

Need for English Communication Skills of Thai Senior Employees in a Multinational Company in Thailand

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Abstract: *This research aims to study the needs of English communication skills of senior Thai employees in a multinational company. In general, it is found that Thai senior employees have insufficient English communication skills. This affects significantly on working performance of the individual senior employees, teamwork and the company in overall. Thus, it is desirable from a management point of view to improve English communication skills of senior Thai employees for both employees and the company's benefit. This research applies statistical approach to analyze the needs of English communication skills of senior Thai employees in a multinational company according to several factors. The researcher uses several tools to collect data, e.g. interviewing the management level employees and questionnaire for the sample group of supervisory Thai employees in a multinational company. It is found that senior Thai employees in a multinational company are aware of importance of English communication skills. However, the needs of each English communication skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are found to be varied depending on the studying factors, e.g. working experiences, education level, and job description. The results show that senior Thai employees with different characteristics need different English communication skills at different levels.*

Keywords: needs of English communication skills, senior Thai employees, multinational company

Introduction

Globalization allows the companies to extend their business to overseas and leads to the establishment of multinational companies around the world. A multinational company is a company consists of two or more nationalities of employees (Swift and Wallace, 2011), i.e. the employees of the investor's nationality and the local employees' nationality. In this situation, the company shall define the common language to be used as the company's communication language. It is found that the common language for business is English, even in the case where both the investor and local employees do not use English as their mother language. For this reason, it is unavoidable for the employees to be fluent in English in order to work efficiently in the multinational company.

The multinational company, which was chosen for this study, is one of many multinational companies located in Laem Chabang Industrial Park, Chon Buri, Thailand. The company was established since 1989 and has business in compressor manufacturing for residential air conditioners. Its products have been sold to both domestic and overseas

residential air conditioner manufacturers. The company's business has expanded continuously. In 2014, it was reported that the company has a sales amount over 260 million USD and had more than 2,500 employees. The products were sold to more than 140 customers in 40 countries worldwide, according to the company's report as of October 2014.

Although, the company is located in Thailand, its headquarters is, however, located in Japan. Thus, the company is said to be a multinational company consisting of both local Thai and Japanese staff. Normally, the headquarters usually dispatches the top management level staff as expatriates to Thailand to run the business. It also dispatches skilled technicians to train and transfer its knowhow and technology to the local production and related staff. Note that it is not only the local technical staff but also the support staff who have contact at some levels with the foreigners. For example, employees in the Procurement division have to contact the foreigners in terms of ordering raw materials and parts from raw materials producers, suppliers, and machine makers from time to time. Employees in the Marketing division often have to communicate with foreign customers for product exports and sales. Engineers usually have to contact the foreigners either during the knowhow transferring process with the foreign experts and skilled technicians, or services provided in product development, specifications, and technical manuals to the foreign customers. In addition, even the employee in the Human Resource division sometimes has to communicate to the company's branches in foreign countries in order to dispatch local employees to work as expatriates or in issuing an agreement. Thus, all of these previously mentioned jobs or positions strongly require good language communication skills. Since English is the business lingua franca, it implies that the employees, especially senior employees then need these communication skills in English.

As commonly happens with non-native English speakers, most senior Thai employees have problems in English communication. The problems become more severe for the employees with educational level lower than a Bachelor's degree. Since working in the multinational company requires a certain level of English communication skills, improvements of the English communication skills are of importance to these employees, especially English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In high vocational schools and universities, the employees studied English language for academic purposes or for general purposes such as communication in daily life. It should be noted that the knowledge obtained from studying might be insufficient to work in a multinational company. This is because after joining a multinational company, employees are required to have more English knowledge concerning technical terms, which are related to parts, products, production processes and transliterated words. For this reason, English training courses related to each job description should be provided. Since one of the scopes of Human Resource Development is to fulfill the job assignments and working tasks of employees in a multinational company as well as the organizational policy, English communication skills development is an important issue for Human Resource Development.

