NEEDS OF THE THAI TEACHERS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT:*The Thai people recognize English as their foreign language. And many Thai teachers find it difficult to communicate in English especially in speaking, listening, reading and even writing. Hence, this study was conducted in order to explore the English language needs of teachers at Phadungpanya School, Tak City, Thailand. Moreover, it correlated the teachers' language needs to their profile and proposed intervention activities in order to address the English language needs of the respondents.*

The Needs Analysis (NA) was used in analyzing the data gathered from a survey distributed to the teachers with frequency count, percentage, rank, mean and correlation measures as statistical tools.

Based from the findings of the study, it was discovered that the teachers are handling Vocational Education, Science, Mathematics, Thai Language, Foreign Languages (English, French, Chinese, Japanese and Myanmar), MAPE and Social Studies. Most of them are females. The respondents are dominated by teachers who are new in the profession but they almost have equal number to that of teachers who have been in the profession for long years. Most of the respondents have 0-2 number of trainings in English attended.

Their so much need on Listening, Reading, and Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) skills are likewise revealed. The respondents also indicated that they have needs on Speaking and Writing skills. Thus, intervention activities along these areas will be provided to address their identified needs.

Remarkably, the teachers' Writing, and CALL needs have significant relationship with the number of trainings in English they attended.

KEYWORDS: *Needs Analysis (NA), English language needs, Thai teachers, language courses, General English Language Needs Analysis (GELNA)*

INTRODUCTION

English as everyone knows is used as a lingua franca. As the world gets into modernization, the English language dramatically becomes a powerful tool for communication. Thus, if one wants to compete in the global arena, he or she has to be competent with the language.

In the Kingdom of Thailand, English is a foreign language to its citizens. But its people feel the need to learn English especially that their country is a member of the ASEAN community. Hence, they are not exempted from the responsibility to prepare themselves for the said endeavor. Along with this preparation is the proposition for the Thais to learn the English language, since it is the only language that connects them to the members of the ASEAN and to the rest of the countries in the world. Thus, learning the English language is imperative to them.

The administrators as well as the teachers at Phadungpanya School, Tak City, Thailand are very eager and open-minded to learn the language. For them, they believe that they cannot fully prepare their children and their students to become globally competitive when they themselves are not even competent with the English language. They strongly believe that when they are equipped with the right skills and competencies in English they

are able to influence their children, students and other members of the community to also learn and use the language. Consequently, it is indispensible to identify the teachers' English language needs to provide them the language activities they need.

It was in this picture that the study on needs analysis was conducted. This study aims to identify the profile and English language needs of the teachers, analyze these needs and articulate these to the offering of English language activities for the teachers. The researcher believes that through this procedure, the needs of the teachers will be addressed.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: Broadly defined, Needs Analysis (NA) is a procedure to collect information about learners' needs (Richards, 2001). The importance of NA is emphasized in English for Specific Purposes (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) and English for Academic Purposes (Jordan, 1997) and also in general language courses espousing learner-centers curricula (Nunan, 1988; Tudor, 1996), task-based curricula (Long & Crookes, 1992) as well as performance-assessment (Norris, Brown, Hudson, & Yushioka, 1988). NA is considered a crucial component of systematic curriculum development.

NA is generally administered to a particular target group of students at a program-level. For the administration to alarge number of students, a questionnaire is the most frequently used and efficient method to elicitresponses.

In this study, it is gratifying to note, however, that the respondents are teachers and not students. Nonetheless, the teachers are considered students since they are learners of the English language.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Generally, this study aimed to assess the English language needs of the Thai teachers at Phadungpanya School, Tak City, Tak Province, Thailand. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the Thai teachers at Phadungpanya School in terms of:
    a. subject handled/taught;
    b. sex;
    c. number of years in the profession; and
    d. number of trainings in English attended?
2. What are the English language needs of the Thai teachers along:
    a. computer assisted language learning;
    b. listening;
    c. speaking;
    d. reading; and
    e. writing?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the teachers' English language needs and their profile?
4. What intervention can be proposed to address the language needs of the Thai teachers?

SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the profile and English language needs of the Thai teachers at Phadungpanya School, Tak City, Tak Province, Thailand. Thus, its result is only limited to the identified respondents. The identified language needs were correlated to the teachers' profile in terms of subject taught or handled, sex, number of years in the teaching profession and number of trainings in English attended. The General English Language Needs Analysis (GELNA) instrument developed by Kumazawa Takaaki (2005) was the instrument used in the study.

Highlight of the instrument is the list of language needs covering five sections (speaking, listening, reading, writing, and computer-assisted language learning).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used the qualitative or descriptive research design. It described the profile of the teacher-respondents, including the teachers' English language needs. More importantly, it described the relationship between the teachers' profile and their language needs.

The Phadungpanya School located at Tak Province in Thailand served as the locus of the study. It is governed by a school director. Its faculty is composed of 107 teachers including four (4) foreign teachers. These teachers are handling the following subjects: a) Mathematics; b) Social Sciences; c) Foreign languages (English, French, Japanese, Chinese and Myanmar); d) Thai Language; e) Sciences; f) Music, Arts and Physical Education (MAPE); and g) Vocational Education (that includes Business, Food Technology, and Computer Education,).

Among the 107 teachers, 74 served as respondents in the study. These teachers were selected through purposive sampling. Only these 74 teachers responded to the study. This study was conducted from June 2016 to July 2017.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AND DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

The General English Language Needs Analysis (GELNA) instrument developed by Kumazawa Takaaki (2005) was utilized to gather the needed data. The first part of the instrument asks for the profile of the respondents, particularly the subject they teach or handle, their sex, their number of years in the teaching profession and the number of trainings in English they already attended. The second part of the instrument asks for the English language needs of the teachers. The items are jumbled or disarranged so as the respondents could not immediately pinpoint or detect the language course they need. Thus, a valid result would be arrived at.

In this study, purposive sampling technique was used. To gather the pertinent data, the items in the GELNA instrument were translated by a competent Thai translator from English to Thai to serve as survey checklist. Afterwards, copies of this survey tool were distributed to the teachers and were asked to answer and accomplish them. Notably, the teachers were also asked to indicate the extent or level of their need to the language needs listed in the checklist. However, inasmuch as the researcher wanted to retrieve all the questionnaires floated to the respondents, they refused to respond, hence, it is no longer beyond the researcher's control.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the survey were tabulated and interpreted using frequency count, percentage, rank, mean, and correlation measures such as the Pearson and eta correlation.

The following four-point scale and range of intervals were also used to interpret the teachers' responses in the survey checklist:

Scale	Range of Interval	Descriptive Interpretation
1	1.00-1.75	Not needed (NN)
2	1.76-2.50	Not much needed (NMN)
3	2.51-3.25	Needed (N)
4	3.26-4.00	So much needed (SMN)

Profile of the Thai Teachers at Phadungpanya School

Table 1 shows the profile of the Thai teachers at Phadungpanya School. The teachers' profile was limited only to subject area they teach, sex, years in the teaching profession and the number of trainings in English attended.

Table 1. Profile of the Thai teachers at Phadungpanya School.

Profile of the Teachers	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Rank (r)
Subject Handled/ Taught			
Science	12	16.22	2
Mathematics	11	14.86	3.5
Foreign Languages	13	17.57	1
Thai Language	11	14.86	3.5
Social Studies	8	10.81	6.5
MAPE	8	10.81	6.5
Vocational Education	11	14.86	3.5
Total	**74**	**100.00**	
Sex			
Males	12	16.22	2
Females	62	83.78	1
Total	**74**	**100.00**	
Number of Years in the Profession			
0-4 years	27	36.49	1
5-9 years	6	8.11	5
10-14 years	5	6.75	6.5
15-19 years	5	6.75	6.5
20-24 years	3	4.05	8
25-29 years	8	10.81	4
30-34 years	10	13.52	2.5
35-39 years	10	13.52	2.5
Total	**74**	**100.00**	
Number of Trainings in English Attended			
0-2 trainings	68	91.89	1
3-5 trainings	2	2.70	3
6-8 trainings	0	0.00	4.5
9-11 trainings	0	0.00	4.5
12 trainings and above	4	5.41	2
Total	**74**	**100.00**	

