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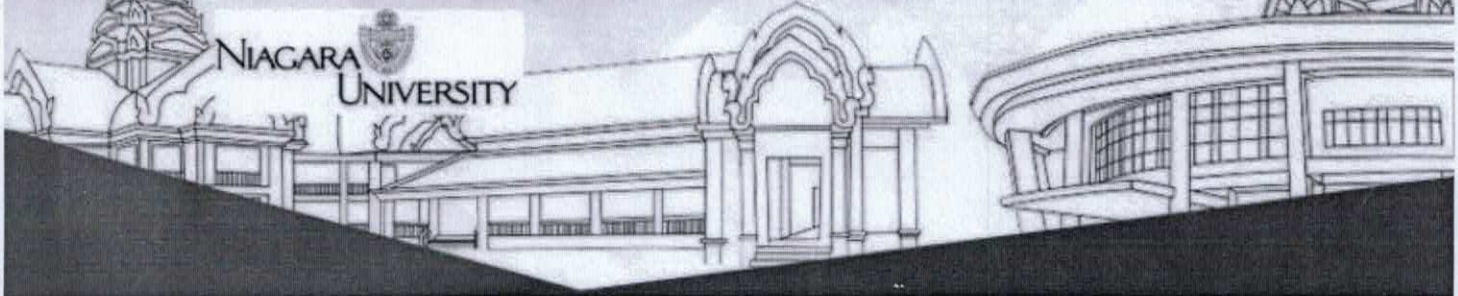
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A Study and Development of a Model of Participatory English Communication Innovation to Enhance Potential of Personnel to the International: A Case Study of Buriram Rajabhat University Personnel

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to investigate problems and needs of English for Buriram Rajabhat University (BRU) personnel, 2) to develop a participatory and appropriate model of English innovation for BRU administrators, support staff, security officials, drivers, and Phanomphiman hotel staff, 3) to develop a participatory and appropriate English guidebook at the Lower Northeastern Cultural Center and other BRU attractions, and 4) to develop a manual of BRU personnel's positions and linguistic landscape at the campus. The population consisted of 782 BRU personnel, and the sample group was composed of 30 administrators, and 120 support staff who were purposively selected. The following tools were employed in this research: questionnaire, focus group discussion, innovation for English communication, innovation assessment form, and SL-TL form. The descriptive statistics i.e. percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the quantitative data while content analysis was made for analyzing the qualitative data. The research results revealed that the BRU personnel needed the booklet and sound CD (4.77 $\bar{X}$) as the participatory English communication innovation. The English topics were needed according to their jobs and responsibilities. Regarding the English guidebook at the Lower Northeastern Cultural Center and other BRU attractions, they needed a guidebook to visit the center and also other attractions at BRU, including library, big Buddha statute, and other important buildings, etc. For the manual of BRU personnel's positions and linguistic landscape, they needed the researchers to develop the English manual with different BRU personnel's positions and also bilingual linguistic landscape at the BRU campus.

Keywords: innovation model, participatory English communication, English potential, Buriram Rajabhat University personnel

1. Introduction

English is a universal language spoken in many countries around the world. It is used as a second language and a foreign language. Some countries use English as their official language (Naunton, 2005: 7). In addition, people in ASEAN use English as a working language, as defined in the ASEAN Charter: Working language of ASEAN shall be English. In Thailand, English is used as a foreign language and is more widely used by Thai people than other foreign languages (Kullawan and Surayudh, 2006: 14). The use of English in Thailand is for specific purposes such as English for business, trade, investment, academic and technology and sciences. The content of English for this particular purpose is designed to meet the needs of learners in terms of topics and content, and relationship with the profession of the students. Hutchinson and Waters (1996: 18-19) say that English for Specific Purposes focuses on the needs of learners with different demands of English.

There are two ways to communicate in English: speaking and writing. The two types of communication are equally important, but communicative speech seems to be the most convenient and most useful medium (Thuaycharoen, 1991: 1). There are four English skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but the most problematic skills are listening and speaking skills. This is consistent with Meemark (2007) who states that the most problematic English skill for police officers is listening skills, followed by speaking, writing and reading, respectively. To learn English for tourism business, people in the Khiriwong community want to learn the skills of listening and speaking most (Ophatratanakon, 2007).

