

A Needs Analysis of English Communication for Sports Tourism of Thai Boxing Personnels in Chaiyaphum Province

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Abstract

Thai boxing recently gains popularity among tourists with limited number of personnels to bring it forward internationally. This research has two objectives: 1) to study the English language needs of Thai Boxing (Muay Thai) personnels 2) to provide the guideline for the development of innovative tourism English communication for Thai Boxing personnels. The questionnaires administered to 50 Thai boxing personnels and one-on-one semi-structured interviews with six experts in Thai Boxing were used. The participants were selected by a purposive sampling method. The descriptive statistics and content analysis were used to analyze the questionnaires and the latter was used to analyze content from the interviews. The results from the questionnaires show that English is necessary for Thai Boxing personnels at the highest level. The sample group required listening and speaking skills rather than reading and writing skills. The content wanted to practice at the highest level was the introduction of skills in using fists, feet, knees, elbows, followed by how to describe different types of boxing at the high level. The

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most preferred innovation of English learning was online media. They prefer the online media with animation or picture illustration with subtitles as well as language training. The results of the interview also show that they had the greatest communication problems in listening and speaking. The highest needed content is the history of Muay Thai sports and various boxing skills. All six experts have a need for media with translation into Thai and English for Muay Thai application media. They suggested for the English language training, along with online English language training through social media, to be provided for Thai Boxing personnels.

Keywords: Needs Analysis, sports tourism, English communication, Thai boxing personnels, ESP

1. Introduction

English is used as an official and semi-official language in more than 60 countries around the world. It is used as the primary language in books, textbooks, publications, airlines, international businesses and more. English is the global language or international language of communication (Crystal, 2003). People around the world endeavor to learn English for the purpose of communicating effectively through the educational process to be able to use the English language to exchange and learn ideas between each other. At present, the sport tourism industry is both a small and large industry that is an important economic driver, generating huge income. It also tends to be very high and more significant (Higham, 2018; Malchrowicz-Mosko, & Munsters, 2018). The first obvious benefit is language, a communication tool that is the medium of understanding between individuals and groups in provinces or localities with tourist attractions. English is more necessary to

communicate with foreigners. Although Thailand has opened the country into the tourism industry for a long time, the problem of the inability of tourism personnels still exists. Muay Thai or Thai Boxing is an important martial art for the Thai people. The problem has occurred with Thai boxing personnels who still have communication problems with foreigners interested in learning Muay Thai (Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa, & Tanner 2006).

Moreover, Muay Thai is an intellectual heritage of Thai culture. It is a martial art for Thai people since the ancient times. It is one of the oldest types of martial arts in the world that should be well preserved (Ngaoprasertwong & Chandarasorn, 2019). In developing the potential of Thai boxing personnels to promote tourism and to develop local, provinces, and countries, the development of potential of Thai boxing personnels is focused as it added value for the boxers themselves in Chaiyaphum Province and other provinces in Thailand. Promoting English language proficiency will increase the effectiveness of the boxer or those interested in Muay Thai. In addition, there were boxing spectators from both domestic and international arena who traveled to watch Muay Thai or organize boxing to promote the business of Muay Thai sport tourism. Moreover, the language abilities of boxers and those involved in Muay Thai have also raised Thai boxing as a sport that has become more attractive (Yuvanont, Buristrakul, & Kittimetheekul, 2010).

Shrivastava (2009) defined ESP as English that is used to meet students' specific needs. He stated that ESP "makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves" (p.2). ESP is centered on the language that will be applied in the workplace, and all the activities are centered on the language appropriate to the "activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre" (p.3). According to Shrivastava, the

main goal of ESP is that it serves a specific purpose and is a different way of teaching content from that for general English. Belcher (2006) pointed out ESP specialists often need evaluators in the first place, then designers and implementers of specific curricula in response to identified needs. ESP assumes that the problems are unique to specific learner in specific contexts and thus must be carefully tailored to suitable instruction.

The following researches on needs analysis were conducted in order to identify the needs to learn English language. Giannarou (2021) investigated the needs of naval engineers in learning English language for the diploma. With the help of a questionnaire, it was found that learners viewed learning English as useful in their career. In fact, they need to be able to read and understand engine operation manuals and write the manuals.

