

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) discussions of some interesting issues (4) conclusions, and (5) recommendations for further research.

#### **5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

##### **5.1.1 Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study was to analyze the needs, problems, and wants concerning English communication of garment merchandisers at William Connor and Vision Garment.

##### **5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures**

The subjects of the study consisted of three merchandisers and one merchandise manager (the boss) from William Connor, and two merchandisers and the owner (the boss) from Vision Garment. All were female. To investigate the needs, problems, and wants concerning English communication of garments merchandisers, a set of interview questions was developed to be appropriate for this garment merchandiser interview. The interview questions consisted of four parts, which were the garment merchandisers' personal background information, the garment merchandisers' knowledge and skills required concerning English communication at work place from the management view, the garment merchandisers' problems concerning English communication at work place, and the garment merchandisers' view of knowledge and skills required concerning English communication at the work place. The collected qualitative data was organized, grouped into categories, evaluated for usefulness and relevance to the research questions. Then, the data was examined for alternative explanations, and the report was transcribed.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

##### **5.2.1 The Garment Merchandisers' Personal Background Information**

All five merchandisers were female and were aged between 26-42 years old. There were five merchandisers in total at William Connor and Vision Garment. The first one did not have textile education but had worked in some other garment and garment accessory companies for six years. Her major subject at university was English. The second one graduated in Textile Engineering, Rajamangala University – Klonghok Campus. She learnt very little English from school and university. She had been in the garment business for ten years but only three years using English communication. The third one was titled as assistant merchandiser but her job was really a merchandiser who followed up orders and had her own accounts. Hence she was called merchandiser in this research. This merchandiser had a Diploma of Garment Textile from Rajamangala University – Udon Thani Campus, with very little English background knowledge. She had been in the garment business for twenty years and was an assistant at the company for eleven years. The fourth one graduated five years ago from Textile Engineering, Rajamagala University – Klonghok Campus and had only little English education from school and university. She had got a good chance of getting some English skill from her Philippines boss during her first two years working. The last merchandiser graduated from Accounting, South East Asian University. She had worked in the company for three years but she had neither garment background nor English skill practice before working as a merchandiser.

### **5.2.2 Merchandisers' Problems from the View of the Boss, that Lead to Merchandisers' Needs.**

Writing skill was the biggest problem and most needed from the bosses' view. The merchandisers should know technical words, vocabulary, expression and grammar relevant to the job so that they could put those words in e-mail whenever they had to communicate with the customers, share some ideas, and translate from Thai into English for all other cases. Writing had to be concise, clear and full of information that merchandisers wanted to convey.

Reading skill was as important as writing skill since all customers' requirements were in e-mail and BOM. The merchandisers had to read carefully, understand thoroughly, and process correctly since they were the only people in the companies who contacted all customers. Moreover, the merchandisers wanted to

know technical words, vocabulary, expression and grammar relevant to the merchandising job so that they got all details and requirements and processed samples and production correctly.

Listening/Speaking skill was crucial for merchandisers in buying agent companies as they had to confront customers more often than merchandisers in garment manufacturer. The merchandisers had to get used to native speaker's stress and intonation and know sufficient technical words, vocabulary, expression and grammar related to merchandising job so that they could independently discuss and negotiate with customers and fluently correspond to all customers' requests. This was emphasized by the William Connor's boss as she said ability to independently work with customers is the core of the merchandiser's responsibility.

### **5.2.3 Merchandisers' Problems in the View of the Merchandisers, that lead to merchandisers' wants.**

Reading skill was the most wanted skill for merchandisers to understand all requests from customers through both e-mail and BOM. The merchandisers wanted to know relevant vocabulary, especially sewing procedure, to produce samples and production correctly. In order to be efficient in reading, the merchandisers wanted technical words, vocabulary, expression and grammar to avoid time wasting and thoroughly understand the e-mail and BOM.

Writing skill was the second most wanted skill for merchandisers. They wanted writing technique to clearly identify or express main ideas in an appropriate length of e-mail. The merchandisers wanted basic grammar knowledge regarding tense, simple expression, and some verbs concerning merchandising job to lessen or avoid customers' confusion during communication through e-mail, and to avoid spending too much time in writing e-mail.

Listening/speaking skill was placed as the least wanted skill for merchandisers in terms of work as they met customers of each account about twice a year with a few days visit each time. The merchandisers wanted listening/speaking skill to understand what customers discussed and promptly respond to the customers' requests. Basically, all merchandisers wanted to get used to native speaker's stress and intonation, and know words and vocabulary regarding textiles and garments so that they were able to promptly response to the customers' discussion.

#### **5.2.4 The Most Important Skills for Merchandisers**

Reading/Writing is the most important skill in export business as most of the time the customers and merchandisers communicated through e-mail.

Listening/Speaking is personally the most requested skill to learn by all merchandisers as when confronting with customers, they need listening/speaking skill in terms of stress and intonation, basic grammar, and technical vocabulary, to promote confidence in generating a prompt response to the customers.