As previously mentioned, it has been observed that lacking of English communication skills of employees, including senior employees, happens both before and after joining the company. This characteristic eventually leads to several problems for the multinational company, ranging from miscommunications, fewer opportunities to obtain valuable ideas from the senior staff, waste of valuable resources such as cost and time, etc. The senior staff who cannot communicate well in English will have difficulties in performing their tasks assigned from the foreign staff for several reasons, e.g. they might not understand the assignments well enough to perform them, though they would like to have better clarification

for the tasks, they could not communicate, etc. These would lead to poor results of the given assignments and affect the performance of senior staff concerning their job ability apart from English communication skills. From another viewpoint, the senior staff who lack English communication skills will not be able to communicate, share, and express their opinions or ideas to their foreign bosses or co-workers in critical events, e.g. the meetings or public speeches. Thus, they will lose their opportunities to present their capabilities that might affect their career growth. Furthermore, the companies might also lose valuable opinions or ideas as well.

For these reasons, the top management team of this selected multinational company announced the policy to improve English communication skills of its senior employees within 5 years starting from 2014. The aim of the policy was to improve English communication skills of senior employees. It was expected that the senior employees should be able to read the related research and patents and apply this knowledge for product improvement according to their educational levels and job categories. Thus, to satisfy the vision of the top management team it is essential to develop such an efficient English course for target senior employees. Therefore, human resource development in English Communication skills is needed in the perspective of organization development and individual development of senior staff.

In order to proceed further, it is of importance to know the needs of English communication skills of senior Thai employees. For this reason, the researcher should have access to the current problems, situation of usages and required support in English communication skills in order to identify the needs of English communication skills of senior Thai employees. This information will be crucial for human resource development to set up an efficient English training course in a multinational company. It is expected that the senior employees who have been trained by this course will have better understanding in English and be able to improve their English communication skills according to their characteristics.

Research questions

The research questions of this study were:

1. What are the needs for English communication skills regarding listening, speaking, reading and writing of senior Thai employees in a multinational company from a management point of view?
2. What are the needs for English communication skills of senior Thai employees regarding the different factors, e.g. job categories, educational levels, and service years of employee at a multinational company?

Literature Review

Needs of English Communication Skills Improvement for Senior Thai Employees in Multinational Companies

Globalization makes communications not limited locally but expands beyond the countries' borders along with the development of world economics. This brings investment opportunities overseas and leads to the establishment of multinational companies. As a result, the employees of such companies usually consist of two or more nationalities. It is then unavoidable for the companies to define a common language to run their business. In the works of Charles (2007) and, Swift and Wallace (2011), the authors mentioned that the language chosen to be lingua franca of international business is English. This is because

of the economic power of USA, and most of professional management education was developed in USA, it is then obvious why English becomes the business lingua franca. Harzing and Pudelko (2012), Vaitinen (2012), and Nuolijärvi (n.d.) support this claimed by stating that not only the companies originating from native English speaking countries use English as business lingua franca, Asian and non-native English speaking countries also used English in a similar manner. Harzing and Pudelko (2012), Ojanperä (2012), It-ngam, and It-ngam (2013) also pointed out that the multinational companies from Asian countries used both host companies' language or local language in addition to English. Hence, it can be seen that English has become worldwide business lingua franca especially for multinational companies. For this reason, it is unavoidable for the senior employees of multinational companies to use English communication skills in their workplaces.

Harzing and Pudelko (2012) reported that different countries have their own challenge in term of language problems and need subtle management. Nuolijärvi (n.d.) mentioned that lack of English communication skills of Finnish employees caused financial losses to companies. There is no exception for multinational companies in Thailand. Rajprasit, Pratoomrat, Wang, Kulsiri, and Hemchua (2014) found that the level of English communication skills of Thai employees barely meet the requirements of the multinational companies. However, the authors also mentioned that the employees are aware of the importance of English communication skills. They are now taking extra English courses or planning to take them in the near future.

Lacking of English communication skills affects companies in various aspects. Sriussadaporn (2006) showed that communication between Thai employees and expatriates were sometimes problematic. Ojanperä (2012) found that using English could make communication in Japanese-based multinational companies slow, cause misunderstanding, create frustration and create barriers for employees with poor language skills. Wiriyaichitra (2002) pointed out the causes of English studying in Thai educational systems. Some issues are from the educational system; the others are from the materials and passive learning environments. Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012) studied specifically in oral communication in Malaysia. The study results showed that the employees often faced problems in public speaking and that lack of English communication skills while working in the multinational companies leads to several problems both in employees' and companies' points of view. It is then desirable to improve these English communication skills to benefit both employees themselves and the multinational companies. The work of Ojanperä (2012) and Global English (2010) supported this need. Ojanperä (2012) reported on the effect of using English in Japanese-based companies concerning career advancement. The employees who can communicate fluently in English were reported to be able to contribute to better job performance and hence better opportunities to get promotion in the companies. Global English (2010) published the study results of the need for business English communication skills. It found that the need for business English communication was accelerated by globalization. The report mentioned that employees being skillful in business English not only performed their current jobs more effectively, but also related to their potential for career advancement as well.

