

## Chapter 4

### Results of the Study

#### 4.1 Introduction

The following chapter details the setting of the course and the data analysis. It starts with defining the context of the program from information collected in the teacher's log, through observations of the classroom and informal discussions with the students, followed by an analysis of the data concerning learners' responses to course materials, activities, and topics as viewed by the learners themselves. Thirdly, evaluations of the learner responses compared to the teacher's log and course materials are included. Finally, data collected from interviews with the stakeholders including their views on why tourism is important, and their overall goals for the course, followed by a summary of the overall reactions of learners, conclude the chapter.

#### 4.2 Context of the Program

The program took place from August 2010 to December 2010 at an international college in the north of Thailand. The class convened once a week for three hours on Monday from 1pm to 4pm. The scheduling of the course only provided difficulties for one student, because of a work commitment. However, several students felt that the course should be twice a week, because "after waiting one week to meet again, I feel like I have forgotten everything from the week before and sometimes it is hard to concentrate for three hours." Each class included a fifteen-minute break to allow the learners and instructors to relax and regroup before reconvening. Both the learners and the instructor felt the break was necessary in the program.

Ample resources were available to the teacher including: a computer, internet, printer, and classrooms equipped with computers and projection screens. However, a limited number of textbooks were available to the instructor that focused on tourism in Thailand. The two most available books were *Communicative English for Tourism* (Utawanit, 2005) and *English for Tourism 2* (Wanichanugorn, 2009). However, these books were both referenced in the previous Tourism 2 course taken by all learners in the class and the instructor chose to omit these course books. In addition, five students who previously enrolled in Tourism 2 classes failed and were retaking the class in conjunction with the Tourism 3 class.

The learners' English levels and backgrounds varied. All students had previous English experience, but some had limited exposure compared to the ample exposure of others to English through social interactions or employment. All students had studied English from at least grade 4, and all had completed at least three years of English at the tertiary level. The levels, according to the Common European Framework (CEF), ranged from A2-C1 in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The different English abilities of the learners in the course provided difficulties for both the students and the instructor. As viewed later in this chapter, the weaker students viewed outside readings as too difficult and of no interest to them, while the stronger students found them helpful. In addition, the weaker learners were constantly relying on the experienced English speakers to translate and guide them through the activities. This issue was addressed with two advanced learners on why they constantly translated and did the majority of the work for their peers, their response was:

“well, they are my friends I want to help them and have them do well in the class, I have been doing this for the last four years, and when I explain in English even if they do not understand it helps my English in explaining things to them but it is sometimes easier for me to just tell them in Thai.”

The other student agreed and commented “it is Thai culture to help our friends, if we do not they will not want to be friends with us.” This represents positive group dynamics within the classroom, but went against the teacher's beliefs that students should take control of their own learning; relying on direct translations is not effective in learning the target language. However, after reflection, the teacher developed an understanding of this situation. This situation happens all the time outside the classroom in different contexts where we rely on our friends for help, because they possess skills we do not have.

For example, if you have a bicycle but are unfamiliar with how to fix basic problems that arise, such as a flat tire, you can rely on a friend to fix it for you. This friend has always happily done it for you, and each time you think “well, this time I want to learn how to do it myself, so I will have my friend teach me the skills I need.” As the friend begins explaining the basics of bike mechanics you realize that their teaching style does not suit you or it is just easier to have them do it. After all, it is not challenging for them. The problem then arises in the future when the bicycle gets a flat tire or the chain snaps and you are in the middle of nowhere in the middle of night. You look around, there is no one to help you, and you think “maybe I should have listened to my friend and learned how to fix these problems myself.” It is not until a realization such as this that we notice the skills we need to get through our everyday life. In the classroom, it becomes the instructor's job to help the learners realize this need before it arises.

The learners possibly see no need to complete the tasks set forth by the teacher, because they cannot perceive the necessity of the skill in future settings. This issue is discussed further, showing how the weaker students responded to tasks and activities that they thought would be useful for their future, such as English related to the airline industry.

## **4.3 Results from the Questionnaire**

The following section details the learner reactions to the course materials, activities, and topics. Both qualitative and quantitative results from the questionnaire are detailed in the following section.

### **4.3.1 Qualitative Results from Questionnaire**

Item numbers 1-3, 8 and 11 address the learners overall satisfaction with the course concerning difficulty level, teaching style and additional comments the students may have had, which item 11 addressed. However, no comments of significant value were found in item 11, therefore it is not included in this analysis.

The initial question asked students if the overall course was satisfactory in improving their English skills. Thirteen learners responded yes to this question, but only some of the learners elaborated on why they felt it was helpful. Two students remarked that the class provided them with vocabulary and phrases that would be useful in everyday life and their future career ambitions. Other students remarked that the class provided them with a variety of skill improving activities that could be adapted or used in their future work, or skills to improve their knowledge on their own. One student remarked that the class focused on improving only listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, two learners only responded by stating the course was okay for them, but they did not elaborate.