Zaidoune and Chroqui (2020) investigated English language needs of Economics and Management second year Master's degree at the Faculty of Economics, Social Sciences and Law. To this end, a questionnaire has been administered to 123 students. The findings pointed out that the students were interested in the four language skills but wanted to improve their productive skills in particular. Moreover, Li, Zhang, May & Qin (2020) developed the questionnaire of ESP teachers' challenges and needs in English curriculum innovation, completed by 208 Chinese novice ESP teachers. Statistical methods were used to find out factors indicating challenges and needs for ESP teachers. In addition, semi-structured interviews with six selected participants were conducted. Results show institutional support required for effective ESP innovation provision by means of policy and financial.

In the context of Thailand, Nuemaihom (2016) analyzed the need for ESP of the 40 tourist local vendors and 10 foreign at Phnom Rung Sanctuary by questionnaires. The focus group discussion with 15 Thai participants were purposively selected. All these subjects were chosen by using a purposive

sampling method. The research findings show that the samples needed to develop listening and speaking skills rather than reading and writing skills. They needed to study the tailored-to-fit terms and conversations related to their jobs. The two innovations, i.e., booklet and audio CD were needed. Similarly, Saisaengjan and Prachanant (2018) compared needs and problems on English skills used by baristas and 50 waiters & waitresses, from the coffee houses in the northeastern region of Thailand, all of whom were selected by multi-stage random sampling technique to answer questionnaires. The data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and independent samples t-test. The findings show that the need of English skills for working at the high level. The listening is the most needed, followed by speaking, reading and writing. Also, they faced the listening skill most, followed by speaking, reading and writing. Likewise, Waewchimplee (2018) analyzed 78 students' needs regarding English course of the 2nd year students at the Performing Arts Program, Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University, Thailand. The questionnaires and interviews were used and revealed that speaking and listening is the most difficult skills which is most important for their future. Moreover, Thitivesa, Siraphattada, Kingkaew and Yimwan (2019) investigated their English-speaking problems and needs for the skill improvement to determine the scope of topic for developing administrative clerks' English speaking skill for administrative work. The sampling groups included administrative clerks working for the dean in the faculties of Education in a Rajabhat Universities with purposively selected. The semi-structured in-depth interview result suggested that there were communicative situations in which English speaking skill was in need for success in their career. They are interested in improving their pronunciation, structures at sentence level, as well as conversation skill.

Limited research was conducted on needs analysis of English Communication for Sports Tourism of Thai Boxing (Muay Thai) Personnels, the researcher is interested in doing the research on this topic to investigate the need of the Thai boxing personnel so that they can work properly in their situations whereby the linguistic features, field specific content and the language skills are required. The reason to choose Chaiyaphum province because it is rich in natural resources suitable for tourist destination and Muay Thai was highly supported in this city with numerous Thai boxing personnel. There are two objectives of this research: to investigate needs of the Thai boxing personnels for sport tourism English communication and to provide the guidelines for communicative English innovation or pedagogical and learning materials for Thai Boxing personnels. In the present study, the two terms, Muay Thai and Thai Boxing, are interchangeably used.

2. Research Method

2.1 Subjects

The subjects for the questionnaire were 50 Thai boxing personnels consisting student boxers who are interested in and related to Thai boxing, selected by purposive sampling method. The criteria for the selection is that these individuals are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with Thai boxing and they need to be available and willing to participate to communicate experiences and opinions with prior informed consent. In addition, six boxing experts, four of whom are Thai boxing lecturers or masters and the other two are the world boxing champion and the gold medal boxing winner in Seagame, were selected purposively for the one-on-one interview. The criteria of the selection is that all of the subjects in the interviews are experts in Thai boxing and have some experience

participating in situations where English is used, who are willing to participate to communicate experiences and opinions with prior informed consent. The number of six cases is considered the saturated point for obtaining comprehensive data in qualitative research based on Creswell (2012).

2.2 Research Instruments

The questionnaires and one-on-one interviews were conducted in Thai language. In the questionnaire, the first part required demographic information. The second part evaluated their perception on the needs of English for their career, the importance of four language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) in relation to their career field, innovation pattern and the most needed content in learning English. The last part was about their suggestions and their opinions. The content validity and the index of item-objective congruence (IOC) of the questionnaire constructed by the researcher were examined by three experts, that was between 0.67-1.00. The questions of the questionnaire and seven open-ended questions interview were grouped in parallel so as to find out if there was consistency between the results from the questionnaire and interviews. Moreover, in the one-on-one interview, there are six questions parallelly consistent with the content of the questionnaire's questions. The interviews question form constructed by the researcher was examined by the three experts. The content validity and the index of item-objective congruence (IOC) was between 0.67-1.00.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaires administered to the 50 Thai boxing personnels were analysed using the descriptive statistics and the content analysis. Regarding the questionnaires, a five point Likert Scale was used to evaluate

the items in three parts, except for the first and the last one. Mean and standard deviation were used in calculating the average level of needs for the five point Likert Scale questions in the questionnaires. Both percentage and frequency were used in the analysis of the first and second parts. The content analysis was conducted for analyzing the sample's opinions and suggestions in open-ended questions in the last part.

