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EDITORIAL

It is my proud privilege to welcome you all to the ISER International Conference at Seoul, South Korea. I am happy to see the papers from all part of the world and some of the best paper published in this proceedings. This proceeding brings out the various Research papers from diverse areas of Science, Engineering, Technology and Management. This platform is intended to provide a platform for researchers, educators and professionals to present their discoveries and innovative practice and to explore future trends and applications in the field Science and Engineering. However, this conference will also provide a forum for dissemination of knowledge on both theoretical and applied research on the above said area with an ultimate aim to bridge the gap between these coherent disciplines of knowledge. Thus the forum accelerates the trend of development of technology for next generation. Our goal is to make the Conference proceedings useful and interesting to audiences involved in research in these areas, as well as to those involved in design, implementation and operation, to achieve the goal.

I once again give thanks to the Institute of Research and Journals, The IIER for organizing this event in Seoul, South Korea. I am sure the contributions by the authors shall add value to the research community. I also thank all the International Advisory members and Reviewers for making this event a Successful one.

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★★★

ESP TARGET SITUATION NEEDS ANALYSIS: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE NEEDS AS PERCEIVED BY PASSENGER SERVICE AGENTS IN THAILAND

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Abstract - This study aimed to investigate the English language communicative needs of airline passenger service agents in Bangkok, Thailand by investigating their language use in the workplace in order to provide empirical data serving Thai ESP context. The English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) most needed, measured by the frequency of use of each English language skill, in their workplace and for performing what kind of activities are investigated along with the perception of airline passenger service agents towards their English language preparation during their college study. A set of questionnaires was used to collect data concerning the needs of English use in the career of airline passenger service agents. The participants of this study comprised 150 passenger service agents working at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, Thailand. There were 35 males and 115 females, 20-47 years of age. The result shows that the English language is used extensively in the workplace and plays an important role in the career of airline passenger service agents. The English language listening skill is the most frequently used and the writing skill is the least frequently used skill. Though receptive skills are viewed as more important than productive skills, the percentages are so close that it is hard to prioritize any skill areas over the others. In addition, the activities in an English program should reflect situations similar to what the students will encounter in their future careers. Finally, most airline passenger service agents report they gained their knowledge of English from their formal education, but it was not adequate to meet the real needs of their job functions.

Index terms - Needs Analysis, Target-Situation Analysis, English for Specific Purposes.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many universities in Thailand have offered the Bachelor of Arts in Airline Business to provide courses that focus on fundamental airline management and operational skills to prepare students for their future career. Airline industry employs many different individuals, from pilots and flight crew to caterers and ground crew. Many of these jobs require communication in English, whether it be among co-workers or with international passengers. Preparing students for careers in the airline industry and improving the language skills of current employees requires an ESP textbook that teachers can use to teach particular language skills and forms of communication.

However, airline business study is still new in Thailand, only a few ESP materials are available and most of them are for air traffic controllers and flight crew. Very little literature on English courses is tailored for airline passenger service agents who mainly rely on language abilities and communicative skills to deal with all sorts of enquiries and requests of travellers.

An important component of an effective ESP course is a textbook that contains job-related English lessons. However, there often is a mismatch between the content of ESP textbooks and actual workplace language demands. To help teachers recognize and rectify the mismatch, this study aimed to investigate the English language communicative needs of airline passenger service agents in Bangkok, Thailand by

investigating their language use in the workplace in order to provide empirical data serving Thai ESP context. The English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) most needed, measured by the frequency of use of each English language skill, in their workplace and for performing what kind of activities are investigated along with the perception of airline passenger service agents towards their English language preparation during their college study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Needs Analysis

Needs analysis has been one of the key factors and an essential part of English for specific purpose (ESP) practitioners; i.e. researchers, course designers, material developers, testers, evaluators as well as classroom teachers for many years. According to Iwai et al. (1999), the term needs analysis normally refers to the activities that are involved in collecting information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the needs of a particular group of students. For Johns (1991), needs analysis is the first step in course design and it provides validity and relevancy for all subsequent course design activities. According to Brown (1995), the term needs analysis (also called needs assessment) was identified as the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum which meet the learning needs of a particular group of students. Hutchinson & Waters (1992) define needs analysis on the basis of "necessities" and "wants" in order to classify between

what the learners have to know and what the learners feel they need to know. The focus here is on the "lacks" that represent the gap between the required proficiency in the target situation and the existing proficiency of the learners. This definition views language needs as a process of negotiation between the learners and their society. Witkin and Altschuld (1995) define needs analysis as a systematic set of procedures undertaken for the purpose of setting priorities and making decisions about programs or organizational improvement and allocation of resources. According to this definition, needs analysis should fill the "gap" of needs between the current state of affairs and the desired state of affairs. Obviously, the role of needs analysis in any ESP course is unquestionable.