In addition, questionnaire item number 2 addressed the difficulty level of the class. None of the students responded that the class was too difficult, only that some reading materials were too difficult for them. The majority of the students felt the level was satisfactory for them, remarking, "it's not too hard" and "it's okay for me". However, two students felt it was too easy for them but continued by remarking the opportunities to explain tasks and reading materials to other students were beneficial to them.

The responses to item number 3 on the questionnaire were concerning the teaching style of the course. The instructor of the course adopted the communicative approach to language teaching. The majority of the comments were positive. The students remarked that a variety of teaching styles were used throughout the course; the students viewed this as beneficial. However, two students responded that the teacher did not explain tasks clearly. Furthermore, the students' viewed the teaching style as relaxed, which they saw this as a positive. Citing the relaxed nature of the course made them feel comfortable in class when practicing speaking and listening.

In addition, questionnaire item 8 gathered responses from learners about topics that they would have liked to cover during the course, but were not included or completed due to time constraints. Some students responded that they would have liked to discuss the business aspect of the tourism industry, because their goals include owning their own tourism business in Thailand. In addition, the majority of students suggested they would have liked a field trip during the course in order to have a real life experience in practicing their English. Two learners responded that they would have liked to learn more about formal rules and cultural norms when traveling aboard.

In conclusion, the learners felt the overall course was beneficial to them and the skills learned could be applied beyond the classroom. The students were mixed

about the difficulty level of the class most remarking that it was “okay” and “alright” for them. They enjoyed the positive environment in the classroom instituted by the instructor as long as the tasks were viewed as achievable. In addition, there were some topics that students viewed as important to them and would have liked to discuss in the class. These responses are analyzed more thoroughly in the following sections by comparing them to qualitative data from the teacher’s log and course material evaluations.

### 4.3.2 Quantitative Data from Questionnaire

The following section outlines the results from the quantitative portion of the questionnaire. A chart is provided for each quantitative item followed by a brief discussion of each chart. The data is further analyzed in the following section by comparing the learners’ responses to the teacher’s log and material evaluations.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate the learners’ points of view concerning the materials used during the course. As shown, twelve out of fifteen students favored the group activities and nine students found the case studies helpful. However, ten learners cited the textbooks as unhelpful and seven viewed the outside class readings as unhelpful. In addition, less than half the students felt the worksheets were helpful, but also less than half of the enrollees felt they could be improved.

Table 4.1 Learners’ Responses to Questionnaire Item 9

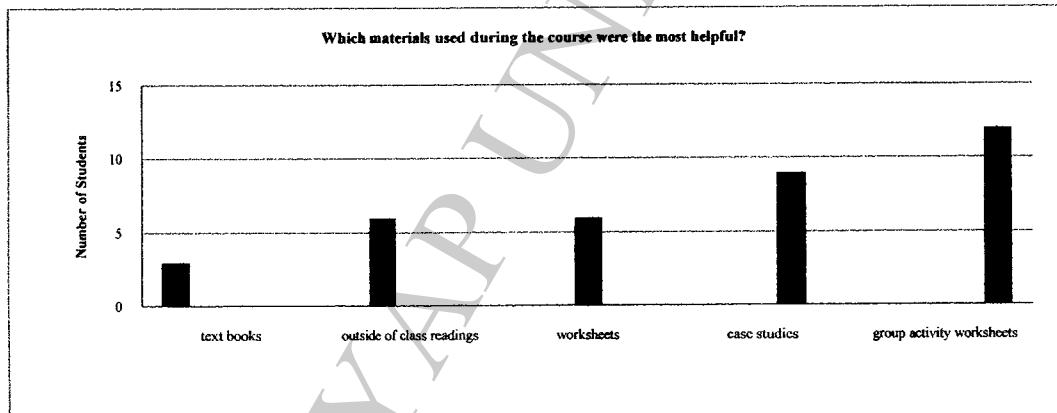
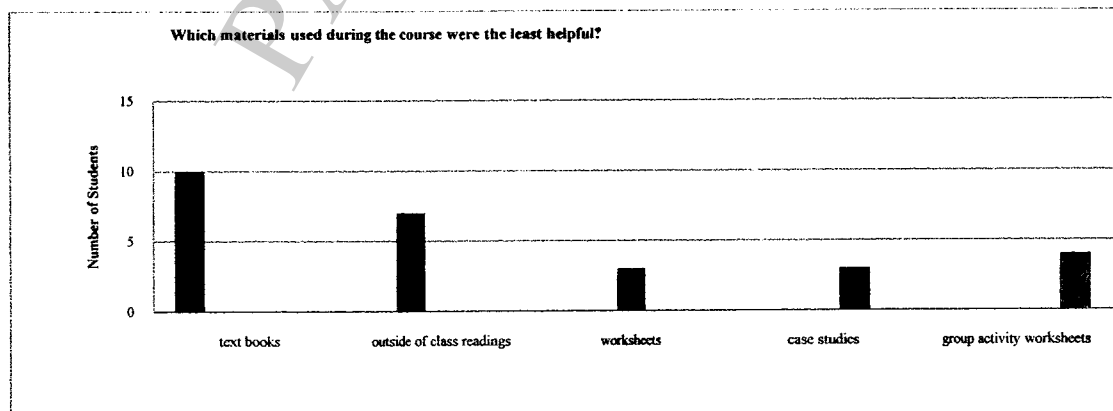


