Seminar Leader Effectiveness:
Teaching Short Courses in
the Thai Business Community.

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ABSTRACT

Research and literature on teaching adults primarily discusses longer courses within the sphere of formal education, that is formal tertiary education and non-formal education (typically work-place or work-related learning). While both these fields provide a rich source of general information, it is difficult to find research texts that specifically deal with teaching adults in a seminar environment, that is, a planned, one-off learning event ranging in length from three hours to two days. While some research has focused on Thai culture in general and the nature of Thai university teaching in particular, very little has been published concerning the teaching of Thai adults, whether in a formal setting such as a university or college, or in a non-formal, work-place or work-related setting. This research reflects an effort to compensate for this pronounced lack of research in teaching adults in a short course environment and the paucity of research on teaching Thai adults.

Using a case-study method, fifteen Western or Western-educated Thai trainers in the Thai short-course market were interviewed to determine the characteristics of an effective short-course trainer instructing courses in English. Based on a semi-structured interview format, with questions framed from the literature review, eight key characteristics were determined that reflect the qualities of an effective trainer in the Thai market.

Centered on the vital role played by trainers’ knowledge of the participants and their culture, the characteristics identified by the research highlight the need to foreground key aspects of participant culture when planning and presenting a short course in the Thai business community. While content expertise and teaching skills remain important, the key to effectiveness lies in acquiring and skillfully applying a knowledge of participants that goes beyond needs analysis to include a generic knowledge of the social norms that identify Thais as a cultural group throughout the training process.

The eight characteristics are discussed in detail, and while some aspects of these are consistent with the conventional wisdom discussed in the literature review, most arose from the analyses of comments provided by the interviewees. This discussion leads into a number of recommendations for new trainers in this market and concludes with insights into further areas of study that could prove useful in Thai and other cultures, and for educators involved in short- or long-course events.
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The goal of this research is to determine the characteristics of an effective short-course trainer in the Thai business community. This chapter illustrates the events that led to the formulation of the research question, describes the researcher’s background and interest in the research, offers an insight into the importance of this study in both the Thai and non-Thai milieu, and concludes with an overview of the chapters that follow.

1.1 Personal Background

To better understand the origins of the problem to be investigated here, it is useful to describe key aspects of my personal story, with an emphasis on my teaching experience in this and related fields.

I have lived and taught overseas since 1979. Before leaving Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, I earned a three-year Business Diploma (Management) from Algonquin Community College (1972), a BA in English Literature (1978), and a Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language (1979) from Carleton University.

From 1979 to 1982, I taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at a leading vocational English language institute in Tokyo. During the first three years I taught in Japan, I was primarily responsible for traditional college classes in that I would see the same group of 45 to 50 students for 90 minutes a week over the course of an academic year.

In 1984, I earned a Master of Education in Teaching English as a Second Language from Temple University, Japan, (TUJ) and graduated with distinction. From 1982 to 1985, I taught in the TUJ Academic English Program. Teaching in this intensive program involved teaching two groups of twenty students for nine hours a week over the course of three months. I enjoyed this experience, as I was able to build strong relationships with students and over each term, I could take encouragement from their very visible improvement with English.

From 1985 to 1987, I was Guest Professor, Business Administration Department, Klagenfurt University, Klagenfurt, Austria, where I taught weekly classes and was able to teach many of the same students in two or three courses. This allowed me the opportunity to get to know these students and to prepare courses based on their immediate needs and expectations.
In 1988, I returned to Japan and from January 1988 to December 1996, I taught at a variety of Japanese universities, including three years as an Assistant Professor, English Language Department, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan. Most of the university courses I taught involved classes of approximately 50 students taught for ninety minutes per week for two, twelve-week terms each year.

While in Japan, I published two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, *Speaking First* and *Take Off* with MacMillan Press and numerous articles on a variety of topics ranging from the teaching of English to the benefits of income insurance.

I also established and ran a successful financial planning business while in Japan working primarily with young Western teachers. Each year, I would conduct a number of seminars around the country with small to large groups of teachers. This was a great teaching experience as my effectiveness at teaching these potential clients about what they should do with their savings was reflected in the level of commissions I received from investment products or services these teachers decided to do.

In 1997, I moved to Bangkok, Thailand and for the first two years, I took a break from teaching. During this time, I was the Managing Editor for a Bangkok monthly city magazine, *Guide of Bangkok*, which provided an opportunity to write and edit. Although, I enjoyed this experience, I found that I missed being in the classroom. Therefore, in 2000, I returned to teaching at Ramkamhaeng University and teaching for a number of corporate clients.

I am currently the Managing Consultant for my company Speech Work Consultancy Co Ltd helping clients and students with work-related speaking and writing duties, assignments, and engagements. As part of my work for Speech Work Consultancy, I offer five to ten short seminars each year. In addition, I now teach at three universities in Bangkok as an Adjunct Professor teaching educational courses to graduate students in school administration along with a number of English language courses to undergraduate students.

As a Distinguished Toastmaster and Past Division Governor for Toastmasters in Thailand, I have made over 150 short speeches to groups of Toastmasters over the past eight years. In most cases, I have received positive feedback concerning the way I have spoken, for example, the use of gestures, vocal variety, and humor; as well as the quality of the message, for example, organization, impact, and clarity.
I am also a member in the Rotary Club of Bangkok South, where I am editor of the club’s weekly eight-page newsletter, *The South Wind*. Both Toastmasters and Rotary are important in this research context as the majority of the fifteen participants interviewed in this research project came through contacts in these two organizations (see 3.0).

I have extensive experience with teaching EFL and constantly receive excellent evaluations from my students at the college and university level. I enjoy working with the same students over a few months, even years and take pride in my ability to create a professional, and often, personal relationship.

In Thailand, I began to teach short courses involving a variety of Thai business people with course content in which I had considerable experience teaching in longer courses, for example, discussion, presentation, and negotiation skills. However, despite my extensive, varied, and generally very successful and rewarding teaching of Thai, Austrian, and Japanese adults in longer courses, I did not feel I was teaching short courses with the same level of success as I had become accustomed to in longer courses. This troubled me, as I was not used to this level of disquiet concerning my teaching skills.

While I felt that local conditions in the short-course training market might be partly responsible, I was also aware of other trainers in this market who were enjoying high levels of finding ‘repeat business’. Given my frustration that I was not enjoying the same level of success that I had been used to, and with my interests in finding ‘repeat business’, I decided to explore. To understand the Thai training conditions I was experiencing, the following account offers a description of a seminar I was asked to present.

### 1.2 A Short Course in the Thai Business Community

The following account details a two-day seminar I taught to a group of employees from a large, Bangkok-based international corporation.

The only information provided before the seminar started was that the seminar should be about ‘Meeting Skills’, 10 to 12 people would attend, and that their conversational English ability would be at a low-intermediate level. Speakers at this level can produce a series of simple sentences to describe events, dreams, and ambitions, and can offer a few reasons for their opinions and plans. However, when the course started, I had 14 students and it quickly became apparent their English speaking skills were at quite an advanced level. Speakers at
this level can produce longer, well-structured discourse to describe a wide-variety of complex topics with relative ease and sophistication.

During a discussion with the participants concerning the dichotomy between what I had been told to expect by their Director of Human Resources and apparent true abilities, it also became clear that they did not need to learn basic meeting-related vocabulary and skills as I had been advised. Instead, they indicated that they would prefer to work on two immediately pressing problems.

The first concern was how to allocate the time to meeting agenda items as every meeting they planned went longer than scheduled. Fortunately, a number of exercises in the training manual I had created based on my original understanding of what they needed could be used in exercises and discussions that would help them to learn about and become more skilled at creating realistic agenda schedules. For example, in one exercise they needed to calculate how long it would take five people to make a two-minute statement. Their initial suggestion was ten minutes. However, on reflection, they realized that considerably more time would be needed as a two-minute statement would often involve another person introducing and thanking each speaker, the time needed to stand up or make their way to the front of the room, two minutes to speak, followed by questions and answers, and then make their way back to their seat. They concluded that it would take closer to four minutes for each speaker and that 20 minutes was a better estimate. This particular session ended with participants recognizing that the benefits of finishing ahead of time far outweighed the tension created when timing invariably proved to be unrealistic.

The second problem was more complicated. Students wanted to know how to control ‘challenges’ from colleagues that would be made throughout a meeting. In this company’s meetings, one or two people were routinely appointed to the role of challenger. In this role, they were expected to challenge any comment made by any attendee, at any time they wished. This was instigated by their non-Thai CEO in an attempt to force Thais to ask questions. The seminar participants I was working with felt very strongly that the role of challenger was being taken far too seriously and that it was resulting in a challenge to virtually every statement made during a meeting. This was proving to be very frustrating and time consuming with most people who were attending these meetings unable to see the benefit in having a challenger.
I had a dilemma in that the material I had prepared was too easy for the students and could not be used to help with this problem. Fortunately, it was close to lunch, so I decided to stop 30 minutes early. I needed time to think. I reviewed the handouts I had prepared before the seminar and could not find anything that I could use to help with the problem my participants had identified they wanted help with during my seminar.

When they returned from lunch, I decided to probe to learn more about these ‘challenges’ and why they were causing problems. Following a 30-minute discussion, I realized that while they disliked ‘challenges’, they understood the benefits that came with having a challenger in the meetings they attended. In fact, they did not want to stop ‘challenges’ but instead wanted to gain confidence in being a challenger and in answering challenges. I decided that to gain an insight into their abilities with making and replying to ‘challenges’, I needed to watch and listen to the participants as they discussed a topic as a group. With this in mind, I asked them to answer one question, “Which is a better pet, a cat or a dog?” Fortunately, the opinions were almost evenly divided so I placed the eight dog lovers in one group and the six cat lovers in another. They were given thirty minutes to work in groups to produce as many reasons for their decision as they could. The group discussion that followed went extremely well and allowed all participants the opportunity to challenge and respond to challenges about a myriad of facts and opinions related to cats and dogs as pets.

At the end of the two-day seminar, a specially prepared, 90-minute role-play was used to provide participants with a further opportunity to deal with challenges. Planned for 90-minutes, it was finished in 30. Unfortunately, this particular exercise proved to be unrealistic in that participants tended to be too kind to each other and did not challenge with the same vigor that would be expected in a meeting, particularly if their non-Thai CEO were present. Fortunately, a review and discussion allowed for a thorough ‘wrap-up’ and the participants left the seminar with vocabulary, expressions, and strategies they could use to reply to a challenge, and an improved skill in creating an agenda that reflected a realistic use of time.

In Thailand, it is typical for the information provided to a seminar leader concerning participant numbers, language level, learning needs, and expectations to be limited to a few words, often not entirely accurate. More importantly, this information often arrives very close to, or on the day of the seminar, precluding its use in planning and preparation. In the story above, I was given a copy of the pre-training needs analysis completed by each participant, in which they described what they wanted to do, for example, watch videos and play games, and
what they wanted to learn, for example, how to write a meeting agenda and deal with challenges. However, it did not arrive until the first break on the first day.

This story illustrates my frustration with short-course teaching in this context. Despite 26 years of success as an effective adult educator in longer courses, I was not enjoying the same sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in the short courses I was being asked to present. I knew that if I wanted to be successful in teaching short courses, I needed to learn more about what constituted effectiveness in this environment.

1.3 Formulating the Research Question

My initial response was to review a wide variety of ‘how to books’ and ‘professional publications’ that dealt with the theory and practicalities of providing short courses or training programs to an adult population (e.g., Burns, 1996; Davis & Davis, 1998; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Moon, 2001; Burns, 2002). However, while some of this material proved insightful, for example, how to prepare instructional objectives, create powerpoint displays, or how to find clients, it did not adequately examine the phenomenon of teaching a short course and, most notably, teaching a short course with Thais.

There was nothing at hand to help explain what characterized ‘effective seminar leaders’ in the Thai business community. Trainers I knew in Thailand were enjoying repeat business (the key indicator of ‘success’ in this context), but there was nothing in the literature to explain why this was the case and what I could do to be as effective. This is also extremely important, as there is a growing demand for effective short-course teaching, not only in Thailand, but also worldwide.

There was clearly a need, apart from my own personal interest, to go beyond the rather superficial indicator of effectiveness represented by ‘repeat business.’ I felt that I needed to establish an evidence-based description of what it is that makes a short-course seminar leader effective in Thailand. This led to the following research question.

What are the characteristics of an effective short-course trainer in the Thai business community?