Galloway (1993) states that language and content are used for communication in different situations should be a language used in everyday life because it will help students learn English to communicate more effectively. The English media must also be convenient with no need of being sophisticated equipment or technology. However, it must be simple and easy to use and suitable for the education level of the target group. Atiphaet (2010: 55) states that the learning style that respondents want to use in English for communication is a personal diary, use of the photo book, and self-learning audio recording or CD / VCD, etc. Meemark (2002) says that the book or manual used in teaching English for the tourist police should be a series in-house authentic materials so that the content and teaching methods will be in accordance with the need and necessity of using the English language of the tourist police. Tanyong (1989) states that a booklet is appropriate for the following conditions because it is based on local demand. It is the cheap and effective tool that is easy to take and can be used at anytime and anywhere.

Buriram Rajabhat University has a policy to promote internationalism by setting strategies and action plans such as seeking academic cooperation by signing MoUs with universities both inside and outside ASEAN, human resource development project, purchasing English Program (English Discovery Online), and holding National and International Conferences. This is in line with Strategy 6: Improve the quality and standards of faculty and staff at all levels in professional practice to international standards, Goal 2: Continuously develop lecturers and personnel to perform professionally and competitively at the university level, and Strategy 2.1: Enhance and support new lecturers and personnel to have the skills and capabilities to do research, provide academic services, and teach by using English and advanced technology.

Based on a survey of university personnel's readiness to enter the internationalization, it was primarily found that support staff and lecturers had ability in English at beginning and intermediate levels. They needed to improve English skills to communicate with foreigners who use services at the university campus. In addition, the university personnel also opined that the linguistic landscape signs should be a bilingual in both Thai and English languages.

With the significant reasons mentioned above, the researchers were interested in doing the research on "A Study and Development of a Model of Participatory English Communication Innovation to Enhance Potential of Personnel to the International: A Case Study of Buriram Rajabhat University Personnel" in order to enhance the university personnel's English ability to enter the internationalization in the 21st century.

2. Research Objectives

The following were the research purposes:

2.1 To investigate problems and needs of English for Buriram Rajabhat University (BRU) personnel,

2.2 To develop a participatory and appropriate model of English innovation for BRU administrators, support staff, security officials, drivers, and Phanomphiman hotel staff,

2.3 To develop a participatory and appropriate English guidebook at the Lower Northeastern Cultural Center and other BRU attractions, and

2.4 To develop a manual of BRU personnel's positions and linguistic landscape at the campus.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Population and Samples

The population consisted of 782 BRU personnel. The sample group was composed of two groups: 1) 30 administrators, 20 of them answered the questionnaires and the other 10 participated in a focus group discussion, and 1) 120 support staff, 100 of them completed the questionnaires and the other 20 took part in the focus group discussion. All of these samples were purposively selected.

3.2 Research Instruments

The following tools were employed in this research: questionnaire, focus group discussion, innovation for English communication, innovation assessment form, and SL-TL form. Having considered quality of the tools, three experts examined the appropriateness of the language used and the content validity. Moreover, the instruments possessed the IOC (Index of Item-Objective Congruence) value of between 0.67-1.00, which is considered a criterion that can be applied to the research target group.

3.3 Data Collection

The following were the stages of data collection:

1. Send letters to the administrators and support staff of Buriram Rajabhat University to distribute questionnaires and invite them to join in a focus group discussion;

2. Collect data relevant to signs and personnel positions of Buriram Rajabhat University, and translate these signs and position from Thai into English;

3. Conduct a focus group discussion with the following steps: Start by talking about the purpose of the research, then introduce the discussion topics based on the questionnaires created by the researchers and summarize the discussion;

3.4 Data Analysis

The general information of respondents was analyzed by using the descriptive statistics including frequency and percentage to describe their demographic data. Their needs of English language and content of English communication, and needs to develop English signs and positions were analyzed by employing the descriptive statistics i.e. mean and standard deviation. Content validity of the research tools was selected using the following criteria: If the questions had the IOC value of 0.5-1.00, these questions were selected for the samples. But if the questions had the IOC value of less than 0.5, it is either improved or eliminated. It is noted that comments and other suggestions obtained from the open-ended questions, content analysis was made.

