacher who really enjoyed her class and her students. As I went through school, however, I decided that I did not want to teach (at least in the United States) and I ended up getting a degree in marketing and international business. I worked in marketing for several years before deciding on a career change. I had heard of this school in Thailand, and knew they were looking for volunteer teachers. I decided it was time. So I came to Thailand and started to teach. My first year I taught first year English and thought it was very difficult because I had no idea what they should learn, in what order, with what books, etc. I am a native speaker of English, but a lot of my knowledge of grammar was gone. By my second year of teaching I had a little more experience. I also had decided to go back for my masters in TESOL so that I could improve and help my students more. After more trial and error that year I felt much more prepared for my class the following year. It was with that class that I decided to implement the negotiated syllabus.

I speak French at an intermediate level and draw on those experiences of learning when I teach. I speak very little Thai and no Burmese.

4.3.2 The Students

Aye

Aye was a 20-year-old Kachin woman. She came from Burma where her family was poor, but she was able to get a good education at a Seventh Day Adventist school through a sponsorship. She finished 10 Standards (the equivalent of high school). Her papers had been delayed, so she was not part of the class the first semester. She came to school with knowledge of Burmese and Kachin. Her English level was also quite high (compared with others in the class), especially in reading and speaking. She began taking Thai lessons simultaneously with English upon coming to the school.

Daw

Daw was a 21-year-old Lahu woman. She came from the northern part of Thailand. She finished Matayom 6 (the equivalent of high school). When she came for her interview I felt she was very determined to come here. I had to hesitate because she was the only girl at the time. She was so determined that she recruited another girl to come to the school with her. In her interview she said that she wanted to learn English to speak with the foreigners at Bible camp in the summer and understand when they teach the bible. English would also help her get a job at the camp. She studied diligently and asked many questions (in Thai) about her homework. Her primary weakness was that she would not talk in English at all. Unfortunately she left in the middle of the semester to get married. She spoke Thai and Lahu.

Virote

Virote was a 22-year-old Lahu man. He came from the north of Thailand in the mountains. He finished Matayom 6 before coming to this school. He wanted to use

English to teach the poor in the mountains. His level of English was the highest in the class. He was not at all shy to speak. He could read fairly well and his listening was also good. His level was not, however, good enough to be in the second year class. He left the school in the middle of the semester. He spoke Thai and Lahu.

Hlaing

Hlaing was a 19-year-old Karen man. He and his family resided in a refugee camp in Thailand on the Thai/Burma border. He had been at the school the previous year but had to leave soon thereafter because he had to go back to the camp. He finished the equivalent of high school in the camp. He said during his interview that he would like to learn English to go back and teach the people in his community. He spoke Karen well, Burmese fair, and small amounts of English and Thai when he came to the school. His knowledge of English was quite good with listening and reading, but his writing and, especially, speaking needed improvement.

Sunee

Sunee was an 18-year-old Lahu woman who came from the north of Thailand. She came to the school primarily I believe because Daw asked her to. She finished up through Matayom 3 and did not take the weekend classes to finish Matayom 6, which were offered at a temple nearby. In her interview she said that she wanted to learn English to be a tour guide and to teach in her village. She did not appear to know much English at all when she arrived. She spoke Thai and Lahu.

Sakda

Sakda was a 20-year-old Lahu man from the north of Thailand. He finished Matayom 6. He said that he wanted to learn English so that he could be a translator. He wanted to help the Lahu and be a pastor. He was reticent to use English but really loved pronunciation exercises and vocabulary. His listening and speaking levels remained low. When he came to the school he spoke Thai, Lahu, and a little Chinese.

Niran

Niran was an 18-year-old Lahu man from the north of Thailand. He finished Matayom 3 and began taking the weekend classes offered nearby to finish his Thai education. He said that he would like to learn English to work on a demonstration project. He improved a lot throughout the year, especially in the areas of listening and speaking. He spoke Thai and Lahu.

Sittichai

Sittichai was a 19-year-old Lahu man from the north of Thailand. He finished Matayom 3 and also began taking the weekend classes to finish his Thai education. In his interview he said that he would like to learn English to teach young people and he would like to go to another country. When he started, his level of English was quite low. He spoke Thai and Lahu.

Tong

Tong was a 28-year-old Lahu man from the north of Thailand. He finished Matayom 6 and also went to a Lahu bible school. He wanted to use English to teach people in a Lahu village. He was very interested in coming to the school. When he started, his English level was quite low and he struggled with listening and reading. He spoke Thai and Lahu.

Kavi

Kavi was a 25-year-old Lahu man from the north of Thailand. He finished Matayom 6, went to Bible school, and was a soldier for two years. He wanted to learn English because he wanted to get a job with a charity in his village where they must work with foreigners. His listening and speaking seemed quite high when he arrived, but it did not seem to improve a lot during the year. He spoke Thai and Lahu.

4.4 Documenting the Negotiation Process in this Classroom

As discussed in Chapter 2 section 3.2 Breen and Littlejohn outline an effective framework to use in order to implement a negotiated syllabus in the classroom. As was stated in Chapter One, there are three steps to negotiating a syllabus. The first step is to negotiate decisions, followed by the actions that result from the negotiation, and finally evaluating the process and making adjustments accordingly. This study was limited by the level of the students and the fact that the class consisted of students with Thai and Burmese as their first language. Therefore, the instances of negotiation that follow through actions and evaluation are limited. The process of negotiation in this class is illustrated through the three steps as outlined below.

4.4.1 Step 1 - Negotiated decisions

Students were asked questions from day one on their opinions about elements of the class. These questions primarily dealt with students' reasons for wanting to learn English (which are discussed more thoroughly under Importance of English). During the first couple weeks I assessed what areas of negotiation were most applicable to my class. The difficulty in explaining anything complicated was a factor in deciding what to negotiate. Anything that I could easily communicate to students and they could communicate back was considered for negotiation. I presented students with the following list of non-negotiable and negotiable items.