Table 4.2 Learners’ Responses to Questionnaire Item #10



In addition, Tables 4.3 and 4.4 chart learners' responses to course activities. Ten out of fifteen students viewed the teacher led discussions, group activities, and presentations as helpful. In addition, eight students felt the role-plays were beneficial. Videos were viewed as the least helpful, as nine learners felt they needed improving. Furthermore, eight learners cited that student led discussions and group activities could be improved.

Table 4.3 Learners' Responses to Questionnaire Item 4

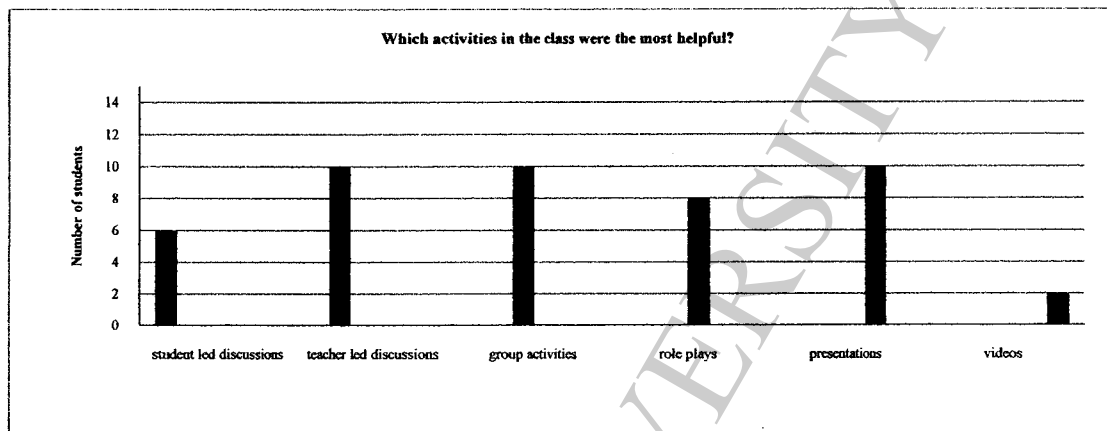
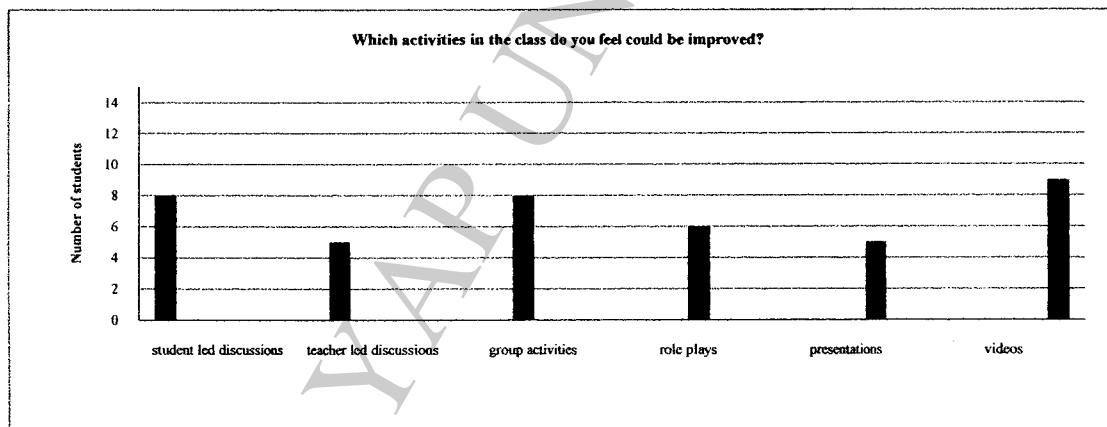


Table 4.4 Learners' Responses' to Questionnaire Item 5



Finally, Tables 4.5 and 4.6 document the learners reactions to the topics covered in the course. The students viewed the topics of tour development and airport situations as the most helpful, with twelve positive responses to airport situations, and nine positive responses regarding tour development. Conversely, tourism information regarding Thailand and sustainable tourism were viewed as the least helpful, with eight students not favoring the sustainable tourism topic, and five viewing the tourism information related to Thailand as unhelpful. As shown in Table 4.6, only three learners felt general tourism information, developing a tour, and airport situations were unhelpful. This demonstrates that most topics were beneficial to the learners with the exception of sustainable tourism.

