

# CHAPTER FOUR

## FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the research and discusses them. The topics under this chapter are the following:

1. General Information about Respondents
2. Respondents' Perceptions of Their Identity and the Thai Academic Community
3. Respondents' Perceived English Competency
4. Respondents' Perceived Level of English Use in Their Graduate Study
5. Respondents' Perceived Level of English Use Within Their Academic Community
6. Respondents' Perceived Problems in Their Use of English
7. Respondents' Perceived Coping Ability
8. Respondents' English Support Needed from the University
9. Results of Roundtable Discussions
10. Summary of Findings

### 4.1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONDENTS

#### **Age**

This study investigated 131 student participants: 118 MBA students and 13 DBA students. Of that number, 78 of them or 59.50 percent were female. The tables that follow present the general information of the respondents.

**Table 4.1** Respondents by Age

Age Range	MBA	DBA	Total
20-25	25	-	25
26-30	43	1	44
31-35	16	4	20
36-40	10	8	18
>41	2	-	2
Total	96	13	109

Most students were between 26-30 years old. Only two of them were above 41 years old. The data in Table 4.2 also show the age difference between the two programs.

**Table 4.2** Age and Gender Cross Tabulation

Age Range	Male	Female	Total
20-25	16	26	42
26-30	11	29	40
31-35	9	10	19
36-40	6	12	18
>41	1	0	1
Total	43	77	120

It was found that 69% of them (82) were in the age range of 20-30 years old. 15.8% or 19 of them were between 31-35 years old, and 15.0% were between 36-40 years old. Only one of them was above 40.

**Table 4.3** Respondents by Occupational Background

#	Occupation	Frequency	Percent
1	Business Owners	15	12
2	Civil Servants	21	16
3	Employees of Private Organizations	46	36
4	State Enterprise Employees	12	9
5	Teaching Professional (Private)	4	3
6	Teaching Professional (Public)	5	4
7	Graduate Students	26	20
<b>Total</b>		129	100

In terms of occupational background, the majority of the participants were in the business sector. Forty-six (36%) were employees of private companies; fifteen (12%) were business owners. Twenty-six (20%) were graduate students. Nine (7%) were in the teaching profession.

**Table 4.4** Respondents by Number of Years at DPU

No. of Years at DPU	Frequency	Percent
> 1	38	29
1-2	64	49
2-3	13	10
3-5	15	12
<b>Total</b>	130	100

Table 4.4 shows that Sixty-four respondents (49%) were those who have been studying at the university between 1-2 years. Thirty-eight of them (29%) have been studying at DPU for less than a year. Twenty-eight (22%) have been at DPU for more than two years.

## Overseas Training Experience

**Table 4.5** Respondents by Overseas Training Experience

Experience	MBA	DBA	Total
YES	16 (12.3 %)	8 (6.2 %)	24 (19%)
NO	101 (77.7%)	5 (3.8 %)	106 (81%)
Total	117 (90%)	13 (10%)	130 (100%)

Their overseas training, as the data suggest, was at the low level. Of the total respondents of 130, only 24 (19%) said they have experienced such the training. The majority of them, 106 or 81% said 'No'. It is worth noting that the ratio of DBA students who reported having overseas training experience and those who did not was higher than that of the MBA students (MBA = .016; DBA = 1.60).

The number of the participants who have experienced English language training overseas was even lower. Of the total number of respondents, only 5 of them (4%) said they have done so. The majority of them said they never had such the experience (125 or 96%).

## 4.2 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR IDENTITY AND THE THAI ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

In an effort to find out the respondents' perception of the role of English within the Thai academic community, the open-ended question was asked, "What do you think are the qualifications of Thai academics in business administration field?" Below are the results.

In addition to other qualifications such as knowledge and skills in management and theoretical knowledge, many of them also mentioned the English ability.

Based on the table below, it was found that only 31 MBA students (30%) mentioned English proficiency as a part of the qualifications of Thai academics. It is worth noting that the ratio of DBA students who explicitly mentioned English as one of the qualities of the Thai academics in business administration and those who did not was higher than that of the MBA students (MBA = .42; DBA = 1.20).

