CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents; (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) discussions of the communication problems and possible solutions, (4) conclusions, and (5) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study "Oral Communication Problems of Thai and Foreign Employees in Benchmark Electronics (Thailand) Public Co., Ltd" was conducted to find out and to understand the specific obstacles in oral communication between Thai and foreign employees. Additionally, the study aimed to explore the possible solutions to these communication breakdowns.

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To determine and understand what the specific communication problems are when Thai employees deal with foreign employees within the same workplace.

- To investigate the solutions of these communication breakdowns based on the part of Thai employees who have to communicate with foreign employees in their workplace.

5.1.2 Subjects Materials and Procedure

The target population of this study was ninety-one Thai employees working at Benchmark Electronic Company. The subjects were selected by using the random sampling technique.

According to the study, the research instrument used to collect the data was a questionnaire divided into five parts as follows:

Part I (Personal Information): The respondents gave their answers about their demographic information including gender, age, marital status, educational level, graduation year, current position, and work experience.

Part II (Experience in Being Exposed to English): The respondents were asked to provide their background information of English exposure.

Part III (Communication Problems): The respondents were asked to identify the factors that cause their communication failures.

Part IV (Additional Communication Problems) This part provided the respondents to give other factors that can affect their oral communication, apart from part III. In this part, they were able to make more that one choice and also to write their own answers.

Part V (Possible Solutions to the Problems): The question focused on the possible factors that can help to solve the problems based on the respondents' suggestions.

After the complete procedure of the data collection, the researcher analyzed the data with the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) program, Version 10.0.5. The results were shown in percentages.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 General Information of Respondents

More than half of the ninety-one respondents (74.7%) were female. The age of the population was mainly between 25-30 years old (39.6%). Also, more than half of the population (68.1%) was single. It was found that most respondents (78.0%) graduated with bachelor's degree and they (14.3%) mostly got the degree in 2002. The respondents (78.0%) mainly worked as officers with more than 2-years experience (84.6%). Over half of the population (52.7%) had the experience of taking an additional English course. However, most respondents (86.8%) did not have the experience of living, staying, studying or training in an English speaking country. Besides, they (76.9%) did not have any family members that they had to speak English with.

5.2.2 Communication Problems

According to the respondents' opinions in this study, the communication obstacles that they had to confront have been found as follows:

1. Language Proficiency Problem

It was found that most respondents had problems with English grammatical usage ($\bar{x}$=3.97), followed by the lack of skill in understanding different English accents ($\bar{x}$=3.95) and wording skills to communicate with foreigners ($\bar{x}$=3.87). Moreover, they could not find the English words to support their ideas or give recommendations ($\bar{x}$=2.66).

2. Personal Strategies

The respondents mostly thought the main problems were adjusting their speaking style to the age and gender of the person with whom they communicated ($\bar{x}$ =3.45), not stopping, slowing down, or thinking of what had gone wrong, and the possibilities of misinterpretation, when things seemed to have gone wrong ($\bar{x}$ =2.99). Other problems that they had to face were listening carefully to what is being said and paying attention to other people's emotional attitude as well as trying to be aware of their gestures and words used when communicating with foreigners ($\bar{x}$ =2.93), followed by repeating what they heard to make sure they understood it correctly ($\bar{x}$ =2.91). However, they rarely used body language, Thai and English when communicating with foreign colleagues or supervisors ($\bar{x}$ =2.41).

3. Cultural Problems

Most respondents felt that their making generalizations about an individual based on his or her nationality did not help ($\bar{x}$ =3.55), also, misunderstanding when foreign colleagues or supervisors used unfamiliar idioms ($\bar{x}$ =2.91). However, they believed that they understood the fact that people from different cultures had different points of views and conflicts ($\bar{x}$ =2.65).

4. Other Factors of Communication Problems

Over half of the respondents (63.7%) agreed that they lacked confidence when communicating with the foreigners. They (62.6%) were also afraid of making mistakes when communicating with those foreigners. Moreover, they (50.5% and 6.6%) were unable to communicate in unfamiliar topics and there was a problem about the age gap respectively.

5.2.3   The Suggestions for Possible Solutions to the Problems

In this study, the respondents provided the possible solutions to the communication problems as follows:

The main suggestions were Thai employees should take additional English courses so that they could improve their speaking and listening skills and that they could increase their confidence when communicating with the foreigners. The respondents also suggested that those employees should learn more English vocabulary and idioms in order to understand the technical terms or phrases used in English communication. In addition, they gave the advice that watching English soundtrack movies or listening to English music could help them practice their English

speaking and listening skills effectively. Nevertheless, some respondents suggested that they should try to select the easy words used in daily life when communicating with foreigners but they should not worry about making any mistakes in communication.

