CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in five main areas: (1) Need and importance of English training courses in companies, (2) English training course design and its elements, (3) Needs analysis, (4) ESP courses, and (5) Evaluating English training courses.

A company's success depends on its ability to compete, often within a global economy. Coping with today's market changes requires a company to take various actions such as merging, internationalizing, downsizing, and becoming more flexible in work arrangements and work hours. Human skills are frequently the most important resource a company has to offer. All other resources are transferable or easily copied by competitors, but the individual is unique and training is the key to make the best use of individual skills (Vaughn, 2005, p. 1). Training can prepare employees to use new technologies, function in a new work system such as virtual teams, and communicate and cooperate with peers or customers from different cultural backgrounds (Noe, 2002, p. 3). Training practices can also help companies gain a competitive advantage. They can expand their business, maintain and gain market shares, and improve customer service by providing employees with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.

2.1   NEED FOR ENGLISH TRAINING COURSES IN COMPANIES

English has become a global language and has played a very important role in today's business practice in all phases of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Not only is English used in daily routine activities, it is also a means to acquire knowledge for developing new products and to publicize them worldwide. Erling and Walton (2007) mention in their report on English at Work in Berlin that in multinational companies English is typically used in negotiations, meetings, telephone conversations, emails, traveling, trade fairs, and small talk with international contacts.

Global economic changes and severe business competition have caused managers and employees in non-native English speaking countries to ask for English courses which directly address their needs. These people use English as a second or foreign language and have communicative problems in expressing and interpreting when dealing with native speakers such as British, American, Australian, Canadian, New Zealander, and other foreigners. Mallika (2000) states that the same problems have occurred in Thailand because several companies employ both local and foreign employees as well as have worldwide contacts with foreign countries as their business partners. Being aware of the prevalence of English communication problems, many companies try hard to solve them by implementing in-house English training courses for their employees, expecting that their English skills will be improved. The in-house English courses should serve the needs of both employers who spend money and time for human resource development and employees who have interest and want to minimize their language problems, and at the same time to increase their capability of using English in a proper manner.

2.2   ENGLISH TRAINING COURSE DESIGN

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1995), the in-house English training courses of a company are considered as English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), a large branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). EOP is an approach to language teaching aiming to meet the needs of particular trainees. Therefore, designing English training courses is a matter of asking questions in order to provide the data for the subsequent processes which are syllabus design, material selection, classroom teaching, and evaluation. The questions are as follows.

- Why do course trainees (employees) need to learn?

- Who is getting involved in the process? Not only the trainees, but all the people who may have some effect on the process: trainers, sponsors, inspectors etc.

- Where is the training to take place? What potential does the place provide? What limitations does it have?

- When is the training to take place? How much time is available? How will it be distributed?

- What do the trainees need to learn? What aspects of language will be needed and how will they be described? What level of proficiency must be achieved? What topic areas will need to be covered?

- How will the learning be achieved? What learning theory will underlie the courses? What kind of methodology will be employed?

To sum up, the design of English training courses or ESP courses should consist of three main elements: need analysis to answer the questions of Who?, Why?, Where?, and When?, language descriptions to answer the question of What?, and learning theories to answer the question of How?

Strevens (1980) points out that English training for a specific purpose is a part of general organizational education of a company tending towards job related studies. It entails a different kind of teaching from that which is suitable for academic framework as there is a more practical command of language. According to Strevens, there are four main elements to be considered for the appropriate design of English training courses as follows.

1) The trainees

The trainees are the ultimate element of the training process. They are not simply a passive recipient. Their varied qualities, abilities, motivations, and expectations force the training administrator to take their distinctive backgrounds into account before designing the courses. However, good training courses should serve both the company's and trainees' needs.

2) The content

The content is the what to be taught in language training/teaching courses. It should combine general English and specific English to suit the needs of trainees and their organization. The content also includes some specific techniques which can be transformed from classroom tasks or activities into practice on the job.

3) <u>The trainers</u>

The trainers are considered the second essential element of the language training courses. Highly skilled language trainers can help upgrade the trainees' language skills or professionalism. The content of the courses is transformed to be the lecture and the trainers are the ones who deliver it. If the trainers are credible, active, and enthusiastic, it is believed that trainees can be convinced to learn more and enjoy the class. Moreover, the trainers who have extra experience in business besides their minimum language teaching qualities will be more beneficial to the trainees.