The one-on-one interviews with six boxing experts were also analysed using content analysis and descriptively presented. The one-on-one interview was applied using a semi-structured interview that would gather data to answer the questions posed in this study to offer flexibility necessary in collecting rich and in-depth data. Probes and follow-up questions were considered when the prepared questions were not complete as suggested by Creswell (2012). The interview took an average of one hour, was audio-taped for increasing trustworthiness (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The transcribed interview data in this study were condensed, i.e. selected, focused and organized then displayed using participants' verbatim words and from these, conclusions were arisen. In this study, after verbatim transcription of data from one-on-one interviews with six experts, the transcribed data were coded based on the order of topics put in the questionnaire as developed by the pilot study conducting. In reducing the large data, first, the transcripts were all browsed as a whole, then impressions were noted particularly focusing on common and unique concepts presented by the participants. After reading for general impression, focused reading and re-reading for relevant information was done. Then, most important common and unique concepts were selected and were put into categories which were described from the perspective of the participants using their own words. The identified categories were linked to the research problems and were presented as the results.

Lastly, to facilitate the accuracy for revisions of the interview questions and the questionnaire prior to actual data collection, there was the try-out interview with a population similar to the sample, one person involved in or interested in Muay Thai sport and two Muay Thai teachers to identify some issues and challenges in the selection of participants who can provide rich and in-depth information with multiple perspectives related to the research problems. In the same vein, the questionnaire was also tried out with 10 samples who are involved or interested in Muay Thai. The piloting revealed 1 question in the interview was not understood (what is the preferred English communication innovation). After the piloting the item concerning individual skills was excluded because it overlapped with questions about required improving skills and was adjusted with examples.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the analysis were divided into three parts according to the sections of the questionnaire, except for part 3. Firstly, regarding the demographic information, it was shown that the majority of the sample were male (84%) with 19-35 years old (82%). Most of the sample had bachelor's degree (88%). They were the Thailand Sports University' students in Chaiyaphum campus who studied Muay Thai and interested in Muay Thai (60%), followed by Muay Thai teachers (14%), trainers in Muay Thai Gyms (8%), and professional boxers (8%).

Table 1 English skill requirement

	Thai respondents' opinions toward needs of English	mean	S.D
1	English is essential for boxing personnels and people who are interested in or related to Muay Thai.	4.58	0.54
2	Speaking skill is very essential for them.	4.54	0.50
3	Listening skill is very essential for them.	4.50	0.54
4	Reading skill is very essential for them.	3.76	0.87
5	Writing skill is very essential for them.	3.56	0.86
6	Vocabulary related to Muay Thai is necessary for them.	4.26	0.63
7	Conversation related to Muay Thai is necessary for them.	4.28	0.64
8	Both vocab and conversation related to Muay Thai is necessary for them.	4.24	0.66
9	Grammar is necessary for them	3.62	0.90
10	Vocabulary and conversations should be transcribed and translated into Thai.	4.20	0.64
11	English training workshop should be organized for them.	4.42	0.67

Secondly, in terms of needed skill shown in Table 1, it was found that the respondents strongly agreed that English is necessary for Thai boxing personnels who are interested in and related to Muay Thai ($M= 4.58, SD=0.54$)

and strongly agreed with the need of speaking skills ($M=4.54$, $SD=0.50$), followed by listening ($M=4.50$, $SD=0.54$), however, they agree with the needs of reading ($M=3.76$, $SD=0.87$), writing skill ($M=3.56$, $SD=0.86$) and grammar ($M=3.62$, $SD=0.90$). They agree with the needs of Muay Thai vocabulary ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.63$) and conversation ($M=4.28$, $SD=0.64$) related to Muay Thai with the transcription and translation into Thai ($M=4.20$, $SD=0.64$). Lastly, they agreed with the need of English training workshop ($M=4.42$, $SD=0.67$).