However, improving English communication skills for senior employees should not be performed blindly. There are various senior employees with different characteristics and backgrounds; hence, the need for English communication skills improvement could be different. Furthermore, English training courses should be carefully designed so that the outcomes are expected to fulfill the multinational companies' needs.

Human Resource Development Concept

It is shown from the previous discussion that senior employees in multinational companies are required to possess English communication skills at a certain level. However, this might not be the case for most multinational companies in non-native English speaking countries. This is because most of the employees are, in general, local workforce and hence do not communicate fluently in English. In order to fulfill this need of the companies, various English communication skills improvement methods have been developed under the concept of human resource development.

Swanson (2001) mentioned in his work that the theory of human resource development consists of three combinations, i.e. economic theory, psychological theory, and system theory that are based on ethics. These theories support one another in such a way that would improve the performance of the individual as well as the organization. According to the previously discussed human resource development concept, Singh (2012) proposed that a well-planned system is an important part of human resource development. The goals of human resource development are to promote dignity of employment in an organization, and provide development opportunities for both teams and individuals. It is then expected that the organization would increase its business competitive potential. To achieve such goals, many practical components in human resource development are involved, e.g. training and development, career development, organization development, and performance appraisal.

Harris et al. (2006) reported that in the present day working environment, employees at all levels seek opportunities for individual improvement. Their needs should be supported from the organization through development programs provided by the organization. He also identified five human resource development processes that can be practically implemented. These processes include needs assessment, identify and design objectives, instructional method and media, implementing actual programs, conducting evaluation and following up.

Hence, in order to improve English communication skills efficiently, the concept of human resource development should be taken into account. However, human resource development concept discussed earlier is merely the methods applied to improve English communication skills of the employees. In general, the individual needs of improvement should be taken into account as well.

Maslow's Theory of the Hierarchy Needs

Maslow's theory of the hierarchy needs outlines five levels as shown in the following figure

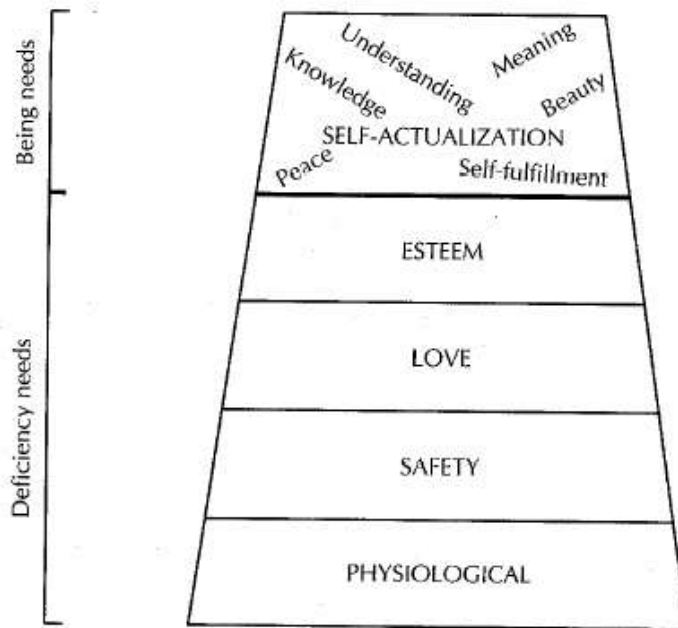


Figure 1. Hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954, p. 125)

Maslow suggested that the basic level is physiological needs including body craves food, liquid, sleep, air, sex, freedom of movement, and a moderate temperature. Shortage of these supplies causes distress. Once this level is satisfied, humans seek to establish stability and consistency. This refers to living consistently with few surprises. Law and order are constructed to serve this level of human needs. The next level is the needs of love or belongingness. Humans seek to fulfill a void by understanding and accepting certain selected others. This level of needs is more fragile than the previous one. The esteem needs suggested by Maslow is self-actualization, which he described as “the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming”. People tend to maximize their potential only after they have satisfied their basic deficiency craving. Maslow also suggested that self-actualization varies individually.