1.4 Defining the Terms Used in Research Question

To understand this study, it is important to be familiar with the meaning of the key terms employed in the research question and how they have influenced this research.
What are the characteristics of an effective short-course trainer in the Thai business community?

For the purpose of this research, a short course is a one-off training session offered in a single block of time (from three hours to two consecutive days) that focuses on a business-related topic, for example, accounting procedures, employee evaluations, ISO compliance, or corporate policy. Short courses involving sales and/or motivational training were not included as it was believed that these topics might involve a different, more prescriptive or product-related style of training. Given the possibility that interviewees would not be able or willing to discuss the content of the courses they had taught due to confidentiality concerns and client privilege; questions related to content were limited to sufficient questions to determine if interviewees were presenting business content courses. English language training courses were excluded from the study as these are generally not offered as a short course as defined here. However, English is a concern and will be dealt with in the Literature Review, (see 2.2.2.2). With 15 interviewees, presenting business-content courses similar in nature, it was felt that a sufficient sample had been interviewed to provide an insight into the research question. (See 3.2)

The decision to exclude certain types of training situation was to limit as much as possible the teaching culture experienced by the interviewees. It was felt that by limiting interviewee experiences to a particular type of training, a clearer picture would emerge of one teaching culture rather than a hybrid of potentially different and conflicting 'teaching cultures'.

Teaching cultures are embodied in the work-related beliefs and knowledge that teachers share—beliefs about appropriate ways of acting on the job and rewarding aspects of teaching, and knowledge that enables teachers to do their work. (Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1986, p. 508)

A further reason for not considering motivational, sales and English language courses was prompted by the literature on discourse analysis (e.g. Gee, 1999) which suggests that to understand what was being said by interviewees, it would be necessary to find a common context as one needed to know which of many inferences that one can draw from an utterance are relevant. And relevance is a matter deeply tied to context, point of view, and culture. One knows what counts for a given group of people at a given time and place as "relevant" by having been privy to certain "conversations" those people have heretofore had. (p. 34)
By limiting ensuing discussions to a single, shared context, that is, how to teach a business-related short course effectively, it was felt that the research would remain within one culture, the business training culture, and not become involved with other teaching cultures that might be associated with motivational seminars or English language training.

In addition, the aim was to reduce as much as possible those factors that were outside the control of the individual trainer. Turning to Lundgren's (1981) frame factor theory and its goal to explain how teaching is a product of a larger social structure, the goal was to reduce the impact of this larger social structure and to reduce the various factors that could be seen to "limit the teaching process … outside the control of the teacher" (Lundgren, 1981, p. 36). While Carr and Kemmis (1986) would argue that it is necessary to understand the factors that might influence a particular teaching culture, an analysis of the political and social factors that might be seen to impact the effectiveness of trainers working with a group of Thai business people over the course of a few hours was considered to be beyond the scope of this study. The primary focus of which was to determine the "beliefs, values, habits, and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers who have had to deal with similar demands and constraints" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 165). In this case, this community was limited to Thai and non-Thai trainers presenting business-oriented content courses, in English, to predominately homogenous groups of Thai, middle-class business executives.

In analyzing the dimensions of the research question, it is also important to distinguish between the terms training and education. While it is arguably difficult to distinguish with precision the difference between the two, Kenny and Reid (1986) offered some useful points on which a distinction can be made in terms of process, orientation, method, and content. Buckley and Caple (1995) suggested that "training normally involves the acquisition of behaviours, facts, ideas, etc that are more easily defined in a specific job context. Training is more job-orientated than people-orientated" (p. 14).

Glaser (1962) suggested that training reflected a degree of uniformity in learning behaviors while education tended to stress the differences in learners so that each person would react differently. Training, he continued, tended to stress knowledge and skills needed to perform specific tasks, whereas education was seen as more theoretical and as such designed to encourage individual abilities. Finally, he suggested that while the results of training could be observed over the short-term, the results of education were more likely to be seen over the long-term and in a more profound manner.
Smith and Ragan (1999) also described training in much the same way.

We generally use the term training to refer to those instructional experiences that are focused upon individuals acquiring very specific skills that they will normally apply almost immediately. (p. 3)

A dictionary definition of the term ‘characteristic’ includes any trait, aspect of personality, appearance, behavior, actions, thoughts, beliefs, quirks, habits, or temperament, which for the purposes of this study, have the potential to impact any aspect of the training. From this perspective, the goal of this research is to determine what characterizes effective short-course trainers in the Thai business community.

Throughout this chapter and the remainder of this project, the terms, ‘trainer’, ‘seminar leader’, ‘instructor’, or ‘short-course trainer’ refer to the person responsible for providing the face-to-face portion of a short course. The terms, ‘participants’ or ‘students’ refer to the people, predominately Thai middle-class business executives, attending a seminar. Finally, the terms, ‘interviewees’ or ‘respondents’ will be used to refer to the short-course seminar leaders interviewed for the purposes of this research project.

A short course is a one-off, adult education or learning experience scheduled as a single block of time from three hours to two days. For example, three hours would represent a morning or afternoon seminar, and not one hour a day for three days. Likewise, two days would be two consecutive days, not one day this week, and one day next week.

The critical feature of this definition is that once a short course has started, trainers will not have time to return to the planning or preparation stage and must follow through with the materials prepared in advance and the personal resources they bring to the situation. This definition is meant to provide a clear contrast to longer courses scheduled over multiple sessions, for example, under-graduate university courses or accredited adult education training programs.

As used in this study the term, ‘business community’, refers to predominantly Thai middle-class, university-educated, employees from a range of Bangkok-based companies. These employees may work for the same company, in which case they may or may not know some or all of the other participants, or they may come from different companies, in which case it would be highly unlikely that they would know any of the other participants before the seminar begins.
The term ‘Thai’ has its own meanings both in general and within adult education that need to be appreciated to fully understand the context in which the research question is set. This involves an understanding of what it means to be a Thai and how Thais interact with each other. In particular, this is necessary to determine how aspects of Thai culture might influence training provision and the effectiveness of short-course trainers.

To examine effectiveness in this context, one has to first identify possible candidates who might be regarded as ‘effective’. Typically, effectiveness in this field is measured in terms of learning outcomes that can be demonstrated or transferred in some form, or by observable changes in behavior. Effectiveness can also be measured in terms of affective outcomes, for example, motivation to study further or by higher levels of participation.

When cognitive and/or affective outcomes are used to evaluate effectiveness, it is assumed that pre- and post-course data is available or can be obtained, for example, information derived from needs analysis data, participant profiles, and work-place measures of acquired skills or knowledge levels. However, in the Thai training environment, short-course trainers are not normally given the opportunity to be involved in pre- or post-training activities, nor as illustrated in the account above, are they necessarily provided with any sort of information that would support these measures of effectiveness.

This suggests that a different indicator of effectiveness is needed in the Thai business community. Given that there is a lucrative short-course training market in Thailand, populated by a limited number of professional trainers, it would appear that in this entrepreneurial environment, the quality and quantity of repeat business is perhaps the most reliable indicator of effectiveness available for the purposes of this study. Despite the fact that most trainers in the Thai business community do not have the opportunity to be involved with participants before or after a short course, many appear to be extremely effective during the time they are with participants.

While it would be advantageous to employ additional measures of effectiveness, it would seem that if professional short-course trainers can earn a living from offering short courses in the Thai business community, they must be doing something that participants and contracting companies believe is effective. Therefore, for the purposes of initiating this research, effective seminars leader will be identified as trainers who are able to secure repeat
business. Beyond this, the question that will now be answered over the course of the next chapters is

What are the characteristics of an effective short-course trainer in the Thai business community?

1.4 Personal Perspectives on Teaching and Learning

An important consideration in conducting research is the relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon being investigated. To this end, it is necessary to describe my views on the nature of teaching and learning in general to provide a better understanding of the influences that have shaped me, the design of the research, and the interpretation of the results to be reported here.

I believe adult students learn best when they know what is required to complete an exercise and more importantly, know why they are doing it. Adult students need to see the benefit in undertaking a task; they must have the confidence that they can complete what has been asked; and that when finished that there will be some intrinsic or extrinsic benefit from what they have completed.

I believe that to accomplish this I need to know my students and what they know before they come to class. This is difficult with any group, as learners will have varying skills and experiences. However, it is my responsibility to determine what my learners share with each other, what knowledge or experience might be limited to one or two individuals, and finally what experience or knowledge needed for the task-at-hand is not available at all. With an understanding as to what most participants share in the way of experience or knowledge, I can determine where I believe the training event should start. For example, in teaching negotiation skills, if the participants understand the concept of ‘give and take’, and have the vocabulary required, the class can move on to other aspects of negotiation. With an understanding of the participants varying backgrounds, I will know who might be able to provide support in certain areas. For example, if one participant is stronger in idiomatic English, they might be called upon to provide succinct translations of idioms. Finally, with an awareness of what might be new for all participants, I will have an idea as to what I need to present and those areas where I can expect difficulty. For example, if students studying negotiation skills do not have experience with accepting or rejecting offers in English, they
will need to be presented with the basic structures employed in day-to-day conversation before they can be expected to adapt these conventions to a formal negotiation.

I also believe that learners need to understand how the learning is to be structured so that they can gain confidence with what they will be asked to do and so that they can work more effectively. I believe that once learners understand how to learn or to complete a particular activity, they become more confident and will learn more readily. For example, adult learners who have been asked to read need to know what is expected. If they do not know what types of question they will be asked or what types of exercise will follow, they will not know what reading skills to employ. However, if participants have been asked to read for pleasure, and know that my questions will relate to their enjoyment of the text, they can then read according to this need. Learners must also understand why they are being asked to do something so that they can understand the benefits of a particular activity in terms of immediate acquisition of skills or knowledge and how, if successful, these skills and knowledge will be beneficial in their future.

My approach to learning increasingly builds on experience through interaction and mutual respect. I believe adults do their best to learn when they know they can use the subject matter and skills acquired in the seminar, and when they can see for themselves how new skills and/or knowledge will fit into an existing set of experiences and expectations. Finally, I believe adult students learn best when they have accepted that everything that is expected or undertaken in a seminar is intended to be of benefit to them personally and professionally.

1.6 Importance of the Study

The study that follows is important as it offers a new insight into how effective seminar leaders plan and present a short course. In particular it examines situations where they have little or no information about participants in advance of the seminar, where they have limited if any opportunities to follow-up and evaluate seminar impact, and where the trainer and participants arrive with very different cultural backgrounds, training experiences, and expectations.

This makes the study of particular interest to trainers coming from overseas to present a short course to a group of Thai business people who need to ensure that their teaching is as effective as it can be in this context. The study also has the potential to inform trainers from
one culture working in other cultures, for example, an American trainer teaching Japanese, a Korean seminar leader instructing French, or a German training Australians.

1.7 Thesis Structure

The next chapter (see 2.0) begins the search for answers to the research question through a detailed review of those aspects of adult education literature that offered the greatest potential to provide insights into the provision of short courses. The research on adult learners leads into a closer analysis of the role of experience, motivation, and adult learning styles and their influence on effective adult learning. The research on effective adult teaching is examined in terms of the craft of teaching, knowledge of the participants, and content expertise, widely recognized as the key elements associated with the effective teaching of adults. The literature reviewed in relation to training provision examines the three stages commonly described in the literature as forming the training cycle, that is, needs analysis, instructional design, and transfer of learning. Finally, as this research takes place in Thailand, it is important to have an understanding of Thai culture and, in particular, those aspects of this culture that could affect how Thais might be expected to behave in a learning event.

Chapter 3 provides a short review of the research environment that led to the case study approach and includes a discussion on qualitative research methodology and the social constructivist/naturalistic research paradigm this case study reflects. A description of how the case study approach was applied leads into a discussion concerning the interview design, and how ideas discussed in the literature review informed the structure of the interview process. The chapter concludes by describing how the data was collected, analyzed, and reviewed.

The next chapter (see 4.0) reports on the results derived from the four-stage analysis of the interview data. Four categories and twenty-two related themes emerged from the analysis of the data and the research literature. These categories and themes describe how trainers apply their background knowledge of Thai culture while preparing and presenting a short course. Interviewee comments also centered on how they felt Thai participants would react to various training strategies and the subject matter of the seminar. Finally, interviewees’ comments offered an idea as to how they taught Thai participants and the problems they expected to encounter.