Not Negotiable

Students have homework

Students have to participate

Students have to come to class

Students have to follow the syllabus (once it's in place)

Use of Clear Grammar 1 (because it has been our text book for awhile and changing would be confusing)

There must also be a reading and writing component (books or reading text or..., plus grammar and journals)

Students will set learning goals and report on their progress

I get the final say [I will ultimately accept or reject what they propose]

Negotiable

What students want to read (Themes for Today, reading books ex. reading a book as a class, reading a variety of things like newspaper articles, advertisements, etc)

If students have quizzes

How many tests students have and what they get tested on

What each component will be worth

Topics to study (as it could fit with the books they choose)

(Teacher reflections from November 9, 2009)

Two classes after students were presented with this list they filled out the Syllabus Questionnaire described in 4.2 (See Appendix F for the Syllabus Questionnaire.) Their input was used to create the syllabus for the class.

Notable outcomes of the Syllabus Questionnaire

Students in this class corroborated the view that students are generally fair when determining what syllabus would benefit them. Although quizzes and tests make students nervous, the students in this class all voted to have frequent quizzes. Also, all students except the lowest one ranked their two tests worth at least 30% of their grade if not 40 or 50%. In much the same way, students ranked quizzes high as well. With other choices like homework included in assessment they could have weighted that much higher and potentially just copied off of friends.

This also could point to the attitude students have towards tests and their feeling that tests are the most reliable way to measure their success. Instead of taking into account the amount of effort they may have to put into homework, or even the importance of participation, they ranked tests and quizzes (which perhaps they study a day for) as the most essential components.

The questionnaire was useful for ranking topics that students would like to learn. The number of students interested in each topic was tallied and ranked for interest. Nine out of ten students were interested in learning about: health and hygiene,

work/careers/jobs, family and friends, music, computers and the internet, Culture of English speaking cultures, and close behind, travel.

The questionnaire did not definitively show a preference for one of the reading options (the textbook, literature book, or authentic materials such as the newspaper), so a mixture of all three was adopted as part of the class. We began using a textbook based on reading skills in addition to students choosing and reading other books on their own and authentic materials being introduced as needed.

Other instances of choices made as a class

Choices that were made by the class were initiated by the teacher. This varied and also got more complex as the semester progressed. Students made decisions as a class about whether or not they wanted a review or if they wanted to move on to another topic of instruction. They also made decisions about the journal topics that they wanted to write about. Frequently they had a choice of working individually or in groups. Also students were able to choose the topics we would learn next. Another area where they were given a choice was which books we would use for reading as well as their individual readers for outside of class.

Students were consistently exposed to making a decision. Often we went with the majority. If there was potential that it would negatively impact a student then either we did not move on or that student received extra help outside of class.

4.4.2 Step 2 - Actions

Besides using all three reading options as a part of the class, quizzes were incorporated, as well as the topics students were most interested in. Student opinions on assessment were taken into consideration, but the teacher decided the final breakdown for grades. This was determined for three primary reasons. First, students didn't know what "Journal" was on the questionnaire and therefore did not know the effort that would go into it. Second, as was mentioned, I felt that students placed an unnecessarily high value on the quizzes and tests that I felt were not fully accurate of a student's progress in the class. Thirdly, at the end of the term we included a group project (country presentations) that students put a lot of time and effort into. This was included in the final grade as well.

4.4.3 Step 3 - Evaluation

The process itself was primarily evaluated on the basis of student involvement and "ownership" of their learning. Student behaviors which determined an increased tendency to plan their own course of action, or to readily and accurately present a course of action. Also, student performance on tests and improvement in journals or working with others was also evaluated. Many of these instances are outlined throughout the remainder of Chapter Four.

4.5 Lesson Plan Elements to Facilitate Negotiation

One of the first questions to ask when starting a negotiated syllabus is about how much to negotiate. Once determining this, lessons were mostly structured through feedback from handouts, such as the questionnaire and evaluations, from student questions, and from how I thought the class was going and chose to respond.

The data show a wide range of choices made as a class (not including those already mentioned on the questionnaire). Decisions ranged from whether or not we would review the preceding class to voting on student generated journal topics or specific things individuals wanted to learn or focus on. Over time it became easier for students to make these choices.

Again I let the students come up with topics to write about. This time it was easier for them since they had done it before. They had definite opinions.
(Teacher reflections December 11, 2009)

At times students made choices about how to progress and gave input on another option.

I asked them to vote - either yes, finish watching [the movie that would lead into the next class], or no. Then there was a different suggestion about how the movie was very long (we were at 53 minutes) and they were very tired. So then I added the choice to finish the movie tonight.
(Teacher reflections January 14, 2010)

Students were reticent to make choices at the beginning, but continually having their opinions asked helped them to become more used to the idea. Teacher response is also important to encourage students to continue giving opinions. Students need to see that what they say has a result. For instance, according to the students' responses on the questionnaire, they were given quizzes and began learning from Themes for Today.

At one point towards the end of the term students were asked what they would like to have access to in order to improve their learning (see Journal entry from January 21, 2010). All of the students had ways that they wanted to improve. The majority wanted to improve their speaking and listening. Students could state what they wanted to improve on quickly and confidently (relatively speaking). They also had ideas for what they wanted to listen to. They did not wait for me to provide answers or ideas.

4.6 Student Reactions and Perceptions of the Process

At the beginning of the study I feared that students would think I was unprepared or did not take the class seriously. I also assumed that they would think it was my job to put knowledge in their head. While some evidence shows that thinking pattern, as shown in the case studies, they did not seem at all phased with the elements that were directly negotiated.

