

A Needs Analysis for English Communicative Innovation of Buriram United Megastore Personnel

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to analyze the needs of Buriram United Megastore personnel for English communicative innovation in Muang district, Buriram province. 18 personnel of Buriram United Megastore were purposively selected as a sample group. A questionnaire and focus group discussion form were utilized in data collection. The statistics used in data analysis were percentage, mean, Standard Deviation, and content analysis. The results showed that among the four skills, the questionnaire respondents viewed that English is necessary for personnel at the highest level (4.72). Speaking skills (4.72) and listening skills (4.66) were needed the most. Both English for Specific Purposes vocabulary and conversations regarding selling and offering services are necessary for the personnel at the highest level (4.55). The innovation they needed was in the form of booklets (4.72) and video clips (4.61). They needed 15 topics to be included in the English communicative innovation. The results of this research can be used for developing an innovation for organizing a training course for Buriram United Megastore personnel and personnel in shops with the similar nature as Buriram United Megastore.

Keywords : needs analysis, English communicative innovation, English for Specific Purposes

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Introduction

English in the global community plays a key role as a medium in communication. It is used for transferring thoughts, ideas, and cultures as well as creating good relationships between people from different countries. Today, the role of English is very important for people in the tourism industry because tourism personnel and foreign tourists are using English as a means to communicate with each other. Buriram is a province in the Northeast of Thailand. Many tourist attractions in Buriram such as Phnom Rung Sanctuary, Prasat Muang Tam, Khao Kradong Volcano Forest Park, Chang International Circuit, and the I-Mobile Football Stadium are attracting foreign tourists more and more every year. In 2015, Buriram was announced by the Tourism Authority of Thailand as one of 12 cities called “Hidden Gems” in Thailand (Twelve Cities Hidden Gems, 2016). Consequently, the numbers of foreign tourists have increased in recent years: the foreign visitors’ number has arisen from 29,174 people in 2014 to 35,460 people in 2016 (Buriram Statistics Office, 2018). Furthermore, a new campaign called “Go Local” was also launched by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in 2018 to promote Thailand’s tourism and to extend the benefits of tourism across local communities countrywide. Yuthasak Supasorn, TAT Governor (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2018), stated that when local communities grow, the nation grows for the reason that travel and tourism is now widely recognized as the main contributor to grassroots economics, job creation, and income distribution; therefore, specific actions must be taken to ensure that the benefits are distributed across the nation.

Buriram United Megastore is a local shop in Buriram province with many branches. The products of the shop, such as sport related products and souvenirs, are widely known and sold to Thais and international customers. Since Buriram is a home of Chang International Circuit and the I-Mobile Football Stadium, many products related to car/motorcycle racing as well as football competitions are purchased by Thais and international customers. Moreover, in the year 2018, there will be a world-class motorcycling event called “Moto GP 2018” held in Buriram province. People from all over the world will come to the province as one of their destinations. Weerasak Kowsurat (Springnews, 2018), the Minister of Thailand’s Tourism and Sports, stated that there was an estimate that 20,000 international motorcycling fans from around the world will be coming to Buriram province during the Moto GP 2018, and they will spend their money at a rate of approximately 6,000

THB per person per day, which means the total income during this event will be 120 million THB per day. Sakon Wannapong (Matichon Online, 2018), the Governor of Sports Authority of Thailand, agreed that Thailand will be seen by an international audience through the Moto GP 2018 live show. This will receive at least 10,000 million THB in incomes from many sources, such as accommodations, expenses, transportation, and also souvenirs. Newin Chidchob (Khaosod, 2018), the CEO of Buriram United F.C., added that in organizing this world-class event, the economy and tourism of Buriram province and those of the neighboring provinces will be improved. It was also expected that more than 100,000 people such as racers, live audiences, and tourists will come to the province and 40,000 million THB will be spent during the event (Khaosod, 2018). Buriram Rajabhat University is a local university. One of its missions is to improve the English language of the locals. This is a great opportunity for the university to be able to involve and support the province in organizing the event by preparing the tourism personnel to be ready for receiving visitors from around the world. The Business English program of the university was asked by Buriram United Megastore to organize an English training course for Buriram United Megastore personnel so that they will be able to communicate with the international tourists in English effectively.

