

The Impact of the Internet on English Language Teaching:

A Case Study at a Thai Rajabhat University

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Certificate

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me, and that any help received in this research work and the preparation of the thesis itself, and all information sources and literature used in the thesis have been acknowledged.

Signature of Candidature

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Abstract

This research was conducted in the English Department of a provincial Thai university. It seeks to address the tension between the priority accorded to English by the Thai government and the relatively low levels of English of most Thai people. The study investigates the potential of the Internet to support students' English language development, in particular the capacity of the Internet to support students' English reading development.

The research was located in Central Thailand at Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University (NPRU), my own work place. Here I investigated students' Internet practices and the potential offered by one English language program that incorporated use of the Internet. My focus on this one program enabled me to address questions about my own teaching practices, and about the implications of incorporating the Internet for program design and teaching.

The research itself was conducted in two stages. Stage One was an ethnographic investigation of students' current Internet practices, both in and out of University. Outcomes from Stage One then informed the development of an English language program that incorporated extensive use of the Internet. This program was implemented and evaluated in Stage Two of the research.

Outcomes from Stage One of the research revealed that the University students had low overall levels of Internet use, low levels of computer and Internet skills, but generally high levels of interest and enthusiasm, and a belief that the Internet could play a positive role in supporting English language learning. Outcomes from Stage Two confirmed that the Internet was potentially a powerful resource for teaching English. However, they also showed that if the Internet was incorporated fully into a program, rather than simply tacked onto a traditional program, then a major rethinking of program design and pedagogical practices was necessary. The implications of such changes in program design and teaching are addressed in the thesis.