Students definitely seemed more comfortable when we did grammar or vocabulary explicitly. More students participated and more audibly. Students felt more comfortable because it was more clear what was expected. Generally with grammar and vocabulary there is one right answer – in that case they know what to work towards.

4.7 Impact of Student Culture and Background

4.7.1 Background

Students come to school with preconceived ideas of what and how they will learn. As pointed out in Chapter Two, their cultural norms can impede or enhance their experience in a new environment. In Asia, the norms tend to be towards rote learning and memorization. In addition, they tend to focus on a hierarchy and a teacher-centered classroom. As was mentioned, some students from rural outlying areas of Thailand may actually find negotiation easier, if they have been accustomed to more autonomous learning. The school where this study takes place is run by foreigners and students know this before they interview. I presume that many students are prepared for differences between the education they receive here and one they would receive in a Thai school. This is one major reason for trying to incorporate elements of negotiation while they are in the first year. It was expected that there would be less resistance to differences at this stage.

4.7.2 Relevance of standard teaching resources

Although there are no overt instances of the students' culture on directly negotiated aspects of the syllabus, the data point to other cultural implications to consider. The cultural implications observed have more to do with the relevancy of standard teaching materials. This increases the effectiveness of a negotiated syllabus in this context, but highlights areas to be prepared for while planning. The first area mentioned in the data from this study is that of creating relevant communication scenarios.

How do I make them want to reach a communicative goal? I think this is one of the added difficulties to teaching English as a foreign language – outside of the context of the native culture. It's difficult to create language scenarios that they might find necessary.
(Teacher reflections November 22, 2009)

Many classroom materials focus on situations that students may encounter when traveling to an English speaking country. Therefore, they learn how to buy items, talk about famous people, talk about careers, get around on public transportation, etc. In the foreign classroom, however, the relevancy of that is greatly diminished since students will not have immediate use for it.

Another area that is similar is using the Internet for information. Searching for information in English is likely to bring up more western-centric information, making it less practical for students to find information about their country in the English language.

I went online to show them salaries for the jobs they chose. I felt a little materialistic doing this. Also, I couldn't find a calculator that would show what people in parts of Asia would earn. Next time I'll have to be more prepared for that. They weren't very interested in how much an American would make in those jobs. I felt like there were discrepancies because the job descriptions came from the US. Some things just wouldn't apply over here. In some village schools you don't have to have a degree even.
(Teacher reflections February 15, 2010)

Having websites ahead of time to direct students to, or even allowing students to search the Internet in their L1 and then share the information with the class in English are ways to alleviate this problem.

4.7.3 Teacher and student roles

At the beginning of the semester students were asked what they thought a teacher's job was and what they thought a student's job was. Their responses are indicative of the idea that teachers have all the knowledge that they then impart to students. Students have to do what the teacher asks of them. Sunee wrote (in Thai) that students need to take responsibility, although it is unclear what for. It is interesting to note this because she was at the bottom of the class.

Table 1: Summary of Students' Responses to: What is a student's job? What is a teacher's job?

Student Roles	Teacher Roles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come to class • Do homework • Study • Obey the teacher • Concentrate on class • Do their best • Study hard/diligently • Learn and use in a good way • Take responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help students understand • Correct students' mistakes • Teach English • Teach students to be disciplined • Understand students • Take care of students • Give students advice • To be smart • To pass on knowledge

Student roles all seem to imply that they respond to an action of the teacher's. They do not find knowledge for themselves, but instead get knowledge from the teacher and use it the way the teacher directs.

4.8 Challenges Throughout the Term

4.8.1 Verbal responses

One of the biggest issues I had with this class was getting them to speak, or even react to things in class. This was an ongoing problem and one that I was constantly trying to find answers for.

“Today I have been frustrated (something that has been building) because they just seem to refuse to speak English...How do I motivate them to do that???”
(Journal entry November 11, 2009)

“How can I create projects that encourage students to talk? What will make them want to talk...?”
(Teacher reflections November 22, 2009)

Trying to motivate them continued to be a challenge until the end of the semester.

Student non-verbal response was also difficult, as they frequently would look down and not look at me. It was not only the low-level students, it was the whole class. My response tended to be rephrasing the question and repeating it until I got more students to respond (see Nov 19 Teacher reflections).

Not only was it a challenge to get them to speak English as part of a whole class discussion, but students constantly would speak in Thai or Lahu when they were put in pairs. This was not always to help each other.

“I feel like I need to crack down on the use of L1 in the class, but I don’t know how to do that.”

(Teacher reflections November 22, 2009)

I also tried to tell the students why it is important to talk in class, which was probably a little counter-productive when they can’t understand about half of what I say. Even during pair activities students resisted speaking in their L1 or English. They had a tendency to work alone, which I thought was strange considering the culture. Speaking only English and trying to negotiate a syllabus is very challenging.

It wasn't always bad and there were times where I did have positive speaking experiences.

"I think today was just really good for me because I felt like I got a response from them. I love just getting a response whether they understand or not. The glazed over look just really bothers me."
(Journal entry December 11, 2009)

"One thing I noticed is that they are getting more comfortable with talking..."
(Teacher reflections February 4, 2010)

I continued to try to identify ways to get students to talk.

"A lot of them would like to improve their speaking. I think it would be good for them to improve their listening in order to help them feel more comfortable speaking. I think there is a big mismatch between words they know by sight and by hearing them. If we close that gap I think their speaking will improve."
(Teacher reflections January 21, 2010)

I definitely had some preconceived notions about the negotiated syllabus and the effect it would have on the classroom.

