

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This chapter reviews the literature and research studies on the needs, problems, and wants of garments merchandisers relevant to English communication at William Connor and Vision Garment in view of: (1) English for Specific Purposes, (2) needs and needs analysis, (3) needs for business English communication, (4) problems of Thai people in business English communication, and (5) relevant research concerning needs and problems of garment merchandisers in Hong Kong.

#### **2.1 ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES**

As English is needed in several areas in different particular ways, including for garment merchandisers, courses of English for Specific Purposes, or ESP, are conducted to meet the needs of learners. ESP is defined by several authors as follows:

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987, pp. 12-15), ESP's aim is to enable learners to function adequately in a target situation by concentrating learners needs and providing a relevant English course. Hutchinson and Waters declares that ESP is considered as one of the new studies of English which focuses on the ways in which English is actually used in real situations. As learners' needs are relevant to the ESP courses, the learners' motivation in studying English would be improved. As a result, the learners would be able to study English better and faster (p. 8).

Robinson's study in 1991 (as cited in Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 3) believes that ESP is 'normally goal-directed' and it is a the course of needs analysis development. The characteristics are consisted of limited time period for achieving objectives and homogeneous classes of adult students involving identical work or specialist studies. Robinson's research in 1980 (as cited in Al-Ahdal, 2007, p. 2) also emphasizes that "ESP is perhaps materials produced for use once only for one group of students in one place at one time". This definition suggests that with time, technology changes and the needs of learners also change.

Stevens' research in 1988 (as cited in Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 3) admits that ESP is composed of four absolute characteristics suggesting that the

learners are in a position to specify their needs characteristics. Those four absolute characteristics are:

1. Designing to match learner's needs
2. Relating in content to specific rules, careers and activities
3. Focusing on language suitable to those activities in grammar, vocabulary, conversation or meaning
4. Differentiating from General English

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, p. 4) asserts that in ESP methodology that in ESP teaching should reflect the methodology of the disciplines and profession it serves. In more specific ESP teaching the nature of the interaction between teacher and learner may be very different from that in a general English class.

Munby's study in 1978 (as cited in Al-Ahdal, 2007, p. 2) says that ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner. It is believed that not two people can have identical needs. Ideally an ESP course should involve one tutor to cater for the needs of one student.

## **2.2 NEEDS AND NEEDS ANALYSIS**

There are different concepts of needs as follows:-

Brindley's research in 1989 (as cited in Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 123) acknowledges that needs are explained as objective and subjective. Objective needs are derived by outsiders from factual information and what is known and verifiable, for example, to be able to follow instructions correctly. Subjective needs are derived by insiders and in agreement with cognitive and affective factors, for example, feeling confidence to do something. Brindley adds that product-oriented needs derive from the goal or target situation and process-oriented needs derive from the learning situation.

Berwick's study in 1989 (as cited in Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 123), insists that needs are perceived and felt. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, p. 123) clarify that perceived needs are the same as Brindley's objective needs and felt needs are the same as Brindley's subjective needs.

In view of Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 54), needs are the ability to understand and/or perform language features of a target situation, for example, ability to understand and/or use relative clauses. Hutchinson and Waters basically differentiate between target needs and learning needs. Target needs are what the learner needs to do in the *target situation*. Learning needs are what the learner needs to do in order to learn.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 12) suggests the process of ‘*needs analysis*’ as identifying the *target situation* and completing linguistic forms/features to be used in that target situation. Chambers’ research in 1980 (as cited in Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p. 12) declares the process as ‘target situation analysis’ rather than ‘needs analysis’ because it is more accurate to explain the process concerned. Munby’s study in 1978 (as cited in Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p.12) points out that the ‘target situation analysis’ is the system that produces the learners’ requirement of communication purposes and setting, the means of communication, and linguistic skills/functions/structures etc. All of this means learners’ needs are put at the centre of the course design process.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, pp. 55-56) contend that target situation analysis is to consider the target situation in terms of necessities, lacks, and wants. Firstly, *necessities* are something learners have to know in order to function effectively in the target situation, for example, the linguistic features for negotiating the prices or explaining order status. Secondly, *lacks* are comparing learners existing proficiency with their necessities, or what they have to know so that the course designer can identify what to put in the course. Lastly, *wants* are learners’ views about what their needs are.

