ENGLISH COMMUNICATION AND TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THAILAND

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Abstract - Currently, there is an increasing of skilled-workers insufficiency among Thai hospitality and tourism industry. Usually, most of the problem came from miscommunication between employers and employees especially in multinational companies where English is a medium language. Thus, education might be one way to boost employee's English knowledge and skill. This education should, moreover, apply adult-learning techniques focus on task flexibility; less time consume; and suitable for personal development. This research aims to develop English communication skill using training package as a tool. The objectives consist of; 1) developing of the training package, 2) comparing of learning achievement scores, and 3) studying the opinion of tourism officers regardless to the training package. 38 samples, who are now working as an officer in tourism sector, are obtained by using purposive sampling method from the English training session. The instruments include 1) training package, 2) paper based tests, and 3) questionnaire concerns with tourism officers' opinions. The data are analyzed using statistical methods, such as average, standard deviation, and t-test dependent. The results of efficiency criterion illustrate that the training package can help to improve communication skill. The efficiency criterions (E_1/E_2) for both topics are: 80/93 for English for hotel and airline reservation topic and 82/96 for English for tourist attractions and tour operation topic. In terms of learning achievement, the scores of posttest are higher than pretest: the average posttest scores are 9.63 for the first topic and 9.29 for the second. This means that after using training package, learning achievement scores for the sample group is higher. So, it is clear that the training package can help those officers develop their English communication skill. For the opinion part, tourism officers agreed that this training package can improve their skills as well as increase knowledge in tourism field. Furthermore, they also said that they would apply skills and knowledge learnt with their work experience and would recommend this training package to others in this field.

Index Terms - English communication, English skill, training package, tourism industry

I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the agreement on trade in service under ASEAN Economic Community or so called "AEC", Thai skilled workers have faced a high pressure in labor competition. According to Policy and Planning Bureau [1], there is an increasing of tourists in Southeast Asia continent about 10 percent. However, the employment rate in tourism sector in Thailand is lower than other sectors due to low quality of skilled workers, particularly in English communication skill. To resolve this problem, Thai education system should encourage learners to do self-study in order to have more efficient in knowledge, ability and skills, as well as have a better attitude towards career and professional development [2].

For developing English language, training seems to be more efficient than traditional style of learning, lecture. Limpakdee [3] suggested that it should focus on practicing while learners can communicate immediately without worrying with grammars and structures. The most effective training, in this case, is simulation activity, which should be used together with training package instruction. It should also be considered under specified objectives and serves directly for tourism field. The study of "Preparedness and English communication skill of travel agents officers in Silom area for approaching ASEAN Economic Community" of Simasathiansophon and Kuosuwan [4] indicated some barriers of communication between travel agents officers and customers/tourists that should be improved. Therefore, the training package could resolve these problems while enhance communication skill for tourism officers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Career Development Theory

Career development theory was found by Isaacson and Brown [5]. The main idea was that society, as one of the important factors, could change attitude of workers towards career development. It could encourage workers to develop their skills as well as to have high responsibility. This theory, however, had to adapt with knowledge, skills, and experience of each worker in order to maximize its effectiveness. 2 main theories will be analyzed in this paper: 1) developmental theory and 2) economical and sociological theory. The developmental theory concentrated on relationship between human, career development, job and environment within the organization. Since people were different in knowledge, skill, ability, value, and attitude, thus workers should develop their career

according to their preferences, interests, and aptitudes. On the other hands, the second theory stated that people would develop their career regarding to social and economic factors, such as labor demand, type of industry, job environment, competition, compensation, value, and social recognition. Therefore, when adapting this theory with English training package for tourism industry, it is important to consider social changes, labor market, and competition of tourism industry together with developing less skilled workers into high skilled workers, particularly in English communication skill.

B. Training package concept

When developing a training package, it is necessarily to identify the purpose and objectives of training. Kozberg and Tempel [6] suggested that content of training should be made under the learners' requirement and preference. Normally, training package would be set according to its content, activities, learning technique and evaluating method that allow learners to study by themselves. A package often included instruction, paper tests, media, and group activities. Appling training package will create a lot of benefits, such as learners can easily manage time, increase learning motivation, and encourage self-study.

C. English communication and AEC

The concept of English communication for professional career was developed by Limpakdee [3]. The study suggested that the best way to communicate in English is through practicing, especially for Thai travel agent. This practice should adapt with the changing environments or situations. Thus, English communication concept is focusing on learning by doing to get the real experiences in real circumstances. The AEC is creating more pressure on Thai skilled workers in terms of both positive and negative ways. It increases the competition in labor market. However, the study of Charoensuk and Charoensuk [7], who examined English language and the forces of AEC 2015, stated that Thai skilled workers in tourism industry have disadvantage in English. This problem could be measured by owners' preference in labor market move towards workers who have high skills of English communication. In this case, education could play an important role in creating the graduated students who have high ability of communicating with foreigners, not only in English but also in other languages.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study is a quality based research utilizing both questionnaire and interview session. Population consisted of tourism officers who work with Thai Travel Agent Association (TTAA). The 38 samples had been collected using purposive sampling method. These 38 samples were tested their English communication skill under the training project for 2 days. Data had been analyzed using descriptive statistic method including average, standard deviation, and t-test dependent.