"I'm also a little disappointed because I thought that having a negotiated syllabus would lead to talking – but instead I feel like it leads to me talking. I wanted us to negotiate."
(Teacher reflections February 4, 2010)

At our school we had an English Only rule. This was to encourage the largely Lahu student body to use English. They were supposed to speak English in all common areas from 8 to 5 on school days. I gave this a lot of thought when thinking about my students and their use of English. I didn't know if I thought that it helped or hindered the students.

I'm not sure what I think anymore about English only at the school. I'm not sure how much that helps them – it might actually make them more quiet. I just don't know.
(Teacher reflections February 4, 2010)

As the semester went on I noted definite improvements.

"I think they are about even for participation now – except Sunee. They all had something to contribute."
(Teacher reflections February 24, 2010)

In this class I asked students a lot of questions. I asked for their input as part of every lesson. Questions could range from something as simple as reading comprehension to

their opinion on something we read to a comparison of what we were reading and their culture. I often viewed my classes as a time where I could learn something new about the students or their countries. However, getting students to answer the more abstract questions was very difficult. Even students who had the ability to answer wouldn't always.

I would really like to create opportunities for them to share information that I don't know. Making them the experts at something. It's just so difficult getting them to share!... How can I get them involved and motivated? How can I get them to feel comfortable and share?
(Teacher reflections November 9, 2009)

Their body language was also frustrating because they wouldn't look at me. Sometimes they pretended to be looking for the answer or else they just looked blankly down at their desk.

What I was frustrated about came at the end when I asked, "Do you like reading the newspaper?" Nine out of nine heads were looking down. So I repeated the question. Still no response. Then I believe I said something like, "You all know what I am saying – do you like reading the newspaper?" A yes. "Do you like reading the newspaper?" A couple nos. And still no overall answer. Class time was up so in a certain amount of frustration I said, "Okay, good-bye – class is finished, good-bye!"
(Teacher reflections November 19, 2009)

4.8.2 Student abilities

Most if not all teachers have issues that arise with students at varying levels of ability. My class is no exception. Students in my classes also have different education backgrounds since some students come from Burma and others from hilltribe regions in Thailand. It is a challenge to keep students interested while not leaving others behind. This year I had three rather distinct groups of high, medium and low.

"Today I was also frustrated because I feel like I am having to deal more with the gap in the abilities of the learners. I have a student who is really motivated to learn and a bit past the others. I feel like now he is starting to check out a little bit. I am trying to think of ways to support him outside the normal class work."
(Teacher reflections November 13, 2009)

Determining how best to help students outside class is a challenge because often it feels like you are planning another class. It was also a challenge to determine how best to have Vrote work in groups. I wanted to challenge him, but no one else was at his level. I often ended up putting him with the lower learners so he could help them. I

was hoping that his helping them would actually increase what he learned. I think he often just ended up frustrated and bored, as I noted on Nov 20th.

I feel like he is bored and I don't like it. I feel like I need to do something more for him to help him stretch a bit. I think he's starting to check out. How do I get him to be involved in class without saying all the answers? How do I capitalize on the fact that he understands things and can explain them without him feeling like he isn't getting anything out of it personally?
(Teacher reflections November 20, 2009)

Sometimes pairing him with the lower level learners also backfired because they would default to him. This happened one day when students were going to give small presentations.

I was happy to see that Tong stepped up to the plate and was about to explain their unit. Unfortunately I had the bright idea of putting Virote with their group (since I hadn't put him in a group – he was home helping his family). Tong then seemed to default to Virote and not talk so much.
(Teacher reflections December 11, 2009)

Lastly, it was difficult to encourage the whole class to participate if a couple of students had all the answers right away.

... we had a really blah discussion class that highlighted the differences in the students' abilities. It also made me start to feel a little negatively towards one of my students, Ah Jar, who just seemed a little haughty and like a know-it-all. It made no one else want to try. And frankly it made me feel stupid for not challenging her. We were playing a game that had them work together in teams, but she answered all the questions, so I had to switch to make it individual again.
(Teacher reflections November 6, 2009)

This was especially challenging because so often I was just waiting for an answer from anyone, so I was reticent to discourage participation.

4.8.3 Course content

Grammar

Students seem to have a high regard for grammar, although they don't seem to actually like it. I really tried not to teach grammar explicitly as I wanted them to learn incidentally. This did not always work, since I felt like I defaulted to a grammar lesson as an easy way out some days. Virote primarily seemed to think we should be learning more grammar. He had a friend in university who was learning a lot of

English grammar. I think he felt that this class, therefore, would not be as beneficial as a university class.

Also, today we discussed count and noncount nouns. This is so difficult for them to grasp. I can totally understand why. I wish there were a way to make all of this grammar more incidental. If I look at my syllabus it's basically grammar based. This is something that I really did not want to have happen. I really wanted grammar to be more incidental. But it's really not.

How do I introduce them to grammar structures without that being the focus of the lesson?

I thought that if I taught mostly using books then grammar would be incidental, but I feel like maybe it's useful to have the grammar so I can refer back to it. I think I ended up having them do readings then introduced them to the grammar later – I was trying to create questions.

I'm not sure how well that worked. I feel like now they would be able to do the grammar part for homework and do fun activities in class to reinforce it.

(Teacher reflections November 22, 2009)

Listening

Students showed in their responses to questions that they really wanted to improve their speaking and listening skills. Student feedback often referenced their desire to speak with others and to understand what the teacher said in the classroom. Given the environment of the school it was a challenge to find ways for students to become exposed to English.

The first interview with the students highlighted this need.

They really need listening practice. I really would like to get the computer lab set up. We need to focus more on listening and speaking now.

(Teacher reflections October 23, 2009)

Class structure

I also found it difficult to incorporate negotiation and also split content between Reading and Writing since one hour was devoted to reading while the next was devoted to writing.