**Table 4.6** Respondents' Mentioning of English as a Qualification of Thai Academics

Program	English Competency Mentioned	English Competency Not Mentioned	Total
MBA	31 (30%)	74 (70%)	105 (100%)
DBA	6 (55%)	5 (45%)	11 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	37 (32%)	79 (68%)	116 (100%)

The next question asked in this section was whether or not they considered themselves academics in the field of business administration. They were also asked to provide a reason.

**Table 4.7** Respondents' Perception of Themselves as Thai Academics

Program	Member of the Academic Community	Not a Member of the Academic Community	Total
MBA	30 (29%)	71 (71%)	101(100%)
DBA	6 (55%)	5 (45%)	11 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	36 (32%)	76 (68%)	112 (100%)

Fifty-five percent (6) of the DBA students perceived themselves as Thai academics. For the MBA students, however, the percentage was much lower, at 30%.

The last question of this section asked them about their perception of themselves as part of the Thai academic community.

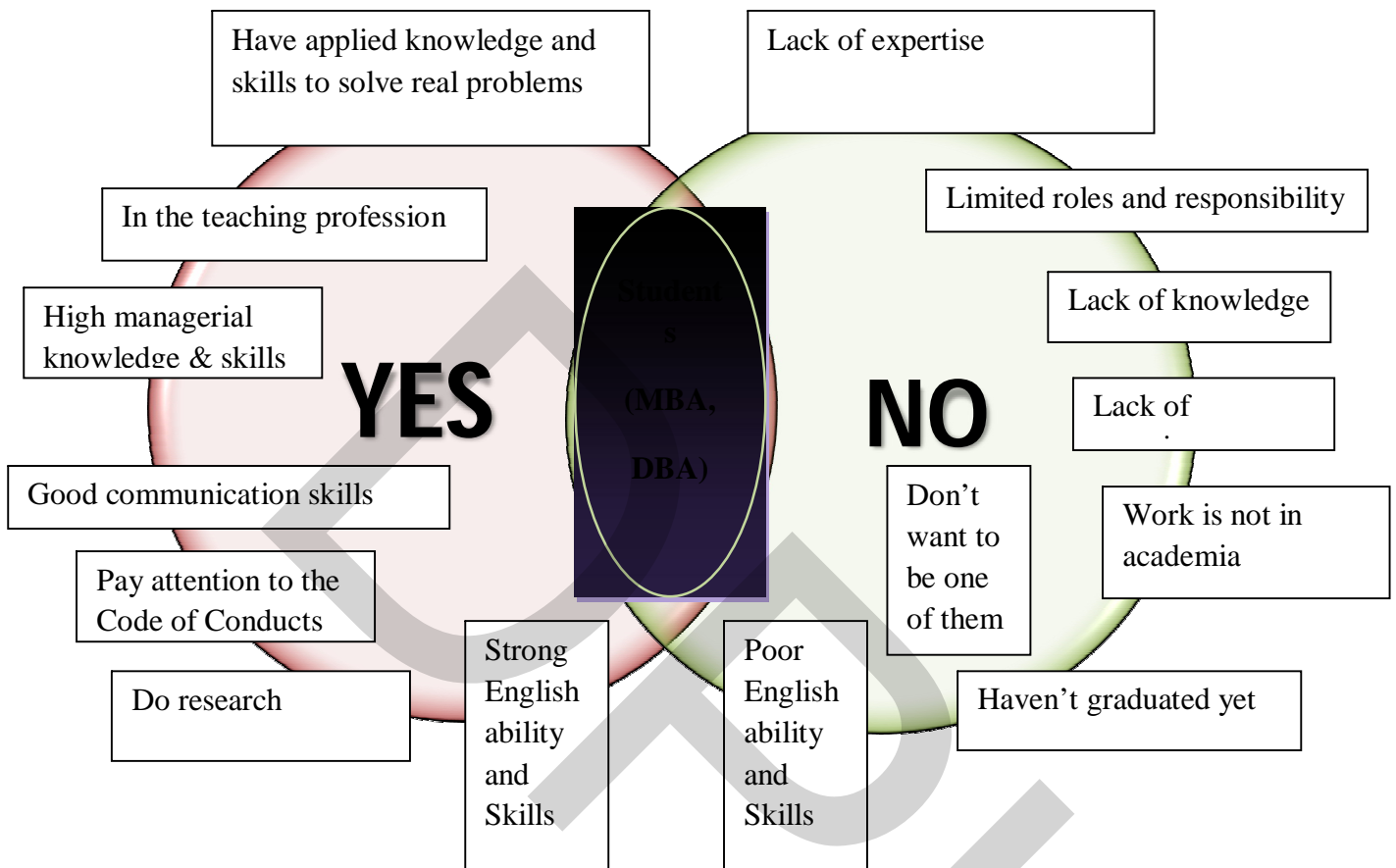
**Table 4.8** Respondents' Perception of Themselves as Being a Part of the Thai Academic community

