ปัญหาและความต้องการในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักวิเทศสัมพันธ์ใน
มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเขตภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือของประเทศไทย
Problems and Needs in Using English Language of
International Relations Officers at Rajabhat Universities in the
Northeastern of Thailand

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาปัญหาและความต้องการในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักวิเทศสัมพันธ์ในมหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเขตภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือของประเทศไทย กลุ่มตัวอย่างประกอบด้วยนักวิเทศสัมพันธ์ จำนวน 18 คน จาก 11 มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏได้มาโดยการเลือกแบบเจาะจงโดยเก็บข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณโดยใช้แบบสอบถาม การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้สถิติ ค่าความถี่ ร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ยและส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน ส่วนคำถามปลายเปิดถูกวิเคราะห์โดยใช้วิธีวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา ผลการวิจัยพบว่า

1. ปัญหาในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักวิเทศสัมพันธ์ในด้านการเขียน เป็นปัญหามากที่สุด ขณะที่การอ่านมีปัญหาน้อยที่สุด ส่วนปัญหาอื่นๆในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการสื่อสาร คือ การฟัง การพูดและการอ่าน ตามลำดับ

2. นักวิเทศสัมพันธ์มีความต้องการในการเพิ่มทักษะการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการทำงานอยู่ที่ระดับสูงที่สุด โดยทักษะในการฟังมีความต้องการเพิ่มทักษะสูงที่สุด ตามด้วย การเขียน การพูด และการอ่านตามลำดับ

ผลที่ได้จากการทำวิจัยในครั้งนี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อการพัฒนาการทำงานของนักวิเทศสัมพันธ์ในมหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏของประเทศไทย และเป็นประโยชน์ในการออกแบบหลักสูตรการอบรมภาษาอังกฤษสำหรับนักวิเทศสัมพันธ์ อีกทั้งยังเกิดประโยชน์ต่อการทำวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องในอนาคตอีกด้วย

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Abstract

This research was carried out at the Rajabhat Universities in the northeastern of Thailand to investigate problems and needs in using English language of international relations officers. The samples comprised 18 international relations officers from 11 Rajabhat Universities selected by purposive sampling technique. The data were collected by using questionnaire and the collected data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The responses in open-ended section were analyzed by using content analysis. The findings were as follows:

1. The most problematic skill for international relations officers was writing skill, while reading was the least problematic skill. The other problematic English skills were listening, speaking and reading, respectively.

2. The findings found that listening skill was needed the most for the international relations officers in their works at the highest level, followed by writing, speaking and reading skills, respectively.

The research findings provide many useful suggestions for improving international relations work of Rajabhat Universities in Thailand and this study would be useful for course designers to organize English courses for the international relations officers. The findings could also be useful to the researchers who want to study in related areas.

Keywords: Problems, needs, English skills, international relations officers

Introduction

Since Thailand participated in the ASEAN Community in 1967, English has played an important role, in terms of national development, in every sector of the country. Due to the fact that, English is a tool for communication and a bridge to build relationships between countries. English is a part of our daily lives and has become even more influential throughout Thailand and globally. Although English is used only as a foreign language in Thailand, its duty has also made an impact on Thai education for more than a century (Darasawang. 2007).

English plays a major role in Thai educational system. The Ministry of Education has conducted policies to further improve English language in

educational institutions by using English training to improve instructors' and learners' English skills (Ungkanawin. 2017). Many institutions have turned their attention to English language by establishing English language institute. Likewise, Rajabhat Universities in the northeastern region of Thailand has initiated the international office as the center of improving English language.

The international office is an organization established by a university. The organization is responsible for foreign affairs, which generally consists of five main parts such as, general administration, international relations, ceremonies and information, capital and cooperation with foreign countries and caring for volunteer teachers and international students (Planning Division of Burapha University. 2018). Moreover, international office also consists of international relations officers who work under the university's administration. International relations officers are the people who operate accordingly to the foreign policies of the university. Responsibilities that International relations officers are accountable for consists of considering, drafting and translating documents from foreign languages to Thai and vice versa; and also make contact with domestic and overseas organizations (Krabi Provincial Administrative Organization. 2015). Therefore, international relations officers' English capabilities and skills should be efficient and well.

