

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND**

The advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides rapid growth of international communication. Apart from the electronics tools for communication, the English language is also considered an important tool used to communicate effectively among people around the world. Therefore, people in an organization have to learn English to be able to use English effectively, which helps them achieve their professional goals and also the success of the organization. In higher education institutions, especially, English is an important tool in teaching and research as well as for communicating with organizations both domestic and international.

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) was founded in 1960. It was founded as a research university serving as both an educational and industrial park. Its main mission is to produce qualified graduates and skillful human resources with strong qualities and a moral ground. It is the first public university in Thailand which was transformed into an autonomous university. The staff in the university are divided into two categories, i.e. academic staff (teaching staff and researchers) and non-academic staff (support staff). One of the university's visions is to be one of the leading universities in Asia. In order to achieve its goal, in addition to developing infrastructure, KMUTT has also developed cooperation with overseas universities/ institutions. Presently, it has implemented cooperative activities with over 50 international institutions. KMUTT realizes that the most important mechanism to drive the university to be an internationally recognized university is the people working for the University. Human resource development is therefore an essential strategy to enable the university reach its goal.

Training is one of the university's strategies to improve the quality of its staff. The university has prepared a Road Map 2020 in which the development plan for human resources is included. The objectives of the training Road Map 2020 are to develop the skills of the staff at every level for continuous learning leading to becoming a learning organization, and also to enable the staff to reach top positions in their career paths. The training roadmap indicates the development of staff in 7 core

competencies: accountability & commitment; continuous improvement; teamwork; innovation; communication; English literacy; and ICT literacy (King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Planning Division, 2004). English proficiency development is one the first competency trainings that have to be started. The School of Liberal Arts, KMUTT has organized English courses for staff. The courses have been conducted since 2004, totally 334 staff members have attended, of which 41 were academic staff and 293 non-academic staff.

However, having attended the English courses, some staff, of which most are non-academic staff, still have problems communicating with foreigners. This may cause some problems for the University. As in the survey of Khairi Izwan (as cited in Yamat, Yunus, Norzani & Juriah, 1993), it was discovered that firms found their employees did not possess sufficient communicative skills in English. For instance, poor writing skills result in reports, letters and minutes of meetings that require extensive revision. This causes administrative delays and loss of time and effort. Poor oral communication and negotiation skills result in difficulty in interfacing with English-speaking customers and missed trade opportunities. In terms of personal development of staff members, low proficiency in English could hamper efforts in enhancing knowledge through journals and references and participation in courses. From the attribution theory, there are some possible factors that affect the successful learning of English learners, i.e. attitudes toward English, learner's ability, learner's effort, learner's motivation, course difficulty, and instructors (Bruning, Schraw, & Ronning, 1999).

Since the English courses are important for the human resource development of KMUTT, understanding the factors affecting English learning of non-academic staff may help course developers deal with problems in such courses. In addition, it can help learners learn effectively. This study therefore will investigate the factors affecting English learning of non-academic staff who have attended the English courses organized by the School of Liberal Arts, KMUTT. The results gained from the study will be useful to the University's executives, the HRD department, the course developers as well as the learners. Knowing the factors hindering English learning, the people concerned will be able to plan and set up the most appropriate courses and teaching methods for most benefits to learners.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

What are the factors that influence positively and/or negatively the acquisition of English knowledge of non-academic staff of KMUTT?

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **1.3.1 Main Objective**

To investigate the factors that affect English learning of non-academic staff of KMUTT who have already attended English courses offered by the university.

### **1.3.2 Sub Objectives**

To obtain information about the learners' perception of English learning for improvement of English instruction for KMUTT staff.

To find out new training courses relevant to the staff's needs in working.

## **1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

Definitions of the terms of this study are as per the following:

1.4.1 Factors affecting English learning refer to the internal and external factors that influence the English learning, including the attitude, ability, motivation, effort, course difficulty and instructors.

1.4.2 Non-academic staff refers to supporting staff (not teaching staff) of KMUTT who have already attended the English training course organized by the university.

## **1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

1.5.1 The subjects under this study consist of 100 out of 293 non-academic staff who have attended the English training courses organized by the university from 2004 to 2006.

1.5.2 This study aims at finding the internal and external factors that influence English acquisition, including the attitude, ability, motivation, effort, course difficulty and instructors.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

1.6.1 To reveal the factors that hinder the English learning of non-academic staff for the improvement of English training courses for staff at KMUTT.

1.6.2 To understand the learners' attitude, ability, motivation and effort and perception of courses and instructors.

1.6.3 The result of this research will also be beneficial for learners to change some aspects for learning English so that they will achieve better results.

## **1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

This study is divided into five chapters as follows:

- Chapter one consists of the background, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, scope of the study, definitions of terms, and significance of the study.
- Chapter two is a review of related literature.
- Chapter three describes the methodology presenting subjects, research instruments, procedures and data analysis.
- Chapter four reports the results of the study.
- Chapter five is the conclusions, discussions and recommendations.