Program	Part of the Academic Community YES	Part of the Academic Community NO	Total
MBA	58 (60%)	39 (40%)	97 (100%)
DBA	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	10 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	65 (61%)	42 (39%)	107 (100%)

In response to the question "Do you consider yourself being part of the Thai academic community?" the majority of the student participants (61%) answered "Yes." Only 42 of them or 39 percent said "No".

In addition to asking the participants to state their perceived identity, they were also asked to provide reasons to substantiate their perceptions. The content analysis of the reasons given by the respondents to the question of being or not being an academic has revealed the discrepancies of their self-conceptions.

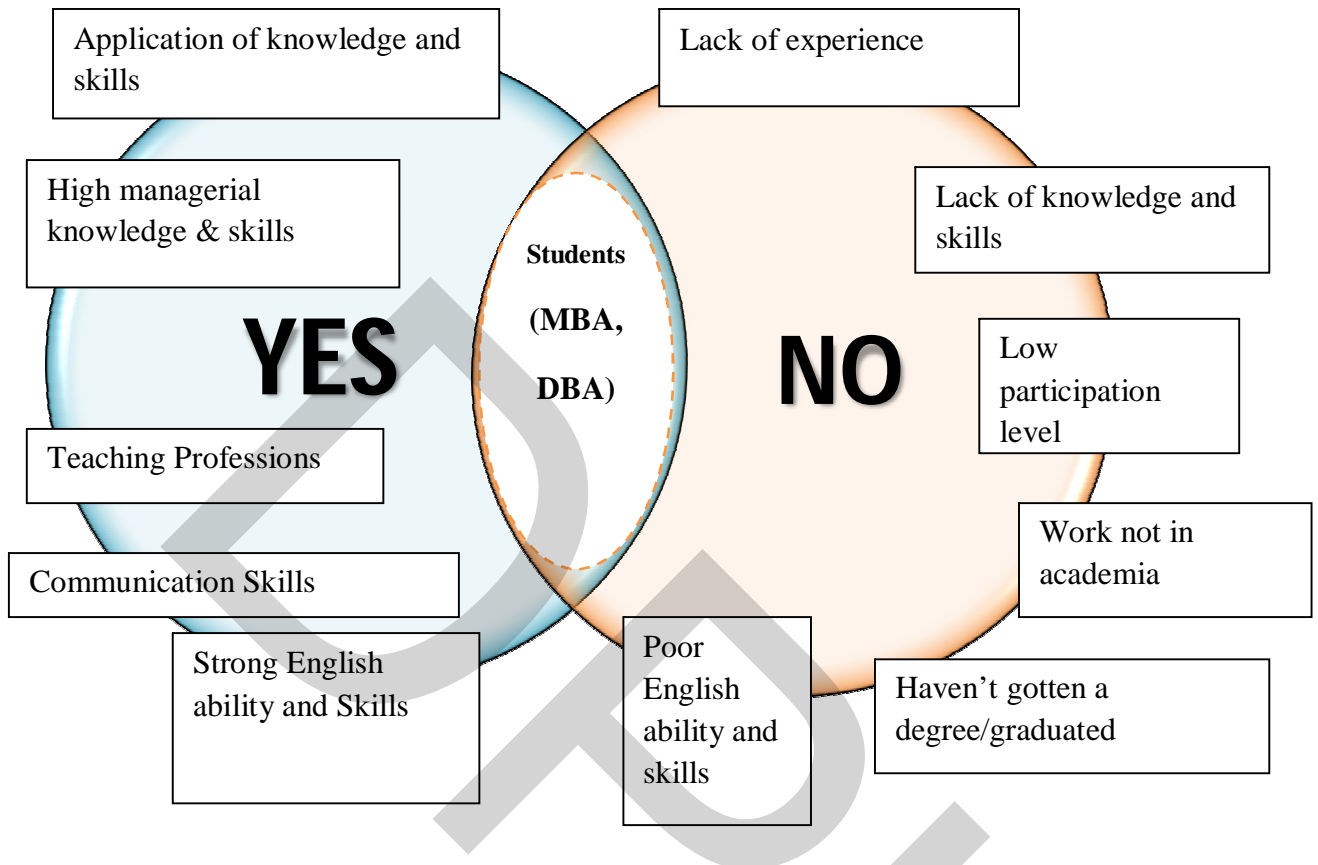
First of all, it was found that those who said that they were not academics were those that perceived themselves as having poor lower levels of English competency, lower levels of knowledge and skills, and less experience.