4) <u>The facilities</u>

Apart from the major elements mentioned above, the supporting facilities can have influence on the effectiveness of the training courses such as the physical environment of the classroom, equipment and material readiness, time appropriateness, etc. Vaughn (2005, p.147) emphasizes that good facilities design is a tremendous asset to effective training. Poor facilities can really lead to an ineffective training course. The training facilities to consider are room size, room layout, seating arrangement, lighting, media and equipment, and amenities which include room location, color, temperature, humidity, and air exchange.

2.3   NEEDS ANALYSIS

Donna (2001, p. 12-13) says that needs analysis for a language training course can be done by interviewing three groups of people as their needs may vary considerably.

Interview with in-house course coordinators to get answers to the following questions:

- What does the company want the trainees to be able to do?
- In what specific situations will they be doing these things?
- Which of the above are priorities in terms of percentages?
- What kind of feedback does the company want from the language institute/ trainers?

- Have the trainees had any training before?

- Which previous training courses have been arranged in general? Who attended?

- What kind of requests and comments have come from managers and potential trainees?

Interview with trainees' managers to get answers to the questions below:

- What do managers want their employees to be able to do?

- In what specific situations will they be doing these things?

- Which of these things are priorities in terms of percentages?

- How do their employees cope now? Do they get help from colleagues?

- Do they use an agency? Do they take work home? Do they use a translator?

- What level of success are the managers hoping for?

- What are their employees' most urgent short-term needs for English?

Interview with individual trainees to get answers to these questions:

- What does he/she find the most difficult about English?

- Which area is the most important in his/her job: speaking, writing, reading or listening?

- How would he/she prioritize his/her needs in terms of percentages?

- How has he/she found training courses in the past?

- What does he/she think he/she can do to improve his/her performance and success on this course?

According to Munby's study in 1978 (as cited in Nunan, 1988, pp. 75-76), it is important for a syllabus designer to collect information on the nine following components:

1) *Participant*: Under this component, the trainees' identity and language skills are defined such as age, gender, nationality, mother tongue, command of target language, etc.

2) *Purposive domain*: This term refers to the purposes for which the target language is required.

3) *Setting*: Under this issue, the syllabus designer must consider the environments in which the target language will be employed.

4) *Interaction*: This is a matter of with whom the trainees will be interacting.

5) *Instrumentality*:   This element refers to the medium, mode, and the channel in which the language is used.

6) *Dialect*: This means specifying the language variety or dialect.

7) *Target level*: Here is to state the proficiency level the trainees expect to meet.

8) *Communicative event*: This refers to the productive and receptive skills the trainees will need to master.

9) *Communicative key*: Here is to specify the interpersonal attitudes and tones the trainees need to master.

Hutchinson and Waters (1995, pp. 58-63) classify trainees' needs into two types: target situation needs and learning needs. Target situation needs are what the trainees will have to do in the target situation, whereas learning needs are what the trainees need to do in order to learn. Needs analysis concerns the information about the target situation and the attitudes towards the situation.

The framework of target situation needs analysis is as follows:

- What is the language needed for?
- How will the language be used?
- What will the content areas be?
- Who will the trainees use the language with?
- Where will the language be used?
- When will the language be used?

The framework of learning needs analysis is as follows:

- Why are the trainees taking this course?
- How do the trainees learn?

- What resources are available?

- Who are the trainees?

- Where and when will the ESP course take place? (pp. 58 - 63)

To sum up, needs analysis can be identified by simply answering these two questions: Why do the trainees need to learn English? and How do they learn it?. Needs analysis is an important procedure to establish an ESP course because it determines the syllabus (course content and language level) and suitable teaching techniques.

2.4   ESP COURSES

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1995, pp. 18-19), ESP is an approach to language teaching, not a product. In this approach, the course contents and learning methods are based on the trainees' reasons for learning. Apart from identifying what ESP is, the authors interestingly point out what ESP is not. For example, a special purpose does not imply that a special form of the language is used. ESP is not different from any other forms of language teaching as it is still based on effective and efficient learning. Although the content of learning may vary, the process of learning ESP does not differ from that of General English. Therefore, there is no special methodology available for teaching ESP. Moreover, Jones and Alexander (2002, p. 7) point out that ESP is not just a matter of jargon and grammar in a particular discipline or occupation. For instance, Business English is not a special language with a special grammar – it's simply English used in business situations.

