

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study, which includes the purpose of the study, its subjects, instruments, and procedures, a summary of the findings, discussions of the results, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

English has been increasingly widely used in Thailand as a medium throughout the different professional and vocational fields. Thai dance instructors from the College of Dramatic Arts are among the groups who face this new requirement. In addition to preserving Thai theatrical performing arts, which is one of the essential parts of Thai culture, Thai dance instructors have a mission to promote this field of Thai culture to foreigners both in Thailand and abroad. Since English has not previously been a major component of Thai dance instructors' education, they need a specific training course to improve their language proficiency. Owing to their work load, the opportunity to attend an outside English language program seems to be limited. Consequently, the most feasible strategy for improving their English language skills is to design a course of instruction in-house, which fits into their existing schedule. In order to design a suitable course, the Thai dance instructor's necessities, problems and preferences in studying and using English need to be determined.

5.1.1 Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the specific English language needs of current instructors of Thai dance at the College of Dramatic Arts. Therefore, the research study is designed to answer the following research questions.

1. What areas of English are required in order to prepare Thai dance instructors to meet their professional needs?
2. Specifically, what problems do Thai dance instructors have in using English in their professional lives?
3. How do Thai dance instructors want the course to be organized?

5.1.2 Populations, Materials, and Procedures

Population: The population of this study was 82 Thai dance instructors who worked during the 2006 academic year at the College of Dramatic Arts, Bangkok.

Materials: The instrument was a questionnaire consisting of multiple choice questions, and a five-point Likert type scale items. There were three main parts in the questionnaire: general background information, opinions toward necessities and problems in using English, and opinions and suggestions for designing an ESP course.

Procedure: The Thai language questionnaires were distributed to 82 subjects. Those questionnaires were distributed by hand and collected within one week. 75 questionnaires were returned. After having been checked for their completion, the data were analyzed using the SPSS program in order to obtain the mean scores, percentage and standard deviation.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 Opinions on Necessities and Problems of Using English Language Skills

From the results of the data analysis, it was found that necessities and problems in using English perceived by Thai dance instructors appeared at the moderate level. It was also found that listening was rated as the most necessary skill while speaking was rated as the most problematic.

5.2.2 Opinions on Necessities and Problems of Using English in Activities

Regarding types of activities, both kinds of necessities and problems were considered moderate. Respondents rated traveling abroad and communicating during dance tours abroad as the highest need and at the same amount for their necessities. As well as the result for necessities, communicating during dance tours abroad was ranked as an extensive problem.

5.2.3 Opinions on Necessities and Problems of Using four Principle Skills in Activities

Listening skills: The highest level of necessities was shown for listening to announcements, advice, and warnings at the transportation sites and department

stores. Every activity concerning necessity of using listening skills was ranked moderate, whilst four out of eight listening activities were rated extensive problem: listening to different dialects, listening to lectures on international art and performance, listening to questions about practicing Thai dance, and listening to opinions and critiques about Thai dance respectively.

Speaking skills: With regards to necessity, every speaking activity was considered as moderate level. The highest score was explaining and sharing opinions about performance while eight out of twelve activities were ranked as extensive problems. The highest level of problem was shown in explaining the meaning of Thai dance gestures.

Reading skills: In terms of necessities, the respondents rated all the activities as moderate. The results indicated that reading announcement, transportation schedules, airline tickets was the most necessary, but the least problematic. Reading agreement and contracts was extensively problematic as it received the highest mean score.

Writing skills: Similar to every skill mentioned above, in terms of necessity, respondents rated all activities as moderate. Writing visa application and custom forms was claimed the most necessary, but the least problematic. The highest level of problem was for agreement and hiring contracts. The second highest level of problem was the performance note. These two activities were rated as extensive problems.