Needs analysis leads to a quite focused ESP course. ESP teachers nowadays are faced with teaching students about English for their subject studies or careers and they have to analyze learners’ needs at the very beginning by asking questions or observing and analyzing the answers.

### **2.3 NEEDS FOR BUSINESS ENGLISH COMMUNICATION**

Ninnat Olanvoravuth’s research in 1996 (as cited in Saowalak Werakanto, 2003, p. 13), defines “communication” as the exchange of useful message that serve

the readers' and listeners' needs, that make your exact meaning clear, that enable readers and listeners to share information with you. People communicate to satisfy needs in their work and personal lives, and usually for the purpose of solving problems. Effective communication is achieved by successful information or business matters exchange in different situations and locations.

Piyarat Sukpradit (1999) investigated in her study the needs for using English by Thai secretaries in Communication and Telecommunication Companies. The purposes of this study were to study how English in business communication played an important role in Thai secretaries' work, to ascertain the current amount of English used in their daily work, to investigate problems as well as task needs for skill training, and to determine which of their language skills were needed to be improved. It was found that Thai secretaries' perception towards the importance of English in business communication was at highest level and the role of English significantly influenced their daily work and their successful careers. Further findings indicated that listening was the most needed task in using English while second, third and fourth were reading, speaking and writing. The finding implied the cognizance of the secretaries that English was very crucial for their business communication and performed a big impact on their duty and professional achievement. Regarding the needs of skills, the finding revealed that listening was the task most needed in using English for secretaries. Reading ranked second, while speaking and writing ranked third and fourth respectively.

English communication is very important not only to secretarial functions as in the instance above, but to all global business areas, especially export business. As English is the international language to communicate with foreign customers of export enterprises, the merchandisers who are key people have to communicate efficiently in English by developing the basic communication skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Moreover, English knowledge of structures and vocabulary are also important for English communication. The merchandisers need to have English knowledge and vocabulary related to textile and garment fields and be able to apply it for communication in the workplace.

## **2.4 PROBLEMS OF THAI PEOPLE IN BUSINESS ENGLISH COMMUNICATION**

Piyarat Sukpradit (1999) investigated in her study the needs for using English by Thai secretaries in Communication and Telecommunication Companies. Two of four purposes were to investigate problems for skill training and to determine which of their language skills were needed to be improved. The findings revealed that reading was the biggest problem in using English, while ranked second, third and fourth were speaking, listening and writing.

The interesting issue of the findings was that educational background and frequency of English used for business communication of secretaries' companies played a significant role in work performance and English problems. The result did not describe the correlation in detail but only described how education background and repetition of English used affect crucially problems occurrence in the secretaries' English communication.

Saowalak Werakanto (2003) studied needs and problems of professional adults in using business English at their work place. The findings indicated that the needs in using business English are listening, speaking, reading and writing respectively. The problems in using business English are writing, speaking, listening and reading respectively.

## **2.5 RELEVANT RESEARCH CONCERNING NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF GARMENT MERCHANDISERS IN HONG KONG**

So-mui F.L. and Mead K (2000) surveyed the work place English needs of textiles and clothing merchandisers who communicate in the international marketplace, through questionnaire surveys, telephone interviews, analysis of authentic correspondence and visits to the workplace.

There were three purposes of the surveys. Firstly, the authors wanted to obtain a far deeper understanding of the day-to-day activities of textile and clothing merchandisers. Secondly, the authors believed that there was a need to update in existing sending and receiving of messages. Lastly, the textile and clothing industry is a major contributor to the Hong Kong economy and has been by far the largest employer within the manufacturing sector. It is mentioned in the research that in

1995, the Hong Kong textile and clothing industry employed over 140,000 persons which was 36.3% of the total number of manufacturing sector employees.

The subjects of the study had graduated from two Hong Kong institutions, namely: The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the Kwun Tong Technical Institute (KTTI). A total of 360 graduates from the two institutes, all of whom had been working as merchandisers for at least one year, were the subjects of the study.

It was found that there was substantial use of English but with far greater use of written compared with spoken English. Though countries of most business conducted were China, USA, Japan and Korea, English was the international language to be used. The most common channels of communication were fax, telephone and e-mails. It is noticeable that fax was commonly used while e-mail was not widely used at that period of year 2000. Most preferred channels of communication were fax, e-mail, and telephone.