

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature related to the study. It consists of the following areas:

- 2.1 The role of customer relations towards British Council service
- 2.2 English for specific purpose (ESP) and Communicative competences
- 2.3 Previous study

2.1 THE ROLE OF CUSTOMER RELATIONS TOWARDS BRITISH COUNCIL SERVICE

2.1.1 The History of the organization

British Council is an international organization from the United Kingdom for educational opportunities and cultural relations between the UK and Thailand and has offices in 110 overseas countries around the world. In Thailand, British Council has operated since 1938 and has built long-term relationships with Thailand's education ministry, schools, universities, institutions, English language teachers and students. According to achieve its main goal, to enhance the UK reputation for education and culture, British Council has operated many services for years e.g. English language teaching centre, examination services, a UK educational resource services, UK educational activities, science projects, and arts and culture activities.

English Language Teaching Centre, as part of the services provided by the British Council, takes a major role in the organization. In Thailand, there are 4 English Language Teaching centers, 3 in Bangkok and 1 in Chiang Mai.

In Bangkok, the 3 English language teaching centers are operated in different areas which are Siam Square (head office), Lad Phrao and Pinklao. The English Language Teaching centre provides English courses for children aged 6 – 13 years old and English courses for long-life learning for adults aged over 16 years old. According to the annual report 2007 - 8, the British Council now has over 3,000 students enrolled in its courses.

2.1.2 The Role of customer service in English language teaching centre

Customer service is considered an important unit of the British Council's English language teaching center. Customer Service department's main responsibilities include the front of house services e.g. counter service for English language courses, education UK resources and individual counseling, enquiry desk and I-zone or library service.

Each day Customer Relations Officers have to provide excellent service for both Thai and foreign customers according to the standards set by Human Resources. In order to support the excellent service, Customer Relations Officers as well as every British Council staff can access the online database and resources provided by the British Council e.g. British Council intranet, regional intranet, customer service excellent guide, education UK guide, visit Britain guide, share point and etc. The information available in online resources is written in English.

According to the organization's practice, English is also preferred in office communication with foreign colleagues not only for foreign customers. Therefore, the knowledge and fluency in English are essential for both Thai officers and Customer Relations Officers themselves as it is used as a medium to search information and deliver service to customers.

In the aspect of staff self-improvement, British Council is encouraging its staff to take appropriate training courses which are relevant to the individual's needs and jobs quality enhancement. Staff can either take online training or English courses where appropriate.

2.2 ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE (ESP) AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

2.2.1 English for specific purpose (ESP)

Based on Hutchinson and Waters (1996), the relentless growth of technology and commerce in the modern world has influenced the needs of international language for international communication. English language is considered one of the most important languages used worldwide. The use of English is not limited only in the countries where people speak it as their mother tongue but also in those that adopt it

as the official and second language. Consequently, the expansion of English for specific purpose has been implemented to fulfill these requirements.

According to the expansion of the language in terms of business communication and career advancement, English language teaching approach has been designed to respond to actual use in real communication (Widdowson 1978) In Thailand, though English is not considered as the country's second language, it is inevitable that the use of English has become essential for business and organization administration. Employees with good English language skills are required to fill up positions.

2.2.2 Communicative competence

In order to deliver a good service, the knowledge and skills of communication and communicative competence is beneficial. Basically, communication is a process or procedure used to share thoughts and ideas between or among people (Hamilton and Parker, 1997, p. 4).

According to Oxford (1990), in terms of English language communication, the communicative competence refers to ability or competence of people to communicate which relates to both spoken and written language in all 4 skills. The 4 skills of communicative competence are 1) grammatical competence, 2) sociolinguistic competence, 3) discourse competence, and 4) strategic competence.

Grammatical competence

Grammatical competence refers to accuracy or the degree to which the language user has mastered the linguistic code, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, spelling and word formation (Oxford, 1990, p. 7).

Sociolinguistic competence

Sociolinguistic competence is the extent to which utterances can be used or understood appropriately in various social contexts. It includes knowledge of speech acts such as persuading, apologizing and describing (Oxford, 1990, p.7).

Discourse competence

Discourse competence is the ability to combine ideas to achieve coherence in thoughts, above the level of the single sentence (Oxford, 1990, p. 7).

Strategic competence

Strategic competence is the ability to use strategies like gestures or an unknown word in order to overcome limitations in language knowledge (Oxford, 1990, p. 7).

2.3 PREVIOUS STUDIES

Kasapa Sripaiboon (2000) investigated the public opinion about 1) adopting English as a second language, and 2) drew up guidelines for human resources development in terms of English proficiency of Thai employees. According to the study, most of the respondents supported the idea of adopting English language in Thailand as it is used internationally in global business communication and information technology. The study also stated problems in English language teaching in the country in the aspect of quality of the teachers, inadequate practice, motivation, irrelevant teaching methods and insufficient teaching aids.

Chonrat Thanasontikool (2006) investigated the attitudes towards English speaking at work of Thai Union Limited employee. The study revealed that most of the employees had a favorable attitude and recognized the importance of English language at work as the most frequently used medium. However, the study also reviewed some negative attitudes and inappropriate beliefs towards English speaking concerned with 3 situations 1) meeting, 2) presentation and 3) face-to-face communication. The employees also examined the limitation of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, accent and grammar as the problems they've faced when speaking English.

In summary, this chapter reviews the customer relations officer responsibilities and how they use English language in their jobs. According to English for specific purpose and communicative competences, these parts show how English language is used and the development in terms of business communication.

The methodology for the study is presented in the next chapter.