In developing a language training course, Needs Analysis (NA) is used to obtain a detailed description of the learners' needs (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). English for Specific Purposes (ESP) practitioners, researchers, course designers, materials writers, testers, evaluators, and course instructors use NA for planning courses (Boydell, 1970). NA is employed for collecting information of the learners for syllabus design (Nunan, 1988). Needs analysis can be done in many ways such as present situation analysis or learning situation analysis proposed by Hutchison and Waters (1987). Present situation analysis or learning situation analysis aims to investigate strong points and weak points of the learners' condition of language. This analysis can find out the learners' condition of language development at the beginning of the language program. It can offer useful information of the language learners' purposes, the learner's background, and important aspects of the language which the learners still lack and want to consider.

Many researchers have conducted needs analysis for gaining information, and they used the information in providing trainings or constructing innovations, such as Nuemaihom and Sripattanasakul (2017) who conducted a study entitled, "Innovation

Development of Tourism Personnel's English Ability Improvement for Preparation to ASEAN Community at Khao Kradong Volcano Forest Park in Buriram Province.” Moreover, needs analysis was also done in research entitled, “Development of English Communicative Innovation for local Vendors at Koh Kret, Nonthaburi Province” by Nikonkittikoson (2016). In addition, Limsiriruengrai et al. (2018) also analyzed the needs of innovation users before constructing the innovation in a study entitled, “Needs Analysis of Tourism Personnel for English Communicative Innovation in Sai Yao Community Silk Village, Thalunglek Sub-district, Muang District, Buriram Province.”

Therefore, the researchers would like to analyze the needs of the Buriram United Megastore personnel for the English communicative innovation in order to develop the innovation for them and use the innovation they want to train them in the training course. When the personnel can communicate in English effectively, international customers will receive the services/the products they need. These customers will come back to the province or tell others to come to the province, which will boost the economy of the province as a whole.

Research Objectives

The objective of this research was to analyze the needs of Buriram United Megastore personnel for English communicative innovation.

Research Methods

Samples

The population and the sample group included 18 personnel of Buriram United Megastore, Muang district, Buriram province in 2017. They were selected by using a purposive sampling method. The criteria for selecting the sample group were: 1) they were personnel of Buriram United Megastore who have some experience in dealing with foreign customers, and 2) they had Elementary English/Intermediate English proficiency level. These 18 Buriram United Megastore personnel were asked to complete a questionnaire. Moreover, 10 from the sample group were asked to participate in a focus group discussion as the representatives of the sample group. They were also selected by using a purposive sampling method. The focus group was done for confirming the data and results collected from the questionnaire. The criteria for selecting the focus group participants were: 1) they were personnel of

Buriram United Megastore who have more experience in dealing with foreign customers, and 2) they had Intermediate English proficiency level.

Research Instruments

Two research tools were utilized in this research: a questionnaire and focus group discussion form. The purpose for using the questionnaire was to address to the objective of analyzing the needs of the personnel of Buriram United Megastore for the innovation. And the reason for using the focus group discussion form was to confirm the results received from the questionnaire and for the participants to add more information related to their needs for the innovation. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers through the study of related documents including related research studies. The researchers analyzed and synthesized the documents in order to write up a framework and draft the questionnaire. Three sets of the draft questionnaire were sent to three experts to examine the appropriateness of the content, language used, and validity. The questionnaire consisted of six parts of 30 items: 1) personal information of the questionnaire respondents, 2) opinions on English skills needed by the personnel, 3) opinions on contents they needed for practicing English, 4) suitable English communicative innovation for the personnel, 5) opinions on topics they needed for practicing English, and 6) additional opinions and suggestions. The first part was constructed in the form of checklist. Parts 2-5 were constructed using 5 point Likert scale (the lowest, low, moderate, high, the highest). The last part was constructed by using an open-ended form. As for the focus group discussion form, there were 3 parts: 1) personal information of the focus group discussion participants, 2) opinions on problems the participants faced when using English, their needs for English skills, contents they needed for practicing English, the suitable English communicative innovation for the personnel, and topics they needed for practicing English, and 3) additional opinions and suggestions. In addition, these two research tools constructed by the researchers were examined by three experts for approving the content validity and Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) of these tools were between 0.67 and 1.00.