Table 2 The need for topics or content to practice English

Item	Needed Content	mean	S.D
1	Greeting	4.18	0.66
2	Welcoming	4.06	0.68
3	Thank you	4.10	0.71
4	Saying good bye	4.04	0.73
5	Apology	4.04	0.73
6	An introduction to the history of Muay Thai	4.30	0.71
7	Explaining different types of boxing moves	4.42	0.70
8	Introduction to punch, foot, knee, elbow skills	4.46	0.68
9	Price bargain	4.08	0.72
10	Boxing for weight loss	4.16	0.74
11	Asking for help	4.00	0.76
12	Appointment	4.04	0.76
13	Introducing tourist attractions	3.96	0.70
14	Date and Time	3.98	0.74
15	Direction	4.02	0.71

Thirdly, the English topic or content needed was presented in Table 3, it was found that the topic or content needed the most was Introduction to punch, foot, knee, elbow skills, followed by An introduction to the history of Muay Thai, Greeting, Boxing for weight loss, Thank you, Price bargain, Welcoming, Saying good bye, Apology, Appointment, Direction, Asking for help, respectively, and Introducing tourist attractions and Date and Time were least needed. Furthermore, the learning materials found most suitable for English language practice were online media (86%), followed by CD / DVD (12%) and booklet (2%), respectively. In the comments and suggestions section, the respondents want the illustration and description in online media. Moreover, they need an expert in English for Muay Thai to teach them English which can be provided through the training.

Regarding the interview, all six of them are boxing masters who experts in Muay Thai. All participants were males. They totally agreed that English was necessary for them. All the 6 experts have problems communicating in English. The most problematic skills were listening and speaking. In light of the content, the interviewees preferred conversation with specific vocabulary related to boxing postures at the highest level because it is authentically used in daily life, while general terms and grammar is taken for granted in their opinions. This viewpoint is in line with that of respondents in the questionnaires. Furthermore, all of the 6 experts agree to learn English because Muay Thai has been popular for a few recent years through various online media, especially Muay Thai coaches which are preferred by foreigners. Language is therefore very important to be used in communication. Foreigners increasingly have interests in Muay Thai art, and it is necessary to use English in communication to convey the art of Muay Thai, the national art of Thailand. All 6 experts agree that the topics or content that should

be learned the most are: 1) the history of Muay Thai, Wai Kru, 2) price bargains which are essential for boxing gyms, 3) health benefits of boxing 4) introducing various boxing poses or movement including basic communication about how to defense and attack using elbows, knees, punch, kick and other boxing skills in sentences, 5) content or vocabulary about Muay Thai boxing, and 6) Thai traditions of worship and greetings. Furthermore, most of them wanted innovation in online media format, containing interactive sentences about Muay Thai because it is conveniently open to listen to audio files, which corresponds to the result obtained from questionnaires. The other two boxing experts wanted boxing skills videos with simulated events or online learning material. All 6 interviewees have a need for media or communication equipment/ innovation with translation into Thai and English for Muay Thai applications. They suggested for the English language training, along with online English language training through social media. Words and conversations used specifically in their career were most needed. They strongly agreed that innovation in online media format is their appropriate innovation of learning English.

To sum up, all samples share similar views in needs of English communication innovation for personnels involved in Muay Thai and interested in Muay Thai. All samples said English is very strongly essential for them because foreigners are increasingly interested in Muay Thai. Accordingly, Yuvanont, Buristrakul and Kittimetheelul (2010) pointed that Muay Thai sport tourism is highly promoted recently due to the increased number of foreign spectators who are interested in Muay Thai Arts. (Yuvanont, Buristrakul, & Kittimetheelul, 2010).

4. Needs in Language Skills

It was found that Thai questionnaire informants needed speaking skill at the highest level (mean=4.54, S.D.=0.50), followed by listening skill ($M=4.50$, $SD=0.54$) (Table 1), which is in line with the interviews that show the problem of participants in speaking and listening, and they wanted to brush up these two skills at highest level, rather than the reading and writing skills because they often use the two skills in communicating with tourists. Likewise, Nuemaihom (2016) found Thai entrepreneurs and tourists who are both native English speakers and second language tourists failed to understand each other verbally which coincides the study of Saisaengjan and Prachanant (2018), Waewchimplee (2018), and Thitivesa, Siraphatthada, Kingkaew, & Yimwan (2019) in needs of studying English for their specific career which found listening and speaking skills the most needed skills. This study thus paid attention to listening and speaking skill development such as the ability to communicate everyday informal talk with foreign tourists while training Thai boxing, which reflects the third skill or ability of Gatehouse (2001) in that in order to achieve the ESP learning that the important ability to be successful in communication especially in an occupational context is to use the particular jargon representative to specific professional context and to use the language of everyday informal talk or small talk to communicate effectively, regardless of occupational setting. EFL learners inadequately have a chance to listen to the target language, and lack the environment in which they can practice English. They rarely have a chance to speak or listen to English at schools and homes as they speak using their mother tongue (Salem, 2017). Galloway (1993), saying that the language and content used to organize a communicative situation should be the language used in everyday life. This will help learning English for communication more