4. Research Results

4.1 The results of developing a model of participatory English communication innovation to enhance Buriram Rajabhat University administrators

The data obtained from the administrators were presented at the following tables:

Table 1

Opinions about English topics/content for practicing English communication of the BRU administrators

English topics/content	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Meaning
1. Introducing yourself and other people	4.85	0.38	Highest
2. Giving and asking for information	4.67	0.60	Highest
3. Telling and asking for directions	4.54	0.97	Highest
4. English for meeting and seminar	4.77	0.60	Highest
5. Presentation skills (Talking about BRU, etc.)	5.00	0.00	Highest
6. English used for public speaking (welcome speech/ report speech / opening address etc.)	4.92	0.28	Highest

From Table 1, it showed that the BRU administrators needed to practice the following English topics: Presentation skills (Talking about BRU, etc.) (5.00), English used for public speaking (welcome speech/ report speech / opening address etc.) (4.92), and Introducing yourself and other people (4.85), respectively.

Table 2

Opinions about English medias/innovation suitable for the BRU administrators

Needed English Media/Innovation	No. of Samples (20)	Percentage
1. Booklet	7	35
2. Tape/CD	6	30
3. Brochure	2	10
4. VDO	2	10
5. E-book	0	0
6. Sound File	3	15
Total	20	100.0

From Table 2, it was discovered that the media/innovations most needed by the administrators were booklet (35 %), tape/CD (30 %), and sound file (15 %), respectively.

Table 3

Opinions about English topics/content for practicing English communication of the BRU support staff

English topics/content	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Meaning
1. Greeting and Welcoming	4.37	.761	High
2. Thanking and Saying Goodbye	4.40	.682	High
3. Apologizing	4.36	.659	High
4. Polite Refusal	4.29	.701	High
5. Introduce Tourist Attractions	4.19	.873	High
6. Asking for and Offering Help	4.44	.701	High
7. Asking about Accommodation	4.13	.884	High
8. Appointment	4.23	.863	High
9. Asking and Telling Time	4.24	.818	High
10. Asking and Giving Directions	4.44	.729	High
11. Asking Someone to Repeat	4.28	.753	High
12. Telephoning	4.24	.878	High

From Table 3, the samples agreed that they needed to practice English in the following topics: Asking for and Offering Help ($\bar{X}$= 4.44) and Asking and Giving Directions ($\bar{X}$= 4.44) at the same rank, Thanking and Saying Goodbye (4.40), and Greeting and Welcoming ($\bar{X}$= 4.37), respectively.

Table 4

Opinions about English medias/innovation suitable for the BRU support staff

Needed English Media/Innovation	No. of Samples (30)	Percentage
1. Booklet	47	47.0
2. Tape/CD	24	24.0
3. Brochure	3	3.0
4. VDO	20	20.0
5. Others	6	6.0
Total	100	100.0

From Table 4, it showed that the staff needed to have the booklet the most (47 %). This was followed by tape/CD (24 %), and VDO (20 %), respectively.

It is notably found that even if the samples, who are BRU administrators and support staff, had all four problematic skills of listening and speaking, reading and writing. However, they needed to practice speaking and listening skills more than the skills of writing and reading because these two types of English skills are useful for them, and they used these two skills much more than writing and reading skills.

Table 5

Opinions about English guidebook of the BRU personnel

Samples' opinions	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Meaning
1. You think that there should be an English guide manual to visit the Lower Northeastern Cultural Center and other BRU attractions	5	0	Highest
2. You need an English guidebook to visit the Lower Northeastern Cultural Center and other BRU attractions	5	0	Highest
3. You need an English guidebook to visit buildings at BRU.	5	0	Highest
4. You need an English guidebook to visit BRU library.	4.666	.471	Highest
5. You need an English guidebook to visit a huge Buddha statute (Phra Duddha Sapphanyu Sukhato) at BRU.	5	0	Highest
6. You need an English guidebook to visit the landscape surrounding the campus.	5	0	Highest
7. You need an English guidebook in the data file.	5	0	Highest
8. You need an English guidebook in a document form.	5	0	Highest

From Table 5, it was discovered that the samples' needs of having the English communication guidebook attractions were found at the highest level ($\bar{X}$= 5). Only one item, You need an English guide manual to visit BRU library, was found at the average of 4.666 but still was placed at the highest level.

