

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study, a summary of the findings, discussions of the needs analysis survey for DHL (Thailand) company, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The target of the study was to carry out a survey to assess the perceived needs for English language teaching and learning of the office personnel in the Business Development Department at DHL (Thailand) company. The survey was divided into two parts which were questionnaire distribution and in-depth interview. The questionnaire aimed to gather the general and English background of the subjects, which could affect their English proficiency. Also the questionnaire was designed to collect data on perceived needs of English skills and functions. The in-depth interviews were conducted on three of the subjects to examine more deeply the reasons behind the needs assessed by the questionnaire. Other information related to the work operations of the subjects was added to the interview results which assisted to justify the language skills that were rated highest in the questionnaire. The results of the study will hopefully benefit English teachers who would establish English courses that respond to the needs perceived by the students themselves.

5.1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted to find the perceived needs for English language teaching and learning of the office personnel in the Business Development Department of DHL (Thailand) company. The study was expected to discover the needed language skills and functions of the subjects, together with the reasons underneath these needs perceived by the subjects themselves.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

The subjects of the study were office personnel of the Business Development Department at DHL (Thailand) Co., Ltd. The department's operations

require the personnel to interact with customers from different companies, and as customers are sometimes non-Thai speakers, those personnel are expected to communicate in English effectively. Moreover, all the documents made within the company were in English; therefore, the office personnel working for the company were expected to possess a good academic and English background and the questionnaire results showed accordingly.

The materials employed in the study varied according to the methods of collecting the data. The first material used in the study was a questionnaire and it was distributed to the subjects to collect the data on general background, English background, the needs of English skills improvement and the needs of English functions improvement. The second instrument used in the study was a voice recorder. After the questionnaires were distributed and interpreted, In-depth interviews were conducted on three subjects out of those eight subjects who answered the questionnaires.

The procedure started with distributing questionnaires to the subjects who were 8 persons in the target department; therefore, it was possible for the entire population to complete the questionnaires. The data received from the questionnaires were put through computing soft ware giving the results in descriptive statistics which were frequency count and percentage. After the questionnaires were collected and interpreted, in-depth interviews were carried out on three of the subjects who were managers and an officer. The interviews would explain further results of the questionnaire data giving deeper information towards the needs analysis.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study both from the questionnaire distribution and the interviews recorded can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 The Questionnaire Results

The genders of the subjects were male and female equally and their ages were mostly in the range of 26 to 35 years old. Most of the subjects were experienced personnel and seven out of them reported possessing more than six years of working

experience. The majority of the subjects had attained a graduate degree; however, the accumulative years spent on learning English were varied from less than ten years to the range of 16 to 20 years

There was only one subject who reported majoring in English when she was in school. Half of the subjects had stayed in English speaking countries for more than a year and five subjects reportedly had taken English courses or some curriculum in English speaking countries. Thus, fluency in English could be expected from some of the subjects. Moreover, the entire group of subjects agreed that English was necessary and normally used in their work place. And also most of the subjects agreed that English was used frequently in their work environment and they usually used English to communicate with foreigners. It could imply that they would be willing to learn English if there was an English course available since English was perceived as important to them. The assumption was affirmed by the last two questions of this part where the subjects mostly did not feel that their English was proficient enough to perform their work effectively and all of them accepted that they wanted to study further in English.

The subjects mostly perceived that all the four skills of English language were necessary but most of them did not give the highest rating score to the question of whether they perform the language skills naturally. This was corresponding to the previous part of the questionnaire in that they felt there was still room for them to develop their English.

Speaking skill was rated the lowest in the reasons that support usefulness of developing the skill. The reason for this was the skill was not required much in doing their tasks. However, the reasons to develop the skill were mostly rated as “agree”.

The reasons to improve listening skill were mostly rated as “agree” with the number a bit greater than that of the speaking skill; nevertheless, listening and speaking skill were interrelated and that was why the numbers were close to each other.

The subjects rated the reasons to justify reading skill improvement slightly higher than that of the listening skill. The questionnaire results revealed that all four skills were necessary in performing their tasks. However, the number showed that most subjects rated “mostly agree” to the reasons that justified reading improvement.