In the earlier periods needs analysis was mainly concerned with linguistic and register analysis, and as Dudley Evans and St. John (1998) suggest, needs were seen as discrete language items of grammar and vocabulary. With the publication of Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design* (1978) situations and functions were set within the frame of needs analysis. Munby (1978) introduced Communication Needs Process (CNP) containing a detailed set of procedures for discovering target situation needs. It is based on analyzing language communication in the target situation in order to provide a communicative needs profile for a specified group of learners. The Communication Needs Process profile seeks to present a valid specification of the skills and linguistic forms that a group of learners needs in the intended target situation.

The Communication Needs Process model contained nine components (e.g. participant, purposive domain, setting, interaction, instrumentality, dialect, target level, communicative event, and communicative key). Each component asks questions about the use of the target language in order to identify learners' real world communicative requirements. The outcome is used as an input to prepare the intended group of learners for their intended use of the target language through converting the needs profile into a communicative competence specification that is presented in a form of a syllabus (Jordan, 1997).

The Target-Situation Analysis model has remained highly influential in the field of ESL/ESP needs analysis. It was the first needs analysis model based on the concept of communicative competence. Munby's categories of communicative activities and their relation to the communicative events of the target situation reflect categories of real world language use (West, 1994). In other words, they reflect the shift in the ESL field from language system to language use. As a result of this shift, most studies continue to follow this model in relating

communicative needs to analysis of communication in the target situation. Consequently, needs analysis has become an integral element of the field of ESP as the basis for designing ESP courses (Dudley-Evans, 1991).

Related Research Studies

The following overview provides a sampling of recent studies in needs analysis conducted within the field of English for specific purposes for aviation industry.

Tangniam (2006) conducted a needs analysis to investigate the English language needs of Thai Airways ground staff. The participants consisted of 218 ground staff from 3 functions: KP (Airport Customer Services), LP (Special Services), and LL (Baggage Services). The key findings revealed that all ground staff perceived that the English language was essential and almost all of them viewed that the English course provided was not sufficient. The majority of them considered that an English training course helped them improve English skills to communicate with passengers more fluently. Some viewed that an English training course helped them get promoted in their career in the future. The ground staff perceived their own English proficiency as "fair" in all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. As for English skills needs, listening and speaking were rated "extremely needed" skills while reading and writing skills were viewed as "moderately needed". As for English skills difficulty, listening skills were considered as "mostly difficult" whereas speaking, writing and reading skills were indicated "moderately difficult". Based on the findings, it was recommended that English training courses should emphasize on listening and speaking skills as being regularly used while writing and reading skills should be a part of courses to complete job procedures.

Dhanasmithivesn (2007) conducted a needs analysis to identify the English language skills most needed by Thai Bangkok-based flight attendants working for China Airlines to perform their jobs effectively. The study also sought to identify which English language skills most needed training. The survey of the 98 Thai Bangkok-based flight attendants working for China Airlines was conducted at Don Mueng International Airport in August 2006. The flight attendants were divided into three groups based on their years of flight experience with China Airlines: those with 6 months to 4 years of experience, those with 5 to 8 years of experience, and those with 9 to 12 years of experience. Seventy five questionnaires (76.53%) were completed and returned. The analysis of the data revealed that overall the English language reading skill was the most frequently used (most needed to perform the flight attendants' jobs effectively) and the skill most needing training. The writing skill was the least frequently used skill and required the least

training. The participants reported the speaking skill as the second most frequently used skill and ranked it third in the level of need for training. The listening skill was reported to be the third most frequently used skill, but ranked second in terms of training need.