### **5.3 DISCUSSIONS**

This section concerns some interesting issues as follows:

#### **5.3.1 Not Only Textile and Garment Education But Also English Background Knowledge are Important for Merchandisers' English Communication.**

The findings revealed clearly that merchandisers who had textile and garment education were not fluent in reading, writing or speaking, as they lacked vocabulary, expression and grammar to understand some complicated e-mails or to express their ideas in both written and spoken activities. On the contrary, the merchandiser who majored in English had sufficient English knowledge to translate, but got stuck writing e-mail because a lack of technical vocabulary and knowledge. This idea was confirmed by bosses at William Connor and Vision Garment; both textile and English knowledge were equally important for merchandisers' communication. This was also supported by So-mui F.L. and Mead K (2000) who said that a merchandiser required considerable business communication skill in addition to special technical knowledge.

#### **5.3.2 English Communication Demand in Reading and Writing Skills for Merchandisers**

The findings show that the merchandisers apparently wanted to improve reading and writing skills so that they could perform better communication with foreign customers, as most of the time the merchandisers contacted customers through e-mail. The finding, concerning the bosses' view, was evident accordingly that merchandisers wanted to improve reading and writing skills. Comparing the research done by So-mui F.L. and Mead K (2000), on merchandisers graduated from

Polytechnic U and IVE in Hong Kong, by questionnaire, telephone, collection of authentic text and visits to the workplace, it was found similarly that the merchandisers wanted to improve communication in reading and writing to have better understanding. Another study done by Piyarat (1999) on Thai secretaries in Communication and Telecommunication companies disclosed that the importance of English in business communication was at the highest level and the role of English significantly influenced their daily work and their successful careers. With regard to the task that secretaries most wanted to improve, this was listening skill, while reading and writing held second and fourth rank and speaking held the third rank. It was noticeable that the daily function of secretaries, working according to boss's command, was different from merchandisers, exchanging information with foreign customers through e-mail.

### **5.3.3 The Biggest Problem Skill in Business English Communication**

With regard to this study, the greatest problem that merchandisers confronted was with reading skills since they lacked technical vocabulary and reading for comprehension technique for thoroughly understanding of e-mail and BOM. Writing skill was as problematic as reading skill because all production information had to be concise and clear to satisfy the foreign customers. In this finding, listening and speaking skill were the third and fourth problematic skills. It is evident regarding the biggest problem in secretaries' using English for communication (Piyarat, 1999) that reading was the most problematic skill while speaking, listening, and writing ranked second, third and fourth. It was interesting that reading came out the worst problem for both merchandisers and secretaries, but writing came least problem for secretaries while writing ranked equally to reading for merchandisers. The explanation for this is probably that merchandisers worked independently and exchanged information promptly with the customers, while the secretarial job was not exchanging daily information through e-mail as merchandisers were.

It was evident from Saowalak (2003) in her survey of the problems of professional adults using business English, that writing was the greatest problem, which was similar to this study since the professional adults had to do trade presentations and quotations to foreign customers. The second, third and fourth rank of problem from Saowalak (2003)'s findings were speaking, listening and reading.

Reading was the least problematic as the professional adult could take time reading before getting back to customers, which is different from the merchandisers situation in that they had to get back to customers day by day or within a limited time. Speaking and listening came second and third as the professional adults had to encounter customers more often than merchandisers.

#### **5.3.4 Education Background Played a Significant Role in Work Performance.**

One finding in this study concerned a merchandiser who had only a Diploma, though she studied Garment Textiles but with very little English skill, she was still an assistant merchandiser after eleven years in the company. The boss signaled that her performance still brought dissatisfaction to the customers and the company in terms of communication problems and information confusion. This was similar to Piyarat (1999)'s finding that the educational background played a significant role in work performance or problems occurrence during English communication.

## **5.4 CONCLUSIONS**

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

5.4.1 In the textiles and garment business, people who have only good English skills may not be successful. With regard to merchandisers who have textiles and garment education, plus good English communication, these people could work effectively and make progress, as English would help people who knew their job very well be successful in their career.

5.4.2 Reading/Writing were the most important skills for English communication at William Connor and Vision Garment and problems in English communication were found most in reading/writing skill. The merchandisers at William Connor and Vision Garment should have reading and writing skill training.

5.4.3 Listening/Speaking skill was important for William Connor as the nature of the business was an agent company that had to deal directly with foreign customers. Merchandisers had to be fluent in listening/speaking so that they could independently handle a customer's visit. Vision Garment faces very few customer's visits, and anytime they come, Vision Garment's boss always joins the meeting.

Therefore the merchandisers at William Connor should take listening and speaking training as soon as possible while Vision Garment respond to this demand later on.

5.4.4 The merchandisers need training in technical words, garment vocabulary, and expressions and grammar relevant to the merchandising job so that they can work efficiently and effectively regarding the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research.

Further research should be undertaken on the development of business English communication courses at the textile and garment institutes and universities in Thailand as the finding in this research is that merchandisers' career success needs both textile and garment knowledge, as well as business English skills. The recommended research should be conducted in Quantitative Research with merchandisers in several companies so that needs can be collected and analyzed from the majority group of merchandisers.