Data Collection

The 18 questionnaire sets were distributed to the sample population. The researchers collected the data by themselves after informing and explaining the purpose of the research and research details to the sample group. After that, the 10 focus group discussion participants were asked to join the discussion of 30 minutes,

and the researchers collected data by using the focus group discussion form, note-taking, and video recording.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire respondents in parts 1 through 5 were computed by using percentage, mean, and Standard Deviation while the data received from part 6 of the questionnaire and the focus group discussion participants were analyzed by using content analysis.

Research Results

The following results were presented in line with the research objective:

Personal information of the questionnaire respondents

The results representing the personal information of the questionnaire respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Personal information of the questionnaire respondents

No.	Personal Information	Frequency (N=18)	Percentage
1	Gender		
	Male	8	44.44
	Female	10	55.55
	Total	18	100.00
2	Age		
	Under 20 years old	0	0
	20-29 years old	12	66.66
	30-39 years old	6	33.33
	40-49 years old	0	0
	50 years old or older	0	0
Total	18	100.00	
3	Marital Status		
	Single	12	66.66
	Married	6	33.33
	Divorced	0	0
	Separated	0	0
Total	18	100.00	
4	Education		
	Lower than high school level	0	0
	High school level or equivalent	0	0

No.	Personal Information	Frequency (N=18)	Percentage
	Bachelor’s degree or equivalent	18	100.00
	Higher than Bachelor’s degree	0	0
	Total	18	100.00
5	Occupation		
	Salesperson	16	88.88
	Administrator	2	22.22
	Total	18	100.00

Table 1 reveals that out of 18 questionnaire respondents, the number of females (55.55%) was much greater than males (44.44%). The major samples were 20-29 years old (66.66%), followed by age 30-39 years old (33.33%), respectively. Most of them reported single as their marital status (66.66%), followed by married (33.33%), respectively. All of them had an educational level of Bachelor’s degree or equivalent (100%). Most of them were salespersons (88.88%), followed by administrators (22.22%), respectively.

Their needs for English Skills

The result representing the needs of questionnaire respondents for English skills are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 English skills needed by the questionnaire respondents

English Skills Needed		Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1	English is necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel	4.72	0.57	Highest
2	English is necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel in welcoming international customers	4.72	0.57	Highest
3	Listening is necessary skill for Buriram United Megastore personnel	4.66	0.59	Highest
4	Speaking is necessary skill for Buriram United Megastore personnel	4.72	0.57	Highest
5	Reading is necessary skill for Buriram United Megastore personnel	2.38	1.14	Low
6	Writing is necessary skill for Buriram United Megastore personnel	2.27	1.21	Low

Table 2 shows that the respondents viewed English as necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel at the highest level (4.72) and considered English as necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel in welcoming international customers (4.72). The skill they needed most was speaking skills (4.72), followed by listening skills (4.66), respectively.

Their needs for innovation's English contents

The result representing the needs of questionnaire respondents for English contents are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 English contents needed by the questionnaire respondents

English Contents Needed		Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1	General vocabulary and conversations are necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel	3.61	1.09	High
2	ESP vocabulary regarding selling and offering services are necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel	4.55	0.61	Highest
3	ESP conversations regarding selling and offering services are necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel	4.55	0.61	Highest
4	Both ESP vocabulary and conversations regarding selling and offering services are necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel	4.55	0.61	Highest
5	Other contents such as English grammar are necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel	2.38	1.14	Low

Table 3 reveals that most of the respondents believed that they needed both ESP vocabulary and conversations regarding selling and offering services as necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel at the highest level (4.55), followed by general vocabulary and conversations as necessary for the personnel (3.61), respectively.