Ting (2010) presents the process of designing a course for airport ground staff working at the Information Desk. It reflects the situations that lots of ESP practitioners are confronted with when designing course tasks; that is, analysing the needs of specific learners, identifying the occupation-related aims, and tailoring the authenticity-featured materials. The aims of the needs analysis are three-tiered: firstly, to investigate the "necessities" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 55) that the Information Desk staff at any airports are generally aware of so as to function effectively at their locations, which include the situations where they need to function (communicating events), the linguistic features identified in these situations, the language skills required in these situations, and other areas of knowledge (if any) needed to fulfill their duties; secondly, to elicit the learners' views on and experience associated with these "necessities"; additionally, to assemble the most basic information of the learners' background. To collect these information, the target learners (insiders) are the most direct and convenient source; apart from them, relevant airport department managers and passengers (outsiders) can be useful sources, too. The study introduces a course framework, a set of sample material and a series of plans on learning assessment and course evaluation, with some reflections made on the limitations of both the process and the products, as well as the directions of further research influenced by the current trends of ESP development.

Permtanjit (2003) conducted a study 1) to investigate language problems and difficulties in terms of language functions and English usage which the Thai Airways flight attendants encountered while working during flights, 2) to identify particular needs regarding job-related language skills and knowledge which are essential for flight attendants' jobs, and 3) to provide practical suggestions for the Basic English Course for Flight Attendants. The subjects were 105 Thai Airways flight attendants who had worked for a maximum of one year. These subjects attended the basic training course including a five-day basic English course in the year 2002. The instruments employed in this study were a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings from the study revealed that: 1. Lack of familiarity with passengers' accents and the flight attendants' own accent and pronunciation were two major areas of difficulty which the flight attendants had encountered while working. 2. Speaking and listening skills were the two most important language skills for the flight attendants. Also, knowledge of job-related

vocabulary and cultural differences were also recognized as essential for their in-flight work. 3. To increase effectiveness of the English courses, more job-related roleplaying and pronunciation practice should be provided in the course. Additional English material such as leaflets about polite language and in-flight vocabulary should be used as supplements to the core handbook. In addition, course should be taught in teams of two teachers, one a native English speaker and the other a native Thai speaker who has experience as a flight attendant.

Cahyani and Drajadi (2017) presents stakeholders' comments about the staffs' English communication ability and needs in the work setting (data collected through semi-structured interview) and problem of English communication encountered by the currently working staffs (through open-ended questionnaires as preliminary data and extended group interview or discussion). The study reveals that the airport passenger-handlers in Indonesia still struggle with language, especially their English oral communication during the service in their workplace, which means that they have not fulfilled the company's expectation yet. Meanwhile, the needs of the future officers in passenger-handling to learn before their job involvement are: knowledge (involving vocabulary, general English, job procedures) and activity (the actions or procedures performed by each kind of position of passenger-handling).

In short, the field of ESP includes a number of needs analyses conducted on language programs in many different areas. However, very few studies have looked specifically at the English language needs of passenger service agent professionals in Thailand.

To be more specific, the present study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is the English language used in the career of airline passenger service agents in Thailand?
2. Which English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are most frequently used in their workplace and for performing what kind of activities?
3. Is the English that the airline passenger service agents studied in previous educational institutes adequate for them to perform their work?

Significance of the Study

This study will provide empirical data for ESP programs in the airline business field. ESP researchers and practitioners can benefit from this investigation by comparing and contrasting the language situation in this study with other ESP applications around the world. This study also contributes to our understanding of how English is used in international workplace settings as a foreign language or lingua franca.

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study comprised 150 passenger service agents working at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, Thailand. There were 35 males and 115 females, 20-47 years of age. 41 participants (27.3%) have been working as a passenger service agent less than 1 year, 60 participants (40%) 1 to 3 years, 25 participants (16.7%) 3 to 6 years, and 24 participants (16%) more than 6 years. 137 participants have a bachelor's degree and 13 participants have a master's degree.

Instruments

The research instrument was a set of questionnaires which was used to collect data concerning the needs of English use in the career of airline passenger service agents. The questionnaire included four parts. The first part consisted of participants' biographical data. The second part was designed to provide data to answer the first research question: To what extent is the English language used in the career of airline passenger service agents in Thailand? The third part was designed to provide data to answer the second research question: Which English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are most frequently used in their workplace and for performing what kind of activities? The last part of the questionnaire was designed to provide data to answer the third research question: Is the English that the airline passenger service agents studied in previous educational institutes adequate for them to perform their work? The questionnaire was designed in English and translated into Thai language in order to minimize problems related to ambiguity and misinterpretation.