effectively. Conversely, the reading and writing skills were rarely used. To be able to communicate verbally is therefore more essential than writing and reading.

5. Needs in English Content

In light of the content, the interviewees preferred conversation with specific vocabulary related to boxing postures at the highest level because it is authentically used in daily life, while general terms and grammar is taken for granted in their opinions. This viewpoint is in line with that of respondents in the questionnaires ($M=4.46$, $SD=0.68$) (Table 2). In the same vein, Long (2005) also mentioned that it was sufficient knowledge about to what extent the grammar linguistic features are included in ESP provision. And consequently, this has shaped the need analysis. In terms of linguistics, Belcher (2006) also viewed the rhetoric purpose or motivation is the key component of ESP, so the communicative approach is essential for ESP. Richards & Rodgers (2014) leveraged the functional model of language, i.e. the means of conveying functional meanings in real-world activities. However, Flalova (2021) suggested that even though grammar is found problematic, it has to be taught in context and in an interesting way showing practical use. The present study thus suggests that the English communication content in the form of authentic conversation for future English communication innovation or its pedagogic and learning materials necessitate the selected grammar. For example, English teachers can direct learners to focus on the particular tenses which are crucial to speaking and listening skills in order to see how the correct usage of this grammar topic can facilitate them to speak more confidently in certain time or situation.

6. Needs in Institutional Supports

The respondents from the questionnaires and individual interviews shared the similarities that organizing an English training program was necessary for Muay Thai personnels and those who are interested in or related to Muay Thai at a high level ($M=4.42$, $SD=0.67$) (Table 1). The sample group found that organizing an English training program was necessary for personnels who are interested in or related to Muay Thai to use these words and conversations to communicate with foreign tourists. The result is similar to that of Zaidoune and Chroqui (2020) who suggested to conduct training sessions for the benefit of those teachers, according to the subject matter of different areas, would fill the gap between the students' needs, the language teacher, the specialist subject teacher, and the job requirements. Li, Zhang, May & Qin (2020) posited that institutional support was required for effective ESP innovation provision, namely, policy and financial. Therefore, the present study further proposes the liaison of the institution to subsidize the ESP training using the interdisciplinary collaboration among pedagogical learning, research activities, English teachers and professional entity related to Thai boxing.

7. Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate needs of Thai boxing personnels for English communication in Muay Thai for sport tourism and to provide appropriate guidelines for designing the English courses for them. The main findings are that the speaking, followed by listening skills were most needed. The specific English vocabulary authentically related to boxing postures was most necessary content to learn. The most preferred innovation of English learning was online media. The English language training was highly needed.

The results of the study can be used as a guideline for creating the English innovation for Muay Thai personnels so that they would be able to communicate with foreign tourists to promote sport tourism in the context of Chaiyaphum province or other provinces where Muay Thai can be included to promote the sports tourism in their area. For the pedagogical implication, through appropriate teaching methods and media integrated in the classroom, lecturers can provide an authentic learning atmosphere, namely, conversation or small talk with the tab of grammar to enhance the practical use, that is appropriate for sport students studying in the classroom based on their needs of required skill, learning goals and occupational context. Lastly, institutional support is required for effective ESP innovation provision to support self-directed learning, collaboration, research activities, and pedagogical learning opportunities.

The suggestions and recommendations based on the research results are that further studies on needs analysis should be conducted with more data gathering approach to triangulate the results such as focus group discussion to avoid errors from testing the small sample size. The limitation to apply focus group discussion in this study is due to the social distance policy due to Covid-19 situation at the time of data collection. Further studies on needs analysis should be conducted with a larger sample size to obtain more information, to better determine the average values. Moreover, the questionnaire and the follow-up interview would answer what to teach which is a rough idea for class activities. Therefore, future research should aim at examining learning styles, preferred and efficient ways of individuals and environment (i.e. teachers and the situation).

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