**Figure 2** Respondents' Reasons for Being and Not Being an Academic

The above figure shows that the only commonality between those who said they were academics and those who said they were not was the fact that they were graduate students (MBA & DBA). Their other reasons, however, differed from each other. For example, those who perceived themselves as academics reasoned that they did so because they were in academia; they did research, possessed high managerial knowledge and skills. Those who said 'No' reasoned that they lacked experience and their work was not in academia. One of the reasons was English proficiency. Those who perceived themselves as academics perceived themselves as having high English skills and ability. However, those who said they were not academics mentioned that their English was poor.

It is worth noting that no one had explicitly mentioned the reason related to the public at large. This may reflect the emphasis of the university and the nature of the two programs, which is focusing on the individual progress and well being.



**Figure 3** Respondents' Reasons for Being and Not Being Part of the Academic Community

The above figure shows that the only commonality between those who said they were academics and those who said they were not was the fact that they were graduate students (MBA & DBA). Their reasons differed from each other. The reasons were similar to the reasons given when asked whether they considered themselves as Thai academics. The two groups differed in their reasons cited. Again, English was mentioned as one of the criteria. But the lack of knowledge and skills was the most frequent cited reason for those who considered themselves not part of the community.

The last question of Part 2 of the questionnaire asks the respondents to explain why English is important for Thai academic in business management. Most of them said that English is necessary for Thai academics as it has become the global language. Textbook and articles are in English, so they need English to access the knowledge and information encoded there.

In sum, the respondents acknowledged the importance of English as a means to access knowledge and updated information written in English. Most of them perceived themselves as being part of the academic community.

### 4.3 RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED ENGLISH COMPETENCY

The student participants were asked to assess their English proficiency, skill by skill, followed by their overall self-assessment; a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very weak) to 5 (excellent) was used.

**Table 4.9** Respondents' self-perception of English ability

Skill	N	Mean	Meaning
Listening	130	2.80	Fair
Speaking	129	2.65	Fair
Reading	130	3.16	Fair
Writing	130	2.75	Fair
Overall Proficiency	123	2.82	Fair

The above table shows the respondents' rating of their English proficiency. In general, the respondents rated themselves as having a 'fair' level of proficiency.

In terms of the student participants' listening ability, most of them (51.9) rated their listening ability as being 'fair'. Up to 29 percent rated their ability as weak and very weak. Most of them also rated their speaking ability as 'fair'; only 10 percent (13) said their speaking ability was good and excellent. For their writing ability, the majority of them said their ability was 'fair'.