Data collection

After sending the official letter to request for permission and cooperation to gather the data, the researchers distributed the questionnaires to the target subjects with the help of four former students of the researchers who were working at the airport. The questionnaire was administered to the target group in November 2018.

Data analysis

After checking the completion of each questionnaire, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to generate frequencies, means and percentages.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results of the First Research Question

The results of the data in Part 2 from item 5 to item 7 of the questionnaire provides answers to the first research question: 1) To what extent is the English

language used in the career of airline passenger service agents in Thailand?

In regard to item 5 of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to provide a percentage of using English in the workplace and the mean value of using English at the work place among all participants is 95.68%. The result shows that, there is an agreement among all participants that the English language is used extensively in the workplace and plays an important role in all of the participants' professional lives.

The next two items of the questionnaire are related. Items 6 and 7 seek information regarding the nature of their job. Item 6 of the questionnaire asks about whether the participants have coworkers who communicate only in the English language. 57 participants (38%) report that their workplace includes coworkers who only communicate in English.

Based on that, Item 7 of the questionnaire asks how often the nature of the job requires the participants to communicate with coworkers who only communicate in English. This question uses a Likert scale with the following values: "very extensively" "extensively" "moderately" "rarely" and "never". In their response to this question, 42 (73.7%) of the 57 participants who indicate that their workplace includes coworkers who only communicate in English, report that they communicate "very extensively" with these coworkers. 11 participants (19.3 %) report that they communicate "extensively" with their English-only coworkers. 3 participants (5.3 %) report that they communicate "moderately" and only one participant (1.8 %) reports that he/she "rarely" communicate with coworkers who speak English only. No participant reports that they "never" communicate with their English-only coworkers. This shows that the majority of the participants who indicate that their workplace includes coworkers who only communicate in English, communicate very greatly with coworkers using the English language.

In conclusion, it is obvious that the English language is not only used extensively at the workplace, but also plays an important role in the professional life of the participants.

Results of the Second Research Question

The results of the data in Part 3 of the questionnaire item 8 to item 10 of the questionnaire provide answers to the second research question: 2) Which English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are most frequently used in their workplace and for performing what kind of activities? Item 8 of the questionnaire seeks information about which of the language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) is more emphasized at the work place. The result shows that listening is the

most often used for their work ($\bar{x} = 4.65$), followed by speaking ($\bar{x} = 4.54$), reading ($\bar{x} = 3.86$) and writing ($\bar{x} = 3.44$), respectively.

Question 9 of the questionnaire seeks information about the frequency of use of English language skills in conducting different activities at the workplace.

In regard to listening skill, the result shows that five activities in listening skill that the participants need to communicate most often in English are "Listening to and understanding what passengers want" ($\bar{x} = 4.47$), "Listening to passengers' complaints" ($\bar{x} = 4.22$), "Listening to passengers' satisfaction" ($\bar{x} = 4.21$), "Listening to personal details and information" ($\bar{x} = 4.11$) "Listening to idiomatic English" ($\bar{x} = 3.54$), respectively. The result also shows that the participants listen to British accent English ($\bar{x} = 4.06$) more often than American English accent ($\bar{x} = 3.91$).

In regard to speaking skill, the result shows that five activities in speaking skill that the participants need to communicate most often in English are "Welcoming and greeting" ($\bar{x} = 4.59$), "Bidding farewell to passengers" ($\bar{x} = 4.49$), "Offering assistance" ($\bar{x} = 4.49$), "Making polite requests" ($\bar{x} = 4.46$), and "Inquiring about passengers' information and needs" ($\bar{x} = 4.46$).

In regard to reading skill, the result shows that five activities in reading skill that the participants need to communicate most often in English are "Reading passengers' travel documents" ($\bar{x} = 4.17$), "Reading E-mails" ($\bar{x} = 3.73$), "Reading manuals and policy" ($\bar{x} = 3.61$), "Reading inquiry letters" ($\bar{x} = 3.43$), and "Reading telexes" ($\bar{x} = 3.35$), respectively.

In regard to writing skill, the result shows that three activities in writing skill that the participants need to communicate most often in English are "Writing airline documents" ($\bar{x} = 3.61$), "Writing messages for passengers" ($\bar{x} = 3.46$), "Writing e-mails" ($\bar{x} = 3.45$), "Writing to reply to complaint letters" ($\bar{x} = 3.41$), and "Writing daily reports" ($\bar{x} = 3.39$), respectively.

