

EGID 490: English Communication for Engineers

Overview

The environment in which we are working has safe limits for you. If you are wrong, you can only lose a few marks; and maybe if you were to fail a course, that is a temporary setback only, even if *you* think it is serious.

In a commercial environment, which many of you will enter eventually, the risks are higher: your project, your team, your company, your job. A task and your employment need planning, training, management and control.

Planning

Whether you create a device, a circuit, a paper or a company strategy, your end result does not come from random working. It is also not luck. *ไม่เป็นไร* does not come into the equation either.

Training

Any randomness comes from either inexperience or laziness (or a combination). Training increases your experience and body of knowledge. Part of the structure here, including this course, is to provide situations where you can learn and practice in safety.

Management

I give you a task and push you to execute it successfully.

Control

To achieve this success, *you* must exercise control: of data, of material (text/code), of your time, sometimes of your team, and always of yourself.

Structure

I do not like exams for this type of subject, but to ensure that you are making the right level of effort and going in the right direction, I need to evaluate you throughout the course.

Every task I give you carries marks (some carry higher marks, of course). Some projects will carry enough marks to make a significant difference to your grade. The final project will count as a take-home exam.

My aim is to give you the skills to operate effectively in a work environment. The standard therefore will be professional: effort, materials and punctuality.

Part One: Data, Organisation, Presentation

In writing as well as presentation, there are two basic needs: data and organisation. With no information, you have nothing to say. If the data is not organised then its presentation will be (at best) confusing.

Part of that organisation needs to include the ideas of balance and priority: the essentials, not minor details. A question or a technological problem may allow you to change this temporarily. You will see professionals on screen carrying out first-rate presentations.

A clear and simple demonstration of organisation is the résumé. There will be other examples of writing. An early project will require you to create a slide show from photographs you take during a class session.

Several other tasks will be included, particularly presentation in many forms, if time allows: round-table, spontaneous, organised, and ending with the mid-term: individual presentations in the "Pecha-Kucha" format.

At the same time, you should be preparing for the first project: a 10-minute movie on a subject that is your choice (but my decision to veto), in groups of 3.



Part Two: Writing

Building on the organisation and collection of information, we need to look at several types of writing, each building on the skills used in the previous task. We will begin with summarising and organisation.

In EGID 490, you will write a project proposal in English. We will continue with a paper that needs you to collect your own information. You should recognise the importance not just of earlier skills, but also of note-taking and the careful use of external sources of information (e.g. textbooks, journals) to support your ideas or concepts.

These papers will require *much* work. I am aware you do not have the skills to write high-level texts. The keys here are progress through **planning** and **drafts**, coupled with **consultation**.

Consultation means working with me. The Proposal will go through several stages called drafts. If you do not complete one of these properly, or you are late for any deadline, the consequences will be serious.

A draft is a version of a paper. We do not go from brain to book. Instead a series of steps is used to improve the writing until the finished product. The improvements are helped by consultation.

Here we have some problems. Some students think they are good enough that they do not need to bother and only attend sessions sometimes. Some students think they are not good, or do not have the confidence, so try to avoid me. Both of these groups will suffer. It happens every year.

Another problem occurs with assistance. Students think that they must start by bringing me a perfect piece of writing: it does not work like that. As they want to start with perfection, they try by either receiving help from their friends, or by downloading much information (or copying from books) and insisting it is theirs. I am not fooled. This also happens every year.

A variation on this is to read the information, think, then to write it all down and insist that it is yours. If you did not know *before* you read, this is the same (academically) as copying.

In any of these cases, the result will be a failing grade.

A further problem comes with translation. While you communicate in Thai in your day to day lives (as I have to), when you are writing English, Thai grammar does not work. If you do this when you give me a piece of work, I will be unimpressed and will simply return it to you unmarked.

The purpose of the process is to learn about ways to improve, not to produce a perfect piece of work.

Requirements

A dictionary
A notebook
Students on time

Not needed

Mobile phones
Talking dictionaries
Talking students

Graham K. Rogers

Salaya
January 2017

extensions1@me.com
<http://www.extensions.in.th>
@extensions_th