However, international relations officer who have been currently working at the Secretariat of the Senate could not work efficiently due to their lack of knowledge and understandings in the field. Some of them have graduated from the English Language major but have not graduated from the International Relations field, resulting in the lack of knowledge, work experiences and confidence within the field (Saipimpin. 2015). The same case with international relations officers who works in the international office at Rajabhat Universities in the northeastern region of Thailand whom lacks English language skills in many areas, which then leads to unsuccessful work such as interpreting at a national conference, moderating, and presenting in English. Specifically when coordinating or communicating with foreigners, issues that are found are all under the context of international relations.

As a result, the researcher is interested in investigating problems and needs in using English language of international relations officers who work for Rajabhat Universities in the northeastern region of Thailand. The results of the study are expected to provide beneficial information for course designers to identify the

main focus point in English course. The findings could be useful to researchers who want to study in the related areas.

Need Analysis

The term needs analysis is originated by Michael West of India in the 1920s when he was trying to establish the way the learners should learn English. In the field of language program planning, needs analysis is the first step in developing a language curriculum (Brown. 1995). It is a systematic and ongoing process of gathering information about learners' needs, interpreting the information, and then making course decisions based on the interpretation in order to meet the needs. It is the responsibility of the teachers and planners in investigating the learners to which the language they need in order to produce and teach an effective course.

Brown (1995) stated that need analysis in general terms, refers to the activities involved in combining information for developing a curriculum to meet the needs of learners. According to Krause (2003), in the simplest terms, need analysis consists of all the activities used to collect information about students' learning needs, wants, wishes, desires, etc. Sometimes this process involves consideration of the expectations and requirements of other such as teachers, administrators, supporters, and others who may be affected by the program, such as the parents or employers of students. Techniques such as surveys, questionnaires, interviews, or even test scores are generally used to carry out needs analysis. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) propose that needs analysis is the process of establishing what and how of a course and also explain that needs analysis is neither unique to language teaching nor is it unique to LSP and then to ESP. Nevertheless, needs analysis is the corner stone of ESP and leads to a much more focused course.

To summarize, needs analysis is an integration of different such as wants, lacks, target situation analysis, present situation analysis, deficiency analysis, strategy analysis, means analysis, language audit and constraints, demands, necessities, likes, deficiencies, aims, purposes and goals as stated earlier by other savants.

The Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the problems in using English language of international relations officers at the Rajabhat Universities in the northeastern of Thailand

2. To investigate the needs of English language using of international relations officers at the Rajabhat Universities in the northeastern of Thailand

Scope and Limitations of the Study

1. The data of this study were collected from 18 international relations officers who work for Rajabhat Universities in the northeast of Thailand.

2. This study focuses on needs and problems faced by the international relations officers in 11 Rajabhat Universities as follows; Buriram Rajabhat University, Chaiyaphum Rajabhat University, Loei Rajabhat University, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, Nakhonratchasima Rajabhat University, Roi Et Rajabhat University, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Sisaket Rajabhat University, Surindra Rajabhat University, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University and Udon Thani Rajabhat University.

3. The population and samples were selected by using purposive sampling technique.

Population and samples

Population

The population of the study comprised 51 staff who have been working for the international offices of 11 Rajabhat Universities in the northeastern region of Thailand. There are 11 vice presidents for international affairs, 6 directors, 3 vice-directors, 6 general administrations officers, 18 international relations officers, 6 educators and a translator.

Samples

There are 18 international relations officers chosen from 11 Rajabhat Universities as follows: Buriram Rajabhat University, Chaiyaphum Rajabhat University, Loei Rajabhat University, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, Nakhonratchasima Rajabhat University, Roi Et Rajabhat University, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Sisaket Rajabhat University, Surindra Rajabhat University, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University and Udon Thani Rajabhat University by using purposive sampling technique. There were 4 males and 14 females, 21 to over 40 years of age. Most samples graduated bachelor's degree, and have 1-5 years of work experience. There

were 2 staff in 7 Rajabhat universities: Buriram Rajabhat University, Loei Rajabhat University, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, Nakhonratchasima Rajabhat University, Roi Et Rajabhat University, Sisaket Rajabhat University and Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University and only one officer in 4 Rajabhat universities: Chaiyaphum Rajabhat University, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Surindra Rajabhat University and Udon Thani Rajabhat University.