n= 74

Based on the previous table, it can be shown that 74 Thai teachers served as respondents in the study. Thirteen (17.57%) of them are handling Foreign Languages (i.e., English, Japanese, French, Chinese and Myanmar) followed by Science (16.22 %) and Vocational Education subjects (i.e. business education, food technology, and computer education), Thai Language and Mathematics with 11 (14.86%) teachers from each subject areas. The least represented subjects in the study are MAPE (Music, Arts and Physical Education) and Social Studies with eight (10.81%) teachers, respectively.

Likewise, it can be gleaned from the same table that 12 (16.22%) of the respondents are males while 62 (83.78%) are females. This means that the respondents of the study are mostly Thai female teachers.

As regards the number of years in the teaching profession, it is shown that 27 (36.49%) of the respondents have 0-4 years in the service. Ten (13.52%) each for the respondents with 35-39 years and 30-34 years in the teaching profession. Eight (10.81%) have 25-29 years, six (8.11%) have 5-9 years, and five (6.75%) each have 10-14 years and 15-19 years in the teaching profession. Further, three (4.05%) of the respondents have 20-24 years in the profession. This indicated result means that the faculty of the school is dominated by teachers, who are young in the profession, making them in the top rank (rank 1). However, it is also significant to note that teachers who have been in the teaching profession for long years (i.e., teachers with 25-29, 30-34, and 35-39 years in service), are in the second to fourth rank. Thus, with the total number of respondents in the study, it can be said that there is almost a balance number of young and old teachers who have been in the profession.

The same table likewise reveals the respondents' number of trainings in English attended. It can be seen from the table that 68 (91.89%) of the respondents have 0-2 trainings, four (5.41%) have more than 11 trainings, and two (2.70%) have 3-5 trainings in English attended.

This only means that almost all the teacher-respondents have not yet attended trainings in English. Many of them are linguistically disabled in English. Such result and claim are confirmed in an interview by some of the Thai English teachers saying that most of the teachers at Phadungpanya School have 0-5% knowledge in English. Therefore, this firmly supports the conduct of assessment on the English language needs of the said teachers to equip them the necessary linguistic and communicative competencies and skills.

Teachers' English Language Needs

The English language needs of the Thai teachers are stipulated in Table 2. Needs on computer-assisted language learning (CALL) which were stipulated in items 10, 17 and 18 in the checklist, the teachers agreed that they have so much need to use authentic audio-visual materials such as videos, CDs, and audio attend classes that use computers for learning, and attend classes that use computers for learning, as shown by the computed mean ratings of 3.41 and 3.38, respectively. Further, practicing making their homepages in English as shown by the mean rating of 2.97 is also needed by the teachers. According to the Thai teacher respondents, they can easily learn the target language which is English if they are well-equipped with the right skills to utilize CALL. As stressed by Barron (2002), technology is evolving at a rapid pace, fuelled by faster, smarter, more powerful, less expressive and easy-to-use gadgets. Obviously, life nowadays is driven by advanced technologies. It cannot be denied that the language of the information age is English.

Computers talk to each other in English. More than eighty percent of all information stored in more than a hundred million computers around the world is in English. Eighty-five percent of international telephone conversations are conducted in English, as are three fourths of the world's mails, telefaxes, and cables. Computer program instructions and the software itself are often supplied only in English (Llagas, 1998).

Table 2. English language needs of the Thai teachers at Phadungpanya School.