5.3 DISCUSSIONS

This section consists of the discussions of the results of the opinions of Thai employees of Benchmark Electronics Company regarding communication problems and the possible solutions to the problems:

5.3.1 The Population of the Study

All respondents of this study were Thai employees working for Benchmark Electronics Company located in Ayutthaya province. Most of them work the officers in different departments, whereas the others are the managers. Due to being a large multinational manufacturer and exporter, Thai employees always use English as the main channel to communicate with their foreign colleagues and supervisors. Thus, Thai employees cannot avoid communication problems in their workplace. However, the problems that they have to face may vary because of their different educational levels, ages, experiences and so on.

5.3.2   Language Proficiency Problems

The results of the study showed that the respondents could not select the appropriate English words to communicate with the foreign colleagues or supervisors. Also, they could not use the easy words to explain difficult contexts as well as finding the words to support their ideas or even to give recommendations. เมตตา วิวัฒนากุล (2548) claimed that the barriers of cognition or the lack of commonly used language and the ways to use an appropriate level of language including its connotation can lead to misunderstanding in communication.

Similarly, Wiwat Rojjanaprayon (1997) stated that the language barrier is a significant problem when Thai people communicate with non-Thais. Several Thai people could not effectively speak and listen to non-Thais' English. Besides, they were not pleased with their English capability or proficiency due to limited word choices in constructing English sentences, especially on an unfamiliar topic.

Another prominent communication problem in this study was that the respondents did not perfectly understand all the different English accents. Moreover, most of them had an experience where their foreign colleagues or supervisors did not understand their English accent. Orathai Sriring (2005) explained that it was difficult for Thai staff to understand certain peculiar English words and expressions including colloquial speech and unusual accents. Sa-nguan Ampaipisut (2007) also described that most foreign tourists did not understand Thai staff when they spoke. In addition, they thought that those Thai staff could not follow when communicating with them and used the wrong pronunciation or accent.

According to Wilkins (1975), to achieve a second language, the learners' task is not so much to reach a native speaker's pronunciation standard. In fact, it is not the real expectation. They need to procure a pronunciation exact enough for the important sound to be distinctive from one another. It is not necessary that a single pronunciation of the sound will enable them to do this. Hence, in pronunciation a sound is unable to only be adequately produced in isolation, but also depends on how well it is formed in the phonological contexts in which it occurs in the target language. A sound may not be intrinsically hard for a learner, but in an unfamiliar context, the learner may find that it is difficult to correctly produce the sound as he or she would if it were a totally novel sound. He also stressed that an error in intonation can cause a different interpretation of an utterance.

In this study, the respondents found that they had to think in Thai first and then translate Thai into English again when communicating with the foreigners. Wiwat Rojjanapryon (1997) stated that Thai people complained that it was hard to speak their mind in English because of their language proficiency problems.

5.3.3   Problems of Using Personal Strategies in Communication

From the study; it was found that most respondents rarely adjusted their speaking style to the age and gender of a person with whom they communicated. They also hardly stopped slowed down, or thought of what had gone wrong, and the possibilities of misinterpretation, when things seemed to have gone badly. These circumstances opposed the idea of "Metacognitive Strategies" explained by O'Malley and Chamot (1990). They stated that the L2 learners should focus on planning and thinking about learning such as planning their learning, monitoring their own speech and evaluating themselves during their communication. Moreover, Hamilton (1997)

claimed that different genders can cause barriers to listening and lead to communication failure at the same time if the communicators did not pay attention.

According to the findings of this study, even if the respondents had to repeat what They had heard to make sure that they understood it correctly; this behavior matched the good language learner's strategy of Naiman (1976). He described that good learners should repeat what they perceived aloud so that they can improve their L2 learning skills.

5.3.4   Cultural Problems

Cultural problems in the case of Thai employees at Benchmark Electronics Company were not significant problems. Due to being surrounded by people having various nationalities, the respondents could mostly learn and understood the differences between cultures, so they could accept these contrasts. Anyhow, this case resisted the definition of intercultural communication described by Samovar, Porter, and Stefani (1998). They stressed that the communication between people having distinctive cultural perceptions and symbol systems could change the communication event.

Nevertheless, Mills (1998) claimed that culture influences an individual in both conscious and subconscious ways: behavior modes, thinking patterns, beliefs, attitudes, ideas, values, and various habits, we must know that culture can bring us to a communication event so that we can understand people with whom we communicate. In short, we should consider a culture's value in order to understand cross-cultural values in communication. These statements showed that we can understand different cultures if we learn, consider, and differentiate each culture's value.

On the contrary, most respondents still misunderstood their foreign colleagues or supervisors when they used some unfamiliar idioms. Similarly, Wiwat Rojjanaprayon (1997) explained in his study that several Thai accepted that they could not effectively speak and listen to non-Thais' English, especially Americans. Some of them were unable to understand the sense of humor and figurative speech such as anecdotes, similes, and metaphors in English. Additionally, Thais did not know much about American culture, while Americans were likely to realize the differences. He also added that Thais still regard Thai values especially social hierarchy and elder respect as significant. In other words, they were hierarchical and indirect. These barriers affected non-Thais' understanding.