Jerome (2013) mentioned about the work of Greenberg & Baron (2003), which applied Maslow’s theory of needs to organizational operation and employee motivation. The theory was applied to the organization first and then later to the employees using the following concepts:

Both organization and the employees must decide on the performance of their organization

When the employees put in their best abilities to serve the organization, the organization should ensure that their level of needs are reflected in the values the organization holds in high esteem

Maslow suggested that if the needs were not culturally focused on, the performance standard would not be met. As employees had a desire for social needs, the organization should help employees attain their self-esteem and self-actualization needs. Jerome (2013) suggested further that when employees discovered that their organization cared so much about their developmental status, employees would offer their best service to the organization. Hence improving the senior employees’ potential in English communication

skills would be one of many approaches to help fulfill the senior employees' self-actualization according to Maslow (1945). As a result, this would increase the performance of the senior employees individually and the companies in overall.

English Communication Skills in Multinational Companies

Based on Maslow's theory of hierarchy needs, it can be seen that people seek these needs in their life even working in the organization. Knowing the needs of employees and satisfying them would lead to the high competitive potential of the company.

Petcharat (2012) mentioned that English communication skills were very important especially in a joint venture business between Thai company and foreign company. The author focused on English communication skills for the oil drilling business with the company's headquarters resided in Europe or USA. Hence, the employees were bounded to use English as an official language for communication inside the companies. The authors performed the survey of needs of English communications in all four skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The research results showed that although the employees need all four English communication skills for their career, however the needs of each English communication skills are varied depending on their positions. The author showed that English training course should be provided to the local employees.

Khan, Ghulamullah, Mohsin, Dogar, and Awan, (2011) mentioned that English training courses should be developed to improve all four English communication skills. Furthermore, the course should be based on English for Specific Purpose (ESP). The aims of this English training course are more specific compared to general teaching English or English for General Purpose (EGP). The authors reported that needs analysis should be performed to identify the information necessary to develop courses in order to satisfy the desired learning goals. The authors defined "needs" according to the work of Hutchinson and Waters (1987) as "the ability to comprehend and or to produce the linguistic features of target situation".

Although English communication skills are required for employees, there are differences in required communication skills according to several factors, for example, the education background, job position and categories. Petcharat (2012) reported in her investigation over the English needs that in general, the most important English communication skills were listening and speaking. It was found that middle-level employees who hold at least bachelor degree had better skills compared to low-level employees who have educational level lower than bachelor degree graduation. However, English communication skills of both group are still needed to be improved. The authors mentioned that the goals of improvement and the training courses designed for different level of employees would also be different. While middle-level employees preferred to have the training courses applicable to real work situations, the lower-level employees were satisfied with the training courses involving conversation, practicing in listening, and reviewing.

The previous research works show that working in multinational company required a certain level of English communication skills. However, in general, the employees from non-native English speaking countries usually lack such skills and need to be improved. This includes senior Thai employees in a selected multinational company studying in this research. It is found that although the needs of English communication skills are essential to all the employees, the goals and courses designed to satisfied the needs of employees are varied depending on various factors. This research attempts to analyze the needs of English communication skills from a management point of view and the needs of English

communication skills regarding the different factors, e.g. job categories, educational levels, and service years of employee at a selected multinational company.

Research Methodology

It has been previously discussed that English communication skills are essential for senior employees in multinational companies. This also applies to the multinational companies in Thailand. However, in general, senior Thai employees are found to have insufficient English communication skills which is problematic for working in such companies. Hence, it is important to provide English training course for the senior employees to fulfill both individual needs as stated by Maslow's theory of hierarchy needs and the benefit of the companies. However, in order to set up an efficient English training course, the needs of English communication skills for senior employees have to be identified. It is the focus of this research to analyze the needs of English communications of the senior employees on various factors, e.g. education level, job categories, working experiences, etc.

