

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology of the study involves the processes of identifying the target subjects, developing the research instrument, conducting the questionnaire, collecting and analysing the data. This chapter describes the:

1. Subjects
2. Instrument
3. Procedures
4. Analysis of data

#### **3.1 Subjects**

The subjects of this study are first-year MBA students who are required to take Course BA502: "English for Graduate Studies" in the second semester of the academic year 1998/1999. They represent 43% (38 students) of the total population of first-year MBA students. The remaining 57% (51 students) took this same course in the first semester, as arranged by the MBA Department.

#### **3.2 Instrument**

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire designed by the researcher. It is a commonly used instrument in needs analysis (West 1994).

##### **3.2.1 Designing the questionnaire**

Firstly, information on Course BA502 was gathered, and the course description, course objectives, and course content were examined. Questionnaires from related literature and research were also reviewed.

In developing the questionnaire, key questions in relation to the objectives of the study were asked and considered. How could the needs of the first-year MBA students be determined? The key questions raised were:

1. What are the backgrounds of the students?
2. What types of language functions are relevant to the students?
3. How necessary is it for the students to use English language skills in relation to their work or intended field of work?
4. How difficult is it for the students to use English language skills in relation to their field of work or intended field of work?
5. What are the students' preferred modes of learning Business English?

These key questions formed the content of the questionnaire.

The kinds of questions used in the questionnaire are close-ended questions, open-ended questions and multiple-choice questions. The majority of questions are close-ended questions, which elicit fixed responses from the students. Open-ended questions are included so that students' views or suggestions could be taken into consideration. The multiple-choice questions allow the students to indicate their preferences and exercise their options.

The Likert Scale, a summated ratings method is employed in the questionnaire to check how necessary and how difficult it is for the first-year students in using English language skills in relation to their field of work or intended field of work.

The students choose from five alternatives, and weights of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 are assigned to the answers as follows:

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 = Not necessary at all | 1 = Not difficult at all |
| 2 = Not so necessary     | 2 = Not so difficult     |
| 3 = Necessary            | 3 = Difficult            |
| 4 = Fairly necessary     | 4 = Fairly difficult     |
| 5 = Very necessary       | 5 = Very difficult       |

The questionnaire consists of three parts and is organised as follows:

#### Part I: Background information

Questions 1 to 6 concern biographical data of the subjects such as sex, age, university attended, undergraduate major and area of specialisation in the MBA programme.

#### Part II: Target needs

This part of the questionnaire contains a classification of business functions under the four English skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The five-point Likert Scale is used for the two questions here. Question 7 requires the subjects to rate the necessity of using business functions in English in relation to their field of work or intended field of work. Question 8 requires the subjects to rate the degree of difficulty or their perception of their present ability in using English for each of the business functions in relation to their field of work or intended field of work.

#### Part III: Learning needs

Questions 9 to 13 deal with the preferred learning modes of the subjects in learning English in Course BA502, in terms of the learning styles, the types of classroom activities, the correction and evaluation preferred by the subjects.

On the questionnaire, the questions are posed in both Thai and English to ensure that the questions are clearly understood by the subjects.

Once the questionnaire was developed, it was presented to the Special Project Committee (comprising an advisor and two members) for their comments and advice. The Committee improved the Thai translation of some parts of the questionnaire.

### **3.2.2 Testing the questionnaire**

Before the questionnaire was administered to the target subjects, it was tested. The questionnaire was tested on three first-year MBA students who took Course BA502 in the first semester of the academic year 1998/1999 and five second-year MBA students. They were asked to critically examine if the questions, statements

and directions of the questionnaire were clear and to give suggestions for improvement. From their responses, a minor amendment was made to the final form of the questionnaire: the layout of question 6.

A copy of the questionnaire designed is attached at Appendix A.

A reliability analysis of the questionnaire was also conducted using the alpha-coefficient method of the SPSS programme. The statistical analysis is shown in Appendix B. The result indicates that the instrument is reliable at 0.96. This means that 96% of the responses of the subjects would be consistent whenever they fill out the questionnaire.

### **3.3 Procedures**

Before conducting the questionnaire, permission was obtained from the Head of the MBA Department and the instructor of Course BA502.

The questionnaires were distributed to the first-year MBA students at the end of a class period. The questionnaires were personally administered by the researcher. The researcher was present in the class to clarify and answer questions from the students. The students were cooperative, and they took 15 to 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The administration of the questionnaire was smoothly carried out.

On record, there are 38 students in the class. Six students were absent on the day the questionnaire was administered. The total number of subjects is 32. All the 32 questionnaires were returned by the students.

### **3.4 Analysis of data**

From the questionnaires, the data gathered had to be processed and analysed. The data had to be coded and keyed into the computer before the results of the study could be computed. Data analysis was carried out using a computer software programme known as the SPSS.

The Likert Scale was used to determine the level or degree of necessity and difficulty in learning and using business skills in English in the questionnaire.

Using the guidelines provided by Penkae Saengkeaw (1995), the mean levels of the scores of statements with regards to necessity and difficulty are specified as follows:

Scale	Levels of necessity	Mean range
1	Not necessary at all	1.00 – 1.80
2	Not so necessary	1.81 – 2.60
3	Necessary	2.61 – 3.40
4	Fairly necessary	3.41 – 4.20
5	Very necessary	4.21 – 5.00

  

Scale	Levels of difficulty	Mean range
1	Not difficult at all	1.00 – 1.80
2	Not so difficult	1.81 – 2.60
3	Difficult	2.61 – 3.40
4	Fairly difficult	3.41 – 4.20
5	Very difficult	4.21 – 5.00

The statistics used in this study are percentages, mean (M) and standard deviation (SD).