The reasons that supported the improvement of writing skill were rated the most in all four skills. This came from the real usage of English in their work environment. The subjects reported that writing was the most skill employed in order to accomplish their works in duty.

The English functions related to speaking skill were rated mostly on the negative side as speaking was not the skill that was used mainly when the subjects performed their tasks. The subjects informed the interviewer that the customers at the level they dealt with were mostly Thais. Speaking skill would be used only when foreigners were present in the conversations and that was not very often.

The subjects tended to regard listening as a skill attached to speaking skill. Moreover, speaking seemed to be the skill that dominated listening which was shown in the results that speaking functions seemed to be slightly more rated compared to listening functions. This was different from a needs analysis survey conducted on human resource staff in multinational companies in Malaysia by Kaur, S. and Clarke, C.M. (Unknown published year).

English functions which involved reading skill was mostly rated positive which meant most subjects accepted that the functions were used most frequently. The results went the same way with the in-depth interview in that every document made inside and outside of the company strictly had to be in English while listening and speaking skill were only used occasionally.

The English functions related to writing skill were rated the most positive compared to others. The reason could be that it took more effort to produce than to receive the language. Since the documents had to be composed in English, the subjects could feel more stressed when they had to produce a lot of written texts at work.

5.2.2 In-depth interviews were conducted a week after the questionnaire distribution and the responses from the interviewees revealed that the most used English language skills in their office were reading and writing since all documents, whether paper or electronic, strictly had to be communicated in English. The most frequent documents they read were logistic requirements received from their customers. The requirements stated a list of demands where the customers needed the subjects to find logistic services that responded to their needs, and those requirements could be from 20 pages to 200 pages long. After the requirements were carefully read and the solutions to the requirements were provided, the subjects would write service proposals to offer customers the solutions that would meet with the requirements. The proposals were written in English and they would be the documents that the customers considered in order to make a decision on their purchase of the services proposed by the subjects. This is the reason why writing and reading were rated the most needed skills on the questionnaire. The next highly used function revealed by the interviews was reading and writing emails. Email was an effective way of communication used among the subjects and their customers since email could be sent any time, even out of the working hours. It could contain attachments that were huge and so much more informative than talking on telephone etc. One interviewee stated that he spent 40% of working time on reading and writing emails, and the function of writing email was rated highly in the questionnaire also. This data supported the needs for improving reading and writing skills. Listening and speaking skills were rated less in the questionnaire which was unexpected but the interviews exposed the causes of the questionnaire results; that all the subjects were Thais and the direct supervisor also spoke Thai; however, there were other management personnel in other departments who were non-Thais but the chances to communicate with them were not likely. Their customers were mostly from multinational companies; however, the contact persons the subjects interacted with were almost all Thais and the spoken language used there was therefore Thai. The use of English would come when there were non-Thai speakers in their business discussions even if only one of them did not speak Thai, the entire communication would then be in English but the occasions were not often. The use of listening and speaking was not frequent but they were rated the most necessary to the jobs. The interviews revealed that the subjects rated in this way since they felt

that listening and speaking were the skills that they wanted to improve the most while reading and writing were used frequently but they already had capability to deal with the requirements. In summary, most of the subjects reported that they wanted to improve speaking skill the most and the most needed to improve function was business writing.

5.3 DISCUSSIONS

This section concerns the language needs of the language perceived by the subjects and the English courses to be designed in response to their perceived needs.

The company DHL had a high standard of accepting people to join the company and the subjects were all well educated; moreover, the company was multinational and their customers mostly were also. The English usage was accordingly expected to be high in all aspects but, in practice, it was not agreed in all the four skills. The weight of English usage fell mostly into reading and writing as they were the used a lot in performing the necessary tasks. However, regarding listening and speaking functions, it was perceived that there were still levels above for the subjects to develop and move up to. It could be implied that the subjects needed to learn all the four skills for the reasons that reading and writing were used the most in their practical work so the better the skills were, the better their work would be. On the other hand, Listening and speaking were needed to be improved because the subjects perceived they were still lacking the proficiency on these skills. Therefore, English courses that aim to develop all four skills would fulfill the needs of the language courses as perceived by the learners themselves. Nonetheless, the DHL was a commercial organization with the aim to make profit; the ESP courses that would be designed should meet with financial and time constraints and at the same time the courses should succeed in improving the learners' English (Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A., 1987)

