

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

For a number of years, English has been recognized as an international lingua franca among people for whom it is a second or foreign language. According to the British Council's report of 2006, there are about 450 million native English speakers around the world distributed in about 70 countries and there will be about 2 billion people from Asia and non-English-speaking Europe learning English by 2015.

As a result of globalization, Thailand is one of those countries in which English has been widely used and made compulsory in schools. Nowadays, English has become crucial in Thai people's daily lives, particularly in workplaces. Since a number of people around the world communicate in English, it is necessary for employers or companies in Thailand to headhunt for those who can communicate in English so that they can help in driving the company to a global standard. This is one reason why many employers adopt a method to assess the English listening and reading proficiency of their employees and job applicants.

One of the world's most well-known assessments is the test of English for International Communication or TOEIC which was developed in 1979 by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), located in Princeton, New Jersey, USA and effective in January 2003. Although TOEIC is a norm-referenced test of which a score is not an indicator of "how well" one can communicate in English, its score can be used to judge an ability to communicate in English to a certain degree (Wilson, 2004). At present, there are approximately 4 millions people taking the TOEIC test per year. TOEIC is an English proficiency test used worldwide. It can be used to measure English ability at both the beginning and advanced levels. Specifically, it is a proficiency test of passive skills which are listening and reading.

In Thailand, the Center for Professional Assessment (Thailand) provides both in – house and on – site testing administration to clients in various businesses and industries, such as hotels, airlines, and automobile companies. Nowadays, both the government and private sector use the TOEIC scores to assess their employees' English proficiency.

To ensure that English skills of employees can serve the company's goal of internationalizing its business, Toyota Motor Thailand also prioritizes English language development among employees. Since the year 2005, TOEIC has been used to set criteria for recruitment, training, and promotion as well as enabling the Human Resources Department and Human Resources Development Department to assess employee English proficiency in a more standardized way. Therefore, Toyota Motor Thailand values the necessity of providing employees with English language training courses focusing on enhancing their English skills according to TOEIC standards.

Each year, Toyota Motor Thailand spends a great amount of money on providing employees with English training courses. In the year 2007, the budget for all English training courses was over 2,000,000 baht and 1,000,000 baht was put aside for all TOEIC preparation courses. Currently, English training courses at Toyota Motor Thailand are developed and conducted by various English language institutes, such as Berlitz, OMNI, and the Continuing Education Center, Chulalongkorn University. Although courses are carried out by different institutes, the main areas of development and objectives of the course are standardized. All institutes should be able to bring about an enhancement of general English listening and reading skills which may result in an increase of TOEIC scores.

Despite the fact that a number of TOEIC preparation programs have been conducted at Toyota Motor Thailand for 2 years, no systematic research or studies have been done to assess the effectiveness of the program in terms of score increase as well as employee attitudes towards the program and their own English progress. Therefore, this study is crucial in that it may prove the effectiveness of the program and will be useful for organizers to improve overall English language development programs at Toyota Motor Thailand.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To ensure its growth and competitiveness in an era of globalization, Toyota Motor Thailand has been focusing on human resources development for a number of years. English language development is one of the most important developments in which Toyota Motor Thailand has shown great concern. English language training has been provided for Toyota employees in an attempt to leverage employee English proficiency based on TOEIC score. Therefore, it is essential to explore the effectiveness of training courses provided in terms of employee attitudes as well as TOEIC scores. The exploration through means of questionnaires and comparing pre and post TOEIC scores aims to answer the following questions:

### *Main question*

- Do employees have positive attitude towards TOEIC preparation courses and their English language development after the course?
- Did employee TOEIC scores increase after the course?

## 1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### **Main objectives:**

1. To explore the result of the TOEIC preparation course in terms of scores achieved before and after the course
2. To explore employee attitudes towards their own development after the course.

