CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, the results presented in the previous chapter are summarised and discussed. Implications arising from the study are drawn and recommendations for further research are proposed.

5.1 Summary of findings

This study aims to find out the English language needs of first-year MBA students at Payap University. It attempts to document information on the students and their needs and their present ability in learning and using English language skills. The results, in turn, can serve as guidelines for the review of Course BA502.

The main findings of the study are summarised as follows:

5.1.1 Target needs of subjects

Based on the analysis of data, the results show that the four English skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are fairly necessary and very necessary to the first-year MBA students. The language functions which they consider as the most necessary in relation to their field of work or intended field of work are:

Listening skill - Listening on the telephone

Speaking skill - Negotiating, agreeing and disagreeing

Reading skill - Reading faxes/e-mail/internet information

Writing skill - Writing faxes/e-mail and application letters

5.1.2 Learning needs of subjects

In terms of the students' preferred modes of learning English in relation to Course BA502, the results are:

Styles of learning

The first-year MBA students indicated that their most preferred learning style is by listening and taking down notes, followed by participating in conversations with partner and by repeating what they hear. In class, they prefer a combination of learning arrangements, but learning in small groups is more preferred than learning individually, in pairs or in a large group. Their least preferred learning style is by memorising or by copying from the board.

Types of language activities

The language activities most preferred by the students are engaging in conversations and discussions, using the internet and pronunciation exercises. They are least interested in drills.

Correction and Evaluation

According to the first-year MBA students, they prefer to be corrected immediately when they make a mistake in speaking. The students also indicated that they prefer to get feedback on their course progress through a combination of ways – from test results, from instructor's personal comments and from peer-assessment.

5.1.3 Difficulty of subjects in using English language skills

The results indicate the first-year MBA students' perception of their present ability in using the English language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing to be difficult and fairly difficult. None of the skills is very difficult for them in relation to their field of work or intended field of work. The most fairly difficult areas are:

Listening skill - Listening to presentations or talks

Speaking skill - Chairing or leading meetings

Reading skill - Reading professional / trade literature

Writing skill - Writing business reports, and minutes of meetings

5.1.4 Overall results of target needs and difficulty of subjects

From an analysis of the data, an overall picture of both the target needs and the difficulty of the first-year MBA students in learning the four English language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing can be seen. The results show that the students consider reading skills as the most necessary to them, while speaking and writing skills are the most difficult for them in relation to their work or intended field of work.

5.2 Discussion of findings

From this study, an overall picture of the target needs and difficulties of the first-year MBA students at Payap University in using the English language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing has emerged:

In terms of target needs, the students consider reading skills as the most necessary for them. This is understandable in view of the fact that literature and reading materials as well as textbooks in the MBA programme are mostly in English, for examples "Managerial Accounting", "Journal of Marketing", "Journal of Finance", "Harvard Review", "Human Resource Review", etc. Moreover, there are technical terms and vocabulary which are difficult to understand for the first-year students.

With regards to the students' perception of their present ability in using the English language skills, the students indicated that speaking and writing skills are most difficult for them. In learning English, Thai students appear to be weaker in the productive skills of speaking and writing than in the receptive skills of listening and reading. This is to a large extent due to the reason that English is taught and learned as a foreign language in Thailand. As such, opportunities to listen in English, as well as to speak and write in English outside of the classroom, are limited.

In terms of preferred learning modes, the first-year MBA students indicated that they like to learn English by engaging in conversations and discussions, by pronunciation and by repeating what they hear. These results reflect the students'

awareness of their weakness in speaking skills and show their desire to improve in speaking skills.

5.3 Implications for course review

As previously mentioned, needs analysis in ESP is learner-focused. The needs of learners are determined with the intent of aligning course content and methodology to meet the specific needs of learners. Based on the results of the study, Course BA502 (the current syllabus of which is attached at Appendix C) is examined and modifications are made in the following areas:

Reading skills

As the first-year MBA students consider reading skills as most necessary to them in relation to their field of work or intended field of work, reading skills will be emphasised in the course syllabus: skimmimg and scanning, using contextual clues, reading for main ideas, predicting outcomes and reading critically. The students will be given more practice in reading during the semester. They will be assigned reading from the newspapers, from business reports, from business reviews and articles, from professional/trade literature and also from the internet.