I also have a problem now because I feel like the reading and writing classes are disjointed and I had wanted them to work together.

(Teacher reflections November 27, 2009)

Scaffolding

Students had difficulty understanding some exercises because they seemed too easy and they didn't seem to understand the purpose of activating that information before proceeding to more difficult items.

The last question in the prereading exercise was to read the title of the chapter and say what the passage would discuss. They could not seem to understand why there was this question. "What could it mean? Was it really that easy?" I think they have a hard time realizing that sometimes things just are that easy. It almost seems like they don't understand the concept of building up. They also seem confused by the idea that they have to guess about what is next. They want to just read it and go back to the question. I have to say, 'No, the question is before – you have to go in that order!'"

(Teacher reflections November 30, 2009)

4.8.4 How much to tailor the class

It was difficult to keep a broad perspective of the timeline of the class with such a small number of students and such an intense focus on each one. As part of the negotiated syllabus student input was very important. In addition, I wanted to meet each student's needs. This was difficult in such a small class because if students were missing on a day that I planned to negotiate something or get student opinion I was inclined to postpone what I had planned.

I felt like it was a little pointless to talk about some things I wanted to talk about since three students were missing. – that's almost half my class.

However, I do need to be sure that I don't continue in the habit of letting things like that derail my efforts. If they aren't all there then I guess too bad. I'll introduce the syllabus tomorrow regardless.

(Teacher reflections January 11, 2010)

In addition, it was difficult to find a balance of how much to try to meet individual student needs. The negotiated syllabus is very student-centered and requires participation and input from the student. I believe I erred on the side of student opinion, but this left me feeling unorganized and unfulfilled in terms of what was accomplished each day.

I feel like I need more goals and objectives, but I feel like it's hard to set those when I am trying to remain flexible and meet needs. If I'm honest, though, I don't think the students learned much more at the end of the class than they did at the beginning.

(Teacher reflections November 18, 2009)

Although the class may have felt unorganized, allowing so much student input may have encouraged students to become more comfortable in their roles as directors of their own learning.

4.8.5 English as medium of instruction

The class was taught entirely in English primarily because students did not share an L1. Students had a variety of tribal languages as well as Thai and Burmese. Students' levels in these languages also differed. In addition, my level of Thai is not sufficient to teach a class. In many ways I saw this arrangement as a benefit since students were forced to listen to English for a communicative purpose. It did, however, also pose challenges.

There were times when I felt that students would benefit from instruction in a native language. These times were primarily when I was giving directions or trying to explain a difficult aspect of grammar like verb aspects and tense.

This is one of those times [I was teaching about the verb *to be*] where I wonder if it isn't just more efficient to speak the native language (ie Thai) so that they get it and we move on. Two reasons I don't want to do that: 1. I don't want to speak another language in the class because then I think it would be hard to stop and I think it's really important to speak primarily in the target language.

2. I have a mixture of students – not all speak Thai.

(Teacher reflections October 28, 2009)

Unfortunately my feelings on this did not change during the semester. At the end of the semester I had students use authentic materials for their Country Presentations. The fact that students didn't fully understand the instructions made the assignment much more difficult than it should have been.

...if your students don't understand all of your instructions, it makes it hard to help them understand what it is you really want.

(Teacher reflections March 1, 2010)

Students also exhibited signs of anxiety over not understanding the teacher. On their mid-semester evaluations seven out of the ten students said to speak more slowly when asked how I could answer their questions better. Two seemed to comment that I should repeat the question and another said that she would like to understand when I explain. Their journal entries about the class also showed this concern for understanding the teacher.

“The English Clash [class] is difficult because I can’t understand...”

Hlaing

“And sometimes I don’t fun because sometimes when we come to class to study and we don’t know at Aj to teach with us...”

Niran

“And I don’t like. Sometime teacher speak very fas because sometime I can not listen. and sometime I don’t understand.”

Sittichai

“and thing at don’t like in English calss is at time teacher teach I don’t know! listen. I don’t like is this thing.”

Tong

(Students’ journal entries about English class)

At the time students wrote about the class in their journals there were only eight students. Therefore, half the class mentioned in their journals their dislike of not being able to understand in class. In addition, this likely had a negative influence on their feelings towards the class.

4.9 Unforeseen Themes That Emerge

Throughout the study several themes emerged that I had not thought of at the start of the study. These themes recurred throughout the data and deserve some notice here. While the results of these themes may not have been unforeseen the prevalence of them was.

4.9.1 Affective attributes of the teacher and students

Although it is not surprising in hindsight, one theme that wove through the entirety of the data was affective attributes. These were particularly clear throughout the teacher reflections. In addition, students’ journals and interviews provide data on these

attributes as well. There is a clear link between the teacher's mood and response, and how the students react. The teacher sets the tone for the class. If the teacher is high-energy the class will most likely be high-energy, too.

Affective attributes of the teacher

Throughout the term my feelings about the class as expressed in my reflections varied widely. I did not, however, take notice of this until I noticed students' journals and their reactions to my demeanor in class.

I had thought before class that I needed to tell them that I enjoyed their journal entries. I think lately I have just been so negative. Maybe some of that was rubbing off on them. Anyway, I told them that I read their journals and I really enjoyed them! They looked pleased.

(Teacher reflections December 10, 2009)

I was discouraged during the process as I tried to implement the syllabus and meet students' needs. Mistakes that I made or a lack of effort on the part of the students were the most common sources of discouragement.

Ahhhhh!!!! I just get so frustrated when 1. They don't seem to listen, or to try to listen. and 2. They don't answer, or seem to want to answer. If they don't use English now how do they think they will learn?