Language Needs	Overall Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
A. CALL (Computer-assisted Language Learning)		
I need to practice making my homepage in English. (10)	2.97	N
I need to take a class that uses authentic audio-visual materials such as videos, CDs, and audio. (17)	3.41	SMN
I need to take a class that uses computers for learning. (18)	3.38	SMN
Composite Mean	**3.25**	**SMN**
B. Listening		
I need to practice listening to be able to understand stress pattern and intonation. (2)	3.30	SMN
I need to practice watching dramas or movies in English in order to be able to understand the content. (5)	3.37	SMN
I need to practice listening extensively to get the main ideas. (15)	3.40	SMN
Composite Mean	**3.36**	**SMN**
C. Reading		
I need to learn reading skills such as reading rapidly and getting the gist. (3)	3.27	SMN
I need to practice reading by focusing on the grammar of English texts and translating them into Thai. (6)	3.36	SMN
I need to study the structures of English sentences. (7)	3.39	SMN
Composite Mean	**3.34**	**SMN**
D. Speaking		
I need to learn to discuss issues effectively in English. (8)	3.12	N
I need to practice making a speech and presenting ideas in English. (12)	3.03	N
I need to take a class in which my final grading is decided based on my score on test performance such as a speech. (16)	2.95	N
Composite Mean	**3.03**	**N**
E. Writing		
I need to practice writing papers in English. (9)	3.14	SMN
I need to practice writing business letters in English. (11)	3.29	N
I need to take a class in which my final grading is decided based on the result of my paper. (14)	2.50	N

Composite Mean	2.98	N

Legend:

Range of Interval	Descriptive Interpretation
1.00-1.75	Not needed (NN)
1.76-2.50	Not much needed (NMN)
2.51-3.25	Needed (N)
3.26-4.00	So much needed (SMN)

In terms of the respondents need on listening skills, as stated in items 2, 5, and 15 of the instrument, the teachers conveyed so much need to practice listening extensively to arrive at main ideas and practice listening to be able to understand stress pattern and intonation, as revealed by the computed mean ratings of 3.40 and 3.30, correspondingly. Furthermore, they articulated so much need to practice watching dramas or movies in English in order to be able to understand the content, as reflected by the mean rating of 3.37. Listening as noted by Brooks (1974) is a physiological, intellectual and emotional process of converting sound waves into meaningful thought symbols. In order to be an effective listener, one must possess and adapt certain practices: find an area of interest; judge content, not delivery; delay evaluation; listen for ideas; be flexible; actively work at listening; resist distractions; exercise his or her mind; keep his or her mind open; and capitalize on though speed (Hernandez, 1998). Undoubtedly, it pays to be a good listener so as to be involved in a conversation. Simply, one who lacks listening skills cannot participate to dialogues, discussions and other verbal exchange of ideas. Henceforth, for the Thais, taking part in the communication process is a must.

In the instrument, items 3, 6, and 7 communicate needs on reading skills. Furthermore, it can be deemed from the table that the teachers have so much need to learn reading skills such as reading rapidly and getting the gist of a selection and practice reading by focusing on the grammar of English texts and translating them into Thai, as shown by the mean ratings of 3.27 and 3.36, respectively. Moreover, they clearly expressed their need to study the structures of English sentences, as shown by the mean rating of 3.39. Shaywits (2003) stressed that reading is the most complex of human functions. Reading in any language poses a challenge, but reading in English is particularly difficult. Some language systems are based on a system where each syllable is represented by a written symbol. When these symbols are learned one can read with relative ease (Snow, Burns & Griffins, 1998). Written English uses a system of letters to make up a spoken syllable. A letter alone does not refer to anything. It must be combined with other letters to represent a meaningful unit or syllable. These complexities in reading written English make the Thai teachers yearn for reading skills. In fact, research has shown that one can predict, with reasonable accuracy, language learners' future success by their reading level (Slavin, 1994).

Meanwhile, items 8, 12 and 16 in the instrument conveyed needs on speaking skills. As shown in the same table, the teachers expressed their need to learn to discuss issues effectively in English. Likewise, they communicate their need to take a class in which their final grading is decided based on their scores on test performance such as a speech. Furthermore, they articulated their need to practice making a speech and presenting ideas in English. These teachers' needs are reflected by the computed mean ratings of 3.12, 2.95, and 3.03, respectively. This finding is in consonance with the claims of the Thai English

teachers that even some of them who teach the target language are not that good in spoken English.