Speaking and writing skills

These two skills will be given attention as well since the students have the most difficulty with them. The students are expected to participate in discussions, to give short talks and presentations, and they will be evaluated on their performance. To improve the students' writing skills, they will be given writing practice such as writing notes on discussions, minutes of meetings, e-mail and faxes, summaries or business reports.

Learning modes

In terms of learning modes, as the students prefer to learn by participating in conversations and discussions, and in small groups, class discussions and group work will be common features in the classroom. The students will also be encouraged to use modern day technology, for example the internet to access information to enhance their learning.

Evaluation

With regards to evaluation, the students will be given feedback on their class progress through evaluation of class participation, class presentations and examinations. The instructor will involve the students to assess their peers during class presentations. The grades for class presentations will be based on the assessment by both the instructor and the students.

Course BA502 is modified as follows:

Course description:

An interactive course in the four English language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, stressing the development of reading skills.

Course objectives:

The course aims to enable the students to use the English language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in relation to their field of work or intended field of work. Students will be able to:

1. demonstrate the reading skills of skimming and scanning, using contextual clues, reading for main ideas, predicting outcomes and reading critically.

2. recognise and use common business vocabulary, task-related words with technical meanings and the meanings of common abbreviations and acronyms.

3. grasp concepts of business issues, problems, ethics and the global world of business.

4. demonstrate better listening skills of listening for gist, and listening for specific information.

5. use writing as a communication tool of business.

6. participate in group discussions and presentations.

7. work as a team on real-life business projects.

8. think critically and apply problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Course syllabus:

Topic	Reading	Listening / Speaking	Writing	Language function
At a company	- company structure - company profile - business reports	- introducing a company - chairing or leading a meeting	- note-taking - agenda of meeting - minutes of meeting - business reports	- making requests - clarifying ideas - expressing opinion - asking and answering questions
Job application and interview	- techniques for entering the job market - interview tips - classified advertisements	- interviewing - promoting self	- application forms - resumes - application letter	- asking questions - asking for further information - raising additional questions - expressing opinion
Marketing and sales	- marketing - sales - product data - market data	- marketing a new product - negotiating a business transaction - presenting a marketing plan	- sales report - business report - marketing plan	- expressing approval / disapproval - making people interested - negotiating - instructing - explaining - demonstrating
Business communications / technology	- business information from the internet - business faxes / e-mail - professional / trade literature	- listening to business news on radio or television - listening to financial reports	- faxes / e-mail - editing	- communicating ideas - identifying main ideas - asking and answering questions - agreeing and disagreeing - expressing opinions
Business ethics / issues	- newspapers - business articles and reviews - business reports	- giving short talk - impromptu speech - presentation - discussion - debate	- notes on discussion - summary of an issue	- defining the problem distinguishing fact from opinion - agreeing and disagreeing - expressing opinions - drawing conclusions

Course evaluation:

Homework	10%
Class participation (class discussion, group work)	25%
Class presentations (giving short talks/speeches, presenting reports)	25%
Mid-term examination	20%
Final examination	20%

5.4 Recommendations for further research

This study focuses only on the first-year MBA students at Payap University who are taking Course BA502 in the second semester of the academic year 1998/1999. A survey of the English language needs of MBA students, to include samples from second-year students, third-year students, and graduates of the MBA programme is recommended to obtain a more representative picture of the needs of the students.

The method that is used in this study to ascertain the English language needs of the first-year students is a questionnaire. Data is collected from only one source: the students. Current trends in research lean towards a multi-methods or triangulation approach. This means using alternative methods so that the findings from one method can be checked against the findings of another. This can enhance the validity of the data. It is therefore recommended that data be collected from other sources as well. Through the use of interviews, data on the needs of the students can also be gathered either from businessmen or from experienced business English teachers. They can furnish information on the specific types of English language functions that are required in business practices in Thailand. The results can be used to confirm the needs that students have in using English in the field of business.

5.5 Conclusion

This study is undertaken based on the premise that identifying the needs of learners is a necessary first step in an ESP approach to course or syllabus design. However, needs analysis should be kept in perspective. By itself, needs analysis does not lead directly to a specification of what should be taught in a course. Ultimately, the course designer or instructor has to depend on his/her knowledge and experience as well. An on-going analysis of needs is recommended. The reason is that the needs of the learners will change as the course proceeds, as will the instructor's perception of the learners' needs. The learners' needs will be better met by regular feedback between the instructor and the learners.