Table 4.5 Learners' Responses to Questionnaire Item 6

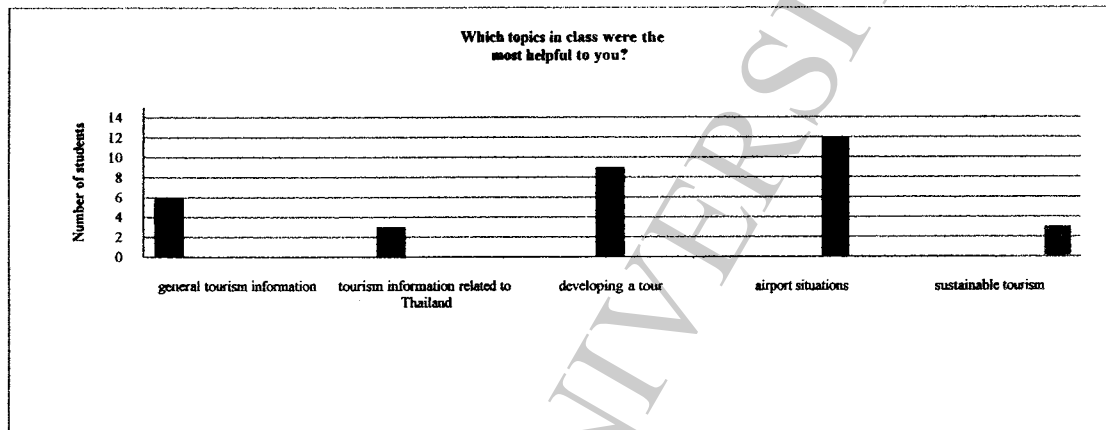
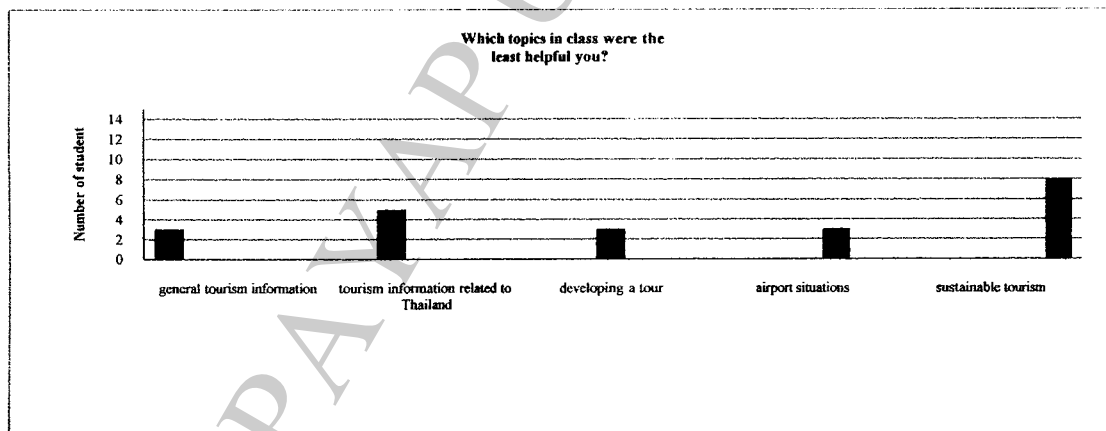


Table 4.6 Learners' Responses to Questionnaire Item 7



The results illustrated in Tables 4.1 to 4.6 provide a description of the learners' viewpoints towards materials, activities, and topics. In order for a more complete evaluation to take place, these results are compared to the teacher's comments in reference to course material evaluations in the following section.

#### 4.4 Course Material Evaluation

The course material evaluation utilized Cunningham's checklist (cited in Yani, 2007) for communicative interaction, and was divided into three sections. Section one focused on the elements of genuine communication present in the materials. The second section detailed the level of the materials, and the third section emphasized turn taking opportunities and the inclusion of adjacency pairs.

Section one of the checklist (see Figure 4.1) determined unpredictability, opportunities to express oneself, opportunities for learners to structure their own discourse, the need to use communication strategies, and the emphasis on co-operation between speakers in communicative interaction. The text, *How to Start a Tour Guiding Business*, and the sustainable tourism readers do not include any of these characteristics. This result reflects the nature of the materials in that they were not designed for ESL learners, but rather as overall content in their respective areas. The teacher designed worksheets coinciding with these texts that did include all the characteristics included in the evaluation. In addition, the case studies, airport materials, and *Keep Talking* included all the characteristics illustrated in Figure 4.1.

	<i>How to Start a Tour Guiding Business</i> (Mitchell, 2005)	Outside of Class Readings (i.e. Sustainable Tourism Readers)	Worksheets	Case Studies and Airport Materials	<i>Keep Talking</i> (Klippel, 1984)
unpredictability	x	x	✓	✓	✓
opportunities to express real information, feelings, opinions, etc	x	x	✓	✓	✓
opportunities for learners to structure their own discourse	x	x	✓	✓	✓
need to formulate and use communication strategies	x	x	✓	✓	✓
emphasis on co-operation between speakers in communicative interaction	x	x	✓	✓	✓

Figure 4.1 Genuine Communication Elements Present in Course Materials

The second section (see Figure 4.2) of evaluation determines if the course materials are at the appropriate level and reflect the nature of communicative interaction. The evaluation assess the structure of the discourse in interaction, complexity of structure, appropriate lexis range, fillers and incomplete sentences, and roles of speakers in interactions. The textbook *How to be a Successful Tour Guide*, case studies and airport materials included discourse interactions such as openers and confirmation checkers. In addition, all the materials provided an appropriate range of lexis and complex structures appropriate for university level. Furthermore, the case studies, airport materials, and *Keep Talking* featured fillers, incomplete sentences, and speaker roles.