Aside from the needs on speaking skills, the teachers also indicate their need for writing skills. These needs for writing skills are gleaned in items 9, 11 and 14 of the instrument. Based on the table, it can be reflected that the teachers have so much need to practice writing papers in English, as conveyed by the computed mean rating of 3.14. Also, they communicate their need to take a class in which their final grades are decided based on the result of their papers and practice writing business letters in English, as shown by the mean ratings of 2.50 and 3.29, correspondingly. This is maybe true as uttered by the head of the foreign languages department of Phadungpanya School in an informal interview conducted to her by the researcher that mostly teachers in the said school cannot even write even a simple sentence in English.

Relationship between Teachers' Language Needs and their Profile

The study also aimed at finding out the relationship between the teachers' language needs and their profile that include subject taught/handled, sex, number of years in the teaching profession and number of trainings in English attended.

It can be observed from the table that Writing, Culture-oriented and CALL needs have significant relationship to the number of trainings in English attended by the teachers while Test Preparation needs have significant relationship to the teacher's number of years in the teaching profession.

At 0.05 level of significance, Writing and Culture-oriented needs have significant relationship with the teachers' number of trainings in English attended with 0.257 and 0.233 level of significance, respectively. This only means that the Writing and the Culture-oriented needs of the teachers are affected by the number of trainings in English they attended. Further, it can be implied from the result that the greater the number of trainings in English attended by the teachers, the higher their need for the Writing and the Culture-oriented needs is.

Likewise, CALL needs of the teachers are affected by the number of trainings in English they attended as indicated by the 0.310 level of significance which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. This means that the more number of trainings in English attended by the teachers, the more their need for the CALL needs is.

Table 4: Relationship between the teacher's English language needs and their profile.

	Teachers' Profile			
English Language Needs	Subject Taught/ Handled	Sex	Number of Years in the Profession	Number of Trainings in English Attended
Culture-oriented	0.355	0.096	-0.112	0.233*
CALL	0.315	0.031	-0.078	0.310**
Listening	0.282	0.065	-0.028	0.158
Reading	0.156	0.073	-0.076	0.077

Speaking	0.253	0.015	-0.204	0.221
Writing	0.352	0.019	-0.118	0.257*

* significant at 0.05 level of significance (2-tailed)
** significant at 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed)

Interventions to address the English Language needs of Thai Teachers

In this study, it likewise meant at offering intervention activities in order to address the identified English language needs of the Thai teachers at Phadungpanya School, Tak City, Thailand.

School-based intercession skills such as enrichment activities in writing, reading, speaking, listening, and computer assisted language learning (CALL) will be provided and conducted to the teacher-respondents in order to improve their language skills.

Moreover, sessions in writing, reading, speaking, listening, computer assisted language learning (CALL) will be done in order to develop the said needs of the respondents. Sessions that will be conducted will depend on the availability of the researcher and the Thai teachers. Hence, common time of both the researcher and the respondents will be arranged.

CONCLUSIONS

Based from the findings of this study, it was concluded that the respondents are teaching Vocational Education, Science, Mathematics, Thai Language, Foreign Language (including English), MAPE and Social Studies. Most of them are females. The respondents are dominated by teachers who are new in the profession but they almost have equal number to that of teachers who have been in the profession for longer years. Most of the respondents too have 0-2 number of trainings in English attended.

Based on the results of the survey, the teachers indicated that they have so much need on Listening, Reading, and Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) skills. They also indicated that they have needs on Speaking and Writing skills. Thus, intervention activities along these areas will be provided and conducted to address their identified needs.

In terms of the correlation of the teachers' language needs to their profile, Writing needs has a significant relationship with the teachers' number of trainings in English attended at 0.05 level of significance while CALL needs have significant relationship with the teachers' number of trainings attended in English at 0.01 level of significance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and conclusions made in this study, the following are hereby recommended:

1. School administrators in the public and private high schools of Thailand should encourage their teachers to attend English training and related seminar-workshops to widen their perspectives and skills in the English language;
2. Researchers should conduct similar study to other high school teachers in Thailand to validate the result of this study;

3. The school administrators and officials of Thailand specifically the school director of Phadungpanya School should support the conduct of trainings of teachers on English to improve their communication skills in English; and

4. Thai teachers and other school staff should continue to attend trainings on English to enhance their motivation and interest since they have a limited background in the said language.

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