**Table 4.10** Weakest Skill by Program

Program	Weakest Skill				Total
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	
MBA	34 (30%)	43 (37%)	1 (1%)	38 (33%)	116
DBA	3 (25%)		1(9%)	8 (67%)	12
Total	37 (29%)	43 (34%)	2 (2%)	46 (36%)	128

For DBA students, 67 percent of them (8 out of 12) reported that their weakest skill was writing; 25 percent (3) said that it was the listening skill. For MBA students, the speaking skill was mentioned as their weakest (37%). For DBA students, 67 percent of them (8 out of 12) reported that their weakest skill was writing; 25 percent (3) said that it was the listening skill. For MBA students, the speaking skill was mentioned as their weakest (37%).

**Table 4.11** Best skill by Program

Program	Best Skill				Total
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	
MBA	25 (22%)	16 (14%)	61 (53%)	14 (12%)	116
DBA	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	7 (59%)	1 (9%)	12
Total	27 (21%)	18 (14%)	68 (54%)	15 (12%)	128

With regard to their reported best skill, it was found that both groups said it was the reading skills. In terms of gender, male and female students did not differ in their reported English competency.

**Table 4.12** Perceived English Competencies by Program

	Program (N)	Mean	SD	Sig
Perceived English Competency	MBA (113)	2.86	.78	Not Sig
	DBA (10)	2.40	.96	

#### 4.4 RESPONDENTS' USE OF ENGLISH IN THEIR GRADUATE STUDY

This aspect of English use was investigated by having the respondents answer the close-ended question: "Please identify the extent of your use of English in your graduate study."

**Table 4.13** Respondents' Frequency of English use in their graduate study

Program	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
MBA	2 (1.7%)	27 (22.9%)	45 (38.1%)	30 (25.4%)	14 (11.9%)	118 (100%)
DBA	1 (8.3%)	-	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	5 (41.7%)	12 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	3 (2.3%)	27 (20.8%)	48 (36.9%)	33 (25.4%)	19 (14.6%)	130 (100%)

The majority of the respondents said they occasionally used English in their workplaces. Only 12.5% (17) said they often or always used it.

**Table 4.14** Level of English Use in the Workplace

Program	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
<b>MBA</b>	19 (16.7%)	54 (47.4%)	24 (21.1%)	10 (8.8%)	7 (6.1%)	114 (100%)
<b>DBA</b>	3 (23.1%)	5 (38.5%)	5 (38.5%)	-	-	13 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	22 (17.3%)	59 (46.5%)	29 (22.8%)	10 (7.9%)	7 (5.5%)	127

#### 4.5 RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED LEVEL OF ENGLISH USE WITHIN THEIR ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

The question to determine their English use within the academic community is: How often do you use English in your academic community? The results were as follows:

**Table 4.15** Level of English Use within the Academic Community

Program	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
<b>MBA</b>	19 (16.1%)	41 (34.7%)	42 (35.6%)	9 (7.6%)	7 (5.9%)	118 (100%)
<b>DBA</b>	4 (33.3%)	6 (50.0%)	1 (8.3%)	0	1 (8.3%)	12 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	23 (17.7%)	47 (36.2%)	43 (33.1%)	9 (6.9%)	8 (6.2%)	130 (100%)

The mean of the 130 respondents who answered this question was 2.47, which was considered to be the use at the 'low' level. Only 13 per cent or 17 of them said they often or always used English in the community. The majority said they sometimes or occasionally used it.

Across the four skills, it was found that the respondents' use of English within their academic community was low ( $\bar{X} = 2.20$ ). The use of listening skills was low ( $\bar{X} = 2.16$ , S.D .67); the use of speaking skills was very low ( $\bar{X} = 1.91$ ; SD = .64). The use of reading skills was at the moderate level ( $\bar{X} = 2.58$ ; SD = .74). The use of writing skills was low ( $\bar{X} = 2.12$ ; SD = .78)

The use of English in the community of the two programs, MBA and DBA, was found to be similar. In other words, their use was not significantly different from one another's.