Their needs for the innovation

The results representing the needs of questionnaire respondents for the English communicative innovation are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 English communicative innovation needed by the questionnaire respondents

English Communicative Innovation Needed		Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1	A booklet is suitable for practicing English	4.72	0.57	Highest
2	Cassette/CD is suitable for practicing English	2.27	1.21	Low
3	Sound clips are suitable for practicing English	2.72	1.27	Moderate
4	Video clips are suitable for practicing English	4.61	0.60	Highest

From Table 4, it can be seen that the respondents needed a booklet and viewed it as suitable for practicing English at the highest level (4.72), followed by video clips (4.61), respectively.

Their needs for English topics

The results representing the needs of questionnaire respondents for the English topics are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 English topics needed by questionnaire respondents

English Topics Needed		Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1	Giving details about product promotions	4.72	0.57	Highest
2	Telling the shop's policy of accepting credit cards	4.66	0.59	Highest
3	Recommending products	4.61	0.60	Highest
4	Greeting	4.55	0.61	Highest
5	Telling prices and methods of payment	4.55	0.61	Highest
6	Calculating and giving change	4.55	0.61	Highest
7	Telling about colors and sizes of products	4.50	0.61	Highest
8	Recommending on sale products	4.44	0.61	High
9	Telling about availability of products	4.38	0.60	High
10	Telling customers when trying on products	4.33	0.76	High
11	Telling customers about exchanging products	4.33	0.59	High
12	Asking about customers' needs	4.27	0.66	High

English Topics Needed		Mean	S.D.	Meaning
13	Apologizing when there is a computer system failure	3.72	0.57	High
14	Telling customers about product return	3.66	0.90	High
15	Telling customers the directions to other shop's branches	3.61	1.09	High

Table 5 reveals the topics that needed to be included in the English communicative innovation at the highest level included 7 topics: giving details about product promotions, telling the shop's policy of accepting credit cards, recommending products, greeting, telling prices and methods of payment, calculating and giving change, and telling about colors and sizes of products. They also needed 8 topics at a high level: recommending on sale products, telling about availability of products, telling customers when trying on products, telling customers about exchanging products, asking about customers' needs, apologizing when there is a computer system failure, telling customers about product return, and telling customers the directions to other shop's branches. Therefore, they needed 15 topics in total in the English communicative innovation.

Their additional opinions and suggestions

The additional opinions and suggestions obtained from the questionnaire are summarized below.

It was suggested that the personnel also needed some information about local tourist attractions, local foods such as meatballs and stewed pork leg, local restaurants, local hotels or accommodations in order for personnel to be able to talk with the customers and give them useful information during their stay in Buriram province.

Personal Information of the focus group discussion’s participants

The results representing the personal information of the focus group discussion participants are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Personal information of the focus group discussion’s participants

No.	Personal Information	Frequency (N=10)	Percentage
1	Gender		
	Male	5	50.00
	Female	5	50.00
	Total	10	100.00
2	Age		
	Under 20 years	0	0
	20-29 years	7	70.00
	30-39 years	3	30.00
	40-49 years	0	0
	50 years or older	0	0
Total	10	100.00	
3	Marital Status		
	Single	7	70.00
	Married	3	30.00
	Divorced	0	0
	Separated	0	0
Total	10	100.00	
4	Education		
	Lower than high school level	0	0
	High school level or equivalent	0	0
	Bachelor’s degree or equivalent	10	100.00
	Higher than Bachelor’s degree	0	0
Total	10	100.00	
5	Occupation		
	Salesperson	9	90.00
	Administrator	1	10.00
Total	10	100.00	

Table 6 reveals that out of 10 focus group discussion’s participants, the number of females and males was equal (50%). The major participants were 20-29 years old (70%), followed by aged 30-39 (30%), respectively. Most of them had the

single status (70%), followed by married status (30%), respectively. All of them had an educational level of Bachelor's degree or equivalent (100%). Most of them were salespersons (90%), followed by administrators (10%), respectively.

Results from the focus group discussion

Results from the focus group discussion regarding opinions on problems faced by the participants upon using English, their needs for English skills, contents they needed for practicing English, the suitable English communicative innovation for the tourism personnel, topics they needed for practicing English, and additional suggestions and recommendations are summarized below.