Table 6

Opinions about an English manual of BRU personnel's positions and linguistic landscape

Samples' opinions	X̄	S.D.	Meaning
1. An English manual of BRU personnel's positions and linguistic landscape is essential to your work.	3.97	.87	High
2. You need an English manual of BRU personnel's positions.	3.87	.90	High
3. Linguistic landscape (signs) at Buriram Rajabhat University is essential to your work.	4.15	.92	High
4. You need an English linguistic landscape (signs) at Buriram Rajabhat University.	4.08	1.03	High
5. You need an English manual of BRU administrators' positions.	4.46	.74	High
6. You need an English manual of BRU academic personnel's positions.	4.32	.86	High
7. You need an English manual of BRU support staff's positions.	3.97	.96	High
8. You need a welcome sign.	4.31	.73	High
9. You need a direction sign.	4.19	.84	High
10. You need a building sign.	4.29	.79	High
11. You need a division sign.	4.33	.79	High
12. You need a name sign for administrators.	4.25	.80	High
13. You need a name sign for support staff.	4.10	.83	High
14. You need signs for male and female toilets.	4.29	.75	High
15. You need a No Parking sign.	4.31	.81	High
16. You need prohibition signs.	4.27	.85	High
17. You need the linguistic landscape in both Thai and English languages.	4.35	.85	High
18. You want to help improve and correct existing linguistic landscape.	4.24	.96	High
19. You need the linguistic landscape in a data file.	3.91	.95	High
20. You need the linguistic landscape in a document format.	3.89	1.10	High

The table 6 showed that the item 5, You need an English manual of BRU administrators' positions, was needed and ranked first (4.46), and was followed by the item 17, You need the linguistic landscape in both Thai and English languages (4.35) and the item 11, You need a division sign, (4.33), respectively.

5. Discussion

The research findings obtained were discussed in line with the objectives as follows:

1. The samples who are the BRU personnel faced problems of using four English skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, they needed to practice speaking and listening much more than reading and writing. This might be the reason that the English skills of speaking and listening are useful for them, and they often use these two skills to communicate with foreigners visiting BRU. This is consistent with the research of Meemark (2007) who states that the most problematic English skill for police officers is listening skill, followed by speaking, writing and reading skills, respectively. To learn English for tourism business, people in the Khiriwong community want to learn the skills of listening and speaking most (Ophatratanakon, 2007).

2. For the BRU personnel's opinions about an English communication guidebook for visiting the Lower Northeastern Cultural Center and other BRU attractions. The BRU administrators needed the practice the following topics of English communication i.e. Introducing yourself and other people, English for meeting and seminar, and Presentation skills (Talking about BRU, etc.), etc. The following English topics were needed by the BRU support staff i.e. Greeting and Welcoming, Thanking and Saying Goodbye, and Asking and Giving Directions, etc. And the BRU personnel needed to have an English guidebook to visit the Lower Northeastern Cultural Center and other BRU attractions. Moreover, they also needed the English manual of BRU personnel's positions and linguistic landscape (signs) at Buriram Rajabhat University. This might be the reasons that all these English topics and content were needed by the samples because these specific topics met their needs and useful for them. The English for this particular purpose is designed to meet the needs of learners in terms of topics and content, and relationship with the profession of the students. English for Specific Purposes always focuses on the needs of learners with different demands of English (Hutchinson and Waters (1996: 18-19).

3. The research samples needed a booklet, tape/CD and the suitable English innovations for practicing English communication, the bilingual manual of BRU positions and linguistic landscape, also the English guidebook for visiting the Lower Northeastern Cultural Center and other BRU attractions. This is because of the reasons that all these innovations are useful and portable that they can carry and use anytime and anywhere they want. The findings are relevant to the following research works: The English media must also be convenient with no need of being sophisticated equipment or technology (Galloway, 1993). The learning style that respondents want to use in English for communication is a personal diary, use of the photo book, and self-learning audio recording or CD / VCD, etc. (Atiphaet, 2010). In addition, a booklet is appropriate for the following conditions because it is based on local demand. It is cheap and effective tool that is easy to take and can be used at anytime and anywhere (Tanyong, 1989).

6. Conclusion

The researchers surveyed the samples' opinions about the English innovation suitable for them in order to help them have the effective tools for improving English communication. They needed different English topics and content, and these are undoubtedly relevant to their jobs and responsibilities. The English needed by a

specific group of learners is called English for Specific purposes (ESP) that is designed in line with the learners' needs.

The researchers, therefore, conducted this research based on their needs of English in order to enhance their English capabilities to enter the 21ˢᵗ century of globalization.

7. Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the research results obtained can be used to design an English course for personnel of a particular organization. The English topics and innovation can also be applied to development of English media for a specific group of students.

2. For further studies, it is recommended that the English topics found in this research should be put in the innovations of a booklet and CD, and a comparative study should also be conducted so as to see the differences of using different English innovations for different targets of learners.

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