#### 4.6 RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED DIFFICULTIES IN THEIR USE OF ENGLISH

In general, the respondents reported that they had problems communicating in English; the level of difficulties was moderate. Their difficulties spanned across the four macro-skills.

**Table 4.16** Perceived Difficulties in English Use

Difficulties	Responses	Mean	SD	Meaning
Listening	131	3.25	.83	Moderate
Speaking	131	3.35	.75	Moderate
Reading	131	3.24	.71	Moderate
Writing	131	3.31	.79	Moderate
<b>Overall</b>	131	3.29	.79	Moderate

Moreover, it was also found that their perceived problems were positively correlated with each other. The correlations were found to be significant.

**Table 4.17** Respondents' perceived problems in their English use

#	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Listening	1.00	.73*	.66*	.54*
Speaking	-	1.00	.68*	.61*
Reading	-	-	1.00	.68*
Writing	-	-	-	1.00

This confirms that the problems are across the four skills. An independent t-test shows that the two groups did not significantly differ in their perceptions. Both groups has similar problems using English, and the problems were at the moderate level ( $\bar{X} = 3.28$ ).

**Table 4.18** Perceived Difficulties in English Use by Program

	Program (N)	Mean	SD	Sig
Perceived Difficulties in English Use	MBA (118)	3.28	.65	Not Sig
	DBA (13)	3.38	.73	

It was also found that genders did not have a significant effect on their perceived English difficulties. The mean of this construct for male participants was 3.13, and for the female participants 3.38.

**Table 4.19** Perceived Difficulties in English Use by Gender

	Program (N)	Mean	SD	Sig
Perceived Difficulties in English Use	Male (43)	3.13	.67	Not Sig
	Female (78)	3.38	.66	

#### 4.7 RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED COPING ABILITY

Another aspect of the analysis was to investigate the respondents' perceived coping ability, that is, how well they can cope with the demands of English use within their academic community.

**Table 4.20** Perceived Coping Ability

Coping Ability	Responses	Mean	Meaning
Listening and Speaking	131	3.20	Moderate
Reading and Writing	131	3.30	Moderate
Overall	131	3.26	Moderate

Based on the total 131 respondents, the overall mean of their perceived coping ability was 3.26, which was at the moderate level. Across the four macro-skills, their perceived coping ability was moderate.



#### 4.8 RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED ENGLISH SUPPORT NEEDED FROM THE UNIVERSITY

This construct was determined from their responses to the following items:

- ❖ I would like the university to help me develop my knowledge and English language skills.
- ❖ My English language skills and ability are adequate; I do not need help from the university.
- ❖ The university should provide me more help to improve my English language skills.
- ❖ My English language competency is adequate to support my study and work in Thailand.
- ❖ Overall, I have received the adequate English support from the university.

They were asked to identify their attitudes towards each of the items above, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The higher mean reflects the higher level of perceived English support needed from the university.

**Table 4.21** Perceived English Support

Item	Responses	Mean	SD	Meaning
I would like the university to help me develop my knowledge and English language skills.	131	3.70	1.04	High
My English language skills and ability are adequate; I do not need help from the university.	131	3.82	1.03	High
My English language skills and ability are adequate; I do not need help from the university.	131	3.83	.86	High
My English language competency is adequate to support my study and work in Thailand.	131	3.94	1.08	High
Overall, I have received the adequate English support from the university.	131	4.05	.86	High

Based on the table above, the mean calculated from the responses of 131 respondents answering five items of the construct was as high as 3.87 with S.D. of .70. This shows that, in general, the respondents perceived that they needed the high level of English support from the university.

## 4.9 RESULTS FROM THE ROUNDTABLE SEMINARS

Two roundtables were conducted in August 2009, the title of which was *English for Graduate Study: What, Why, and How Much?* The first roundtable was conducted on 2 August 2009, participated by five MBA students, facilitated by the researcher. The second one was organized on 9 August 2009, participated by four DBA students, also, facilitated by the researcher. Below is the summary.