The discussion (see 5.0) draws on the results to address the research question by describing these comments and provides an insight into the characteristics of an effective
short-course trainer in the Thai business community. In examining the eight characteristics, the dichotomy between ideas presented in the literature (see 2.0) is contrasted with the reality experienced by interviewees involved in teaching seminars in Thailand (see 4.0).

Finally, the conclusion (see 6.0) looks at the implications of this research more broadly and makes a number of recommendations for further research. For example, research to determine how new trainers should be taught the skills needed to teach a short course in Thailand; or, research to determine the relative importance of the characteristics found.

1.8 Summary

The background to this research is important as my personal background and the local conditions have played an important role in shaping the chapters that follow. With twenty-six years as an adult educator, my review of the literature (see 2.0) reflects areas of interest believed to be necessary in researching this topic. In particular, I examined literature on the characteristics of adult education that delineate it from the teaching of non-adults. I also examined the components typically included in discussion on teaching adults, that is, the content, the instructor, and the learner. Finally, I examined literature and ‘how to’ manuals on training provision, and following a conventional pattern, this has been organized in terms of activities undertaken before, during, and following a training event.

The choice of a case study method (see 3.0) was influenced by my personal views on the nature of knowledge and the local conditions experienced in Thailand. The multi-step analysis of the comments collected, reflects a rigorous examination of comments provided by the fifteen interviewees and has resulted in the clear delineation of comments into four important categories and twenty-two themes (see 4.0).

Eight characteristics of an effective trainer in the Thai business community were found and described in detail (see 5.0). These offer a number of recommendations for the preparation of new trainers entering this market.

The conclusion (see 6.0) returns to the origin of this research project and describes the steps taken to reach the findings presented. This chapter also highlights my major findings and concludes with personal insights into further research avenues both in Thailand and in other countries and cultures.
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons here and there, nor as a thing which concerns only a short span of early manhood, but that adult education … should be both universal and lifelong. (Ministry of Reconstruction, 1919, p. 55)

The provision of effective short-course training sits within the fields of adult education and adult learning. While not all aspects of the research literature and professional advice are relevant to this study, it is necessary to examine the broader picture in some detail to provide a frame of reference and starting points for this study.

Recent adult education research continues to provide adult educators with a broader socio-cultural landscape of what they might hope to accomplish in adult education. However, in the real world this theory must be examined on a more practical level with regards to how adult educators approach teaching (Harvey, 1996). This need to combine theory with practical classroom application requires examining how educators are seen to understand social realities and their role in their creation. To accomplish this, it is necessary to examine the various views seen to encompass the role of the adult educator and "the personal relationship between teacher and taught" (Jarvis, 1995, p. 143).

Foley (2000) suggested that adult educators need to be aware of the various schools of thought in both adult education and training to better appreciate their role as adult educators. Listing major schools of thought, Foley offered an overview of each school’s aims, focus, acceptable content, teacher and learner role and finally, teaching method.

The traditional school, focused primarily on the individual, aimed to provide politically neutral and useful knowledge, usually in more classical areas, such as history, math, morality and philosophy. This was generally seen to involve a teacher in full control in a predominantly lecture role.

Individual self-actualization (Knowles, 1978) also focused on the individual, but it leaned more towards personal development, self-direction and fulfillment. With the content more affective than cognitive, that is, the experience was seen as more important than the content, the teacher and students were seen as equals in deciding what to learn.

The progressive school (Dewey 1938) focused on the individual and the development of a strong democratic society. With the teacher and student expected to learn from each
other, they were seen as partners in deciding what immediate concerns or problems the student needed to solve. Social transformation (Freire, 1973), focused on creating a new social order and was seen as emancipatory, with the experience of all participants gained through reflection and action, codified by the teacher working, as an equal, to create the required curriculum.

The school of organizational effectiveness (Argyris & Schon, 1974) was aimed at meeting the needs of organizations. As reflected in this study, training was seen to be provided by trainers, using a variety of techniques to meet the specific training needs established by an organization.

Regardless of the role taken, or seen to be most important, by an adult educator, the overriding concern for a classroom practitioner, is the "more practical issue: how exactly to facilitate … learning" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 337). In examining the effect a particular focus might have on a trainer and their pedagogical decisions, the practical questions posed by Habermas (1995) could help clarify the directions taken in an adult education class. For example, is the selected strategy based on an "orientation toward success ... (or) toward reaching understanding?" (p. 133) Is the class "reaching agreement as a mechanism for coordinating actions?" (p. 134) Do all participants have the chance "to take turns playing the communicative roles of speaker, addressee, and bystander?" (p. 134)

While personal and social transformation are seen as particularly important in adult education research, the implications of this for the provision of one-off training sessions by a freelance trainer remains unclear and beyond the scope of this research. The aim of this research is more directly focused on answering Merriam and Caffarella's (1999) question as to what practical issues are seen to influence a short-course, adult training event provided to Thai business executive and leads into the discussions that follow.

The field of adult education is a broad domain encompassing: apprenticeship, mentoring, coaching, technical training, professional development, academic programs, seminars, short courses, work-place training, and personal development. In addition, adult education, in contrast to school education, does not have fixed boundaries. It can be undertaken at any point during an individual’s lifetime, for whatever reason, that is, work-related or for leisure, and for any period of time that is required or desired.
The whole of life is learning, therefore education can have no endings. This new venture is called adult education not because it is confined to adults but because adulthood, maturity, defines its limits… (Lindeman, 1926, pp. 4-5)

Foley (2000) suggested a framework was needed to understand adult education and that it was necessary to develop theoretical frameworks that were holistic, coherent, and strategic.

Holistic—that is, they comprehensively account for the contextual and ethical factors which shape adult education. Coherent—that is, they give a clear account of the ways in which these different factors interact in particular situations. Strategic—that is, they help adult educators to act… (p. 21)

The goal of this research is to determine the characteristics of an effective seminar leader in the Thai business community. To accomplish this objective, it will be necessary to review the literature and research in a holistic, coherent, and strategic manner. This objective has therefore placed the emphasis on examining research and professional publications in fields associated with the teaching of adults in a business community, in particular, a one-off, planned learning event of limited duration, that is, from three hours to two days.

While this limited, to a great extent, the literature that could be considered, key aspects of the research on adult learners, teaching adults, and training provision were seen to offer insights into the characteristics of an effective seminar leader in the Thai business community.

Even though there is a vast literature on the adult student, much of it is anecdotal or policy oriented, rather than empirically based. (Harris & Brooks, 1998, p. 227)

Consequently, this review will consider a wide range of sources in addition to published research including newspaper or magazine articles and ‘how-to’ manuals or texts. Given this diversity, the theoretical perspectives, which inform this field, will be considered where appropriate.

Within the literature on adult learners, three distinguishing features emerge as factors shaping adult learning, that is, the role of adult experience, motivation, and learning styles.

a. The role of experience is repeatedly cited as the predominant factor in distinguishing adult learners as a unique field of research and inquiry. More importantly, the role of experience and how it is incorporated or applied is recognized as a key factor in effective
adult training (e.g., Kelly, 1955; Knowles, 1978; Jarvis, 1987; Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 2002) (see 2.1.2).

b. What prompts adults to undertake and then engage in an educational event has also been thoroughly examined in terms of how motivation is created, maintained, and most importantly, employed by a trainer to create an effective training environment (e.g., Jarvis, 1995; Richardson & King, 1998; Merriam & Caffarella; 1999; Rae, 1991; Cantwell, Archer, & Bourke, 2001, Rogers 2002) (see 2.1.3).

c. Research into preferred learning styles and the adult learner has also provided useful insights concerning adult learners and they ways in which they might approach a learning event and as such offers insights into effective training (e.g., Torres, 1986; Stouch, 1993; Rogers, 2002, Spicer, 2004) (see 2.1.4).

The research on teaching adults (see 2.2) can be broadly delineated in terms of trainer characteristics and qualities, participant background features, contextual factors associated with the training, along with the subject matter and its mode of presentation. Each of these will be described briefly below and in further detail in later sections with the view to identifying those aspects that might inform the design of this research study.

The literature on training provision (see 2.2.2) invariably considers this issue in a temporal, linear, sequential manner. In general, the activities include: pre-training preparation, for example, needs analysis or skills testing, the design and presentation of the planned training program; and post-course observation, that is, the transfer of training. Included in this discussion, is an analysis of current second language teaching theory and practice. As all stages in training provision have the potential to directly influence the quality of a short course, each stage will be examined in more detail to determine its role in the creation and provision of effective adult education by an instructor.

Finally, as this research is located in the Thai business community, it is important to review aspects of Thai culture associated with an adult learning environment to provide an understanding of the context in which short-course training occurs (see 2.3). The chapter concludes with a review of the major observations derived from the literature and a brief summary of their importance in determining the characteristics of an effective seminar leader in the Thai business community.
2.1 Adult Learners

The term *adult learner* has provoked considerable controversy and discussion with a succinct definition still eluding academics. However, one of the earliest definitions by Lindeman (1926) offers a description that foreshadows topics covered in this chapter.

In an adult class, the student’s experience counts for as much as the teacher’s knowledge. Both are exchangeable at par. Indeed, in some of the best adult classes it is sometimes difficult to discover who is learning most, the teacher or the students. In conventional education, the pupils adapt themselves to the curriculum offered, but in adult education, the pupils aid in formulating the curricula. (p. 166)

Burns (2002) discussed the nature of adulthood based on a chronological basis, legal aspects, and societal expectations. Having difficulty in producing an acceptable definition, he turned to Knowles’ (1980) definition created more than twenty years earlier.

The basis for treating people as adults is that they behave like adults and perceive themselves as adults. Behaving like an adult means behaving in a more mature way. (Burns, 2002, p. 221)

A discussion of adult learners must reflect the contributions made by Knowles (1980) and his theory of andragogy, which dealt with the differences seen in helping adults to learn, compared to pedagogy or helping children to learn. Knowles suggested that his theory was universally applicable, and argued “in the world of the future we must define the mission of education as to produce competent people” (Knowles 1980, pp. 18-19).

Merriam (1993a), in summarizing the role of Knowles’ theory, wrote that,

While andragogy does not define the uniqueness of adult learning, it does provide a set of guidelines for designing instruction with learners who are more self-directed than teacher-directed. (pp. 8-9)

However Knowles work was criticized, in particular by Pratt (1993), who argued that Knowles' assumptions were based on a group of adult learners prepared to take part in a participatory and democratic learning experience based on a Western male concept of individuality, and by Tisdell (1998) on the grounds that it was based on a simplified view of individual freedom. Concerns have also been expressed as to whether the assumptions are based on evidence and to what extent variations can be seen in their interpretation (Racha, 2002). However, Knowles' theory of andragogy continues to be a focus of research, in particular, in the on-going debate as to the boundary between adult education and human resource development (Galusha, 1998).
The self-directed and self-aware aspect of adult learners suggested by Knowles continues to be employed, for example, by Sewell (2000) who turned to adult students themselves to define how she believed they differed from traditional-aged students.

1. Mature students are able to put ideas into a wider context
2. Mature students can apply professional knowledge and skills to their studies
3. Mature students know the value of their time. (p. 312)

The term ‘learner’ has also proven difficult to define, although Cranton (1989) offered a definition useful in this research context, in suggesting that, “a learner is any individual who engages in education activities for the purposes of acquiring knowledge, skills or values in any area” (p. 4).

The following section examines the literature related to the ‘adult learner’. It begins with a brief discussion of lifelong learning and lifelong education and leads into a focused review of three areas of current research that have a direct bearing on teaching adults during a planned, short-course learning situation, that is, experience, motivation, and adult learning styles.

2.1.1 Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Education

The literature on lifelong learning is important as the characteristics or distinguishing features of adult learners have often been studied in this context. Lifelong education is important, as what is involved in teaching adults is often addressed in studies that examine lifelong educational theory and practice.

The term ‘lifelong learning’ is sometimes confused with ‘lifelong education’ and while they share some characteristics, they are not interchangeable. Lifelong learning takes place throughout one’s life. It includes experiences gained on a daily basis; study undertaken for a variety of personal or professional reasons, for example, a course in First Aid; and, education leading to official recognition such as undergraduate and graduate university degrees, business diplomas, and technical certificates.

Lindeman (1926) and Dewey (1938) saw lifelong learning as something that was both within the learner’s control, particularly the choice of experiences sought and outside the learner’s control in that everyday experiences also provided a variety of learning experiences whether or not they had been actively sought. The two cannot be separated and regardless of
how acquired, “every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality” (Dewey, 1938, p. 47).