### **Sub objective:**

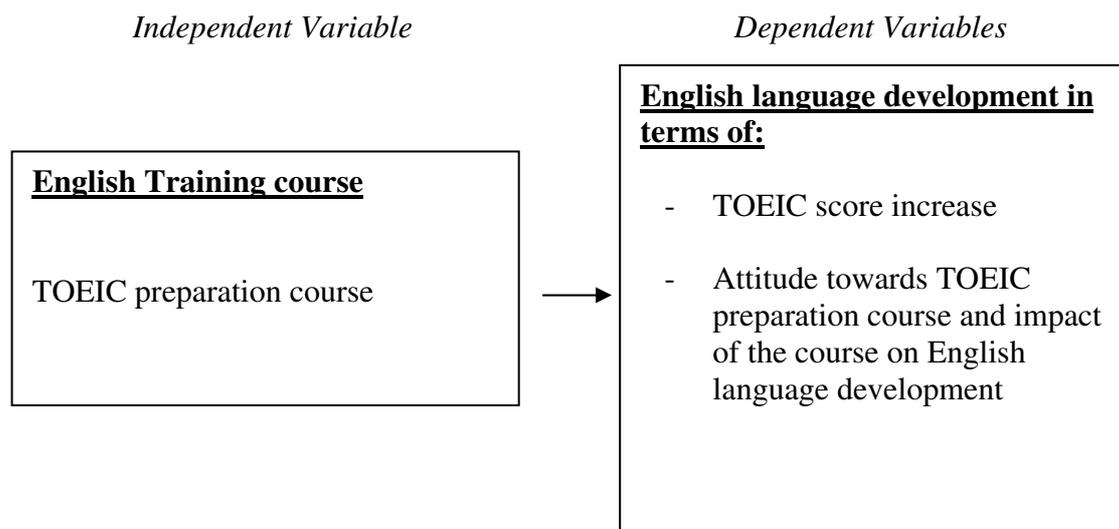
1. To investigate the effectiveness of the course in terms of its impact on employees' English language development

## 1.4 VARIABLES AND DEFINITIONS

This study is intended to explore the impact the TOEIC preparation course may have on employees in terms of attitude and TOEIC score increases. Moreover, it was conducted to find relationships among a set of independent variable towards the dependent variables which are presented below.

### 1.4.1 Variables

In this study, there is only one independent variable which is controlled and experimented on to see the impact it may have on dependent variables.



**Figure 2:** Conceptual framework showing the relationship between independent and dependent variables

### ***1.4.2 Definitions***

To ensure an understanding of terms used in this study, definitions and clarification are provided as follows

#### **Attitude towards the TOEIC preparation course**

Employees' feelings or opinions about TOEIC preparation course and the impact of the course on their English language development, which can be indicated through overall components of the course

The components primarily concern:

1. Curriculum and Content
2. Length of the course
3. Class atmosphere
4. Teaching method
5. Material
6. Reading skill improvement
7. Ability to understand communicative English
8. Assignment
9. Pace of the class
10. Practicality of content to be applied in daily life
11. A possibility to gain higher TOEIC score thanks to the course.

These mentioned components can be measured by using the 5-point Likert scale: 1) Strongly disagree 2) Disagree 3) Undecided 4) Agree 5) Strongly agree.

#### **Employees**

Male and female employees who are currently employed with Toyota Motor Thailand Co., Ltd. and entitled to take TOEIC preparation courses provided by the company. Criteria for entitled employees are as follows.

1. Employees who are senior supervisors, Assistant Managers, Managers, Deputy General Manager, and General Manager
2. Employees whose TOEIC scores are under 600 points

#### ***1.4.3 Research Hypotheses***

The hypotheses in this survey are as follows:

1. Employee TOEIC scores are higher after completing TOEIC preparation course.
2. Employee attitudes towards their English language development after the TOEIC preparation program are varied, but should be relatively positive.

### **1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study focuses on employees who are now working at Toyota Motor Thailand Co., Ltd. and taking the TOEIC preparation course provided by the company. The survey aims to measure the level of employees' attitudes towards the course, improvement of their TOEIC scores, and their suggestions for further course improvement.

### **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study significantly aims to measure employee attitudes towards the TOEIC preparation course as well as their English language development in terms of TOEIC score increase. Findings from the study will be beneficial in different aspects which can be listed below.

- The results will be used in tandem with the Toyota evaluation report which will be presented to Toyota top management
- Based on the results, facilitators and organizers can see room for English language training course improvements.

- Based on the results, teachers and English language institutes can improve curriculum, content, or teaching style.
- The results can be used as a guideline for corporate TOEIC preparation courses.

## **1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one includes the background of the TOEIC preparation course provided at Toyota Motor Thailand Co., Ltd. and a statement of the problem, which is linked to the objectives, the scope of the study, the definitions of terms, and the significance of the study. Chapter two is designed to review relevant literature concerning the impact of the preparation course on English language development and washback effect. Chapter three provides a descriptive picture of procedures concerning subjects, materials, procedures, and data analysis. Chapter four presents the findings of the study. Chapter five deals with a summary of the study, its findings, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations for further study. The questionnaire both in Thai and English which were used to collect the data are also included in the appendix.