(Teacher reflections November 19, 2009)

Towards the end I made an effort to be more cheerful and upbeat in class. This was primarily in response to having read Dornyei's book on motivation and the impact of the teacher's attitude on the students.

I worked on being more positive today – I smiled more. I just need to keep that up!

(Teacher reflections February 1, 2010)

Having so many unknown variables as part of the class made it more stressful and often less enjoyable.

Affective attributes of the students

Students feelings in the class appeared to have two main sources: class content and the teacher's feelings. Students were more positive when they thought the class was fun and they could understand what was required. They also exhibited more positive feelings if the teacher was positive. The converse was also true.

...the students gave their little mini presentations about their job descriptions. It didn't go so well – for those that were not here last week it was too difficult and they didn't really understand. I felt a little bad for Sittichai because he got up looking confident and then got nervous as he realized he didn't really know what to do.

(Teacher reflections February 23, 2010)

Sometimes I tried to explain how I was feeling so that they would understand the importance of what I was saying. I hoped that they would see that I wanted the best for them, but that their behavior was disappointing me. This approach did not work well, and instead seemed to alienate them.

...we had a conversation about having internet in the school and whether or not they would like it...I was frustrated because they just seem to keep speaking in their own language – and this wasn't for clarification purposes. After they started talking in Thai again, I stood up and wrote on the board:

45% frustrated

35% discouraged How I feel when students speak Thai all the time every day.

10% confused

10% sad

....And they looked sad. Sittichai and Kavi and maybe Niran. I'm not here to make them sad... I need to be careful. My job is to be their cheerleader and to give encouragement. I can't forget that. I need to focus more on being positive and praising them. I will see how praise works.

(Teacher reflections January 28, 2010)

4.9.2 Group dynamics

It was difficult to understand when students would work best alone, in groups, or in pairs. Students got along very well but did not seem to try to explain things to other students or help them along. There were exceptions to this, such as Virote and Hlaing.

Sunee and Hlaing worked together and he seemed to be explaining a lot of it to her.

(Teacher reflections December 10, 2009)

When I tried to give them a jigsaw review assignment students did not seem to understand the purpose, although the activity improved when it was repeated.

The second part of class was spent on group work with the students split up again to work on specific units. My point with this is to get them to delve into one particular area and to then have them help the other students in the class. Of course the idea is that when you teach others you generally learn more even than they do. I am hoping too, that this time will go more smoothly since they have already done it once. They at least seemed to understand what was needed and looked for answers. I think that by looking at the chapters so closely they were already getting questions and figuring things out. Daw especially seemed to understand more as she was comparing the present progressive with the simple present and simple past. Niran also seemed like he was really trying to understand count and noncount nouns and when I made a chart (with quantifiers) and went through it with the group he seemed the most interested. Tong unfortunately seemed lost and Kavi didn't really seem to care. As part of these jig-saw learning activities I try to play up the fact that they are supposed to help each other. That different students will understand different units and be able to help with those. They don't seem overly interested in the idea of helping each other. I know that "helping" is very common here – but it generally consists of allowing someone to copy your work or doing their work for them. I want them to get used to the idea of teaching and explaining, especially since some of them want to go back to their villages and teach.
(Teacher reflections December 14, 2009)

I did not have a big problem with students copying each other outside of class or on tests. However, when students were given verbal pair or group activities they copied each others' answers and did not talk.

Then they did a group activity outlined in the book. They had to work in threes and say what a food was they liked in the past, a food they like now, and a food they want to try in the future. Hlaing, Niran, and Aye seemed to mostly copy from the other's paper. I was a little upset to see that because the whole point was to talk.
(Teacher reflections December 9, 2009)

Fortunately there were times when students did seem to work together and learn from each other. At these times they seemed to have more fun. They also tended to expand the activity and learn more.

... he [Sakda] engaged other students in learning the words. Primarily Hlaing and Daw. But Sunee also was listening in. They went through the pronunciation. Then he even tried to say a sentence – “I like long bean.” He and Hlaing continued through the whole list. Periodically they would ask me to say a word again, but they worked through the majority on their own.
(Teacher reflections November 19, 2009)

Generally I was interested in group dynamics and its impact on their speaking. Many group activities required students to speak and yet there were many challenges getting them to do it. Group dynamics were not only based on their preferences for working alone or together in pairs or groups. The make-up of the class also may have influenced their motivation to speak in English. During the year of the study, the school was comprised almost entirely of Thai speakers.

When thinking about this year’s class and comparing them to last year, I feel like they aren’t as good. I think part of the reason is because this year there are ten Lahu students, and three Burmese, two of whom know Thai. Therefore, all but one student can speak Thai. Also, this year there are only three second and third year students. I think this lack of older (or higher up) students makes it harder for them to have people who actually know English to talk to.
(Teacher reflections December 3, 2009)

The lack of a diverse language population as well as of students who were comfortable in English probably had a negative impact on students’ desire and motivation to learn English and use English in class and around the school.

4.9.3 Importance of English

As part of the negotiated syllabus and my desire to understand student needs, it was necessary for me to get an idea of why students wanted to learn English. At the beginning of the semester I specifically asked students why they came to the school and what they wanted to learn. Some of them also gave more insights into their views of English when they wrote their journal entries about the class at the end of the semester.

In general students felt that English would help them to get a better job or to be able to help others. Also, students viewed English as an international language and one that they could use no matter where they are.

Table 2: Summary of Students' Responses to: What do you want?/Why are you here?

Student	View of English	Job desired
Aye	"...I want to be a success."	teacher
Virrote	Can advance more than others, standard language	Can help family and others and to serve God
Hlaing	International language	-
Sunee	I would like to learn English.	-
Sakda	I want to know English.	-
Niran	Nice future	Help others
Sittichai	Apply in daily life	-
Tong	International language	Anywhere we are it is better than if we don't know English

In Tong's journal he mentioned the prevalence of English with computers and the internet. Kavi wrote in his journal about the importance of English for a good job. He also wrote about needing to learn English so he can be a teacher in the mountains.