In contrast, the literature concerned with lifelong education tends to be limited to discussions regarding the provision of education in the context of relatively traditional teacher/student courses for an adult audience defined as

Any organized, sustained activity engaged in by an adult individual for the purposes of changing their knowledge, skills or values in any area. (Cranton, 1989, p. 4)

In the late 1990s, the term ‘lifelong education’ came to replace an earlier term ‘recurrent education’. Although Burns (2002) preferred the term lifelong education over the term ‘recurrent’ to describe learning throughout one’s life, he argued that the term recurrent should remain to describe one aspect of adult education - discontinuous learning between periods of work. While the term lifelong education better exemplifies current attitudes toward adult education, recurrent education fills a niche as it suggests that for some adults, education is sought or provided from time to time or as needed, whereas lifelong learning suggests that learning is an on-going activity. This is particularly important in this research context, as short courses would clearly be seen by Burns as recurrent education.

Whether lifelong learning or lifelong education, the implication remains that both include adults who are willing to become involved in new experiences; to observe and reflect on these experiences; to integrate new ideas with their existing ideas; and finally, are prepared to apply new ideas and concepts learned (Kolb, 1984). Burns (2002) suggested the unique characteristics of lifelong learners included:

The necessary skills and attitudes for learning, especially literacy and numeracy skills; the confidence to learn, including a sense of engagement with the education and training system [and] the willingness and motivation to learn. (p. 45)

However, most discussions concerning the theory and practice of teaching of adults are built on the premise that recognizable differences in maturity, background, and expectations between non-adult and adult students can be observed. Whether these discussions focus on lifelong learning or on lifelong education, the adultness of the learner as a key factor in classroom interaction along with curriculum design and implementation deserves attention. In particular, the role of experience, unique aspects of adult motivation to learn, and the need to understand and teach to varying adult learning styles, are often grouped together as key characteristics and therefore need to be examined in more detail to determine
their role in effective short-course training (e.g., Knowles, 1970; Jarvis, 1995, Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, Foley, 2000).

2.1.2 The Role of Experience

There is a growing consensus that experience forms the basis of all learning. Many modern writers suggest that at the heart of all learning is the search for meaning in experience. (Rogers, 2002, p. 16)

The role of adult learners’ experiences was often cited as the most important characteristic in distinguishing adult education from non-adult (that is, education involving children or adolescents), and that experience was a facet of adulthood that must be considered when teaching adult learners (e.g., Kelly, 1955; Gibb, 1960; Knowles, 1978; Jarvis, 1987; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 2002).

The comparatively richer life experiences and background of the adult has been cited by nearly all writers as a key factor in differentiating adult learning from child learning. (Caffarella & Barnett, 1994, p. 30)

Lifelong learning research and literature, beginning with, for example, Dewey’s (1938) suggestion that “all genuine education comes through experience” (p. 13), has repeatedly examined the role played by an adult’s store of experiences and how it relates to effective adult learning. Dinmore (1997) in suggesting means to distinguish adult and pre-adult learners looked to the central role experience played in shaping adult education.

Dewey (1938) wrote that for learning to take place through experience, both continuity and interaction must be present. Continuity was seen as when every experience reflected those that had come before and would modify, in some manner, those to follow. Interaction was seen as the normal interplay in any experience between objective and internal conditions and resulted in what Dewey termed, ‘the situation’. What was learned in one
situation would change the manner in which the next situation would be approached, in a process that would continue throughout life as long as learning continued.

In explaining the importance of experience in adult learning, Kelly (1955) suggested that learning was not imposed from external sources, but rather came from an internal drive, which involved the observation and reflection of previous experiences to form ‘personal constructs’ or units of meaning based on emotions, memories, and reviews of things done, people met, and places visited. Learning was seen as finding and adding new experiences while constantly analyzing how these new experiences would fit within existing schema (e.g., Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Pratt, 1993).

Rogers (1993) suggested a ‘learning map’ metaphor to describe how new experiences would be added to already existing experiences or how new and unrelated experiences would need to create their own location within the existing schema. He suggested that the more important a set of experiences were on an individual’s learning map, the closer they would lie to the ‘self-center;’ whereas experiences of lesser interest would lie closer to the fringe. The closer a set of experiences was to the center; the easier it would be for an individual to learn or to add to this set of centrally located experiences. Likewise, the further a new learning experience was from the center; the more difficult it would be for an individual to learn. The implications of Rogers’ learning maps for adult educators suggested that no learner in our programmes of education and training is entirely ignorant of the subject matter being taught … there is a responsibility placed on the teacher-agent, both the planner of the programme and the teacher/instructor him/herself, to take care not to increase the concept distance by the use of inappropriate language and symbols; indeed, many will try to reduce the concept distance as far as possible. (Rogers, 1993, p. 215)

Merriam and Caffarella (1999) discussed this aspect of experience and its important implications in concrete terms and suggested that

In helping adults connect their current experience to their prior knowledge and experience, we need to be knowledgeable about the amount of prior knowledge they posses in a particular area and design our learning activities accordingly. (p. 207)

Nunan (1999) examined how new experiences might be combined with previous experiences and using a schema theory, suggested that new experiences would be associated with previous experiences, “based on the notion that past experiences lead to the creation of mental frameworks that help us make sense of new experiences” (p. 201).
Smith (1994) called schemes the “extensive representations of more general patterns or regularities that occur in our experience” (p. 14). Andersen (1994) suggested that information could be recalled when a person was able to “bring to mind a schema that gives account of the objects and events described in the message” (p. 469). This in turn would lead to the restructuring of a person’s schemata as new information is added to the system (Omaggio, 1993).

Honey and Mumford (1986) suggested that learning from experience involved a cycle that included: undergoing an experience, reflecting on the experience, making conclusions based on the experience, and finally, planning the next experience.

Situated in the center of the learning process is a self as the interpreter of experience and the agent of future actions. Implicitly, the individual is engaged in the act of self-assessment where, sitting beside herself and in conversation with herself, she judges and justifies her ideas and actions within the context of her beliefs and values as well as in interactions with others. She interprets meaning from her experiences and sets directions for future experiences. (Marienau, 1999, p. 136)

On a practical level, Tennant (1991) proposed that experience played an important teaching role in linking on-going explanations with student experiences or learning activities introduced during a course. In addition, learning experiences, such as games, simulations, and role-play could provide learners with a common base each individual could use to construct their own meaning through discussion or reflection and to allow them the opportunity to reexamine taken-for-granted ideas about what they had done or learned in the past.

The literature reviewed in this section suggests that effective trainers are likely to understand the importance of recognizing and using participant experience in the design and implementation of training programs. This raises the question of how trainers, without access to students before training starts, can productively utilize learners' past experiences. Trainers in the Thai business community are often in the difficult position of having to guess at what participants have experienced in the past and how they will need to use what is being presented once the training is completed. This, together with the fact that,

an important factor in many adult students’ evaluation of teaching effectiveness is whether their instructor has been able to make connections between course content, the rest of their study program and their own experience (Dinmore, 1997, p. 464),
would suggest that effective short-course trainers in this context may well need to be able to recognize and use learner’s experience as it becomes known to them during the learning event.

2.1.3 Motivation

Research concerning the role played by motivation in an effective adult learning environment typically examines adult motivation to attend a learning event and/or the motivation to remain and make the most of a particular educational event.

Smith and Ragan (1999), for example, clearly stated what they meant about wanting participants to be motivated.

When we talk about wanting our students to be motivated, we mean, of course, that they be motivated toward the instruction in which they should be participating. We want the students to choose to attend to what is going on in instruction and choose to apply effort in learning from it. (p. 239)

While a great deal has been written about what motivates mature-aged students to begin, or return to, university or college (e.g., Jarvis, 1995; Richardson & King, 1998; Merriam & Caffarella; 1999; Cantwell, Archer, & Bourke, 2001, Rogers 2002), most of this research does not apply to a group of adult learners brought together for a single, short seminar. However, factors associated with a desire to remain in a training event and to make the most of the opportunity are important in this study as they offer an insight into how trainers can enhance their ability to be effective.

In this research, the most pertinent aspect of motivation lies in understanding adult learners’ motivation to become involved in a particular classroom-learning situation once they have begun a course. Smith and Ragan (1999) suggested that intrinsic techniques or conditions within the learner were relevant to classroom-based success at creating motivation to learn. They suggested that questions related to intrinsic techniques or conditions were best examined by reviewing research on how adult learners were seen to accept the benefit of what they were learning; how they acquired the confidence they could learn; and finally; how they came to a decision to continue learning. Inherent in each question was the role taken by a trainer in effectively reaching particular learning goals.

Although adults may do their own reinforcement through practical work and study, our teaching designs, if they are to be accountable, must carry adequate reinforcement with them to ensure learning. (Illeris, 2003, p. 17)
Another important motivational tenet is the need for trainers to ensure that participants have confidence in their abilities to accomplish the learning expected. Wright (1991) suggested that confidence building strategies included ideas and techniques used to prevent or to help students work through attitudes or beliefs that would hinder their participation in learning tasks.

Part of the answer to this fear of the unknown is in the use of psychological techniques that one might call ‘success flagging,’ in which the instructor informs the students about the success of others who have gone before and/or suggests ways in which the trainees’ jobs will be made easier, more profitable or whatever. (p. 173)

With participants arriving at a seminar with varying levels of confidence regarding their ability to complete activities related to the learning and the planned program, confidence building strategies should give participants confidence in the knowledge that “some level of success is possible if effort is exerted” (Keller, 1987, p. 5). Keller also suggested learners needed to know what would be expected and be able to see these expectations reflected in a sequencing of material that increased in difficulty, but at the same time remained challenging (Keller, 1983, 1987, 1996).

Thornton, Mattocks, and Thornton (2001) saw confidence as when participants were able to establish control over a learning experience.

Adult learners must be encouraged to develop levels of autonomy over their learning experiences. Instructors can build a participatory environment that encourages individual ideas, unique solutions, experimental solutions, and ‘out of the box’ thinking. (pp. 4-5)

An additional and important motivational concern is the need to ensure that content and the way it is presented includes the “means to draw student attention to the material being learned and frequently involve very specific techniques of content presentation or treatment” (Smith & Ragan, 1999, p. 261). Keller (1987) suggested that motivational strategies related to content included the need to ensure that content presented, the way in which it was presented, and related activities matched a learner’s expectations and experience. Stories, visual presentation, and humor were also seen as helpful in encouraging participant motivation.

The personal anecdote that illuminates an idea or clarifies a concept is neither ego-indulgence nor mere wandering from truth. The personal is a way of gaining the kind of interest absolutely necessary to learning. Moreover, an anecdotal account of how some aspect of the subject matter came to have value for the teacher exerts a powerful force upon the student to grant that subject matter personal worth. And it is surely among the simplest truths of public speaking that the audience’s interest picks up when the discourse turns personal. (Eble, 1988, pp. 15-16)
In a unique study examining motivating and demotivating behavior at a Thai university, Tanchaisak (1996) found that effective presentation skills were the most commonly cited motivating factor, while incompetence and boring presentations were regarded as the most demotivating factors. Rodríguez, Plax, and Kearney (1996) also examined teacher behaviors but looked to these as ways for teachers to influence students’ time on task and ultimately, cognitive learning. In this way, affect is a means to an end or, said differently, affect is the mediator between a number of teacher communication variables and cognitive learning. (p. 303)

Increasingly the role and nature of motivation is coming under scrutiny. While the 1990s saw a predominance of studies related to extrinsic motivation (Brown, 1991), the focus more recently has turned to contextual issues that might influence motivation (Canagarajah, 2006).

We now have a range of perspectives that put motivation on a different footing, integrating psychological considerations with social conditions. For example, we can consider motivation in terms of identity formation. … used the term investment to demonstrate how commitment to gaining important symbolic and material resources helps learners develop… (pp. 14-15)

Canagarajah (2006) concluded his discussion by writing that while it is becoming easier to find counterexamples to most motivational theories, the importance lies in acknowledging the existence of a variety of motivational factors and to prepare for them in a "more holistic and richer framework…” (p. 15).

While most practical advice concerning motivation in adult education continues to recommend involving participants in the planning stage, this is seldom an option in a Thai short-course situation. In this case, motivational devices are limited to those that can be used within the seminar and face-to-face with participants, such as the sequencing of material or the inclusion of personal stories and examples. This would suggest that effective trainers in this context are likely to understand the ideas reviewed and appreciate the importance of ensuring that their adult participants remain motivated to learn during a short course.