5.3.5 Other Communication Problems

The results of this study show that the respondents mostly lacked confidence when communicating with the foreigners. Orathai Sriring (2005) also asserted that the lack of assertiveness of Thai people dealing with western colleagues was the major problem found in her study. It was found that Thai people were not assertive, especially when wishing to oppose the ideas of their western colleagues. Furthermore, it was difficult for them to display their negative comments to their western colleagues, particularly if the ideas expressed were significant enough to be considered. Another result found in her study was that Thai people preferred receiving English written instructions to speaking them out because they were not confident as to whether their spoken instructions would be understood. Sa-nguan Ampaipisut (2007) also added that Thai staff did not express their opinions and were astonished when the participants did something unexpected.

To increase L2 learners' confidence in communication, Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1978) stated that the learners should be content with their L2 knowledge and try to improve it. They should make guesses about things they do not understand and examine whether they are right or wrong by comparing their speech with the new language they had or they should ask any native speakers to correct them. Besides, Stern (1975) added that good L2 learners should seek the opportunity to bring their newly acquired competence into use, and they have to accept that they may make mistakes. This explanation proves that confidence plays a crucial role in an effective communication, especially in different languages and cultures.

Anyhow, the result of this research showed that most respondents were still afraid of making mistakes when communicating with the foreigners. Orathai Sriring (2005) similarly stated that Thai people would not give their feedback when circumstances were incorrect, although they believed that feedback was important to accomplish the business communication. In conclusion, due to the respondents' fear of making mistakes in communication, they had to be faced with communication failure.

5.3.6 The Possible Solutions to the Problems

Mostly, the respondents agreed that Thai employees should take more English communicative courses, learn more English vocabulary or idioms, and practice English speaking and listening skills by watching English soundtrack movies as well as listening to English music. Naiman (1976) claimed that good L2 learners should develop and use specific learning techniques such as memorizing and practicing pronunciation. Another way to be the effective learners is being

"Willing to Practice" including repeating aloud, role-playing, memorizing structures and vocabulary, and reading magazines, newspaper, and comics. Moreover, Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1978) suggested that the L2 learners should let themselves be as a part of the language learning process like practicing the second language by listening to the news in L2 on radio, seeing films in L2, and so on. According to "Social Strategies" written by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), L2 learners should interact with other second-language communicators so that they can improve their new-language experience.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion below can be drawn from the discussion section as follows:

5.4.1   In spite of being in multicultural working environment, several Thai employees at Benchmark Electronics Company still faced oral communication problems when they had to communicate with their foreign colleagues or supervisors. However, their problems may differ due to their frame of references (educational level, age, gender, experience etc.).

5.4.2   The Thai employees in Benchmark Electronics Company needed to improve their language proficiency as a priority. They could not choose the appropriate English words to communicate with foreigners or even to support their own ideas as well as giving commendations. Moreover, it was found that they could not use easy words to explain difficult contexts. They also seemed to have the problems with unfamiliar English accents and the inability to speak their mind in English.

5.4.3   It was hard to adapt their speaking style to the age and gender of the foreign colleagues or supervisors. It was a major point of inadequate personal strategies in communication. Thai employees rarely learned to solve the problems when their communication had gone badly.

5.4.4   According to the data, the Thai employees in Benchmark Electronics Company did not think that different cultures were the important problems in their communication. Being in a multicultural environment, those employees thought they could absorb and understand the differences between cultures well. Nevertheless, they still misunderstood their foreign colleagues or supervisors' unfamiliar idioms.

5.4.5   Lacking confidence when communicating in a second language seemed to be a prominent problem that we should not overlook in this study. Most Thai employees of Benchmark Electronics Company were not confident enough to express their own ideas or opinions,

particularly the negative points essential to be considered. In addition, they were anxious about making mistakes when communicating in English.

      5.4.6   Based on the Thai employees' suggestions to improve their communication skills, they agreed that they should take additional English communicative courses, concentrate more on studying English vocabulary and its idioms and practice speaking and listening skills such as seeing English soundtrack films and listening to English music. They thought that these suggestions could improve their communication skills in learning L2 and overcoming their oral communication problems in their workplace.

5.5   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

      Referring to the findings and conclusions in this study, these are the recommendations made for further research:

      5.5.1   As a result of the number of limited respondents and a too specific site (Benchmark Electronics Company) in the study, the number of the population concerned is too small if they are compared with the total number of Thai employees working in the industrial estates in Ayutthaya province. Therefore, the results could not be considered as a generalization of the whole population.

      5.5.2   This study focused on only one side which was the Thai employees due to time constraints. In order to gain more reliable results, a future study should probably be conducted on the other side of the communicators by focusing on the foreign employees working in the same company. Moreover, it would be better for more accurate and valid answers if the researcher can both interview the respondents and use the questionnaires to collect data.

      5.5.3   Since this study mainly put an emphasis on oral communication problems, a future study can be concentrate on the other side of communication problems including finding out appropriate solutions to the problems.