### 1. English is Important, but...

All of them agreed that English competency was necessary for graduate study. Without strong knowledge and skills of English, they said they would face several problems.

One of them said that the university should have a gate-keeping measure when it comes to students' English competency, saying that:

*I'd like to suggest that DPU should set a minimum standard like other institutions, say CU-TEP, to scan the students. This may help. Then we have them take a remedial course, like we have just discussed. In my opinion, the readiness of the students comes first.*

How much English do they need to function well in the society? MBA students agreed on one thing, that is, English is a plus. They also need to have competency in the subject matters.

*For me, the society may not expect an MBA graduate from a Thai program to have a high competency of English. They do, however, expect you to be competent in the subject matters of the content subjects and your ability to apply the knowledge and skills in real situations. English is a supplementary competence preferred by everybody. As WTC has mentioned, English is useful for your individual progress. If you don't have a high level of its competency, you are okay. An MBA graduate needs to be competent in the knowledge and skills of business. English is a plus.*

For DBA, English is also optional.

*I think what's more important is that they are good communicators. They may or may not know a great deal of English, but if their communication is successful, it is more preferable. My opinion is that if you are not good, but communicate effectively, you are better than when you are good, but poor communicators.*

For some, high English competency was perceived to be optional. What's more important than having good English knowledge and skills is the effective communication.

## **2. Use of English & Coping Ability**

For both graduate programs, MBA and DBA, as they were the Thai ones, the language of instruction is Thai. Unlike the graduate students at Mahidol University, they did not have to write their reports in English. This fact might be the cause of the low level of English use. Both groups, however, mentioned that their teachers or professors required them to use the textbooks written in English. So reading was the important skills. One MBA student had this to say:

*English for graduate study, for me, is mainly about the use of reading skills - to read the textbooks we use. Even though we are in the Thai program, the textbooks are all in English. The lecturers' sources of references are from the texts in English.*

Similarly, DBA students mentioned reading was the most frequently use skill.

*We rely a lot on the reading skills as we have to read a lot of English texts. We need to read when we work on reports or our theses. If you have poor reading skills, your reports might be of low quality.*

The lack of English support structure might have resulted in the students having to deal with the problems themselves. A DBA candidate, for example, said: "I try to cope with the problem by myself. Use a dictionary and translate."

## **3. Importance of Reading Skills**

Reading was perceived as the most important skill by every participant of the roundtable seminars.

One MBA participant (MBA) said:

*My impression is that postgraduate English, mainly, is mainly about the use of reading skills. So far, the textbooks our ajarns (lecturers) have used are written in English. Even though, the instruction is in Thai, but the texts are in English. Ajarns use them as their references. Other skills such as speaking and reading are rarely used.*

For DBA, reading skills were very important for the study at the doctoral level

*In my opinion, graduate-level English requires students to have skills in their use of English, across the four skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. I think at this level, reading skills are very important. As a DBA candidate, I have to read a lot of articles from journals in English. Without good reading and writing skills, it would be difficult to produce good research reports or theses.*

They said they had to read textbooks assigned by the teachers. The difference between MBA and DBA students seemed to be the range of reading materials. DBA students said they often had to read academic journal articles, in addition to textbooks.

#### **4. Technical Terms and Jargon**

Most of the participants mentioned that they needed to understand technical terms and academic and business jargon.

*In my opinion, English for graduate study may be viewed as general English, but it is more specific. As a DBA student, I read textbooks and articles from journals related to business studies. More business jargon and technical terms are used. Grammar is general, but vocabulary is more business-focused.*

They said that even though the language of instruction was Thai, they had to know some technical terms or English loan words.

*We give an oral presentation in Thai. Yes, there maybe some occasions where we have to read English terms aloud. We use English terms or expressions in our presentations. But the presentation is in Thai.*

#### **5. Perception of Thai Academics**

One of the topics discussed was the perception of Thai academics. Are they academics?