2.1.4 Adult Learning Styles

The more we know about how students learn, the more likely we are to teach effectively. (Eble, 1988, p. 67)
The literature related to adult learning styles often includes discussions concerning adult ability to learn along with learning style preferences. Both adult learning ability and preferred learning styles are examined here, as both are relevant to the present study.

A review of the material related to adult learning ability is included as it is important to note that research has suggested that adult learner difficulties, if encountered, are not related to age, but to factors related to content or training techniques.

Contrary to the stereotype of mature students as being deficient in terms of their basic study skills … findings tend to confirm the view … that mature age students perform better overall than normal age students… (Richardson, 1994, p. 15)

Merriam (1993) suggested that while it had long been accepted that living and learning were interwoven and could not be separated, the institutionalization of adult learning had led to discussions concerning intellectual ability and aging. Among early research in adult education, Thorndike, Bregman, Tilton, and Woodyard (1928), researched intellectual ability in adults and found that,

Teachers of adults of age twenty-five to forty-five should expect them to learn at nearly the same rate and in nearly the same manner as they would have learned the same thing at twenty. (pp. 178-79)

More importantly, Lorge (1944, 1947) found that when research focused on the ability to learn and not the speed at which learning took place, adults up to age 70 tended to do as well as younger adults. Merriam (1993a) in her discussion concerning adult-learning abilities also supported the view that “adults can learn, and depending on how learning is measured and assessed, they can learn as well as young people” (p. 9).

The fact that adults can learn as effectively as younger students is extremely important as it would suggest that training programs do not need to be adapted for adult learners, nor do adult learners need to be treated differently based solely on age. In short, the age of the participants in a training event does not play a role in determining effectiveness.

Among the instruments used to measure learning styles, the Rezler and French (1975) Learning Preference Inventory (LPI) considered student preferences for a particular learning environment and how these preferences could be matched with effective classroom activities. In their study, they suggested that an ‘abstract’ focus would be more effective with students who enjoyed learning and generating new theories and hypotheses. ‘Concrete’ learning would
be effective with students who preferred hands-on learning that would result in skills being acquired or applied. Students with a ‘teacher-structured’ preference were seen as those who enjoyed a well-organized teacher who had carefully explained expectations and course goals; whereas a ‘student-structured’ preference would be seen in students who wished to work independently.

What is helpful for adults … is to have facilitators or instructors (1) assist learners in matching their preferred learning styles to learning techniques where such choices are available and (2) use a variety of learning techniques on a regular basis so that all learners feel their strengths are being tapped at different points in the process. (Caffarella & Barnett, 1994, pp. 31-32)

Heron (1989, 1992) suggested that effective teachers could match student preferred learning styles by filling a variety of roles with some roles seen as ‘authoritative’, while others were seen as ‘facilitative’. Authoritative roles included instructing or challenging, while facilitative roles included eliciting information and offering support. An effective instructor, Heron argued, could utilize both roles and move seamlessly from one role to the next.

Kolb’s (1976, 1984) learning style profile was based on his belief that the main way to deal with the need to adapt was through learning. His learning styles theory also suggested varying approaches and, at the same time, types of learning activity that could be included. Effective learning itself was seen to be accomplished through varying modes: direct experience or the ‘affective mode’; through observation and reflection or the ‘perceptual mode’; through abstract conceptualization or the ‘thinking mode’; and, finally, through experimentation or the ‘behavioral mode’.

Kolb proposed that learning was cyclical and holistic in that all learning modes were applied, although most people tended to favor one type of learning over the others. Rogers (2002) has also suggested that each individual acquired, during the course of their education, one or more preferred learning styles. This would suggest that while adults use all learning styles, most seem to prefer one or two approaches, although it remains unclear if the same style would be used in all learning situations.

Honey and Mumford (1986) studied management learning and created a set of preferred styles that would influence the selection of activities presented during a course and observed how learners might react. Learners demonstrating an ‘activist’ style were seen to learn best with new and immediate learning experiences and tended to be bored with the implementation of longer-term projects. ‘Reflectors’ liked to watch and collected data for
analysis before making conclusions from or about an experience. ‘Theorists’ enjoyed working with assumptions, theories, and systems in which rationality and logic were important. Preferring things to be neat and tidy, they would be unhappy with ambiguity and subjectivity. ‘Pragmatists’ were seen as those who would try to find new ideas and be among the first to experiment. This group would see problems and opportunities as a challenge, although it would be unlikely they would see them in this light. Lohan (1997) examined these four learning style preferences on a more practical level and offered examples of how each type of learner would approach the same learning task and provided examples of what each type of learner would be expected to accomplish.

Lee, McKool, and Napieralski (2000) researched part-time, adult graduate students and found a marked preference for discussion over lectures and individual work over group work. However, they cautioned that

what a student prefers may not be what results in the highest level of achievement. Although students in the study expressed a preference for individual projects, many experienced teachers maintain that students learn much from each other in conducting group projects. (p. 559)

Foley (2000) also wrote that an appreciation of learning styles was important as it enabled instructors to become more sensitive to student learning and that “at a more systematic level, understanding of the ways learners think enables educators to help students develop learning strategies, ways of understanding and acting on their learner” (p. 43).

Gagne (1965) proposed a hierarchy of different types of learning with each type having a unique set of conditions which need to be satisfied before the learner can move on to the next level. For example, this view assumes that it is first necessary to learn facts, terms, and basic concepts before learners can be expected to apply what was learned, and that this capacity needs to be accomplished before they could be expected to evaluate what had been learned.

Habermas (1978) also presented a hierarchy of learning types that included: instrumental learning, which he argued was the lowest level involving learning the skills needed to control one’s immediate environment; the next, communicative learning fulfilled the need to enhance interpersonal understanding; and finally, emancipatory learning, which helped to create self-awareness so the learner could better understand cultural and personal biases. Habermas also wrote that these types of learning would require different methods of
teaching and that any educational situation would require the use of all three to varying degrees.

Ramsden and Entwistle (1994) and later Biggs (1987) designed questionnaires to measure a student’s approach to their learning requirements. In both cases, they dealt with approaches to learning in terms of motive and strategy. *Surface learning* was described as a rote-learning strategy used to ensure course requirements are met and not much more. The second, *deep learning* described the situation where students were motivated to learn or to gain competence in a subject, often through extensive learning and the application of previous experience. The *achieving or strategic* approach was adopted by students who wished to be seen as high achievers and, as a consequence, focused on organizing their time and resources to the best advantage. Kember (1996, 2000) suggested three related levels. The first, which is closest to surface learning or rote learning, was evident in students whose strategy was to understand enough of the core concepts so as to make memorization easier. The second was characterized by students who first sought understanding and then memorized, while the third, which was seen to closest to deep learning, primarily involved understanding, in which memorization was undertaken a task-based purpose.

Hiemstra and Sisco (1990) also looked at learning styles and suggested that the use of learning style inventories could be “best used as tools to create awareness that learners differ and as starting points for individual learners” (p. 240). Ebeling (2000) also commented on the benefits derived when trainers understood and accepted preferred learning styles as, “the more options that you have at your fingertips, the more likely it is that you will use those options to benefit the learners in your class” (p. 248).

While both the Ramsden and Entwistle and Biggs questionnaires remain a field of contention regarding their applicability in all learning situations, within all subsets and across cultures, (Sadler-Smith and Tsang, 1998) Richardson (1994) concluded that

… qualitative and quantitative research procedures have produced evidence from a reasonable variety of national systems of higher education for the broad distinction between two fundamental approaches to studying: first, an orientation towards comprehending the meaning of the materials to be learned; and, second an orientation towards merely being able to reproduce those materials for the purposes of academic assessment. (p. 463)

Short-course trainers in the Thai business community will have limited knowledge of the participants they teach. However, it would appear that if the activities chosen by a trainer
also match preferred learning styles and the level of learning, the gain could be twofold. Participants would be presented with a variety of activities, for example, the eliciting of information followed by a short lecture, related to a topic or theme, with the anticipation that one activity might help some more than others. It is not clear from the research whether students enter a class with predetermined learning styles or do they wait to see what is expected before deciding which style they will implement. Clearly, while students may have time to adapt their learning style to a course offered over a number of sessions with either traditional or non-traditional grading schemes included, they will have time to reflect on the best way to approach the learning. However, it is not clear if participants in a short course will have the time or inclination to adapt their learning style when a learning event is short.

2.1.5 Summary

The literature review above has examined research findings on important characteristics that distinguish adult education and has identified key aspects that play a major role in shaping effective adult training rather than education. In particular, it has demonstrated the key role that is played by adult experience in effective adult education; that adult motivation can be enhanced by a knowledgeable trainer, and that adult learners prefer varying types of activities. While this research undoubtedly informs adult education in general, the literature review has raised questions about the extent to which the results of this research are relevant to adult training, particularly the situation of a short, one-off training session offered by freelance trainers.

This store of varied and potentially useful experiences an adult learner has gained and brings to their planned learning (see 2.1.1) plays a central role in defining adult education in that adults are seen as a reservoir of experience, unlike non-adults, or at least not to the same extent as with non-adults. In particular, adult educators wishing to be effective are advised to remember this pool of experience in all aspects of adult teaching. In examining the role of participant experience, research has suggested that in effective adult education, past experiences must be drawn on so that new learning can be effectively related to prior learning and experiences to help learners envision how they can apply what they are currently learning to what has been learned in the past.

The reasons why adults choose to or agree to participate in any form of further education (see 2.1.3) is a complex issue that can be understood in terms of the motivation to
enter a learning situation and the motivation to make the most of a learning situation. As the motivation to enter a learning situation is of limited value in this research, it has not been dealt with in any detail. However, adult motivation to make the most of a learning event is of particular interest and reflects findings in adult motivation related to effective learning during a learning event. Within this area of study, research has suggested that a variety of factors play an important role in motivating adults to start and to continue to learn during a seminar. This includes the need to ensure adult learners remain confident in their ability to learn and in the relevance of the content being presented.

The manner in which adults are seen to approach a learning task and their marked preferences for one or two preferred learning styles is another area in which the literature related to adult leaning has examined the adult as a learner (see 2.1.4). Of particular interest are findings that suggest adults, at least at the age expected in a business seminar, retain most if not all of their learning ability. This is important as it suggests that potential learning problems during a short course will not be age related. This is not to suggest that an effective trainer will not encounter problems during a training event, but as research has repeatedly suggested that age is unlikely to be a factor, other potential causes for learning difficulty would need to be determined.

Preferred learning styles research offers an insight into how adults learn and has suggested the type and variety of learning materials and exercises that could be used to meet a range of preferred learning styles. This research suggests that a well developed capacity to identify how people react in a certain way to a particular type of learning task or activity could provide a trainer with an improved understanding of what activities or combinations of activities might prove to be more effective in helping adults learn. In addition, studies have shown the benefit in understanding the influence a particular learning context might have on adult learning styles.

The more we are able to ‘read’ the reactions of the students, the better we are able to make appropriate choices for our own behaviors (Burns, 1996, p. 46).

The ability to read and respond to participant reactions is important as short-course trainers in the Thai business community will have very limited knowledge of their participants before a seminar and will be limited in the time they have to establish and maintain rapport.
2.2 Teaching Adults

The purpose of teaching is to help students learn more effectively and efficiently than they would on their own. (Angelo, 1996, p. 57)

Research on the teaching of adults can be categorized into two major areas for the purposes of this review. The first is literature related to teaching in general, the essentials of teaching (see 2.2.1). The second includes literature on training provision (see 2.2.2). Section 2.2.1 reviews the literature on teaching skills associated with effective teaching, that is, the knowledge of participants that research suggests is both pertinent and necessary in planning effective learning events, and finally, the role content expertise is seen to play in defining the characteristics of an effective trainer. In Section 2.2.2, the literature on the teaching of adults will be examined in terms of needs analysis, instructional design, and the transfer of learning.

As Cross (1981) pointed out in an essay concerned with the difficulty in defining the qualities of an effective teacher, “the myth that we cannot tell an excellent teacher from a mediocre or poor teacher is as pernicious as it is false” (p. 501). Collinson (1999) also discussed this same difficulty and wrote that while it might be possible to recognize excellent teaching, “what is more difficult to understand is what makes excellent teachers recognizable” (p. 5).