Instruments

1. Problems and needs of English language communication questionnaire (PNLCQ)

PNLCQ is the one of the most commonly used instrument. The questionnaire is relatively easy to prepare, it can be used with large numbers of subjects (Nunan and Lamb. 1996). The content of problems and needs of English language communication questionnaire (PNLCQ) of this research consisted of three parts as follows:

Part I: General information of samples

The first part focuses on gender, age, educational background, duration of work experience and workplace. The items are in the form of checklist.

Part II: Problems and Needs of English language communication

The second part explores the international relations officers' English skill requirements and the problems regarding the international relations officers' English language proficiency. The samples will be asked to identify the level of problems and needs by using a five-point Likert scale.

Table1: Level of Problems and Needs

Rates of opinion	Interpretation of the scale	Mean
5	Very High	4.21-5.00
4	High	3.41-4.20
3	Moderate	2.61-3.40
2	Low	1.81-2.60
1	Very Low	1.00-1.80

Part III: Open-ended questions were used to obtain the samples' needs and suggestions at the end.

The third section aims to explore the samples' opinions and suggestions concerning the English language training. (Rattanawaropas. 2016)

2. Construction and Development of Questionnaire

Due to the fact that, the samples are Thai staff, the questionnaires used in this study were written in Thai in order to minimize any problems that might arise due to the lack of clarity and word misinterpretation. Below is the outline of how the questionnaires were developed.

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the draft one is constructed as follows:

Firstly, the researcher investigates the international relations officers' job description.

Secondly, the researcher conducted the questionnaires by adopting Rattanawaropas's questionnaire which was based on the suggestions of two English instructors and three experts.

Thirdly, take a pilot test with 8 samples who have been working for Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Rajabhat Universities in northern and central groups. According to the pilot study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated. The result revealed a .915 alpha reliability coefficient which was considered high.

Finally, the final draft of questionnaire was revised before collecting data with the target group. Therefore, it could be justifiable to claim that the data collecting instrument of the present study had both validity and reliability.

Data Collection

The distribution and collection of data are done according to the following process:

1. The researcher requested permission from the University to conduct survey study and sent the official letter introducing the research and the purposes of the study from Dean of the Graduate School of Buriram Rajabhat University to the President of 11 Rajabhat Universities in the northeastern group of Thailand in order to ask permission for data collection.

2. The researcher investigated the organizational structure, responsibilities and the total number of the international relations officers of 11 Rajabhat

Universities

3. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the international relations officers via post office, e-mail and Facebook after that made an appointment for the return of the questionnaires.

4. The samples were asked to complete and return the questionnaires to the researcher within three months.

5. The data was collected in 2019 during the period of September – November 2019 via e-mail and Facebook.

Data Analysis

The researcher used Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) to analyze the data. The statistical devices employed in this research were as follows:

1. Alpha coefficient of Cronbach was used to calculate the reliability of questionnaire.

2. Frequency (f) and percentage (%) were used to calculate the data of the personal information of the samples

3. Mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (S.D.) were used to investigate the level of needs and problems in using English language skills.

4. Content analysis technique was used to analyze the data from open-ended part of the questionnaire.

Findings

Based on the research purposes, the results of data analysis were as follows:

1. Demographic Information

This part presents demographic information of respondents; including gender, age, education, work experience and workplace. There were 4 males and 14 females, 21 to over 40 years of age. Most samples graduated bachelor's degree, in term of work experience, a large proportion has 1-5 years' work experience. There were 2 staff in 7 Rajabhat universities: Buriram Rajabhat University, Loei Rajabhat University, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, Nakhonratchasima Rajabhat University, Roi Et Rajabhat University, Sisaket Rajabhat University and Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University and only one officer in 4 Rajabhat universities:

Chaiyaphum Rajabhat University, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Surindra Rajabhat University and Udon Thani Rajabhat University.

