An Investigation into the English Language Needs of Banking and Finance Professionals in Taiwan

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Abstract
With the continuing globalization of markets, widespread recognition of the need for improved English communication skills has been growing among banking and finance professionals in Taiwan. These individuals are finding that general English may not be sufficient to perform job-related communicative functions at a satisfactory level. As a result, the demand for training courses/materials and assessment systems tailored to their specific English language needs is growing in Taiwan's banking and financial sectors. However, without the support of data collected through systematic needs analysis, mismatches frequently occur between what is taught/tested and what is needed for work in these sectors.

To strengthen the link between demand and supply, this study investigated the English language needs of banking and finance professionals in Taiwan. The informants included executive-, managerial-, and staff-level employees in Taiwan's banking and financial sectors. Through interviews and questionnaires, we aimed to identify the English skills these employees use more frequently in work settings, the communicative tasks they often perform in English, and the extent of difficulty they encounter in performing the required tasks. An attempt was also made to understand the employees' experiences with learning English and taking English tests, the learning modes they found effective, and for decision makers, their key considerations when choosing English tests for the selection and promotion of employees. This paper reports the needs analysis procedures and analyzes the quantitative and qualitative data obtained. These findings may lead to innovations in teaching and assessment for meeting the English language needs of the financial service industry in Taiwan.

Key Words: English for Specific Purposes, English for Business Purposes, needs analysis, banking and finance