The subjects had strong academic backgrounds and some work experience in the logistic industry but still all of them accepted that they need English courses to improve their English. This means that the English courses to be given to

them have to be well designed because the courses should not be too easy as the participants have some knowledge of English already. Also the English courses should not focus too much on linguistic items. One of the interviewees stated that they did not see the benefit of learning phonetics since it would be forgotten after the courses were over. However, he accepted that stress on the right syllables was important to make himself understood by his audience. Therefore, the English courses to be designed should be based on business English, giving learners natural ways of using the language effectively in their business environment and benefiting them to interact with others using English. An English course designer should make use of the needs analysis survey conducted on the subjects, since according to Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987) needs analysis is the awareness of the target situations, and the courses designed with the needs awareness in mind would develop the learners' English to meet the requirements of their target tasks. And that would be the success of ESP course designing.

The questionnaire revealed that the needs in term of speaking were the most necessary skill in performing their work. Comparably to speaking skill, writing was reported as the skill that was used the most in several functions of their business interactions. And also the interviews confirmed the results of the questionnaire; therefore, the English courses should be designed accordingly. The most needed skills were speaking and writing; however, those skills have their counterparts, which are the receptive skills - namely listening and reading. Concisely, the English courses should be designed to teach all four skills but the focus should be on productive skills and at the same time it should be ensured that the courses would teach receptive skills to enable learners to equip themselves with the needed language skills in response to their needs of the language to function well in their business environment. The study yielded the results comparable to the relevant research conducted by Kaur, S. & Clarke, C.M. (n.d.) in that, with the same data gathering methods which were questionnaires and interviews, the productive language skills namely speaking and writing were deemed very important by the respondents.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussions above.

The target population of the study were business development personnel and their work was to find potential customers, to receive requirements on logistic and warehouse services, and to give logistic and warehouse proposals to provide services that meet with those requirements; therefore, the subjects were encouraged to produce English in order to provide their services to their customers. Productive skills were necessary for the subjects to deal with their work responsibility and get ahead in their career. The results of the questionnaire revealed that the needs of productive skills came prior to the others; therefore, the English course designer should design the courses to meet with the demands of the learners by focusing on business functions of the productive skills in both speaking and writing. The courses should provide learners with natural language used widely in their business interactions; for instance, polite ways to turn down customers' requests, polite ways to request assistance, how to apologize for lost of goods stored in warehouse. All of these should be taught in both speaking and writing aspects. And the learners should be able to use receptive skills in order to produce the language back during the interactions and make every party in the business interactions understand the same ideas of the communications.

The English course designer should study the business transactions of the learners and take them into account in order to design the courses that contain the language practically used in the business setting of the learners. The courses should give the learners direct usage of the language without them having to adapt the language further to deal effectively with their business encounters.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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

As the main tasks of the subjects were reading customers' requirements, writing service proposals and email correspondence, text composition of those customer requirements should be studied further in order to find general pattern of the

texts and the vocabulary usually employed so that the course designer will know what should be put into the lessons. Reading strategy should also be studied in order to check with the learners on how they read and then add useful reading strategy to the English courses giving the subjects effective reading strategy to deal with large amount of texts that contain requirement points that cannot be missed.

The English course designer should study further on particular patterns of proposal composition, the vocabulary specifically used in the proposals, the use of discourse markers to signal the readers how the text would develop, the understandability of the texts. The further studies would give the course designer language features to add into the courses making the learners write effectively in that they will learn how to write the proposal to ensure the quality of their services and the proposals should also be persuasive to customers. That could be possible by teaching the specific English that was researched and designed to meet with the learners' needs.

There should be further research on email correspondence to find all possible situations that occur in their email interactions. Then the course designer can find general patterns of the language used in email correspondence to teach to the learners to assist them to correspond by email effectively, sending messages that best deliver their thoughts and ideas by written text through email.