2. Problems in Using English Language

The results shown that the overall problems of English Language skills of the international relations officers in their work was at a moderate level ($\bar{X}$=2.78, S.D. =1.14). When considering all of the four language skills, it was found that writing was the most problematic skill at a moderate level ($\bar{X}$ =2.97, S.D. =1.09) followed by listening and speaking skills which are also at a moderate level ($\bar{X}$ =2.74, S.D. =1.21) and ($\bar{X}$=2.73, S.D. =1.18), respectively. Reading skill was found the least problematic skill at a moderate level ($\bar{X}$=2.67, S.D. =1.07).

Table2: Details of English problems of international relations officers

English skills	The most problematic	The least problematic
Listening	Listening to seminar, conference ($\bar{X}$=3.06)	Listening to general conversation ($\bar{X}$= 2.28)
Speaking	English presentation ($\bar{X}$=3.11)	Speaking to general conversation ($\bar{X}$= 2.28)
Reading	Reading journal ($\bar{X}$=3.00)	Reading E-mail / Social Media ($\bar{X}$= 2.28)
Writing	Writing notes ($\bar{X}$=3.22)	Portfolio ($\bar{X}$= 2.67)

Table 2 shows details of problems of English Language communication by 18 international relations officers from 11 Rajabhat Universities in the northeast of Thailand. When considering the need of listening skill, it was found that "listening to seminar, conference" was rated as the most problem ($\bar{X}$=3.06), while "listening to general conversation" was reported as least problem ($\bar{X}$= 2.28). On the other hand, the most problem in speaking skills was "English presentation" ($\bar{X}$=3.11) while "speaking to general conversation" was reported the least problem ($\bar{X}$= 2.28). Furthermore, in reading skill it was found that "reading journal" was rated as the

most problem ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=3.00) while "reading E-mail / social media" was reported as least problem ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$= 2.28). Moreover, in English writing skill, it shown that "writing notes" was rated the most problem ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=3.22) whereas "writing portfolio" was reported as the least problem ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$= 2.67) on their work.

3. Needs in Using English Language

The results showed that the overall needs of the international relations officers when conducting or operating their work was proven to be at a high level ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=3.77, S.D. =0.74). When considering mainly four language skills, it was found that listening skill was considered as the highest need level ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=4.02, S.D. =0.71) followed by reading ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=3.97, S.D. =0.97), speaking ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=3.80, S.D. =1.00), and writing ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=3.29, S.D. =1.24) respectively.

Table 3: Details of English need of international relations officers

English skills	The most needed	The least needed
Listening	General conversation ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=4.61)	Discussion, seminar, international conference ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$= 3.16)
Speaking	Giving information ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=4.50)	Offering help ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$= 2.67)
Reading	Reading E-mail/ Social Media ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=4.44)	Reading operating instructions manual ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$= 3.72)
Writing	Writing English correspondence or E-mail /Line/Facebook messenger ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=4.17)	Writing project plan ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$= 2.67)

According to this table, as for listening skill, it was found that listening to "general conversation" was rated the most needed skill ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=4.61), while "discussion, seminar, international conference" was reported the least needed skill ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$= 3.16). On the other hand, speaking skills was needed the most when "giving information" ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$=4.50) while "English presentation" was reported the least needed ($\bar{\mathcal{X}}$= 2.67).

Furthermore, reading skills was needed the most when "reading E-mail/ social media" ($\bar{x}$=4.44) whereas "reading operating instructions manual" was reported the least needed skill ($\bar{x}$= 3.72). Moreover, writing skill was the most needed when "writing English correspondence or E-mail /Line/Facebook messenger" ($\bar{x}$=4.17), while "writing project plan" was reported as the least needed skill ($\bar{x}$= 2.67).

Table 4: Needs of English skill to be supported by the University

English Skill	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Writing	16	44.44%	1
Reading	10	27.78%	2
Speaking	6	16.67%	3
Listening	4	11.11%	4
Total	36	100%	

Table 4 describes what English skills the international relations officers need to be supported by the University. The answer from the open-ended question "What do you need the University to support your English language skill? Please specify" found that writing skill was the most needed skill to develop (f=16, 44.44%) followed by reading (f=10, 27.78%), speaking (f=6, 16.67%) and the least needed skill was listening (f=4, 11.11%).