While research dealing with teaching adults often considers factors that a seminar leader in the Thai business community does not have the opportunity to address (e.g., motivation to attend a course, participant input in course design, and post-training follow through), research centered on adult teaching in the classroom provides insights into approaches and methods associated with effective adult teaching. As indicated earlier, in order to consider both the theoretical and practical aspects associated with teaching adults, it is necessary to review a wide range of research and professional literature including ‘how-to’ manuals and professional articles that describe best practices in the field of adult education. As learning theories variously inform, what is known about effective teaching in an adult education context, the most important of these will be described briefly before considering the literature related to the components of teaching and training provision.

Cohen (2002) suggested that an understanding of learning theories would help trainers appreciate the role they should adopt in the classroom. He advocated that trainers
Must take the time to think more strategically about instruction and to analyze each learning situation to determine just which methods are likely to deliver the most value-added instructional results. (p. 32)

While learning theories summarized here, that is, ‘behaviorist’, ‘cognitive’, and ‘constructivist’ orientations, are not exhaustive, they provide an overview to orientations that would appear to be most applicable to the effective teaching of adult learners in a business environment conducted over a few hours to two consecutive days.

The behaviorist learning orientation is often associated with skills and competency-based learning. The dominant learning orientation during the first half of the twentieth century, behaviorism reflects the view that learning research only had value when examining observable behavior (Smith & Ragan, 1999). Beginning with early work by Pavlov (1927) and his views on ‘classical conditioning’, Skinner’s contribution in the 1940s and 50s on ‘operant conditioning’, signaled behaviorism’s maturity and reflected the belief that learning was to, “reinforce what you want the individual to do again; ignore what you want the individual to stop doing” (Grippin & Peters, 1984, p. 65). Behaviorism reflected an attempt to change learner behavior in a selected manner, and used a classroom environment in which the trainer would establish a learning environment that would be expected to lead to the desired change. Adult training continues to reflect this approach with programs in which learning tasks are separated into identifiable parts as would be seen in programs that include behavioral objectives, instructor accountability, and a systematic instructional design.

Adult vocational and skills training - in which the learning task is broken into segments or tasks - in particular draws from behaviorism, as does technical and skills training with human resource development … (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 253)

The cognitive orientation looks to the trainer as a facilitator who is more skilled than the learner and can therefore help the learner to negotiate or come to terms with learning.

(a) the view of learning as an active, constructivist process; (b) the presence of high-level process in learning; (c) the cumulative nature of learning and the corresponding role played by prior knowledge; (d) concern for the way knowledge is represent and organized in memory; and (e) concern for analyzing learning tasks and performance in terms of the cognitive process that are involved. (Schuell, 1986, p. 415)

In this environment, trainers would have considered participant needs, learning styles, and the selection of activities needed to enhance learning competencies and that
The challenge for the teacher is to accommodate the uniquely persona nature of each student’s life space, based on the implication that each student will perceive the learning situation differently and interpret the material in subtly varying ways. (Burns, 2002. p. 129)

While cognitive theory is premised on the idea that structured knowledge is transmitted from teacher to learner, the philosophical orientation that variously underpins the works of Dewey, Bruner, Piaget and Vygotsky, is based on the idea that learners construct their own knowledge, a view that helped popularize constructivism. (Jonassen, 1991; Neo & Neo, 2001)

Contrary to the cognitivists' view that teachers play a central role in the learning process and that knowledge is best acquired in a structured, didactic format, the constructivists consider the learner as an active participant in the learning process. (Ali, 2004, p. 72)

The constructivist movement, as described by Jean Piaget (see Flavell and Piaget 1963), was prompted by a dissatisfaction with an educational system in which memorization, regurgitation of facts and figures, and the arranging of knowledge into separate fields (Dixon-Kraus 1996) was seen as the primary means by which knowledge was acquired. A serious consequence of this was that learners were not always capable of applying their classroom acquired knowledge in the real world (Senge 2000).

The constructivist orientation considers the role of experience and the construction of meaning (Caffarella & Barnett, 1994).

Put into simple terms, constructivism can be described as essentially a theory about the limits of human knowledge, a belief that all knowledge is necessarily a product of our own cognitive acts. We can have no direct or unmediated knowledge of any external or objective reality. We construct our understanding through our experiences, and the character of our experience is influenced profoundly by our cognitive lens. (Confrey, 1990, p. 108)

Constructivism, in reflecting the role of the learner’s experience, leads to views that reflect either individual constructivism in which learning results from a personal interpretation of what is being experienced, or social constructivism in which the views of others are incorporated.

Piaget’s main underlying assumption concerning cognitive constructivism was that each person was actively involved in constructing personal meaning based on their individual insight gained from the events they had experienced (Holt and Willard-Holt 2000).

The constructivist epistemology asserts that the only tools available to a knower are the senses. It is only through seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting that an individual
interacts with the environment. With these messages from the senses the individual builds a picture of the world. Therefore, constructivism asserts that knowledge resides in individuals. (Lorsbach & Tobin, 1992, p. 5)

Social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), added another factor into the learning process, that is, social interaction or the idea that each individuals version of the truth must be compared with other individuals' version in order to create a higher order version of this truth (Derry 1999). According to Sternberg and Williams (1995) learners require an educational environment in which trainers, participants and the skills or tasks interact to create their own truth and that the goal of the trainer is to use "personal interactions drawing from their experiences to fill in gaps between a student's existing framework and new ideas" (Tucker & Bathelder, 2000, p. 82).

Social constructivist theory suggests that learning and knowing are built through active and interactive activities in a classroom (Bauersfeld, 1988; Cobb & Yackel, 1996) and values time for discussion between participants and time for building or drawing models (Fennema, Franke, Carpenter, & Carey, 1993; Simon, 1995). With this in mind, the relationship between trainer and participant becomes central to the learning process (Brown, Collins, and Duguid, 1989). Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dweyer (1997), stated that in such an environment, "teacher-student interactions are less didactic, more collaborative. Students work together. Learning environments feel more like real work places where problems are solved through conversations, inquiry, trial and error ..." (p. 13).

In addition to acknowledging the difficult role played by the participant, social constructivism supports, employs, and rewards this role as necessary in learning (Wertsch 1997). Green and Gredler (2002) in discussing constructivism with child learners suggested that “a basic assumption is that children learn when they are in control of their learning and know that they are in control” (p. 7). Social constructivists also suggested that the accountability for learning existed increasingly with learners who should be actively involved in their learning process (Von Glasersfeld 1989).

Within the social constructivist approach, trainers need to change from being a teacher to a facilitator (Brownstein 2001) and leads to an educational environment in which the trainer is seen to help participants come to their own understanding of the material rather than through a traditional lecture based on a particular subject matter (Rhodes and Bellamy 1999).
"Leader as teacher" is not about “teaching” people how to achieve their vision. It is about fostering learning, for everyone. Such leaders help people throughout the organization develop systemic understandings. Accepting this responsibility is the antidote to one of the most common downfalls of otherwise gifted teachers – losing their commitment to the truth. (Senge, 1990: 356)

Social constructivism also suggested that the context in which learning occurred was central to the process being undertaken. Gredler (1997) suggested that learning needed be conducted in a way that was directly related to the way in which knowledge or skills would be applied outside the classroom. Savery (1994) also contended that the more structured the learning environment, the harder it would become for an individual to create meaning based on their understanding.

The word ‘knowledge’ refers to a commodity that is radically different from the objective representation of an observer-independent world which the mainstream of the Western philosophical tradition has been looking for. Instead ‘knowledge’ refers to conceptual structures that epistemic agents, given the range of present experience within their tradition of thought and language, consider viable. (Glasersfeld 1989, p. 124)

In reviewing constructivism literature, ‘reflective practice’, ‘situated cognition’, and ‘cognitive apprenticeships’ are often presented as functional concepts within constructivism (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). These are explained in more detail below.

Reflective practice is seen as the application of existing knowledge based on experience and a tacit knowledge of the practices used. Reflective practice involves a commitment to problem finding and solving, reflection on what action should be taken, and subsequently the taking of action even if this decision precludes the taking of action (e.g., Cervero, 1988; Peters, 1991; Schcolnik, Kol, & Abarbanel, 2006).

Situated cognition is reflected in an underlying assumption that learning should be presented in realistic situations and that assessment should be authentic or performance based (Swanson, Narman, & Linn, 1995).

Every human thought action is adapted to the environment, that is, situated, because what people perceive, and how they conceive of their activity, and what they physically do develop together. (Clancey, 1997, pp. 1-2)

The situated cognition perspective looks to the setting in which observations are formed in lieu of a concern as to how learners process information. Young (1993) suggested that to meet this authenticity test, the approach taken should include aspects of the real world and the problems students would experience and recommended notions such as forcing
students to decide between valuable and worthless input, or the handling of difficulties with imprecise expectations.

The notion of cognitive apprenticeship incorporates the view that a learner progresses through five stages, from developing a mental model through observation, to being able to discuss in general terms what they had learned (Brandt, Farmer, & Buckmaster, 1993). An important feature of cognitive apprenticeship is the choice of appropriate real-life situations based on an understanding of learner requirements and the subsequent modeling by an experienced facilitator (Choi & Hannafin, 1995).

Cognitive apprenticeship methods try to enculturate [participants] into authentic practices through activity and social interaction in a way similar to that evident – and evidently successful – in craft apprenticeship. (Brown, Collins, and Duguid, 1989, p. 37)

A cognitive apprenticeship approach assumes that teaching and learning will take place in rich and varied contexts that are meaningful and authentic to students. An apprenticeship is considered different to tutoring, mentoring, and coaching, as the aim to create interaction is a social and cultural activity at which an adult learner is considered to be more experienced and therefore skillful (Tisdale, 2001).

The aim of a cognitive apprenticeship is to place participants in real-world scenarios in which they act and interact to achieve useful outcomes. The workplace has a number of strengths as a learning environment. It is authentic, goal-oriented activities; access to guidance; everyday engagement in problem solving; and intrinsic reinforcement (Kerka, 1997).

According to Rogoff (1990), the responsibility of a teacher in a cognitive apprenticeship training environment is to structure the modeling of expert skills without overwhelming students. Within the cognitive apprenticeship model, scaffolding is perhaps the best known characteristic and is based on Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD),

actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers"(p. 86).

Zhao and Orey (1999) discussed elements of ideal scaffolding which included the sharing of set goals based on a whole-task approach rather than a set of component skills, in
which students will be provided optimal, expert and on-going support needed to complete the learning. This will require, as Driscoll (1994) suggested, a shift in

focus from the individual to the sociocultural setting and the activities of the people within that setting. Knowledge accrues through the lived practices of the people in a society. (p. 156)

The benefits associated with a cognitive apprenticeship approach include the use of authentic activities and assessment similar to those routinely used by expert practitioners in the field (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989). In addition, this approach provides the opportunity to encourage learners to be treated as an expert, (Collins, 1991), and leads to the facilitation of higher order reasoning (Hogan & Tudge, 1999).

Della (2004), in discussing non-traditional training techniques employed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), suggested that constructivist theory would lead to an interactive classroom environment reflected in a number of observable traits:

1) create a low-risk learning environment, which is accomplished by specific seating arrangements in the classroom to the manner that questions are answered and the response to answers given; 2) encourage higher levels of engagement, such as critical thinking and problem solving; 3) examine student learning to alter instruction if necessary; and 4) increase the student's level of critical thinking by incorporating specialized questioning. (p. 3)

An understanding of learning theories provides a theoretical underpinning for the approaches a trainer may decide to adopt in planning a learning event to meet specific training needs. This theoretical understanding of each theory and an appreciation of how they are reflected in face-to-face teaching, establishes a framework in which the roles performed by teaching skills, participant knowledge, and content expertise can be examined in more detail.

While many researchers and authors have discussed the theories that underpin adult education, only a limited number have examined teaching in detail (Nesbit, 1998).

Indeed, it seems adult educational researchers often ignore the “black box” (Mehan, 1979) of classroom settings, and prefer investigating what goes in and what comes out of the box rather than what takes place within. (p. 157)

Inherent in a teacher's choice of learning theory for application in the classroom are the efforts needed to adapt teaching to that theory, and more importantly, to assist students to adapt to a potentially new learning situation. However, in the research reviewed, no mention has been made of the time required to support a group of students who are competent in one style of learning, to learn to adapt and benefit from another. Therefore, a trainer with a limited
amount of time to present a set amount of material may be reluctant to try something new and, as a consequence, is likely to fall back on teaching patterns that have proven successful in the past. Given the relative paucity of material related to the teaching of short courses as defined here, it will be necessary to review the literature on the teaching of adults more broadly. Although most of the studies cited in the following sections were conducted in non-Thai settings, they provide useful insights into what is known to be effective in teaching university or adult students.