	<i>How to Start a Tour Guiding Business</i> (Mitchell, 2005)	Outside of Class Readings (i.e. Sustainable Tourism Readers)	Worksheets	Case Studies and Airport Materials	<i>Keep Talking</i> (Klippel, 1984)
structure of discourse in interactions (including openers, confirmation checkers, preclosers, etc)	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
complexity of structure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
range of appropriate lexis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
features such as fillers and incomplete sentences	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
roles of speakers in interactions	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓

Figure 4.2 Nature of Communicative Interactions Present in Course Materials



The final section (see Figure 4.3) of the evaluation determines if the materials include the skill of turn-taking and the inclusion of adjacency pairs while providing examples of framing. Only the worksheets, airline materials, case studies, and *Keep Talking* include these features in the text. As stated before, *How to Start a Tour Guiding Business* and the outside readings are not designed to build communicative skills. These texts provide the content, while the teacher-developed worksheets provide the opportunities for communicative interaction.

	<i>How to Start a Tour Guiding Business</i> (Mitchell, 2005)	Outside of Class Readings (i.e. Sustainable Tourism Readers)	Worksheets	Case Studies and Airport Materials	<i>Keep Talking</i> (Klippel, 1984)
Does the material help learners in the skill of turn-taking in conversations?	x	x	✓	✓	✓
Are adjacency pairs included in presentation and practical material? If so, are there examples of framing (insertion sequences)?	x	x	✓	✓	✓

Figure 4.3 Additional Communicative Interactions

The following section analyses these results further by comparing them to the learner responses and the teacher’s log.

#### 4.5 Results Compared to the Teacher’s Log and Material Evaluations

Throughout the course, a teacher’s log (see Appendix E) was kept to observe the student’s interactions and responses to different materials, activities, and topics. Comments in the teacher’s log detailed the difficulty, amount of communication between the learners, and the overall response of the learners to the materials and activities. The teacher’s comments, compared with the questionnaire responses, detailed in Tables 4.1 to 4.6, provided similarities and differences in the effectiveness of the materials, activities, and topics in the class. In addition, the documentary source evaluations are utilized as a source to support findings from the questionnaire.

The majority of learners reacted favorably to most materials in the course, with exception of the outside readings and textbooks as demonstrated in Table 4.1. The majority of the outside readings consisted of the “Sustainable Tourism” articles and the books: *How to Start a Tour Guiding Business* and *How to Travel the World*

for *Free as an International Tour Director* (Mitchell, 2005). An excerpt from the text is included in Figure 4.4 with comments from the teacher’s log. A sample page is included in Appendix E. Only three students felt the textbooks used in the course were helpful, while ten students felt that they needed improvement as illustrated in Table 4.2. These texts provided a step-by-step guide to becoming a tour guide and advice for marketing oneself internationally. These texts are not targeted towards L2 learners; therefore, they do not include communicative activities or focus on the four language skills. However, the book provided target language in the tourism field in respect to the spoken language a tour guide might use.

Sample Text	Teacher’s Comments
<p>Good morning, everyone! I’m James Valentine Jr., and for better or worse, I’m your guide for today. I’ll do my best to tell you all something about this city on our morning walk, which will be about two miles, so I hope your feet are in good shape. Mine are killing me already, but then I’ve already done this walk three times today and about five hundred times before this! I’m sure you all remember some history from your school days a long time ago. (I was never very good myself and rotten at remembering dates.) However, if you would like to listen for a while, I will try and tell you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful for stronger students</li> <li>• Weaker students relying on their peers</li> <li>• Development of vocabulary and speaking skills</li> </ul>

Figure 4.4 *How to Start a Tour Guiding Business* (Mitchell, 2005, p. 31)

This example of spoken discourse allowed for the development of vocabulary and speaking tasks among the students. However, the text did not provide a sample dialogue for the learners to follow, which many reacted favorably to in different speaking tasks, most notably the airport situational role plays to be covered in depth later in this chapter. In addition, the texts were lengthy and most likely included new lexical items requiring the learners to spend adequate time reading the texts.

The students reacted favorably to the teacher-designed tasks related to the books, but on several occasions commented that the readings were too long and sometimes too difficult for them. However, one student responded that it was easy to follow the layout of the book, and the worksheets were helpful in organizing her tour and marketing plans. Another student said, “the book was difficult but not too difficult.” The teacher’s log detailed the use of these books and activities surrounding them as “useful for the stronger students, but the weaker students were relying too much on direct translation from their peers, using their first language (L1) and also appear to not have read the assigned readings prior to class due to their papers appearing to be freshly photocopied.” Possible reasons for these occurrences include: motivation, lack of time, or the learners feeling the text was too difficult and they could wait until class to have one of their peers translate it for them.