For the most part students did not seem to have a tangible reason to learn English. Their reasons seemed to focus on the somewhat distant future and the role English so obviously plays on the world stage.

4.10 Towards a Definition of Ownership

Incidences of "ownership" are arguably less frequent in a beginner level classroom. However, this does not mean that it cannot be fostered from the very beginning. In addition, it is surprising the number of instances which show potential for students to take ownership of more and more of their learning.

Taking ownership for learning is likely a process that students gain knowledge of over time and continue to foster the more they learn. It's not a sudden thing. Several students did, however, have incidences of taking ownership, which are discussed below. Some relevant questions for the teacher are: How do we help and encourage those incidences? What happened before and after those incidences? Can we learn from that and foster those in the future?

4.10.1 Incidences of autonomous thinking

Several incidences of students directed learning were outlined in section 4.4.1. These incidences can contribute to a sense of ownership of the language but they are not fully autonomous. As Wright states, "The main difference between autonomous and self-directed learning, according to Carver and Dickinson (1980), is that autonomy is one of the many possibilities within self-directed learning. Autonomy represents the upper limit of self-directed learning in that all educational choices are made by the

learner independently of teacher and institution.” (1982). With this view in mind, instances where students are autonomous would be useful to note.

One of the students, Virote, was at the top of the class and was able to grasp concepts in the class easily. He also was in a position to help the lower level students and frequently did that. The class was a little too easy for him and he sought areas outside class where he could learn.

...he actually came and asked for some extra English help on how to write a letter for a job. And asked if I could look at some [English] books he had to see if they are good.

(Teacher reflections November 13, 2009)

Another student made his own vocabulary list, asked questions about pronunciation, and worked with other students to learn with words all without prompting. (See section 4.11.2)

Students also showed autonomous thinking when asked what areas they would like to work on towards the end of the year. They were prompted to think of these things, but their ideas and readiness to answer were unplanned and without any in-class preparation.

I asked them general questions and then I asked them if there is anything they would like to know or learn in the next 6 weeks before school is officially out. I also asked them how I can help them. Lastly, I tried to get at how I could help them specifically. ...almost all of them had individual ideas of things they would like to focus on. Awesome!

(Teacher reflections January 21, 2010)

In these examples the students showed autonomous thinking and learning but still used the teacher as a resource. They came up with an idea of what they wanted to improve on and had questions ready for the teacher. Once they received those answers they were able to move on and continue learning on their own. Some even expanding on their original ideas, for example, from learning vocabulary to forming sentences.

4.11 Student Responses to Negotiation - Case Studies

The following two case studies serve to give a representation of student response to the class. The two students were chosen as those at the upper and lower boundaries of English ability in the class at the end of the study. One student, Virote, who had the highest level, is not included because he did not stay through the course of the study. One other student, Sunee, who fell at the lowest end, is not included because her level did not improve sufficiently to allow me to analyze her growth. The responses of the

following students to the negotiated syllabus are deemed representative of these upper and lower boundaries and their classmates fell fairly evenly along the continuum. This portion is meant to show how two students responded to the negotiated syllabus, and purports to give an added dimension to the study, primarily by reflecting the attitudes that they had to the class.

4.11.1 Student A: Niran

When Niran came to the school for his interview he seemed sharp and interested in furthering his education. He enrolled in the Thai Sunday school to finish his Thai high school education and remained committed to that throughout the year. When the year began he was not able to listen or speak very well in English. By the second semester when this study took place, he seemed to be the most communicative and responsive in class. He also seemed interested in class and the subjects we were learning. He showed the most ability outside of class to communicate. He came to study hall on two specific occasions to ask questions that were not specifically about the homework. He was interested how long it would take to learn English, and whether or not I thought he could learn English in the three years he is here. At the end of the semester he also came to ask about what specifically would get graded on their class presentation. When he and Sakda gave their final presentation his English was quite good. He did not need to rely on his notes, and he was able to speak comfortably in front of the class on their topic.

It is interesting to note his perception of knowing English and “build[ing] a nice future” (as seen in Table 3). This is a common view in Thailand that if one knows English they will be able to advance. The teacher is also clearly viewed as the one with authority, since students must “obey teachers” and the teacher must “teach students to be disciplined”. However, Niran does feel that students have a duty to concentrate and do their best. He also seems to see an affective role of teachers, since they must “understand” students. This implies a deeper, individual connection between teacher and student.

Table 3: Niran’s responses to the questions on student motivation

Question	Niran’s Responses (translated from Thai)
What do you want?	(I) would like to know English For a nice future Can be able to help others
Why are you here?	To learn English To build a nice future
What is a student’s job?	Concentrate on class/education Obey teachers Do the best in (our) job
What is a teacher’s job?	To teach English To teach student to be disciplined Understand students

Niran mentioned that he would like to speak English and use English for work, but he also wrote that he would like to buy things using English. In addition, he wrote that he wanted to know about sports and the newspaper. Although the newspaper did not directly answer the question, it shows that he thought about other ways that he would like to use English. Unfortunately, it is unclear how he wanted to know about the newspaper and why this was important to him.