5.2.4 Opinions and Suggestions for Professional Development Course

Speaking and listening skills were considered essential for mastering the language. Thai dance instructors strongly preferred participation and multimedia use. They expressed most preference for a 30 hour course. One third of the respondents wanted to study once a week until the course is done, more than half chose to study during weekdays at the end of semester in early March. A large majority wanted to study for two hours. They chose a combination of a native-speaking instructor with a Thai instructor as assistant.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.3.1 Thai dance instructors' work related to foreigners

According to the researcher's experience and observation while conducting school tours, foreign visitors often like to talk to the instructors and ask questions about the students and their practice lessons in the class. Instructors expressed their willingness to talk and answer the visitors' questions, but because of not having a good command of English, they could not communicate with the visitors as they wished, and therefore they felt discouraged to welcome the foreign visitors to their class. So the number of the responses about involvement in welcoming foreign visitors to the school was inversely proportional to the number of those about teaching Thai dance to foreigners. The responses about performing Thai dance abroad, on the other hand, was inversely proportional to those about involvement in school performance outside of school in Thailand for a different reason. Instructors are chosen for specific performing skills, not according to English proficiency. Each trip had a coordinator who conducted and interpreted documents necessary for the trip, and oral communication during the tour. The teaching staff just followed the leader or the coordinator of the troop. These personnel had difficulties in participating individually in international dance seminars because of their lack of English proficiency.

5.3.2 Rating of Necessities and Problems

The difficulty which the respondents believed was greatest was speaking. Concerning speaking activities, explaining the meaning of dancers' gestures shows the highest level of problem, and the second highest problem was explaining and sharing opinions about the performance. Interestingly, these two activities were perceived to be particularly difficult.

The necessity which the respondents rated as highest was to develop their listening skills, whereas the lowest rank was given to writing skills. The results show that they ranked listening in the highest position, with speaking, reading, and writing in successively lower positions. With regards to listening activities, listening to announcements, advice, warnings at transportation sites and department stores was rated the highest by all respondents. The reason behind this is that they were thinking about traveling abroad without group leaders or escorts; they might get lost if they

don't understand the announcements. On the other hand, listening to general conversation and announcements, advice, warnings on how to use equipment on stage was rated the lowest rank. The reason for this is that they are familiar with the pattern of general conversation like greeting, compliments, Yes-No or Wh-questions that they often exposed to whenever they have dance tours abroad. Moreover, they are also familiar with the technical terms of announcements, advice, and warnings how to use equipment on stage.

One possible reason for the problems with both listening and speaking may be related to the ages of the instructors who are adult learners and typically have difficulty learning these skills. This is often explained by the Critical Period Hypothesis, the proposal that there is a specific and limited time period for language acquisition. (Lightbown & Spada, 1996).

Another reason may be the instructors' experiences when they first learned English in Thai classrooms. Insufficient and inappropriate training (Kriengsukdi Sayananondh, cited in Warapan Sawangnet, 1987, p. 17) or inadequate or boring course materials (Maetravee Tawonwong, 2003) are frequently the cause of low levels of speaking and listening ability. Another factor mentioned by Maetravee Tawonwong is the Thai university entrance exam system, which places no emphasis on speaking ability. Thus the learners did not gain training in either listening or speaking ability. Equally, Thai student learners typically have few opportunities to take English courses, or practice speaking and listening outside the classroom, activities necessary for proficient oral learning (Watjana Suriyatham, 2004).

One reason why listening skills were rated as a more necessary than speaking skills may be related to the professional requirements of instructors. Thai dance instructors have to speak with foreign visitors to the school, or foreigners abroad, in face to face circumstances. The instructors have a greater necessity for listening than speaking because listening is the basis of communication (Piyarat Sukpradit, 1999). This explanation is supported by the findings of Tarinee Sinarkorn's investigation into the needs of learning English of Royal Thai Navy personnel during Cobra Gold Joint training (Tarinee Sinarkorn, 2003), and Chakrit Phaisuwan's study of the needs of Seagate Planners in using English language (Chakrit Phaisuwan, 2006). The results

from their studies showed that the language skills their subjects wanted to improve were listening and speaking skills.

Another interesting finding is that the comparison of the respondents' rating of their needs and problems in using English showed that there were significant differences between them. Problems were rated higher than needs in every skill and every activity. The reason behind this may be related to the results in Table 11 which shows that most Thai dance instructors did not study English at any language schools or study on their own. So it normally causes them difficulty if they need to use the language. Another reason may be psychological: from the researcher's observation, it is clear that Thai dance instructors may be reluctant to rank highly the need for the task which they feel they are unqualified to fulfill. In the interviews the instructors expressed a reluctance to initiate communication with foreign visitors when they felt they were not sufficiently proficient in English. This is in spite of the fact that many instructors have enough English for some basic communication. This may stem from the instructors' own affective barriers, as these are defined by Lightbown & Spada (1996, p. 39). Affective factors such as motivation and self-confidence are very important. The instructors may be placing self-imposed limits to the English use goals, because they feel they do not have the correct skills.

