

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This final chapter includes a summary of the study's objectives, statement of problem and methodology. It also summarises the main findings and the conclusions derived from the research. Then, it proceeds to the implications of the findings for ESP, suggestions for further study and finally recommendations. The researcher has also included a concluding remark to end this discussion.

The objective of the study was to primarily verify learners' perception of an effective business negotiation and to evaluate factors that contribute to the effectiveness of learners' performance in business negotiations compared to real negotiations in the business world.

The focus was firstly on learners' general understanding of negotiations and learners' perception of factors that contribute to the effectiveness of business negotiations. Secondly, it analysed the effectiveness of learners' performance in the negotiation task.

The statement of the problem was triggered by the concern amongst ESP teachers whether the objectives of ESP courses were actually achieved. Although many ESP courses are offered in universities to prepare learners with the necessary skills to cope with their future job demands, there is no assurance that these learners will be able to perform effectively in their job situations.

It is common to hear grouses amongst employers regarding newly employed graduates who were found to be inadequate in performing their work tasks effectively especially when English is required. Moreover, it is not assured that learners have actually learnt what they are supposed to learn if learners' understanding and perception of the 'learning by doing' approach are not investigated.

The research methodology was mainly a case study where the analysis was qualitative in nature. Semi structured interviews were utilised in eliciting data from the learners in search of their perception of the general understanding of negotiations and factors that contribute to the effectiveness of business negotiations.

An observation of a video recording was also utilised to elicit data pertaining to the analysis of learners' performance of this negotiation task. Then it was observed by both teachers and specialist informants to provide feedback through written comments.

The procedure in which these data were analysed began with the analysis of the learners' responses which were later transferred onto a verification list. The purpose was to seek the specialist informants' verification of learners' perception of factors that contribute to effective negotiations. The teachers' comments were consequently analysed and cross referenced with the informants' perception of the effectiveness of the learners' performance in the negotiation task.

5.2 Summary of Main Findings.

The discussion of the main findings is divided to three main sections . The first one is the summary of findings on learners' general understanding of negotiations. This is followed by the discussion of the findings on learners' perception of factors that contribute to the effectiveness of negotiations and proceeded to the discussion of written comments from teachers and informants in analysing learners' performance of the task.

The findings are mainly based on the verification of learners' and teachers' responses by the specialist informants. As many ESP practitioners' main concern is the 'link between classroom practice and the real world', it is only appropriate that the experts make evaluation and verification. This is why the triangulation method was adopted in this study in which three subjects were employed to look at one common issue, in this case, factors that contribute to an effective business negotiation.

5.1.1 Learners' general understanding of negotiations.

In this study the researcher examined learners' perception of their general understanding of a negotiation in terms of :

- their definitions of negotiations.
- their reasons to why the task was found interesting.
- their reasons to why negotiations can be easy or difficult
- the problems that were encountered in negotiations.
- the language used in negotiations.

One main finding is that generally, there is a positive indication of what is learnt or understood by the learners in negotiations through the simulated task. It was found that a majority of the learners had perceived appropriate understanding of business negotiations in terms of the aspects listed above. Although the responses varied, they were most verified by the informants as important in negotiations.

Nonetheless, a very small number of learners' perceived responses were found contradictory to the features of effective negotiations and interestingly these responses were at the same time not verified by the informants.

This justifies Breen's (1987) view that the " intended learning outcomes" may differ between learners. As Breen (1987: 23) emphasises:

" learning outcomes will be influenced by learners' perceptions about what they should contribute, their views about the nature and demands of the task and their definitions of the situation in which the task takes place ..."

5.1.2 Learners' perception of factors that contribute to the effectiveness of negotiations.

Similarly, the findings of this part were primarily based on the verification of :

- the required skills for negotiations
- the thinking skills needed during negotiations
- criteria of effective negotiations
- preparation needed for negotiations.

Positively, the findings revealed that learners' perception of the required skills in negotiations and factors that were thought to contribute to effective negotiations were verified by the informants. This indicates that the simulated negotiation task experienced by the learners was relevant and had increased their awareness of the skills needed to contribute to an effective negotiation.

However, the informants' remarks on certain learners' perceived responses provided a better scenario of the actual demands of real world negotiations. This clarification was necessary to give a clearer explanation. The clarification and specification from the informant, gave a better interpretation of the actual skills required in contributing to an effective negotiation.