Robinson (1991) explains that ESP involves education, training and practice, and drawing upon three major areas of knowledge: language, pedagogy, and the trainees' specialist area of interest. When the relationships between these three areas vary, the interpretations of ESP will be changed. Thus, it would be impossible to create a solid and generally applicable definition of ESP.

Nevertheless, Robinson (1991) considers two main features as criteria to ESP courses. First, trainees of ESP need English for some reasons such as working or

studying not because of the interest in the language itself. ESP is seen as a goal-directed approach. Second, need analysis is a basis of ESP courses. The purpose of the analysis is to conclude what trainees have to do through the medium of English.

Strevens (1988) analyzes that the ESP courses consist of four absolute characteristics and two variable characteristics as shown below:

Absolute characteristics are (a) designed to meet trainees' specific needs, (b) related in content to particular disciplines, occupations, and activities, (c) centered on language appropriateness to these activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics and discourse analysis, and (d) in contrast with General English. On the other hand, variable characteristics are that ESP may be limited to the language learning skills to be learned and that ESP may be taught according to any pre-determined methodology.

2.5   EVALUATING ENGLISH TRAINING COURSES

Noe (2001, pp. 179-180) divides training evaluation into formative and summative types. _Formative evaluation_ refers to evaluation conducted to improve the training process. This means the evaluation is done to ensure that (1) the training courses are well-organized and run smoothly and (2) trainees learn and are satisfied with the training courses. Formative evaluation usually involves collecting qualitative data about the courses, including opinions, beliefs and feeling about the courses. The tools used for collecting the data can be questionnaires or interviews with potential trainees and/or managers who are paying for trainees to attend the courses. _Summative evaluation_ refers to evaluation conducted to see how the trainees have changed as a result of attending the training courses. That is, have the trainees acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors or other outcomes identified in the training objectives?. Summative evaluation may include measuring the financial benefits the company receives from the training courses. This type of evaluation involves collecting quantitative data using tests, ratings of behaviors, or objective measures of performance.

Donna (2001) explains that course evaluation is concerned with three elements: 1) attitudes – how positively trainees view the courses?, 2) effectiveness – how well are the objectives achieved in terms of real learning?, and 3) appropriateness – how appropriate are the training courses to the trainees' real needs?

It is essential to evaluate the success and effectiveness of the training courses for making improvements on an ongoing basis. It is also important for ensuring continued survival of the language institutes or trainers who run the training courses. When the courses are not working, the sponsors and trainees may seek alternative solutions to fulfill their very real need for English such as courses offered by other language institutes or multimedia self-study.

The most common approach to course evaluation is to collect comments or ratings using feedback forms which are distributed at the end of the courses. The second approach is called reflective evaluation. Here the course trainers sit back and reflect on what seems to constitute successful practice in their teaching context. The third approach is to collect and analyze data from registration figures, attendance figures, and test or exam results. To evaluate the success of the training courses, the following should be considered:

Trainers

- Do trainees perceive trainers and their colleagues as being professional?
- Could trainers get any extra training in order to enhance their performance?
- Is there any expertise in-house which is not being shared?

Course Program

- Are trainees' needs adequately analyzed before the courses?
- Are the courses well-planned?
- Do the lessons reflect the planning that is done for each course?
- Do trainers adapt their approach on an ongoing basis, as necessary?

- Is full information on course planning provided to trainees to keep them informed?

Materials

- How do trainees perceive the provided materials?

- Are trainers kept up-to-date with new materials?

- Have any materials recently been published which might enhance the courses?

- Are the materials which are produced in-house well-filed and/or readily available to trainers?

Methods

- How do trainees and their sponsors perceive the teaching methods?

- Are the teaching methods time-efficient?

- Is there any new technology which trainers could, and should, be using?

- Are trainers and their colleagues sharing their collective expertise?

Trainee relations

- Are trainees regularly contacted for comments and feedback?

- Are they kept informed of any changes which may affect them?

- Do trainees know what to do when there are problems in class?

Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1996, p. 4) indicate that when we evaluate different aspects of the teaching and learning process, it is important to make explicit criteria used in our judgments and to be principled in our evaluations. Ill-prepared and unplanned evaluations are likely to be unreliable, unfair, and uninformative. They are not a suitable source which educational decisions should be based on.