

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into 5 parts: 1) a summary of the study, 2) a summary of the findings, 3) discussions of learners' satisfaction with distance English learning, 4) conclusions, and 5) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Service quality is the most important value for distance learning; to understand and satisfy the customers or learners' needs is a key to enhance the success of the company. Consequently, the learners' satisfaction measurement is very crucial for the management team of JPM Multimedia Co., Ltd. since they will learn how well or effective their performance is perceived by learners. As well, it can help them to have a clearer view of what areas require improvement.

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study of the learners' satisfaction with distance English learning provided by JPM Multimedia Co., Ltd. aimed to find out the degree of satisfaction of the learners with the overall JPM Multimedia's distance English course. In addition, it aimed to identify the demographic factors contributing to learners' satisfaction with the distance English course, and to find out their problems and suggestions for further course improvement.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

The subjects used in this study consisted of 69 males and 81 females who are all learners working in Subdistrict Administrative Organizations throughout the country. There are two types of data in this study. The secondary data were collected from textbooks, company literatures, journals, and websites. The primary data were collected from the responses to the questionnaires. All data received from the study were analyzed by the SPSS program.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 General Information Result

From the study, it was found that the respondents' age ranged from 23 to 56. Most of them were under 30 years of age. Moreover, 54% of the respondents were women and 60% of them were single. The majority of learners (71%) responding to the survey hold Bachelor's degrees.

5.2.2 Learners' Satisfaction Result

***RQ 1:** Are the learners satisfied with the distance English learning course provided by JPM Multimedia Co., Ltd.?*

It was noticed that the respondents were satisfied with all areas of the distance English learning course. They had the highest degree of satisfaction with distance English learning in the area of personal tutor, especially satisfaction with the good relationship between the personal tutor and the learner which was at a level of extreme satisfaction, whereas, the area of textbooks and supplementary teaching materials gained the least degree of satisfaction.

However, the learners felt neutral in some aspects of the studied areas which were the satisfaction with the appropriateness of the course's difficulty level, and the appropriateness of the textbooks used in the course. Consequently, the course provider can develop the course to better serve the learners' needs and expectations by attending to these issues.

***RQ 2:** To what degree are the learners satisfied with the distance English learning course?*

The respondents were satisfied overall with the course content, textbooks and supplementary teaching materials, personal tutors, evaluation and testing, distance teaching approach, and application of knowledge.

***RQ 3:** What demographic factors contribute to learners' satisfaction with the distance English learning course?*

The results show that those learners who were female or married were more satisfied with distance English course, but not statistically significant, whereas those learners who were older and hold Master's degrees were significantly more satisfied with the course content than younger ones and the ones holding Bachelor's degree.

***RQ 4:** What were learners' problems throughout the course?*

Throughout the course, the respondents faced different problems which were 1) difficulties in learning due to various backgrounds of English proficiency, 2) a redundancy of assignment topics of conversation, 3) limitation of time in learning, 4) lack of stimulation from the personal tutor, 5) communication problems through the telephone channel, and 6) lack of face-to-face activities between the learner and the personal tutor.

***RQ 5:** What are learners' suggestions for further improvement of the course?*

After collecting data from the respondents, recommended ways to improve the course are 1) to provide a pre-test to find out the level of the learner's English competency, 2) to review the topics of assignments, 3) to provide courses on Saturdays or Sundays, 4) to supply learners with more frequent contact and in-depth explanation, 5) to organize more face-to-face activities between the learners and the personal tutors.

5.2.3 Comparison of Satisfaction

After comparing the sampled learners' satisfaction, it was revealed that the area of textbooks and supplementary teaching materials was the first priority that should be improved as it had the lowest score.

5.2.4 Hypothesis Testing

After testing the hypotheses, it was revealed that there were a few statistical differences in learner's satisfaction. Some demographic information of the

respondents significantly influenced the area of satisfaction with the distance English course as follows:

Hypothesis 1.1 *Female learners are more satisfied with distance English learning than male learners.*

This hypothesis is rejected because the results show no significant difference in the level of satisfaction between female and male learners. On the contrary, male respondents were found to be more satisfied with the course in all studied aspects, but not significantly.

Hypothesis 1.2 *Older learners are more satisfied with distance English learning than younger learners.*

According to a significant difference in the level of satisfaction between older and younger learners, which is found in the area of the course content, this hypothesis is verified.

Hypothesis 1.3 *Married learners are more satisfied with distance English learning than single learners.*

This hypothesis is rejected because the results show no significant difference in the level of satisfaction between married and single learners.

Hypothesis 1.4 *Learners with higher education are more satisfied with distance English learning than learners with lower education.*

This hypothesis is verified because the results show a significant difference in the level of satisfaction between learners with a Master's degree and learners with a Bachelor's degree on the basis of the course content. The findings indicate that learners holding a Master's degree were more satisfied with the course content than learners who hold a Bachelor's degree.