Table 4: Niran's responses to the questions on student interests

Question	Niran's Responses (as written in English)
Write 3 things you would like to know/do in English at the end of the semester.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I want to do speak with English 2. I want to buy thing is language English 3. I want work about language English
Write 3 topics you want to know about/are interested in.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I want to know about news paper 2. I want to know about thing 3. I want to know about sport

Niran's journal entry about the class (see Appendix J) focused a lot on students' attitudes to speaking English as well as insights into the students' feelings and why they do or don't respond in class. He still made the connection between learning English and having a better future. Here he identifies how it does this by writing "if I can listen and can talking easy for my work or everything". He identifies the need for listening and speaking to do this. He makes an interesting statement when he writes "now neary for finish first year but we are can't listen and spoke English", since his ability definitely improved, perhaps to a greater degree than all other students. It is possible that he was speaking for the class as a whole. He identifies student feelings such as "shy in speak english wrong" and "excited [nervous] to learning english because we don't know about Aj said us or something Aj wants [us] to do". This theme of not understanding is another reason why class is not fun sometimes. He also wrote "sometime Aj so sad and because sometime slept before come to class also don't understood". By writing this towards the end of his journal entry he seems to try to take some of the blame off the teacher for some of the other things he wrote. This could be cultural since it is generally considered impolite to blame someone in a place of authority. However, students are often very attuned to feelings and it may have been a legitimate response to that.

4.11.2 Student B: Sakda

Sakda remained at the lower end of the class for the duration of the study. He had difficulty understanding what was happening in class. However, throughout the term he continued to try and to make an effort to be vocal in class. The observations that I made of him corroborate this. Often he would zone out in class. He would look out the door or not pay attention when the class was reading and would have to have someone point out to him where we were. When he understood what was happening in class, however, he was eager to participate. There are several instances of his

willingness to answer questions, such as when I asked for questions they had about music and then we looked up those questions online. He has a very outgoing personality and this was reflected whenever he understood.

When he did not understand he would get discouraged, such as when he did not understand what to do to explain the job description I gave him. Also, if he did not understand he would do his own thing such as when students drew pictures to illustrate what a “setting” is in a book or play. He sat and drew a detailed setting and did not even try to understand the second part of the activity by asking the teacher or a friend.

Where Sakda really tried was outside of class. He loved pronunciation and memorizing phrases. When we went over common English travel phrases in class I could hear him the next morning saying them to himself while he was working. He would also bring over words and ask how they were pronounced and he would pay a lot of attention when we went over pronunciation in class. One day I went in the kitchen and asked him what phak-bung (a vegetable) is and he showed me. In study hall that evening he brought over a list of vegetables that he created and asked me for pronunciation help. He then went over the pronunciation by himself and then went over it with other students. Just creating this list seemed to encourage his use of English. Later that evening I could hear him calling out very confidently to one of the other students in English.

An area where Sakda also struggled was in writing. Students had to write journal entries and he found this challenging. He acknowledged this as part of his journal entry about the English class (see Appendix K). Although it was difficult, he seemed to have a good grasp of how to tell a story or explain an event. Even though his English grammar, punctuation and vocabulary was lacking, it was still possible to follow his thought process. This was especially clear when students had to write a journal entry about a time they had to apologize to someone (see Appendix L).

At the end of the semester Sakda and Niran were paired up to present on a Southeast Asian country of their choice. Sakda surprised me by being incredibly prepared and comfortable. He hardly needed his notes and was able to explain their slides smoothly.

Sakda’s views on English were not as detailed as Niran’s although all students had the option to answer in Thai and he took this option. Sakda viewed the teacher as the one to correct mistakes and acknowledged that students need to study. This view was exhibited in his use of the teacher to correct pronunciation in particular. In addition, he felt the same as Niran when writing that teachers need to understand students. Again, this seems to have a connotation that the teacher needs to understand students individually to meet their needs.

Table 5: Sakda's responses to the questions on student motivation

Question	Sakda's Responses (translated from Thai)
What do you want?	I want to know English.
Why are you here?	-
What is a student's job?	study and
What is a teacher's job?	to teach and must also understand students correct students' mistakes

Sakda really wanted to be able to understand in class and a big thing that he wanted to do with English was to be able to understand when the teacher talked to him. His interests were specific and informative. They are also very representative of him because after knowing him better he is really interested in famous people and trends. He also loves to draw so it makes sense that would want to learn about these things in English. A challenge to this is that learning English for art, for example, is really difficult. For one of his journal entries he wrote about drawing but it was so jumbled and confused because he tried to write about different kinds of pencils and paper. He wanted to know terms that I didn't even really know how to help him with. I did, however, add a basic drawing series to the library to address his interest.

Table 6: Sakda's responses to the questions on student interests

Question	Sakda's Responses (translated from Thai)
Write 3 things you would like to know/do in English at the end of the semester.	1.I would like to speak English. 2.I would like to write and read English. 3.When Ajaan talks with me I cannot understand so I would like to understand when Ajaan talks with me.
Write 3 topics you want to know about/are interested in.	1.I would like to know news everyday. (In English) 2.I would like to know the well-being of movie stars. 3.I would like to know about arts.

In Sakda's journal entry about English at the end of the semester I was able to understand his feelings about English much better. Particularly the importance he places on reading. He wrote that he really likes reading, as opposed to writing, because he can just "follow" in the book and if he doesn't understand he can read it again (see Appendix K). When this is compared with his desire to understand what is said in class he appears to feel much less anxiety with reading. He seemed to feel that

reading was the easiest, which he also wrote that he enjoyed most on his mid-term evaluation.

4.11.3 Case study summary

Niran and Sakda both were involved and interested students in the process and in the class. The primary difference was their level of ability. Niran was able to understand more in the class and was therefore more apt to participate and to gain new understanding. Sakda found the class challenging and did not understand a lot of what was said in class. On occasion he found ways to adapt what he learned in class for his own needs or directed his own study. Sakda's progress is harder to see and document. By the end of the semester however, he was able, like Niran, to more fully articulate his opinions on learning English and was also able to use the language effectively in a class setting to disseminate information through their country presentation and also through his journal response about the class.

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