Summary

In conclusion, this study aimed to investigate problems and need in using English language of the international relations officers who have been working for Rajabhat Universities in the northeastern group of Thailand. There were 18 international relations officers from 11 Rajabhat Universities participated in this study. The result of this research can identify the problems and needs of the international relations officers when using English language. The result is also regarded as a benefit for people who are interested in curriculum development in order to solve working problem for international relation officers in the future.

Discussion

The present study focused on investigating the problems and needs in using English of international relations officers in Rajabhat Universities, Thailand. The

findings from this paper can be discussed in the following points.

Research Question Number 1: What are the problems faced by the international relations officers in using English language?

In this research, it was found that writing skill was the most problematic skill for international relations officers when using English language while the least problematic skill was reading. The other problematic English skills were listening, speaking and reading, in declining order. This finding is different from others research studies where listening and speaking skills are mostly found as the most problematic skills, for example Rattanawaropas (2016) studied problems in using English for communication of supporting staff at Buriram Rajabhat University and found that the most important problems were listening and limited vocabulary. While Yoyram (2016) investigated problems and needs in using English language of staff at Bright Future International Training and Service (BFITS) and found that the main problem was speaking skill, when the staff have to communicate with foreign teachers and students. Ruppawn (2014) investigated needs and problems on English skill for staff members at the elephant study center in Surin Province. The results revealed that the staff needed help in four English language skills, especially listening which is the most serious problem. The problems in using English were different due to different experiences, background knowledge and job description. The most common problems in using English are listening and speaking but this research found that the main problem was writing which can assume that writing is an ability, which enables the learner to represent words "by means of written sign" due to the writing as a complex skill which were emphasizing on the correct use of grammatical forms (Shodhganga. 2019). The fact that they faced the difficulties more frequently in the situations that require writing English skills such as writing notes, project and plan, article, and E-mail correspondence.

Research Question Number 2: What are the needs in using English language of the international relations officers?

The finding of needs in using English language of international relations officers was at a high level. When considering in four language skills, it was found that listening skill was considered the highest need, especially in the topic of

"general conversation" and writing skills was the least skill employed in the topic of "writing project plan". This finding is in line with Khamkaew (2009) who studied the needs and problems in English listening and speaking skills: a case study of the metropolitan police officers at counter service at Chanasongkram police station and found that the metropolitan police officers need to improve their English listening and speaking skills and need to have a good command of English listening and speaking. Moreover, it is also in accordance with the finding of Prachanant (2012) who studied the needs analysis on English language use in tourism industry and found that speaking was the most important skill, which the participants want to improve, when compare with listening, reading and writing. The related research had shown that listening and speaking skills were very important skills for people who regularly communicate with foreigners. Work will be success, if they were good listeners and speakers in English. English listening problems are most frequently discovered in comparison to those of speaking, reading, and writing. Most of them are caused by lacking of vocabulary knowledge, word unfamiliarity, and inability to recognize accents (Tamtani. 2019). On the other hand, the answer from open-ended question "What English skills do you need University to support" identified that writing was the most problematic skill and they need Universities to support. It can be assumed that the international relations officers used writing skills less than speaking, listening and reading when they worked. However, while they were using English for writing, they faced a lot of challenges until they need to improve themselves in this skill which can be seen from their answer in this section.

Pedagogical Implications

1. Based on the findings of this research, the participants felt writing skill is the most problematic among international relation officers. If the course designers conduct ESP courses for develop their writing skill, it can reduce problems and make participants to be more confident while working.

2. There is a high demand for English language skills training especially writing skill. Providing this training would reduce the difficulties faced in a wide variety of workplace situations. This would in turn reduce their stress and make them more confident while working.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are made for future research:

1. The questionnaire used in further research should be more specific and the researcher should add an interview as a tool for data collection.

2. The number of participants in this study was small. It may be more accurate if there are larger numbers of participants.

3. The research findings provide many useful suggestions for improving international relations work and it would be useful for course designers to conduct short or long-term English language course especially the English language training program for international relations officers.

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