

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the introduction of the present study as follows: background of the study; rationale of the study; objectives of the study and Research questions; significance of the study; scope of the study; definition of terms and outline of the Thesis.

Background of the Study

Kasetsart University is one of the most famous universities in Thailand, established originally as the College of Agriculture offering a three year nondegree training program serving the personnel requirements of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. Afterward, the College of Agriculture was conferred a state university status on February 2, 1943 with the official name "Kasetsart University" (KU) (KU website, 2004), KU consisting of 13 faculties.

The faculty of Humanities, established on June 17, 1981, as the eleventh faculty of Kasetsart University, is one of the well known faculties of Kasetsart University. It provides four major master programs: M.A. (Applied Linguistics); M.A. (Philosophy and Religion); M.A. (English for Specific Purposes) and M.A. (Thai Language).

The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program is different from 'general English program', which has broad purposes. In this sense, this program provides "the practical skills and specific purposes of using English for occupational and professional purposes" (MA in ESP leaflet, 2005). All the courses are related to particular fields or disciplines, which means the course makes use of vocabulary and tasks related to the field. Moreover, ESP programs use printed and materials that are specially design to

meet the needs of a specific group of learners (Hortas, n.d.). It is widely known among ESP material writers that ESP materials are complicated and time consuming as they are designed for specific purposes e.g. reading passages with a certain control of syntax and lexis.

Rationale of the Study

People who can attend ESP program must have a bachelor's degree in any field. Accordingly, ESP students have different backgrounds for the use of English. Some students graduated with the English major and thus have a good basis for using the English language while some did not. However, English major graduates may not have a high proficiency in the use of academic writing, resulting in difficulties in studying ESP. Since most of the courses in ESP have regular written assignments, students will face difficulty and may be unable to complete the program.

The previous groups of ESP students (who entered the program during 2001-2004) did not attend the pre-session course as the course available to the students beginning in the academic year of 2005. The purpose is to help students adjust to the academic environment before they start their M.A. courses. Therefore, the course must be designed to address the specific needs of its students and an assessment of their needs is necessary.

Objectives of the Study and the Research Questions

This study aims at investigating the academic writing needs and revealing the additional opinions and suggestions of the ESP students at Kasetsart University.

This study, therefore, attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the needs of MA students at Kasetsart University regarding academic writing?
2. What are their opinions and suggestions concerning instruction academic writing?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will provide some useful information for English for Specific Purposes course at Kasetsart University. First, the outcomes of this thesis will help the course designers to create appropriate pre-sessional academic writing courses to meet the needs of the ESP students. Second, the results will provide some practical guidelines for the course designers to develop an effective in sessional course academic writing for ESP students.

Scope of the Study

The participants in this study are confined to the ESP students of the academic year 2004 and 2005 at Kasetsart University. Therefore, the findings from this study might not be applicable to students in different programs.

Definition of Key Terms

ESP students: students who have joined English for Specific Purposes program at Kasetsart University in the 2004-2005 academic year

ESP 4: students who have joined English for Specific Purposes program at Kasetsart University in the 2004 academic year

ESP 5: students who have joined English for Specific Purposes program at Kasetsart University in the 2005 academic year

Needs: what individuals require in order fulfilling their deficiency

Academic writing needs: academic English writing requirements by ESP students

Abbreviation

ESP	English for Specific Purpose
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
NA	Need(s) Analysis or Need(s) Assessment

Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is presented in five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the study. The second chapter reviews definitions, theories and frameworks related to English for Specific Purposes (ESP), need analysis (NA) and academic writing. The third chapter shows the design of the research. The fourth chapter presents the result of the study. The final chapter provides a discussion of the findings, implications, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research and finally the conclusion of the thesis.