Data Collection

The methodology starts by determining the sample size. A sample group of 134 of senior Thai employees in a selected multinational company is randomly selected according to Israel (1992). The method suggests a specific sample size according to the population and percentage of precision levels. For example, in case the population is 100, and the percentage of precision level is +/- 5 percent, the method suggests the sample size of 81.

There are two research tools involved in this proposed research work, i.e. an interview guide for the management level employees and a set of questionnaires to survey needs analysis for English communication skills, including listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, and writing skills. The interview question guide has been distributed to the management level employees in various departments in the selected multinational company. A questionnaire is developed and distributed to the sampled group of supervisory level Thai employees in various departments in the selected company.

There were two sets of collected data. The first data set was collected from the management level employees of the selected multinational company whereas the second data set was collected from 134 senior Thai employees in the selected multinational company who responded to the questionnaire concerning the needs for English communication skills.

It was found that the interviewed management employees were 83 percent male, their average age is 50.5 years old, and they served the company for about 28 years on average. Two of the management employees held Master degree while the rest hold Bachelors' degrees. For a sampled group of 134 respondents of senior Thai employees, there were 112 males (85.38 percent) and 22 females (16.42 percent). Thus, the ratio of male respondents to the female respondents can be roughly said to be 5:1. It was found that 101 respondents (75.37 percent) hold bachelors' degrees, which is the largest group of respondents. The second large group was the respondents who hold diplomas. There were 28 respondents (20.90 percent) in this group while there were only 5 respondents (3.73 percent) who graduated at masters' degree level.

In the case of categorized by department, the largest group of respondents was from Technical department. There were 45 respondents (33.58 percent) in this group. The number of the respondents in the second and third large groups was approximately the same. These are the 24 respondents (17.91 percent) from Production department and 21

respondents (15.67 percent) from the Engineering department. These three groups made up approximately 70 percent of all the respondents. The two smallest groups of respondents were from Financial department and the Information Technology department with 3 respondents (2.24 percent) from each department.

Data Analysis

The interview was given to six employees in management level from different departments in the selected multinational company. The questions mainly focused on the needs of English communications skills toward different factors.

The interview showed that the management level employees regard English communication skills for Thai employees in a multinational company as one of the important skills. The needs of each skill are different. From the management point of view, it was found that the employees need to improve their listening and speaking skills. Since these are the skills most employees lack. The level of needs in each skill varies from department to department. In the departments with more opportunities to contact outside organizations, the level of needs is higher. This is because it reflects the image and reputation of the company.

It was also found that in general Thai employees in multinational companies possess inadequate English communication skills. This is more obvious with the employees holding a diploma. In summary, the employees at management level agree that English communication skills are essential to Thai employees in a multinational company. They pointed out that fluency in English communications in employees would benefit both the company and the employees themselves concerning self-development and career advancement.

The following tables show the information concerning English communication skills requirement that arises from the problems encountered and the frequency of English communication skills used according to each job category.

Table 1 Basic statistics concerning problems of English communication skills for Thai employees in a multinational company

Communication Skills	Descriptions	\bar{X}	SD	Level
Listening	-Unable to catch a word	3.54	0.91	High
	-Unable to understand the meaning	3.35	0.88	Moderate
	-Lack of vocabulary knowledge	3.62	0.86	High
	-Unfamiliar with intonation	3.87	0.84	High
	-Panic when you are asked	3.30	1.05	Moderate
Problems in listening skills		3.54	0.70	High
Speaking	-Lack of vocabulary knowledge	3.82	0.87	High
	-Unable to make a sentence for conversation	3.46	1.09	Moderate
	-Understand the question but unable to answer in English	3.34	0.98	Moderate
	-Shy to talk	2.82	1.17	Moderate
Problems in speaking skills		3.36	0.80	Moderate
Reading	-Lack of vocabulary knowledge in general	3.18	0.93	Moderate
	-Lack of vocabulary knowledge in technical terms	3.00	1.00	Moderate
	-Unable to understand the sentence structure	3.24	0.96	Moderate
	-Unable to understand the grammar	3.36	0.95	Moderate
	-Unable to understand overall paragraph	3.00	0.83	Moderate
Problems in reading skills		3.16	0.75	Moderate
Writing	-Lack of vocabulary knowledge in general	3.57	0.94	High
	-Unable to understand the grammar	3.57	0.94	High
	-Understand English but cannot write	2.99	0.86	Moderate
Problems in writing skills		3.38	0.76	Moderate
On average		3.36	0.66	Moderate