In addition to the two main textbooks, articles related to sustainable tourism in Thailand did not create the desired outcomes designed by the instructor. The articles detailed the effects of tourism in the north of Thailand. A sample is provided with the instructor's comments in Figure 4.5 with the full text included in Appendix F. The instructor felt these were important, relevant, and challenging articles with the objective of demonstrating how tourism can have a negative effect in Thailand, but precautions can be taken to avoid the negative effects, however, the learners all reacted differently. These texts proved too difficult for most learners and there was little interest in them. After the researcher probed further to determine the negative reaction by the students some responses from the students included "we are not interested in that material," "it's too long and hard," "it is too difficult for the majority of the students in the class and most of them do not think it is important," and "we think sustainable tourism is too deep for us." The difficulty of the articles led to students immediately reverting to their L1 during the group discussions or relying on a stronger student to translate the article for them. Both of these responses were against the teacher's objectives; however, the objectives may not have been stated clearly, or the tasks assigned to the readings were too difficult.

Sample Text	Teacher's Comments
<p>Sustainable tourism is tourism development that avoids damage to the environment, economy and cultures of the locations where it takes place. The aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development is a positive experience for local people; tourism companies; and tourists themselves. Under sustainable tourism, it may be unlikely to experience the kind of 'boom and bust' that led to the rapid growth, and then despoliation of locations such as the east coast of Spain in the 1970s.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too difficult and little interest shown by the learners</li> <li>• Students did not feel it was important</li> <li>• Text too long and difficult</li> <li>• L1 often used by the learners</li> </ul>

Figure 4.5 Excerpt from Sustainable Tourism Article (Forsyth, 2002)

The materials with the most favorable response from the students are those related to the airline industry (see Figure 4.6). The materials included common airline vocabulary, role-plays, traveler problems, and flight attendant role-plays. Most students responded to these activities positively as reported in Table 4.3, were successful in using English, and not reverting to their L1. During these activities, the students were creative in modifying the given situations to better simulate a real life task. Most likely tasks were set out clearly for the students as they provided a chart for the students to fill-in and answer such questions as "What time does the flight to London depart?" or "Which airline offers the cheapest fare to Tokyo." The materials also provided a sample dialogue for practice before engaging in the more difficult task

of booking airline tickets with just a short description of their situation. Figure 4.6 illustrates a sample airline activity.

<p>Student A you are a flight attendant on a flight from BKK to SFO. Use the information below to answer their questions.</p> <p>Non-smoking flight</p> <p>No seats available in business class for economy passengers</p> <p>Vegetarian meals must be booked in advance</p> <p>If overhead locker for hand luggage full, put under seat</p> <p>No mobile phones</p> <p>Laptops no problem</p> <p>Landing card needed for non-US citizens</p> <p>Student B you are a passenger on a flight from BKK to SFO. Ask the cabin crew about the following things:</p> <p>Change to business class?</p> <p>Where to put my hand luggage?</p> <p>Smoke?</p> <p>Use my mobile phone?</p> <p>Use my laptop?</p> <p>Fill out a landing card if not from the US?</p> <p>Have a vegetarian meal?</p>
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Figure 4.6 Sample Airline Activity

In response to positive reactions to the airline materials, informal interviews were conducted with some of the students. The students expressed high motivation for learning more about the airline industry, because that is a career goal of most students. They expressed satisfaction in understanding the objectives presented to them and the ability to refer to an example as they practiced the spoken discourse with other students. One student was quoted as saying “I think these speaking tasks are useful, because I think they are related to real life situations.” Another student responded, “I really want to work in the airline industry so I found these activities very helpful in practicing English.” The teacher’s log documented a similar response “students seem to be enjoying themselves and are active in producing the target language.” The responses to airline activities and materials were positive throughout,

most likely because the students saw a need for them, and were motivated by their future career ambitions.

Furthermore, *Keep Talking* (see figure 4.7) (Klippel, 1984), and case studies (see Figure 4.8) (Cuciniello, 2003), were typically used during this course as warmers to create communicative interactions among the students. These activities did not provide structured discourse for the students, and aimed to provide the learners opportunities to structure their own discourse as a way to express opinions, feelings and information. The activities taken directly from the sources tended to be less effective in generating conversation amongst learners, however the activities adapted to the context of where the learning took place produced more verbal interactions amongst the learners. Most students answered that they enjoyed these activities and found them helpful. However, as noted by the teacher, some students relied on their classmates to complete the tasks and to present their findings to the class. Near the end of the term, one student remarked, “maybe you should let us do these individually, because some students do not do anything. They just wait for me to do the work for them.” After further discussion with the student on why he felt students did not actively try, he replied “because it is either too difficult or they are lazy and do not want to do any work.” The students’ responses indicated that they enjoyed the group activities, but the log noted that all the students were not always meeting some of the objectives set by the teacher.