5.2.3 Teachers' perception of the effectiveness of negotiations.

Teachers' comments and evaluation were cross-checked with the comments made by the specialist informants and hence, the discussion of this finding was also based on the verification from the specialist informants. It was found that teachers' perception of factors that affected the effectiveness of learners' negotiation tasks were to a certain extent aligned with that of the informants.

However, there were some differences in the way the effectiveness of the task was perceived. It appeared that teachers' perception of factors that contribute

to an effective negotiation task were at some point perceived negatively by the informants and vice versa. One of the apparent factors was allowing learners to tolerate each other's view where decisions were easily made. This was seen as an effective factor by the teacher whilst the informants perceived it as ineffective.

Next, it was found that teachers had the tendency to overlook the positive aspects of learners' performance in the negotiation task. In the case of evaluating the effectiveness of the negotiation task, there was a tendency for the teachers to perceive those aspects which were of secondary importance to the informants as the primary ones.

For example, teachers were found to have focussed on one aspect, such as the skills used and failed to observe the progress or development of the negotiation as a whole. The informants were more concerned with the latter, that is, the progress of the development.

This has easily influenced teachers' perception of the task in determining the effectiveness of the learners' performance. One has to understand that this can occur as commonly, teachers do not have the 'hands on' experience on the demands of real world tasks, in this case in 'negotiations'. Thus, it is feasible for teachers to have this kind of perception.

Nevertheless, one positive finding was that teachers to a certain extent had managed to identify factors which were verified by the informants as those that contribute to an effective negotiation.

5.2 CONCLUSION

" when learners of L2 (second language) perform tasks...they will be evaluated in one way or the other.....in terms of its correctness or communicative effectiveness"

Rod Ellis (1984 : 27)

The above quotation briefly recalls the study's objective in which it aimed to seek learners' perception of an effective business negotiation. As discussed earlier in the literature review, the researcher has interpreted the term 'communicative effectiveness' to refer to "a holistic view of the process of the task to see if the task performed serves its purpose in relation to the situations outside the classroom". (Pg 56)

This explains the reason why the study had focused on learners' perception of the classroom negotiations and were later triangulated with teachers' and specialist informants' holistic views of the effectiveness of negotiations.

The conclusions of this study derived mainly from the triangulation of the learners', teachers' and the specialist informants' perception of factors that contribute to an effective negotiation.

Firstly, the learners' experience of this classroom task has assured us that learning did take place and that through the simulation task, learners' managed to have an appropriate understanding of a negotiation. However, certain remarks given by the informants proved that sometimes learners' perception can be less accurate . These specified remarks given by the informants can assist learners and teachers to be aware of the actual demands of an effective business negotiation.

Secondly, it can be concluded that the 'intended learning outcomes' vary between learners as some responses were verified while some were not specified by the informants. This is important to note as Breen (1987 : 23) emphasises that :

"learning outcomes will be influenced by learners' perception of what they should contribute, their views about the nature and demands of the task and their definitions of the situation in which the task takes place ..."

In the case of this study where the learning outcomes refer to learners' ability to perform the negotiation task effectively, the conclusion is that if learners' perception of the task is inaccurate or less specific, it may affect learners' ability to perform the task effectively in the real world situation and this is a major concern for most ESP teachers.

Thus, it may defeat the purpose of the Business English course which aims to equip learners with the necessary skills to cope with the demands of actual negotiations in the professional world. At the same time, if learners' perceptions of the understanding of negotiations are similar to the actual negotiations, it can be assured that learners would be able to perform negotiation tasks more effectively.

With reference to this study, a majority of the learners have perceived appropriate understanding of the task and factors that contribute to effective business negotiations.

The next conclusion is derived from the verification of teachers' perception of factors that contribute to the effectiveness of learners' performance in the negotiation task. It was found that the way teachers perceive factors that contribute to an effective negotiation were aligned with that of the informants.