Results of the Third Research Question

The results of the data from item 10 to item 13 of the questionnaire provide answers to the third research question: 3) Is the English that the airline passenger service agents studied in previous educational institutes adequate for them to perform their work?

The questions in this part ask about participants' language experiences with the English language before they joined the workplace. Item 10 of the questionnaire asks the participants to rate their knowledge of the English language before they started college. This question uses a Likert scale with the following values: "very good," "satisfactory," "poor," and "very poor." In their response to this question, 28 participants (18.7%) report that their knowledge of English before they began college was "very good," 80 participants (53.3%) report that their knowledge of English was "satisfactory." 37

participants (24.7%) report that their knowledge of English was "poor" and 5 participants (3.3 %) report that their knowledge of English was "very poor." Item 11 of the questionnaire asks the participants to indicate whether the knowledge of English that they gained from their formal education is adequate for their job functions. This question uses a Likert scale with the following values: "adequate," "inadequate," and "unsure." In their response to this question, 63 participants (42%) report that the knowledge of English that they gained from their formal education was "adequate," 73 participants (48.7%) report that the knowledge of English that they gained from their formal education was "inadequate." 14 participants (9.3%) are unsure whether the knowledge of English that they gained from their formal education is adequate for their job functions.

Item 12 of the questionnaire asks the participants how the English language courses during their college study were relevant to their job. This question implements a Likert scale with the following values: "a lot," "somewhat," "a little," and "not relevant at all." In their response to this question, 83 participants representing 55.3 % of the sample population report that the courses that they took in college were relevant "a lot" to their job. 48 participants (32%) report that the courses were "somewhat" relevant. 6 participants (4%) report that the courses were "a little" relevant and 13 participants (8.7 %) report that the courses were "not relevant at all."

Item 13 of the questionnaire asks the participants to rate their knowledge of the English language after they graduated from college. This question implements a Likert scale with the following values: "very good," "satisfactory," "poor," and "very poor." In their response to this question, 48 participants representing 32 % of the sample population report that their knowledge of English after they graduated from college was "very good." 90 participants (60 %) report that their knowledge of English was "satisfactory." 12 participants (8 %) report that their knowledge of English was "poor" and no participant reports that his/her knowledge of English was "very poor."

It appears that there are improvements in language proficiency; the increases in rating from 18.7 to 32 % in the "very good" category, 53.3 to 60% in the "satisfactory" and the decreases in rating from 24.7 to 8% in the "poor" and 3.3 to 0% in the "very poor".

CONCLUSION

Regarding the first research question, the results are consistent in pointing out heavy usage of the English language in airline passenger service agent professions in Thailand. This implies that effective English language instruction is greatly needed to perform the job effectively and therefore plays an important role in the careers of airline passenger service agents.

Regarding the second research question, passenger service agents consider the English language listening skill is the most frequently used and the writing skill is the least frequently used skill. The speaking skill is the second most frequently used skill and the reading skill is reported to be the third most frequently used skill. Though receptive skills are viewed as more important than productive skills, the percentages are so close that it is hard to prioritize any skill areas over the others. In addition, the activities in an English program should reflect situations similar to what the students will encounter in their future careers.

Regarding the third research question, comparing the perceptions before and after college, it appears that there are improvements in language proficiency. Most passenger service agents report they gained their knowledge of English from their formal education, but it was not adequate to meet the real needs of their job functions, so they cannot achieve optimum English usage.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following suggestions and recommendations can be incorporated in any English as a foreign language course for airline business students majoring in passenger service.

1. This study suggests that the English language is used extensively in airline passenger service agent professions in Thailand and in EFL and lingua franca contexts. It plays a crucial role as the main tool of communication to conduct a variety of activities. Therefore, to design an English language course and prepare teaching materials for students majoring in passenger service should be based on the target communicative situations representing the communicative use of language rather than formal linguistic categories representing the grammatical rules of language.

2. The relative emphasis of the four English language skills in the courses for students majoring in passenger service should be based on activities driven by the actual communicative situations demanded by airline passenger service agent professions.

3. Though this study suggests that receptive skills are perceived as more important than productive skills in a wide range of activities in the field, it is hard to recommend that English courses for airline passenger

service agent professions should emphasize reading and listening skills over writing and speaking skills because the differences in percentages between receptive and productive skills are very close. Further research in this regard is needed to support such claim.

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