2.2.1 The Essentials of Teaching

What makes excellent teachers recognizable may be a combination of competence (professional knowledge), skill relationships (interpersonal knowledge), and character (intrapersonal knowledge). (Collinson, 1999, p. 10)

Adult training research includes a range of topics from theories concerning adult teaching to practical articles detailing best practices in an effective lesson. Foley (2000a), in looking at the teaching of adults, suggested the need to combine a practical and theoretical viewpoint, as one could not exist without the other.

Adult educators do things, and they think about them. When they do things, they are engaged in practice; when they are thinking about their practice they are reflecting and theorizing. Theory (systematic thought) and practice (systematic action) are tied together. One cannot exist without the other. (p. 9)

VanLeuvan (1997) also saw the need for teachers to have a theoretical understanding of what they were doing as it would lead to the finding of new ideas and approaches.

Teachers, who aim to improve their professional practice, must recognize not only what they are doing, but also the origins and effects of their actions, so that they might consider alternative approaches to teaching and learning. (p. 261)

Moses (1989) looked at teacher knowledge needs in terms of the four ‘Cs’: competence in subject matter, communication skills, commitment to facilitating learning, and concern for individual students, together with a fifth ‘C’, context, that is, where the learning would fit into the learners’ world. Kreber and Cranton (2000), in discussing university teaching, referred to knowledge requirements as ‘instructional knowledge’, which included a reflection on content and how to present it; ‘pedagogical knowledge’ - a consideration of how to present the content; and finally, ‘curricular’ knowledge, that is, a contemplation of how selected content would fit learner needs.
Heron (1989, 1993) suggested that teachers can fill one of six roles. Three of these six roles were seen as authoritative and three as facilitative. Authoritative roles were seen as ones in which the teacher advises, judges, demands or demonstrates; instructs or informs; or, challenges, questions and offers feedback. The facilitative roles involved the release of tension; to illicit information, and finally, to offer approval, confirmation or validation. An effective instructor, according to Heron, was a person who could utilize all six roles and is able to move seamlessly from one role to the next.

Carson, (1996) in discussing student recollections of memorable professors, based on comments received from students some thirty years after they had completed university, suggested that

1) Outstanding teachers love the subjects they teach; 2) they respect and like their students; and 3) they are committed to and skilled at connecting the two things they care deeply about - their subject matter and their students. (p. 12)

The following sections consider the seminar environment in more detail by examining how trainers 'connect' subject matter, their students and the context within in which the trainer and participant are located. In the sections that follow, literature on teaching skills (see 2.2.1.1), knowing the participants (see 2.2.1.2), and content knowledge (see 2.2.1.3), will be examined in more detail to determine the roles they are seen to play in defining the characteristics of an effective trainer.

2.2.1.1 The craft of teaching.\(^1\)

What we need more than anything else is not textbooks but textpeople. It is the personality of the teacher which is the text that the pupil reads; the text that they will never forget. (Heschel, 1983, p. 62)

Discussions concerning effective teaching have looked at teaching from a philosophical perspective detailing desirable characteristics and motivations, through to discussions focused on one aspect of teaching, for example, group discussions, the use of music, and the role of discussion (e.g., Bergman, 1980; Burns, 1997; Jarvis, 1997; Clegg, 2000; Thorne & Mackay, 2001). In reflecting on the research question being examined, effective teaching throughout much of the philosophical and educational literature was seen

as, “the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance” (Bergman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly & Zellman, 1977, p. 137).

In suggesting ways to define effective teachers, discussions concerning the craft of teaching have often looked to metaphors to help clarify effective teaching and identify trainers’ beliefs and values. Edwards and Usher (1996) observed that the complexity of teaching adults has made it difficult to create a sense of group cohesiveness within the profession and hindered attempts to define or describe those involved in teaching adults. They suggested adult educators should see themselves as travelers covering new ground lightly in their search to find new ways to describe their efforts rather than seeing themselves as being planted firmly in one theoretical milieu.

Eble (1988) looked to gardening to explain the role of an effective teacher and suggested that, “faculty should know as much as gardeners about necessary nurture and take as much pride in the eventual flowering” (p. 206). Cosh (1998) argued that good teaching should be regarded as “an art not a science, and is more than merely the summation of good practice: it is an interaction of often intangible elements, impossible to define in a list of criteria” (p. 172).

Dehler and Welsh (1997) also used an art metaphor along with a music metaphor when describing their views on learning-centered management education and suggested that,

‘Good’ teaching requires grounding in a discipline and a measure of practiced ability. Artful teaching goes further. It requires that ‘something extra beyond speaking scripted lines’ or ‘playing the written music.’ Artful teaching requires an investment of energy. (p. 499)

Banner and Cannon (1997) used a religious metaphor to suggest that teaching continually required teachers to balance faith in their ability with a need to control their fear to push too much in their attempts to have learners apply their abilities to what was at hand.

Teaching is always an act of faith. It requires that teachers perform unceasing imaginative leaps to conceive what may be possible for others to learn and to do, to think and to feel. Teachers must venture into the expansive realm of possibilities; they must continually suspend any fear that something may not be within reach of their students. It is this quality of suspending fear that makes great teaching evangelical and sometimes irresistible. (p. 75)

Palmer (1997) employed a weaving metaphor to describe those who loved teaching and who could handle the accompanying tension this emotion might cause.
As good teachers weave the fabric that joins them with students and subjects, the heart is the loom on which the threads are tied: the tension is held, the shuttle flies, and the fabric is stretched tight. Small wonder, then, that teaching tugs at the heart, opens the heart, ever breaks the heart - and the more one loves teaching, the more heartbreaking it can be. (p. 18)

Lowman (1996) looked to a theatre metaphor to describe effective trainers as those who “had a solid command of the classroom as a dramatic arena: their abilities to speak energetically and to use gesture and movement before student groups made them highly engaging speakers” (pp. 35-36).

Clearly difficult to define, even with the use of various metaphors, writers have tried to define effective teaching by examining the characteristics, personality, and values of an effective teacher. Eble (1988) argued that much of what made a teacher effective could be seen in their character and that if qualities were lacking, one should not be a teacher as, “if you have a crumby [sic] self? Then there’s only one thing to do: Stay away from teaching” (p. 58). While Eble did not define what a presumably ‘crumby self’ might be, Tennant (1991) in discussing the establishment of adult teaching relationships, offered some ideas as to what he believed constituted an adult teacher.

It is crucial that teachers of adults have a clear conception of their role. That is, that they have a posture as a teacher, and that they articulate this posture to the learners in a way which addressed their concerns and expectations. This is not to say that the posture should be inflexible and closed to negotiation and change. Rather that neutrality and total malleability as a teacher … is not in the interest of developing an ‘adult’ teacher-learner relationship. (p. 8)

Kumaravadivelu (2006) also dealt with what constituted an effective classroom environment in the relation to language learning. In particular, he suggested that creating a positive atmosphere was more important than the quality of teaching provided.

(a) the quality of life in the language classroom is much more important than instructional efficiency, (b) ensuring our understanding of the quality of classroom life is far more essential than developing every improved teaching methods, and (c) understanding such a quality of life is a social, not an asocial matter. (p. 68)

In discussing the ‘personal relationship’ between a trainer and participants, research has provided a number of important insights into classroom dynamics, and trainer values, philosophy, and beliefs (Galbraith & Galbraith, 2000; Sparks, 2002; Scanlon, 2004). Rogers (2002) suggested that, “the facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal relationship between the facilitator and the learner” (p. 27).
Boyer (1990) and Rice (1991) argued that (a vision of) the scholarship associated with teaching included:

Knowledge of effective ways to represent subjects; the ability to draw the various strands of the field together in a coherent and purposeful way; and cognizance of ways that make the subject more accessible, interesting, and meaningful to students. … Teaching effectiveness is inferred from the product that was created; it is the product that is the indicator of scholarship. (Kreber & Cranton 2000, p. 477)

Pogue and AhYun (2006), in studying students from the US, found that effective teaching was seen a combination of immediacy and credibility and that both could be seen as a function of the communication between the teacher and students and had a role in influencing students’ beliefs in an instructor’s credibility. Eble (1988) also looked to the important role between trainer and student and the need to be oneself and to involve one’s personality.

Without intending to make a potential teacher self-conscious about developing a teaching personality, one still advises new teachers not to deny their personalities. A conscious attempt to be impersonal, dispassionate, and totally objective is likely to work more harm than good. Human beings interest other human beings. (p. 15)

Keller (1983, 1987, 1996) argued that ‘attention’ played an important role in teaching and suggested how a seminar leader could, as Smith and Ragan (1999) wrote, “draw student attention to the material being learned and frequently involve very specific techniques of content presentation or treatment” (p. 261). Keller’s attention strategies, also found in Second Language Instruction theory, (e.g. Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Elyildirim & Ashton, 2006) included the use of stories, questions, and visual aids to encourage student attentiveness. Also included, were the need to include changes in presentation style including vocal variety, the selected medium of instruction, the appearance of materials, the type of interaction, and the activities used. Finally, the use of humor was seen as an important component in overall presentation (e.g., Downs, Javidi & Nussbaum, 1988; Carson, 1996).

Today’s successful and admired teachers are more likely to be noted for their congeniality, good humor, and tolerance than for their harsh discipline and scowling looks. (Banner & Cannon, 1997, p. 107)

Keller’s attention strategies have remained a frequent subject of research, for example, Gorham’s (1988) field-tested and proven reliable 17-item, Likert-type scale, used to measure ‘Verbal Immediacy Behaviors’ with university students in the US (e.g., Richmond, Gorham & McCroskey, 1987; Myers, 1995; Christensen & Menzel, 1998). Verbal immediacy behaviors,
as suggested by Mehrabian (1967, 1981), included whether a trainer uses, for example, the present tense in lieu of the past tense, inclusive references, that is’, we’ and not ‘I’, and probability, the use of ‘will’ in place of ‘may’. The importance of Gorham’s scale is reflected in the positive correlation found between affective and cognitive learning (e.g., Christophel, 1990; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Jensen, 1999). Lannutti and Strauman (2006) also suggested that "instructor self-disclosure that was limited, honest, intentional, and positive was associated with more positive evaluations of instructors" (p. 98).

Although immediate communication in the classroom has proven to be positive for the overwhelming majority of our students, [undergraduate Australian & Asian] we need to remember that those same behaviors affect some college students more positively than others. (Booth-Butterfield & Noguchi, 2000, p. 296)

Marsh and Roche (1992) reviewed studies of student evaluations of teacher effectiveness with Australian TAFE students, along with university students in Spain, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand. In each survey, undergraduate students were asked to nominate no more than five items as most important when describing an overall learning environment. Interestingly the five leading results were related to communication skills,

Teaching style held your interest (33%), lecturer explanations were clear (27%), the course was challenging and stimulating (19%), the lecturer was enthusiastic about teaching (16%), and the lecturer enhanced presentations with the use of humour (16%). (p. 292)

Lowman (1996) reviewed 500 nomination letters for Chancellor’s Teaching Awards Committee at the University of North Carolina and reported that enthusiastic appeared 68 times, humorous 38 and exciting 22. Javidi and Long (1989) found that experienced teachers used humor, self-disclosure and narrative accounts more frequently than less-experienced teachers. Based on earlier studies that teachers who personalized teaching were seen to be more effective in explaining course content, they suggest humor could play an important role in identifying effective educators.

When we ask participants what they remember as positive about learning in formal settings, they often cite well-organized, knowledgeable, and caring instructors, participatory instructional methods and well-crafted lectures, relevant and useful materials, and respect for them as adults and learners. And conversely, when we ask participants to recall some their worst experiences they talk about arrogant instructors who have no sense of them as people or learners, poorly delivered content, whatever the method used, and poorly organized and irrelevant material. (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 26)

Comadena, Semlak, and Escott (1992) in their comparative research with undergraduate students and adult learners found that teacher effectiveness was positively
related to teachers who leave a lasting impression on those they communicated with, and who appeared to be friendly and relaxed communicators, as effective teachers. In closing, they concluded with an observation that teacher communicator style contributed to 43% of the variation in teaching effectiveness ratings with undergraduates, but 64% of the variation with adult learners.