You have to plan how to spend a day in Chiang Mai with your partner. Your partner arrives at the CM airport at 9 am and must be back by 9 pm to return to Bangkok. There is a rental car, which you may use. It has a full tank of gas. You receive 300 baht each, but you have no other money. Decide what you would like to do. You should plan the day in such a way that you are happy with it.”

Step 1: Find out from each other where you would like to do and not like to do.

Step 2: Make a timetable for the day.

Figure 4.7 Adopted Task from *Keep Talking* (Klippel, 1984)

### Away day

The Managing Director of your company has recently read that fun at work is linked to higher productivity, so he's decided to send all the staff in the Chiang Mai office on an *away day* – a day out to encourage team spirit – and increase productivity!

You and your partner have been asked to choose a venue for the day. You have talked to some members of staff from different departments about what they would like to do. Look at their comments below and the newspaper cuttings and decide which venue would suit most people in the company. You have a budget of 3000 baht per person.

A relaxing day out would be wonderful with just a little gentle exercise and lots of good food. Can we go somewhere near the office? Oh, and no silly games, please!  
*James, 45, Accounts*

Can we please do something cultural? What about trying new foods? We want to have fun and spend time relaxing and chatting.  
*Mandy, 30, Administration*

No boring discussion groups with the old guys in accounts, please! We want lots

Figure 4.8 Adopted Case Study from Cuciniello (2003)

The materials that received positive reactions from the students were airport role-plays and situations, materials from *Keep Talking* (Klippel, 1984) and case studies adapted to the context of the students. The learners did not react favorably to outside readings and textbook readings. The majority of the students felt these reading were too long and difficult and did not relate to their objectives or goals, which was being able to practice speaking in real life situations.

As shown in Table 4.5, the topics the students enjoyed most were developing a tour and the airport situations. As noted before in the materials section, the students found these most relevant to their futures. These topics were not on the original syllabus but added after an initial small needs analysis at the beginning of the course. The majority of the students responded that tour development and airport English were the most interesting and relevant to them. In response to the needs analysis results, the instructor included these topics in the course.

The selection of topics towards what the students' wanted or felt they needed shows the importance of an ongoing needs analysis throughout the course, because students and teachers possess different beliefs before and during the course. The reactions of the learners to new materials possibly allowed them to see the instructor was considering their viewpoint. One student commented, "I felt the second part of the course was more useful because the things we did I could see myself in those situations in the future." These results further illustrate the importance of an ongoing needs analysis in any language program; students feel the topics and tasks they are being presented with reflect their future tasks using the target language. In addition, it

stresses the need for the teacher to be flexible with one's beliefs about what topics should be included in the course. Without restructuring beliefs, the learning experience possibly remains unproductive for the learners.

#### **4.6 Stakeholder Perceptions**

Interviews conducted with two major stakeholders in the program provided another viewpoint into the Tourism program. The interviews focused on the broad aspects of the Tourism program within the international college. Both stakeholders commented that they did not know what happened in the classroom; therefore, they were unsure if their comments would be useful. However, they were able to provide information regarding the growing tourism industry in northern Thailand, the importance of a Tourism program within the international college, and highlight strengths and weaknesses of the overall Tourism program.

Both stakeholders viewed the Tourism program as essential within the international college. Stakeholder 1 (S1) highlighted the major role tourism plays in Thailand, referring to it as a main sector in the Thai economy, along with import and export business. S1 feels the Tourism program allows for greater job opportunities among the students, and English skills related to tourism are beneficial to the learners after graduation. Especially with the development of the high-speed railway, S1 commented, "this area will be borderless, between Thailand, China, Laos, and Myanmar." Stakeholder 2 (S2) elaborated further, suggesting that tourism is not only working in a travel agency, but also offers opportunities in other areas such as cultural performances, accommodations, and owning gift shops. Both stakeholders felt the learners should be multidimensional and have skills in a variety of areas within the tourism industry, but with the focus being on speaking and listening skills.

The stakeholders' views on the importance on speaking and listening skills go against the assessment methods employed at the school. During the program, the instructor is required to provide written midterm and final exams. This required assessment measure does not correlate with the development of speaking and listening in the classroom. In addition, the exam schedule periodically changed, with instructors not knowing their exam schedule until one week prior to the scheduled time. In addition, instructors generally did not proctor their own exams, and this eliminated the possibility of providing a speaking exam. Listening could still be included but the reliance on outsiders to conduct the listening test provided problems for instructors. For example, a listening text read by an outsider without the instructor in the room leads to the unreliability of what was actually read to the students. If the administrator mispronounced or left out key words, there was no way for the instructor to know, and this led to unfair grading of the students. The required testing of reading and writing, when they were not the focus of the class, is an unfair assessment.