5.3 DISCUSSIONS

This section concerns how the findings of the study match the theories and the earlier research. Therefore, the discussions are as follows:

This research addressed several issues relating to learners' characteristics and their satisfaction with the course. Independent variables were compared in relation to the learners' satisfaction level with the distance English learning course. Statistical analysis and research-based conclusions can be generalized based on information in the literature and previous research.

The results showed that the learners were satisfied with distance English learning, especially with the personal tutors. The literature indicates that the older student has a high level of satisfaction with the distance learning format (Westbrook, 1993). The findings in this study, however, found no statistically significant difference between age and the level of learners' satisfaction with almost all studied areas, except in the area of course content. According to the results gained from the study, there was only a significant difference in the level of satisfaction in the area of the course content between older learners over 40 years old and younger ones. Based on the learners' age, the older learners were more satisfied with the course content than the younger ones because those older learners are usually the ones who are working in higher positions such as Chief Executive of the SAO, Chief Administrator, or Division Chief. As a result, they always have higher expectations and concentration, which later contribute to higher satisfaction with the course when experiencing a more comfortable educational approach which helps them enlarge their potential for either daily or career development. Moreover, the literature indicates that satisfaction levels among the older students are thought to be high because it offers them the opportunity to advance their careers and education while continuing to meet employment and family obligations (p. 55-69).

In addition, gender has been identified in the literature as having an effect on student satisfaction in distance courses (McGrath & Braunstein, 1997). It was said that female students tend to have a higher level of satisfaction in distance courses when compared to their male classmates. Conversely speaking, this study finds that

male learners were more satisfied in almost all studied areas, except in the area of satisfaction with distance teaching approach, which received a higher degree of satisfaction from females. However, from data gained in this study, no statistically significant relationship between female and male learners satisfaction with the course was found. The higher level of male learners' satisfaction is based on the reason that the majority of learners who are government officials in high positions are male. Most of them decided to enroll in the distance English course with a hope to enhance their academic capacity, which can be beneficial to them in organization and community management and can be employed to initially develop officer's and local people's English proficiency in the future. Consequently, the male learners tend to have higher degree of satisfaction with the course provided.

Focusing on learner's marital status or family obligations, those students with supportive spouses and a good home environment tend to do well in the distance education environment, which may help enable them to boost their satisfaction degree with distance courses (Thompson, 1998). In this study, the learners with a spouse were more satisfied with the course in all studied areas, but not significantly in terms of statistics. The satisfaction level of learners with family obligations may be affected by feelings and attitude of compensation for the lack of time spent for studies. It's because they find it difficult to go to study and sit in the classrooms on the condition that they have also to take care of their spouse or children. Accordingly, when studying in distance courses, they consider this learning approach as a more comfortable and satisfied method of expanding their knowledge base.

In terms of educational background, the study also showed a statistically significant difference in the level of satisfaction between learners holding Bachelor's degrees and those with higher degrees only in the area of the course content. That's because normally learners or the officials working in Subdistrict Administrative Organizations (SAO) in the Department of Local Administration ((DLA) require an education certificate to guarantee their career advancement. Moreover, because of the nature of their routine work which requires their full-time responsibilities for local and community development, most officials (particularly those who are at high-ranking positions) find it difficult to further their education. As a result, when distance

learning approach is provided to them, they always have high expectations from the course as well as high concentration in studying English, which is a language enhancing their potential.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

5.4.1 Based on the results from the study, most respondents were female and single.

5.4.2 The learners were satisfied with all areas of satisfaction studied: the course content, textbooks and supplementary teaching materials, evaluation and testing, teaching approach, and application of knowledge, especially in the area of personal tutor.

5.4.3 The first priority that JPM Multimedia Co., Ltd should improve is textbooks and supplementary teaching materials.

5.4.4 Learners' age and education background were the only two demographics that caused statistically significant differences in satisfaction with the distance English learning.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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

5.5.1 The major limitation of the study was the generalization of the data collected from one language institute. The generalization of the study is limited to institutions using distance or online courses as a method of delivery and institutions similar in size to JPM Multimedia Co., Ltd. In the absence of a larger base of data, a large sample size may extend some degree of generalization. Kerlinger (1986), states that inferences can be made from a selected sample to a general population given an adequate sample size.

5.5.2 This study does not account for other learners' characteristics such as GPA, their major and academic level which could also have an effect on the level of

learners' satisfaction with a distance course. The survey instrument used was developed by the researcher and inspired by the literature. Although a jury of experts judged the survey and the survey was pilot studied, it was the first time the instrument was used in collecting data. Johnson and Christensen (2000) stated that a single survey instrument used for the first time might lack the validity of an established survey instrument in measuring the data. Kerlinger (1986) stated that the use of a self-report questionnaire survey is limited by the accuracy of the participant's responses.

5.5.3 This survey on learner's satisfaction focuses on only the learners who have been working at Sub-district Administrative Organizations in the Department of Local Administration, and who have been studying English with the JPM Multimedia Co, Ltd. from January 2006 until present. So the results will be more reliable and practical provided the survey would have done with common people related to distance learning.