Some of them said 'yes', many said 'no'. One of them said:

*For me, I'd say 'No', but I'm in the process of becoming one. When I am one of the academics, I am sure I'll be ready.*

When asked: Do you see yourself as an academic? one of them said she was in the process of becoming one.

*No, I'm not at the present. But, surely, I'm part of the community. My ability and skills are not great, not good enough to be a guru or sage in marketing. But I'm developing myself all the time.*

Another MBA said:

*I'm a member, but I'm not a star or a significant member of the community, not yet.*

As whether they perceived the existence of their own academic community, most of them said they recognized the community. An MBA has said:

*Yes, I can see it. I can see that there are people who speak the same language as mine. We can share and exchange information and opinions. I'm sure there is such a community.*

One of them said:

*As we understand, if we speak the same language, we are members of the community. If we don't know, we cannot engage in conversations.*

## **6. English Support**

One of the issues discussed was English support. With regards to the provision of English support from the university, it was found that the support was inadequate. This reflects from the participants' opinions. For the MBA program, one course of English, Remedial English, was not adequate for the students to develop the language.

*Poor English background is a big problem for many students. It is evidenced when they have to read thick textbooks. Another thing is that the time to learn English. I, personally, think that one remedial course is insufficient.*

One of them suggested that DPU should require that their students have high levels of English competency: *"I'd like to suggest that the university use English, it's really necessary."*

How should the English be delivered? One kind of support should be the support ‘on the task’, to form a small group and read the texts and discuss with them. This is evidenced by an opinion of a DBA student who said that more English courses may not be an answer to the problem.

*I think if the language institute has an English course, I guess there are few students who would participate. This is because we are more focused. I think what is best for us is when we get together as a group, and we read more. If there is a way to help read as we read our articles or texts, and exchange our ideas among us, Thai or in English. This, I'm sure, will help us better understand the English in our community.*

Peering tutoring has also been mentioned as a means to support their English learning. An MBA student said that:

*The problems would be solved by peer tutoring. We help each other, For example, WCR may be good at one particular topic, so he would be asked to tutor that topic. This is effective. Sometimes I don't have to read in English, I learn from his summary.*

The results of the two roundtables added dimensions to the study, the qualitative information, which is rich in details. The results seem to confirm the results of the survey.

#### 4.10 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**Table 4.22** Summary of Respondents' Use of Macro-Skills

#	Construct	Mean	SD	Meaning
1	Use of Listening Skills with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	2.16	.67	Low
2	Use of Speaking Skills with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	1.91	.64	Very Low
3	Use of Reading Skills with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	2.58	.74	Moderate
4	Use of Writing Skills with Other members of the Thai Academic Community	2.12	.78	Low

In terms of their use of English skills (macro-skills), it was found that the most frequently skills reported were the reading skills. This finding was not a surprise. The information from the two focus group seminars confirms this quantitative finding.

The use of writing and speaking skills were found to rank lower. Again the findings were consistent with those from the focus group seminars.

**Table 4.23** Summary of Respondents' Perceived Language Problems

#	Construct	Mean	SD	Meaning
1	Problems in Listening Skills	3.25	.83	Moderate
2	Problems in Speaking Skills	3.35	.75	Moderate
3	Problems in Reading Skills	3.24	.71	Moderate
4	Problems in Writing Skills	3.31	.71	Moderate

The subjects said they had moderate level of language problems across the four macro-skills.

#### **Perceived Language Coping Ability**

The means was 3.26 with SD of .60. Their language-coping ability was moderate. The English coping ability of males and females were different from each other at the 0.05 level of significance.

**Perceived Support Needed from the University** The mean was 3.87 (SD = .70). Their level of need of institutional support was high. They needed more support from the university.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the results of the analyses. More than half of the respondents considered themselves part of the academic community. English was perceived an important aspect of Thai academics. However, the use of English was found be limited in domain and frequency. Theirs was limited to the educational context. Most of them perceived their English competency as being at the 'medium' level. The most used skill was reading. Their ability to cope with the language demands was moderate, and they needed a high level of English support from the university.