The research instruments consist of 1) training package for tourism officers: topic 1 is English for hotel and airline reservation, and topic 2 is English for tourist attractions and tour operation, 2) paper based tests, and 3) questionnaire concerns with opinion of participants.

The developmental testing for training package has been divided into 2 parts: try out and trial run. The tryout had been tested with 5 samples that never use this training package before, while for the trial run, 38 samples were used to find the efficiency criterion for the package. The package was tested using Efficiency Criterion (E_1/E_2), in which E_1 is a transitional behavioral evaluation while E_2 is a terminal behavior evaluation. The efficiency of training package will be determined by learners' behavior in terms of percentage of the average score for conducting all activities per percentage of products evaluation scores for all participants. In other words, E_1/E_2 is efficiency of process per products [8]. The second tool is paper based tests. It combined multiple choice items, short answer questions, and true or false questions with the highlight on four communication skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Finally, the opinion questionnaire was conducted using Likert Scale [9] then applied it with 38 samples.

IV. RESULTS

A. Efficiency criterion (E_1/E_2)

The efficiency criterion (E_1/E_2) for trial run stated that E_1/E_2 is equal to 80/93 for topic 1, English for hotel and airline reservation, and 82/96 for topic 2, English for tourist attractions and tour operation. That means the learning process can help to increase efficiency of communication skill since the products score was higher than the process score. Although the samples had average ability in English communication, they had a high basic knowledge of tourism industry. Thus, they can improve communication skill rapidly by applying their knowledge about English communication and practice it using simulation activity. Table I indicate the result of efficiency criterion of this package.

Table I Efficiency criterion of the training package

Topic	N	E_1/E_2
1. English for hotel and airline reservation	38	80/93
2. English for tourist attractions and tour operation	38	82/96

B. Comparison of learning achievement

Learning achievement comparison had been conducted using paper based tests. The result illustrated that average scores learning achievement

between pretest and posttest has significant impact on communication skills.

According to table 2, the average score of posttest was 9.63 for the first topic and 9.29 for the second topic. Comparing with pretest scores, posttest scores were higher. This means that the training package can improve participants' ability to communicate in English.

Table II Learning achievement analysis

Topic	N	Total score	Average score		S.D.		t-test
			Pre-test	Posttest	Pre-test	Posttest	
1. English for hotel and airline reservation	38	10	8.21	9.63	1.63	0.63	6.062
2. English for tourist attractions and tour operation	38	10	8.03	9.29	1.08	0.69	8.457

C. Opinion of tourism officers on training package

Opinion of participants over the use of training package was in high level, average 4.26 scores. The most satisfied part was that the training package can enhance their knowledge about English communication. Particularly, the simulation activity encouraged them to participate using their skills and experiences. Moreover, they can practice this activity by themselves since it develop from student center activity. Nevertheless, participants would like to increase time for training period, from 2 days to 3 days, due to various contents and topics.

Table III Opinion rate of tourism officers

Description	S.D.	$\bar{x}$
1. The training package helps increase knowledge of English communication.	0.66	4.42
2. The training package is appropriated to publicize.	0.49	4.39
3. Participants satisfy to study using training package.	0.59	4.39
4. Participants have freedom to use training package outside the training class.	0.53	4.34
5. The training package can apply self-study technique.	0.58	4.34
6. The training package encourages learners to participate in all activities.	0.66	4.32
7. The training package is appropriated to use in this training project.	0.52	4.29
8. Participants can develop self-learning technique.	0.69	4.26
9. Participants can study and practice the package anytime.	0.63	4.24
10. The training package help establish a better learning attitude.	0.68	4.24
11. The training package increase self-confidence of participants.	0.66	4.21
12. Participants can communicate efficiently after using training package.	0.61	4.18
13. The training package is interesting.	0.55	4.16
14. Participants are enthusiastic to learn from training package.	0.73	4.11
15. The content of training package is appropriated.	0.79	4.03

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the better way to improve English communication skill is through practicing. By using the training package, participants increase their self-confidence in communicating with foreigners. Ubonrat [10] suggested that the most important part of creating training package is to carefully identify concepts and objectives.

The main focus should be analyzed in order to develop main purposes as well as identify the preferences and needs for training [11]. Since the package based on learners preferences and needs, participants are likely to learn and practice by themselves outside the training class. [12] also mentioned that learning by doing technique is one of the efficient learning methods for adults. The content and activities should demonstrate the nature of their career which, in turn, will encourage them to adjust communicating skills with their experience and knowledge. Nevertheless, the practice should be pursued continuously to maximize its efficiency level. Therefore, English training package for tourism officers is appropriated to publicize. The content should relate with the problems and the needs in order to resolve communication problem among skilled workers in tourism industry in the competitive market as AEC.

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