Stakeholder 2 continued to stress the importance of speaking and listening compared to reading and writing as means of communication. In regards to this, S2 felt learners should be able to communicate and socialize with foreigners. Within this communication, S2 felt it was important for the learners to be able to describe festivals such as Songkran and Loy Krathong. In addition, the learners should be able to explain how Thais celebrate these cultural events. Furthermore, the learners should be able to speak about different aspects of Thai culture, along with being knowledgeable of the nature and geography of northern Thailand. S2 felt it was

important for the learners to be familiar with Chiang Mai first, followed by northern Thailand, “because if you teach them about Phuket they cannot work in Chiang Mai, which is their hometown.” However, S1 felt the students should be multilingual and have overseas experiences to further their learning.

A major theme in the interviews developed from questions about the overall standards they would like to see met at the university. Both stakeholders have high expectations for the students, but feel it is difficult for the students to reach these standards because of their background. The recurring response was that the learners come “from rural areas and their English ability is quite low” and “they come from basic language skills, they are quite poor, from rural areas.” Neither stakeholder could identify the exact standards, but felt high expectations were appropriate for the program. The only solution that was offered was to have higher standards for enrollees in the program.

With respect to the high expectations, S2 felt that a weakness in the program was reflected in the fact that the instructors do not hold degrees in the hospitality or tourism sector. In addition, both felt the use of native English speakers was a strength of the program because of the opportunities the students have to interact with a native speaker. However, S2 also recognized this as a weakness because the native speakers may not have the background knowledge of Thai culture and festivals. The only solution suggested for this problem was hiring teachers that are more qualified in this regard.

The interviews with the stakeholders highlighted two distinct differences between them. S1 felt the learners need to be familiar with all of Thailand as well as different cultures, while S2 stresses the importance of the learners first being knowledgeable on aspects in northern Thailand. In addition, they both agree on the importance of the tourism industry and see it as a vital aspect of the overall university program. However, the suggestion that the learners’ possess a limited knowledge of English hinders the development of the program and lowers standards in the program.

#### **4.7 Overall Learner Reactions to the Program**

The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions to gain a better perspective of the students’ perceptions of the overall course. The majority of the students gave positive feedback regarding the course as a whole. One student responded to item number one on the questionnaire by writing that “the class had a lot of skill improving activities, so students could improve their skills without noticing them.” The comment was addressed further with a student to determine the exact skills he was referring too. He responded, “mostly listening and speaking skills centered on the group activity worksheets, and it was very helpful for my English because I was always explaining tasks and activities to other students.” Other students remarked that the course provided them with listening and speaking skills that were helpful, and that the subject material was relevant to their future internship and adaptable to different situations.

However, there were features of the course that the students felt needed improving or topics they would have liked to discuss. Most students commented that they would have liked to have seen a field trip built into the course. One student commented, “I wish we went on a field trip, because I learn better if I go to the place and practice speaking in the real situation.” Another student noted, “a field trip would have been good, because I could have practiced speaking with foreigners and that



would help me in the future.” This relates to the stakeholders’ feelings that the students need and want real life experiences to help them prepare for their future careers in the tourism industry.

In addition, the students’ stressed that they would have liked to cover some different topic areas, most notably, the relationship of tourism and other business activities, and different cultural aspects of going abroad. The students expressed desires to direct their own tourism business and felt they needed more practical business skills in order to do this. One student remarked, “I really want to have my own business and feel I need more information about business skills and how they work in tourism, but the class did not cover a lot in this area” Several other students responded that they would have liked to learn more business skills in the tourism program

Furthermore, students felt they needed more information about formal rules when traveling abroad. The students’ high interest in the airline industry was the reason for these responses. A student commented, “I want to work for Thai Airways and travel around the world, but I feel I do not know the different cultures well enough, I would like to know the rules of what I should and should not do.” The students as a whole agreed with this statement, feeling that understanding cultural norms would be beneficial for them as they pursue career goals in the airline industry.

In conclusion, overall, the learners reacted positively to some aspects of the course but felt some materials needed to be changed, because of difficulty or lack of interest on the part of the learners. The features of the course that provided interactive communication among the learners were airport situational role-plays, case studies and group activity worksheets. The least effective were outside reading materials and the readings provided through the textbook. Overall, the materials that were adjusted throughout course provided the most engagement for the learners, which demonstrates the need for ongoing needs analysis and evaluation in the classroom.

## **4.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has detailed the stakeholders’ perceptions on the importance of the Tourism program within the international college, and their feelings that it is a vital part of program. Their feelings regarding speaking and listening skills being the focus agree with the learner responses to course features. The students overall responded positively to in class speaking and listening tasks, however there were negative responses towards textbooks and outside reading materials. They demonstrated a desire to focus on tasks and activities that they would most likely encounter in the future, and showed little interest in aspects of the course that they did not view as relative to them. In addition, the teacher’s adjustments throughout the course by changing her beliefs, topics, and activities, in order to create engaging learning opportunities for the learners demonstrate the classroom dynamic. The ability and willingness to evaluate and assess one’s classroom leads to positive changes and professional development on the part of the teacher. Through this classroom inquiry, the teacher is able to make adjustments for the future to better meet the needs of the learners.