Table 2 Frequency of use for English communication skills of Thai employees in the multinational company

Communication Skills		Descriptions	\bar{X}	SD	Level	
1. Listening	1.1 Internal communication	-Listening to daily conversation or job assignment from boss	3.50	0.90	Moderate	
		-Listening in the meeting and discussion in department	3.48	0.94	Moderate	
		-Listening to a telephone conversation	3.87	0.94	High	
		Frequency of use	3.62	0.79	High	
	1.2 External communication	-Meeting and discussion with outsiders e.g. customers, suppliers, foreign visitors	3.54	1.14	High	
		-Listening to the lecture or training given by foreign instructors	4.07	0.92	High	
		-Listening to telephone conversations	3.99	1.02	High	
		Frequency of use	3.87	0.92	High	
	On average	3.74	0.78	High		
	2. Speaking	2.1 Internal communication	-Daily conversation or report on progress of job assignment	3.78	0.88	High
-Report to the monthly meeting and discussion			3.69	0.95	High	
-Speaking on telephone			4.09	0.90	High	
Frequency of use			3.85	0.80	High	
2.2 External communication		-Meeting and discussion with outsiders e.g. customers, suppliers, foreign visitors	3.84	1.13	High	
		-Presenting products or technical information to customers	4.18	1.00	High	
		-Speaking on telephone with customers or suppliers	4.13	1.01	High	
		-Negotiating with customers or suppliers	4.12	1.14	High	
Frequency of use		4.07	0.99	High		
On average		3.97	0.85	High		

Communication Skills		Descriptions	\bar{X}	SD	Level
3. Reading	3.1 Internal communication	-Reading the minutes of meetings	3.26	0.97	Moderate
		-Reading an e-mail of internal communication	3.01	1.05	Moderate
		-Reading information on website, specification etc.	2.87	0.99	Moderate
	Frequency of use		3.05	0.86	Moderate
	3.2 External communication	-Reading e-mail from an outsider	2.90	1.11	Moderate
		-Reading a letter or documents from customers, suppliers or headquarters	3.20	1.18	Moderate
		-Reading a specific document e.g. manual	3.58	1.22	High
		-Reading a specific document e.g. manual patent, purchasing agreement, legal contact	3.83	1.04	High
		-Questionnaire from headquarters, suppliers, etc.			
	Frequency of use		3.38	0.97	Moderate
On average		3.24	0.85	Moderate	
4. Writing	4.1 Internal communication	-Writing the minutes of meetings	3.14	1.12	Moderate
		-Writing a specific report, e.g. internal memo, defect investigation etc.	3.31	1.06	Moderate
		-Writing an e-mail for internal communication	3.15	1.09	Moderate
		Frequency of use		3.20	0.96
	4.2 External communication	-Writing a report to outsiders, e.g. customers, suppliers, headquarters	3.43	1.22	Moderate
		-Writing letters to outsiders, e.g. customers, suppliers, headquarters	3.55	1.18	High
		-Writing e-mails to customers, suppliers, headquarters	3.30	1.24	Moderate
		-Writing e-mails to customers, suppliers, headquarters	4.01	1.09	High
		-Writing technical documents, contracts etc.	4.15	0.99	High
		-Writing a PR document			
Frequency of use		3.69	0.97	High	
On average		3.51	0.89	Moderate	
Total on average		3.61	0.77	High	

The correlation between the needs for English communication skills and job category, education level, and working experience of Thai employees in the selected multinational company. Table 3 shows the study result of Pearson correlation. The items of rows and columns of the table are represented by the letters A to F where they represent various factor as follows; A: Department, B: Education level, C: Age, D: Working experiences, E: Needs for English communication skills, and F: Frequency of use of English communication skills

Table 3 Pearson correlation on studying factors

Items	A	B	C	D	E	F
A	1	0.09	0.15	0.14	0.08	0.18*
B		1	0.44**	0.49**	0.24**	0.26**
C			1	0.97**	0.19*	0.38**
D				1	0.22*	0.39**
E					1	0.26**
F						1

Remark: **Statistical significant level at 0.01, *Statistical significant level at 0.05

It was found that there are many correlations with statistical significance of the studied factors. For example, the need of English communication skills (E) have statistical significant correlation with education level (B), age (C) and working experience (D). Furthermore, the frequency of use of English communication skills has statistical significant correlation with department (A), education level (B), age (C) and working experience (D).