5.3.3 Specific Listening and Speaking Necessities

The results indicate that the instructors' main concern is in oral communication of professional information on Thai dance, while their least concern was daily communication. This may reflect the instructors' valid sense of their lacks, but it may also stem from instructors' "idea of the 'necessities' of the target situation" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 56). According to Sifakis (2003), students' previous learning backgrounds and social identity as students can result in strong beliefs concerning ESP-related matters. At the College of Dramatic Arts, Thai dance instructors may have a preconception that they ought to be concentrating on studying professional communication and Thai dance vocabulary, and that study of daily communication is unnecessary or inappropriate. As a result, the Thai dance instructors may underplay their need for study and practice of daily communication English, even though experience shows that many instructors have a relatively low level of basic English skills.

5.3.4 Reading skills

Concerning reading skills, the area where the respondents voiced they have the great necessities was “announcements, transportation schedules, airline tickets”. On the other hand, this reading activity was rated the least problematic. The reason for this is that when the respondents went on a group dance tour abroad, they had a coordinator or an escort to take care of this job. So they have no problem at all. In the case where they have to travel individually, they need to know what they have to do in the target situation (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Additionally, there are some reasons, such as the language learning system in schools is based on the traditional method of reading, and reading ability is required in most of the qualifying exams. Therefore, they have least problem with reading skills.

5.3.5 Writing skills

In terms of writing activities, “visa application, customs forms” was rated by the respondents the most necessary, but the lowest level of problem, similarly to the way they rated listening to announcements in reading skills. It can be assumed that the respondents considered the activities related to dance tours abroad for groups and individuals differently. According to Cummins’ theory (as cited in Gatehouse (2001), on cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), this is because the respondents tour frequently, so filling visa forms is a constant requirement, but not a difficult one. On the other hand, writing agreements and hiring contracts was rated as most problematic because it uses a higher level of English that is related to the concept of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) mentioned above.

5.3.6 Preferences for Course Design

In the survey, the researcher asked the learners’ preferences for designing a course. The result showed that the course should emphasize speaking and listening more than reading and writing. The reason behind this is perhaps that Thai dance instructors have to communicate orally with the school foreign visitors or foreigners abroad in face to face circumstances. Regarding time during each academic year, March is a teaching free month. So Thai dance instructors have time to attend some professional development courses. Consequently, the percentage of the choice for weekdays at the end of semester in early March is the highest. Concerning the outcome of the question about the course schedule, there was a problem to allocate

the schedule to meet the respondents' preference that was extremely preferred because the learners wanted to have a schedule of two hours a day and once a week, but the 30 hours course should be completed within one month of March. It was a problem for the course designer to set up an appropriate schedule to meet their preference. In order to solve this problem, the course designers have to negotiate with the learners so as to reach an agreement for designing an appropriate schedule. Concerning the language teachers, they wanted to study with a native-speaking instructor with a Thai instructor as his/her assistant.

To solve this disagreement about the schedule of the Thai dance instructors' preference completely, it is necessary to bring the theory of Sifaski (2003) to eliminate this problem. According to him, the objective of the course design is called "the learning contract" that was divided into four requirements: first is cooperation between teachers and students in negotiating the syllabus, second is for the course to satisfy a complete learning cycle, third is that the course be sequential and cumulative, and last that the course be voluntary and purposeful. Consequently, following Sifakis' first and second requirements, the proposed course should follow the recommendations of the Thai dance instructors for subject content. The third and fourth requirements are best satisfied by following the instructors' recommendations for course duration and scheduling. The course should also be repeated in an expanded form annually or biannually.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