In comparison to learners' perception , teachers' perception were at times more inappropriate when compared to the informants' perception. This was due to contradicting perceptions of primary factors that should contribute to an effective negotiation. Therefore, it seemed necessary for teachers to take into consideration these dissimilarities as it should assist them to give better input and most importantly to bridge the existence of :

"the frequent disparity between what the teacher intends as the outcome of a task and what the learners actually derive from it " (Breen 1987 : 23)

It is important for teachers to be aware of the actual factors that contribute to an effective business negotiation so that teachers' evaluation of the effectiveness of learners performance in the negotiation task is parallel to the perception of the experts. Perhaps , in evaluating the effectiveness of learners' performance, teachers need to identify the effective factors from all angles. This includes the informants' perception and features of an effective negotiation as mentioned in many theories of negotiation such as those mentioned in Cotton & Robins (1993) .

This is because by reviewing the informants' comments and perception in this study, the researcher concludes that these perceptions are mostly identical to that of Cotton & Robins' strategies of effective negotiations. However, one has to bear in mind that the validity of the verification is strongly based on only two informants' perception representing two different companies and this is one of the limitations of this study.

The final conclusion that the researcher would like to include is that learners' learning process is significant as what they 'actually derive from it', is the result of the learning process that took place. So, it is necessary to ensure that the learning process is noted as an important aspect of the teaching and learning of ESP.

5.3 The Implications for ESP.

There are several implications to this study and they are described as below.

1. There should be an awareness amongst ESP teachers that the learning outcomes of each learner can vary from one learner to the other and thus teachers' input and explanation need to be as accurate as possible. This is so that the effectiveness of learners' performance in the classrooms can be monitored to ensure learners' capability in performing the real tasks. Hence, there will not be much disparity in students' learning outcome.

2. Seeking verification from the informants helps to seek appropriate materials and provide accurate input for the learners. The materials used in the teaching of any ESP courses could also be validated by the experts, that is the specialist informants so as to initiate a more effective and realistic start on the teaching of any ESP courses.
3. The findings to this study could assist ESP teachers especially those teaching negotiations in Business English courses to understand better the nature of negotiations and its demands.
4. Another important implication is that there is a need for teachers to be aware of the actual needs of real world negotiations in evaluating the effectiveness of learners' performance in ESP classroom task specifically and teaching materials must be adopted to suit this.
5. It is necessary for ESP practitioners to be aware of the process of learning that learners experience rather than focussing only on the end product.

5.4 Suggestions for further study.

This study may also probe ESP practitioners for further study to look at other ESP courses that are of the same nature especially those that use simulated tasks and also materials used in ESP courses. Another possibility is to analyse the effectiveness of the materials used, teaching methodology and most interestingly is the testing of ESP courses. This may include spoken and written and reading components in ESP courses .

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher would like to include some recommendations based on this study.

1. The course designers should first elicit information on the actual demands of real world tasks from the experts in the professionals prior to designing the outline of the course. In the case of the negotiation component, it would be necessary for teachers or course designers to interview these experts in search of the information. This would assist the course designer to prepare the appropriate 'negotiation' component of the Business English course.

2. Teachers should ensure that correct and appropriate input are given to the learners so as to prepare them with a more accurate perception of negotiations. This is important as how learners perceive a task may to some extent affect the effectiveness of their performance .
3. Teachers should also be aware of the kinds of business negotiations that take place often at workplace to expose learners to different circumstances of negotiations in the business world.
4. This also means that classroom tasks have to simulate those that are closely related to the actual negotiations for meaningful practice. The topic or issue of negotiations should reflect the issues that are commonly negotiated upon in the real business world.
5. In teaching the Business English course, there should be a strong liaison between teachers and the professionals at times in order to validate classroom practice with the real world. Thus, a good rapport should be established between the two parties.
6. Most importantly, ESP teachers of this course should undergo some kind of training to equip them with the right knowledge to teach and evaluate learners' teaching and learning.

5.6 Concluding Remarks.

This study has managed to create an awareness of learners' general perception of the effectiveness of business negotiations through a detailed study on individual learners. Moreover, the researcher has also managed to gain some insights from outside classroom situations. In this case the demands of actual negotiations in the professional world:

More importantly, the researcher has also concluded that the theoretical input in determining the effectiveness of negotiations, for example , those listed by Cotton & Robins (1993) is valid and parallel to the actual negotiations in the real world. However, there are other factors which are not mentioned theoretically but found to be important in the real world for effective negotiations.

Generally, students know what to do and what is expected of them in a business negotiation. Teachers are not necessarily always correct and in providing the 'real' skills, teachers need to seek the opinion of 'real' people or in this study 'real' negotiations.