Findings and Discussion

The researcher used an interview and questionnaire as the tools to collect the data. Thai employees are sampled with the number suggested by Israel (1992) as described previously. By using this approach, 134 Thai employees from various departments, ages, educational levels and working experience were selected. The collected data was then analyzed using various statistical tools, e.g. mean, standard deviation, t-test, F-test, and Pearson correlation.

Research Question One:

“What are the needs for English communication skills regarding listening, speaking, reading and writing of senior Thai employees in a multinational company from a management point of view?”

In the management point of view, English is the language for business, thus it is unavoidable to use it in running business. The senior employees who possess English communication skills would have higher opportunities in completing the tasks in contact with foreigners and thus are important to the company. Furthermore, the multinational company usually has a foreigner in the management team. This implies that senior Thai employees who have higher English communication skills would have higher opportunities for being promoted in their career path compared to the ones who possess poor English communication skills.

It is found that from the management point of view, English communication skills of senior Thai employees are inadequate, particularly, listening and speaking skills. This is obvious with senior Thai employees holding Diplomas. One of the reasons the management pointed out is that these two skills require more instantaneous responses compared to writing and reading skills. This further implied that the senior employees should possess

high levels of these skills in order to interact with the foreign customers, suppliers and visitors. This would reflect a high image of the company as well as the business performance and relationship. The management also points out that though different departments need different levels of English communication skills, listening and speaking skills should be improved overall.

Research Question Two:

“What are the needs for English communication skills of senior Thai employees regarding the different factors, e.g. job categories, educational levels, and service years of employee at a multinational company?”

From senior Thai employees' points of view, English communication becomes more and more necessary as they advance through their career path. The need for English communication skills increases along with their position and service years. In the beginning, they might encounter the need for English communication skills only to fulfill their jobs, for example, reading English articles or technical manuals. However, as they were promoted to higher positions, the need for English communication skills were more obvious. For example, they might need to contact the customers, vendors or business partners. Thus, from the employees' point of view, they were also aware that English communication skills is of importance in working in a multinational company.

Senior Thai employees also specify their needs for English communication skills. It is found that all English communication skills are of moderate level or higher with listening skills in the high-level employees. This was consistent with the findings from the management point of view. Concerning listening skills, Thai employees point out that their problems come from unfamiliar intonation, lack of vocabulary knowledge and inability to catch all words. Though the listening skills are found to be the highest needs for improvement for Thai employees, another two skills, i.e. speaking and writing, are also found to be essential needs for improvement among them. It is found that lack of vocabulary knowledge was the highest factor for speaking skills. This is also true for writing skills. In addition to this, being unable to understand the grammar is another factor found for improvement in writing skills. These problems in listening, speaking and writing skills should be taken into account when developing a training course for the Thai employees' English communication skills improvement.

In terms of frequency of use, it is found that speaking skills is the highest need followed by listening skills. It is also found that Thai employees frequently use these skills in telephone communications both internal and external. Other situations in which Thai employees frequently use these two skills are in training sessions provided by foreign instructors, presenting the products, customer service and negotiation, and discussions in meetings.

From the study, it is also found that English communication skills differ significantly for senior Thai employees holding Diplomas and Bachelors' degrees. The employees' age also affects the needs and frequency of use for English communication skills. Elder employees are found to have higher needs and use English communication skills more frequently. Service years also affects the needs for English communication skills. It is found that employees with more service years have more needs and frequency of use for English communication skills compared to new employees. The correlation study also suggests that needs for English communication skills are related to various factors, e.g. education level, age, and working experience. This is also true for frequency of use with additional factors for certain departments.

Recommendations for Further Research

The study has indicated that English communication skills are very important for Thai employees. However, these employees have to work during weekdays, therefore, the researcher suggests finding the appropriate approach to enhance their English ability while integrating with their job descriptions.

Another issue concerns designing English training courses. Apart from teaching all communication skills in the training class, the researcher suggests to apply additional job related materials or English communication environment creations in order to encourage Thai employees to be able to learn English more efficiently. The need of English communication skills in multinational companies can be studied further in a broader perspective including all level of the employees.

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