5.4.1 Course Design General Considerations

Applying the theory of Gatehouse to the College of Dramatic Arts, her first ability relates to the specific vocabulary of Thai dance. The instructors at the College of Dramatic Arts use this language ability not only to communicate among themselves and students in Thai, but also must use it to communicate with foreign visitors using English. Consequently, the first job of the ESP developer is to translate this vocabulary into English. Despite the brief, early work of Dhanit Yupho, former Director-General of the Fine Arts Department, the majority of this vocabulary has not yet been accurately translated. Gatehouse's second ability, which refers to a language proficiency required to make sense of and use academic language, is also unfamiliar

area. There are sketchy academic terms in English about the dance, written by scholars, and Thai dance instructors lack opportunity to learn such terms for interpreting and explaining the works and performance in the Thai dance context. Similarly, there is no theory of Thai dance which has been translated into English. The same is true for Thai dance theory translated into English. Gatehouse's third ability, the ability to use the language of everyday informal talk to communicate effectively, regardless of occupational context, is particularly important for Thai dance instructors, given the low proficiency in everyday English talk. This means that one of the important tasks of the ESP developer is to develop this proficiency.

5.4.2 Course Design Specific Considerations

Thai dance instructors have a significant work load: at least 30 hours a week for class work in addition to nearly daily performing work and occasionally having to welcome the school's visitors. Therefore, they have no opportunity to attend outside English language programs.

Consequently, the most feasible strategy for improving their English language skills is to design a course of instruction in-house, which fits into their existing schedule. This should be designed then conducted in the month of March yearly, because the respondents desired to have the 30 hour schedule and to learn it within one month only. The existing schedule should be appropriately designed to meet this preference.

5.4.3 Text Design

The goal of this research is to aid the development of an English language course for Thai dance instructors. The results of the survey show that the course text design should:

1. emphasize primarily the skill of speaking with listening second. The skills of writing and reading may be played down.
2. emphasize the explanation of Thai dance, particularly the method of dance instruction, and secondly emphasize introducing and commenting on Thai dance.
3. contain additional material on touring abroad, such as airport announcements, directions, travel instructions, visa interviews, and other material relevant to the daily activities of touring.

Additionally, according to the theories of ESP design cited above, p.9 and p.11-12 the text should:

4. contain sufficient material on general English to refresh ‘false-beginners’, support the special purpose English, and make adult learners feel at ease.

5.4.4 Course Conduct

The results show that respondents would like the course to:

1. be taught by a native-speaking instructor, with a Thai instructor as assistant.
2. be conducted during term break in March.
3. be 30 hours long, if possible.
4. emphasize speaking activities for the students.
5. involve learning 2 hours a day.

5.4.5 Course Objectives

The final conclusions of this study relate to the goals the course should set for itself. The course text design should take special care to:

1. be sensitive to the needs of adult learners.
2. help instructors to overcome the ‘affective barriers’.
3. set out clear goals for professional use of English at The College of Dramatic Arts, and motivate learners to achieve these goals.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.5.1 Recommendations for Further Research

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

There should be more research conducted to analyze the needs and problems of other fields at the College of Dramatic Arts, such as Thai music. By including the Thai music instructors’ views, a broader range of information will be obtained.

A follow up study should be conducted to evaluate the course in terms of language content and skills in order to determine whether course design actually serves the needs.

There should be investigations into needs and problems in using English for Thai dance instructors in provinces outside of Bangkok. The results could be compared to those found in this study.

A research study should be conducted within the College of Dramatic Arts to assess ideas and possibilities for activities and programs to motivate Thai dance instructors to learn English, and provide opportunities to use English. Ideas may include contacts with the tourism industry in Thailand or with dance academics abroad.

5.5.2 Recommendations for College of Dramatic Arts

A point of interest revealed by the survey is the current low level of contact with English and foreigners for the large majority of Thai dance instructors. The researcher considers this to be caused not by lack of opportunity to work with foreigners, but by lack of ability in English. A small number of instructors more proficient in English are called on to undertake the majority of the College of Dramatic Arts' contacts with foreigners. This can be considered evidence that resources allocated to improving English language proficiency among Thai dance instructors generally will yield results in more efficient and equitable functioning of the school. Upgrading the school's human resource base will facilitate improved performance in the school's job of promoting Thai culture among foreigners in Thailand and abroad.