Participants believed that the problems they faced the most during selling and giving services to their international customers included lacking of vocabulary and phrases to talk about their products and sell the products. The skills they needed the most were communicative skills such as listening and speaking skill. They mentioned that they did not have lot of opportunities to read and write while working at the shop. Most of the written documents were produced by language experts so they did not need to write by themselves. They agreed that the 15 topics were covering their needs. However, some of the participants would like to be able to give information about Buriram province, such as local tourist attractions, accommodations, foods, restaurants, etc. And some of the participants would like to be able to explain the meaning of "GU12" and also meaning of colors of football shirts.

Research Discussion

The following points based on the research results are discussed below.

1. Communication skills (listening and speaking) were needed in practicing English the most by Buriram United Megastore personnel. This is in line with a research conducted by Limsirruengrai et al. (2018) entitled "Needs Analysis of Tourism Personnel for English Communicative Innovation in Sai Yao Community Silk Village, Thalunglek Sub-district, Muang District, Buriram Province." From the research, among the four skills, the questionnaire respondents thought that listening was needed at the highest level (4.91), followed by speaking (4.73), respectively. This is also conforms to the research conducted by Nuemaihom and Sripattanasakul (2017) entitled "Innovation Development of Tourism Personnel's English Ability

Improvement for Preparation to ASEAN Community at Khao Kradong Volcano Forest Park in Buriram Province.” In their focus group discussion, it was found that the participants viewed that reading and writing were rarely used in their context. They would like to focus on what they will use only. So, they needed to emphasize only on listening and speaking skill. This is because in the tourism industry, basic communication skills are very crucial for communicating with customers or service users in the context. However, higher skills such as writing skills in the tourism industry must be performed by experts to avoid any mistakes caused. As from the current research focus group discussion, the participants also provided information that most of the written documents were produced by language experts to avoid mistakes. So, they did not need to write by themselves.

2. The content that the participants needed included both general vocabulary and conversations and ESP vocabulary and conversations. They needed a booklet together with video clips. In the booklet, they needed 15 topics to be included in the innovation. This is similar to the results of a research entitled, “Development of English Communicative Innovation for local Vendors at Koh Kret, Nonthaburi Province” by Nikonkittikoson (2016) that Vocabulary and English conversation for specific purposes along with Thai translation and Thai phonetics were mostly required and the most desirable English communicative innovation were booklet and a CD. However, the sample population of the current research would like to have useful information in their hands to provide to their customers information about Buriram province, such as local tourist attractions, accommodations, foods, restaurants, etc. Additionally, some of the participants would like to be able to explain the meaning of “GU12” and also the meaning of the colors of football shirts. This means that the personnel would like to sell their products and also give services effectively, including facilitating international customers so that the customers will have a pleasant stay in Buriram province.

3. Both ESP vocabulary and conversations regarding selling and offering services are necessary for Buriram United Megastore personnel at the highest level (4.55). This conforms with the study of Limsiriruengrai et al. (2018) entitled, “Needs Analysis of Tourism Personnel for English Communicative Innovation in Sai Yao Community Silk Village, Thalanglek Sub-district, Muang District, Buriram Province.” The topics they needed at the highest level (5.00) included greeting and welcoming, telling the history of the community, describing the community’s products details,

and bargaining. This is also in line with the study conducted by Nuemaihom (2016) entitled, “ESP Need Analysis and Course Design for Local Vendors at Phnom Rung Sanctuary in Buriram Province” that the samples needed to study the content relating to their jobs, that is, the specific terms and conversations used in a daily life and for selling local products and services since the content was relevant to the local vendors’ jobs. The content was also more useful and necessary for them than other general English content. To be able to know their real needs, their needs must be analyzed because needs analysis is the first step in developing language because it is utilized to obtain a in depth description of the learners’ needs (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). It has been employed for planning courses (Boydell, 1970). It is one of the steps for gathering information of the learners for syllabus design (Nunan, 1988a).

Research Suggestions

The following items include suggestions and recommendations based on the research results:

1. Further studies on needs analysis should be conducted with different groups of professionals for finding the ESP contents and also English communicative innovation they need.

2. To avoid errors from testing the small sample size, further studies on needs analysis should be conducted with a larger sample size to obtain more information, to better determine the average values.

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