The overwhelming importance of clear communication has been continually supported in studies conducted over the past twenty-five years. For instance, Pratt (1981) found that the effective university teachers, in terms of student satisfaction and levels of learning, were precise and clear in their presentation, active, and lively. Ellsworth and Monahan (1998) suggested that clarity in presentation and warmth in manner contributed to teacher effectiveness in maintaining motivational levels throughout a short course, “clear and immediate teaching together should be considered qualities essential to effective teaching” (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001, p. 67).

Throughout discussions concerning effective teaching, and despite Banner and Cannon’s (1997) warning that “we think we know great teaching when we encounter it, yet we find it impossible to say precisely what has gone into making it great” (p. 3), the theme of communication was found in virtually every discussion on effective teaching.

There is indeed, a difference between knowing and teaching, and that difference is communication in the classroom. (Hurt, Scott, & McCroskey 1978, p. 3)

Research on teacher effectiveness and the role played by communication skills has examined both non-verbal and verbal factors associated with teaching and found a moderate to significant relationships between non-verbal behaviors, for example, smiling and gesturing, and affective and cognitive learning (e.g., Gorham, 1988; Christophel, 1990, Frymier & House, 2000).

Teaching involves a process of relational development and requires effective interpersonal communication skills to achieve satisfying outcomes. (Graham, West, & Schaller 1992, p. 11)

While many authors have had difficulty describing the characteristics of an ‘effective teacher’, most include the central role played by communication. This should not come as a surprise as short courses, regardless of the activities undertaken, involve communication between the trainer and participants. Research has suggested that to ensure communication is effective, it is important for trainers to know the participants they will be teaching.
2.2.1.2 Understanding the participants.

Planning for or adapting to the seemingly endless variety of learner characteristics is probably the most difficult task faced by the instructor of adults. (Cranton & Weston, 1989, p. 34)

Cranton and Weston (1989) discussed factors related to learner characteristics that trainers needed to consider. These contextual factors include: age, educational background, language ability, educational level, prior knowledge, and previous experience. Brown (2004) suggested that understanding the learner included the need to teach

At a level of understanding that is close enough to that of the student for them to be able to follow what is being said, rather than at the teacher’s own level of understanding. (p. 521)

Richmond and McCroskey (1992) argued that the classroom should be regarded as an organization based on the premise that an organization represented any group of people working together in a somewhat structured event (in this case, a shared learning experience). Based on this idea, Chory and McCroskey (1999) suggested that effective instructors needed to consider and implement the most appropriate communication and leadership style they felt was needed in a particular classroom experience. Brookfield (1985) also looked at dialogue as important, but more in a discussion format and offered conditions that should be encouraged if discussion was to prove useful. Rogers (2002) suggested that in teaching, empathy for the learner came from appreciating the learning process or environment from the student’s perspective.

When the teacher has the ability to understand the student’s reactions from the inside, has a sensitive awareness of the way the process of education and learning seems to the student, then again the likelihood of significant learning is increased. (p. 30)

On a more practical level compared to Rogers’ call for empathy, Keller’s (1987) ‘confidence’ strategies looked to the actual performance of learners during the learning process and how trainers could work to create learner autonomy by ensuring participant success.

Confidence building strategies are ideas and techniques used to prevent or to work through student attitudes or beliefs that could hinder their participation in practice and other learning tasks. With participants arriving at a seminar with varying levels of confidence with regards to completing activities related to learning and the program at hand, confidence strategies are intended to give participants confidence in the knowledge that ‘some level of success is possible if effort is exerted.’ (Keller, 1987, p. 5)
Included in the need to have empathy for participants and to ensure their success, was the need to make certain students knew what was expected as activities moved from easy to difficult, but at the same time kept learners challenged and confident in their abilities.

Adult learners must be encouraged to develop levels of autonomy over their learning experiences. Instructors can build a participatory environment that encourages individual ideas, unique solutions, experimental solutions, and ‘out of the box’ thinking. (Thornton, Mattocks & Thornton, 2001, pp. 4-5)

Tannenbaum (1997) suggested that a positive adult learning environment was generated where learners had a clear understanding of how their current learning was related to larger overall picture of their learning and needs. Phillips (2003) suggested the use of concrete, visible rewards and recognition for those employees who made efforts to take part in and benefit from work-related learning events. This learning environment must allow learners to use what they had learned; to be free to make mistakes; and, to enjoy the encouragement needed to provide their own ideas. Learners needed to be held accountable for their own learning, reflecting the goal of self-directed learning popular in adult education theory.

Davis and Zaret (1984) recommended that effective adult educators needed to possess a set of competencies based on planning, observable teaching characteristics, classroom management abilities, and content knowledge, and that these competencies needed to be integrated and should lead to “overt demonstrations of these positive attributes in the teacher’s functioning in the classroom” (p. 21). An instructor can help adult learners develop an understanding of why topics are taught by addressing the following questions:

- Why does the learner need to know this particular course content?
- How does the information apply to the real world?
- How, specifically, can the learner use this information?

In addition, course content should include discussions regarding job opportunities and how the information relates to other courses in the same training program. (Thornton, Mattocks and Thornton, 2001, p. 3)

Foley (2000) went on step further and provided a clear idea of what he considered the characteristics of an adult educator.

Real teachers are those who think and act strategically and with commitment. These teachers are technically proficient: they can present a lively and interesting session, or effectively facilitate a discussion. When we watch such teachers we can see, and admire, their grasp of techniques. But these people are much more than a bundle of skills. They think, and act, at a number of levels. They have a deep understanding of themselves and their students, and of the organizational contexts in which they work. They think strategically – they ‘think on their feet,’ and they have a long-term view of their work. They also relate their teaching to some
sort of ‘bigger picture,’ or, to put it in another way, their work is determined by particular values. These values may be individualist or collectivist, conservative or radical, altruistic or hedonistic. But whatever their values are, these teachers are passionate about them. (Foley, 2000, p. 31)

English as a Second Language teaching theory also suggests that teachers need to understand the language classroom in terms of tensions felt by participants in their struggles to cope with the language and the dichotomy of stated expectations to demonstrate both accuracy and fluency in their use of the language. Allwright (2003) suggested the need for a language teaching philosophy that reflected the need for effective two-way communication in a classroom environment that would allow participants to both practice what they had acquired and to experiment with new ideas.

The literature on teaching adults has also addressed the important role played by the trainer’s knowledge of content and the way they have decided to organize it. These ideas are examined in the next section to shed light on how they could impact trainer effectiveness.

2.2.1.3 Content expertise.

There are two ways of knowing the subject: one is to know the content of the subject matter; the other is to know how to select, define, order, and package it for presentation. (Davis & Davis, 1998, pp. 89-90)

Thornton, Mattocks, and Thornton (2001) suggested that trainers could help adult learners develop an understanding of why topics were being taught by addressing the following questions in their planning:

Why does the learner need to know this particular course content? How does the information apply to the real world? How, specifically, can the learner use this information?” (p. 3)

Banner and Cannon (1997) looked to this knowledge and the way in which it was presented to participants as one key to being seen as a memorable teacher.

The teachers whom we remember most vividly are those who knew their subjects best and transmitted them with the greatest intensity and love. They were confident in their knowledge, and not dogmatic; they acted out their own struggles to understand in front of us, joyful when they understood something fresh, trouble when they did not or could not know. (p. 15)

Eble (1988) cautioned that the importance placed on content in a particular course would reflect that teacher’s location on the continuum marked at one end by student-centered teaching and at the other by teacher-centered teaching.
Excellent teachers purposefully develop interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge as well as professional knowledge. They seem to grasp the balance between intellectual and emotional intelligence and the importance of both in the many roles required of teachers. (p. 10)

Collinson (1999) also mentioned the need for an instructor to acquire content knowledge, but at the same time, placed this particular knowledge within a larger framework that included interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. In short, an effective trainer must not only know the content, but how to present it to the participants concerned. Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Suk Yoon (2001) found that with school teachers, professional development that focuses on academic subject matter (content), give teachers opportunities for "hands-on" work (active learning), and is integrated into the daily life of the school (coherence), is more likely to produce enhanced knowledge and skills. (p. 955)

DiSabatino (2002) examined content from the participants' point of view and expectations and offered practical advice on how to ensure content met the needs of the participants.

Assume that business is the top priority. Most managers have demanding jobs. They're juggling a million and one priorities, and your session is merely one of the balls they're trying to keep in the air. When managers express their frustration about having to attend training, try not to feel defensive or cynical. Make the training worth their time by relating it to real business demands. Help managers see the relationship between training and ROI rather than thinking they're not committed to the training. (p. 3)

In this section, while teaching skills, knowledge of participants, and content expertise have been reviewed discretely, the literature reviewed has suggested that they need to be combined to build a base that would lead to effective teaching and participant learning. The building of this base and what is involved will be examined in more detail in the next section on training provision.

2.2.2 Training Provision

Throughout the literature and professional publications on effective training in a work or non-work environment, three stages associated with what is required to create an effective training event predominate. These are: pre-course research or needs analysis, in-course planning or instructional design, and post-course impact or learning transfer (e.g., Buckley & Caple, 1995; Milne & Noone; 1996; Moon, 2001; Thorne & Mackey, 2001; Burns, 2002).

The literature describing activities seen as most beneficial during participant needs analysis (see 2.2.2.1) include on-the-job analysis, questionnaires, and interviews with
prospective participants. The suggested aim at this stage is to allow trainers to become “aware both of what is being offered and to whom it is being offered in order to provide the best possible learning opportunities” (Neufeld, 2000, p. 62). Included in discussions on pre-course aspects of training provision were frequent comments regarding the need for adult learners to be part of the training preparation process and the importance of ensuring that participant experiences, expectations, and abilities were accounted for in planning, preparing, and presenting seminars.

While there are varying opinions about what skills are best obtained in training modules, effective training begins before and continues well after the course concludes. (Laff, 2006, p. 2)

The training literature has also examined activities associated with post-training, in particular, the need to measure the content or skills learned in a seminar, and to ensure they are practiced and developed in the workplace (see 2.2.2.3). Often seen as the most efficient method to measure learning, transfer of learning is typically included as one aspect of trainer effectiveness. While most research examines post-training in terms of what happens following the training, research also describes the need for effective trainers to be able to relate what they are teaching, as they teach it, to needs participants will have once they leave the training.

2.2.2.1 Needs analysis.

On the surface, involvement of learners in the decision-making process of education appears direct and easily accomplished. The reality is often far different. (Thornton, Mattocks & Thornton, 2001, p. 5)

Needs analysis involves the gathering of knowledge concerning the participants and their needs with regard to learning outcomes and current levels of ability or knowledge in the content area to be presented. In a training environment, needs analysis invariably includes pre-course, on the job analysis, and review of skills or knowledge required by those to be trained. Sometimes referred to as ‘discrepancy-based’ needs assessment (Smith and Ragan, 1999), needs assessment is seen as an analysis that can bridge the gap between current knowledge or skill levels and those desired and could include observation, consultation, and reviews to ensure employees receive the training required to fulfill their assigned duties. Vella (2002) suggested that needs assessment was simply doing all that was possible to find answers to one question: “who needs what as defined by whom” (p. 28). In examining this question, she discussed how students could be helped to place their trust in an instructor’s
abilities and knowledge, in their own ability to complete a course of material they saw as useful, and in an environment they believed was nonjudgmental.

Students will more likely adopt and internalize a goal if they understand it and have the relevant skills to succeed at it. (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 64)

Buckley and Caple (1995) suggested that target population analysis should include deciding who should attend, learning about their background knowledge or skills, and acquiring an understanding of their attitudes or experience with prior learning. However, they later reflected on the reality of being able to solicit this information before training took place.

The best that most trainers are likely to achieve is a broad picture of the target populations which is sufficient for planning in the initial stages but there are other specific features of the target population which it is useful for trainers to know about when the training event gets nears. (p. 187)

Wright (1991) suggested that learner input into the creation of a learning event played an important role in providing adults with a reason to learn and that

If those who are intended to use and/or to benefit from the training have continuous input into the process, they are more likely to use the results. (p. 179)

Thornton, Mattocks, and Thornton (2001) also discussed the importance of having participants involved in needs analysis and offered a compelling reason for involving adult learners in course design.

When adult learners are collaboratively involved in the decision-making process, they are more likely to understand the processes that went into it, support the outcome, and work harder to achieve the desired goals. (p. 5)

Within this area of needs analysis, two trends associated with teaching English as a Second language (ESL) emerge. Benesch (2001) suggested that in addition to needs analysis, rights analysis is required during which he suggests that "understanding and reacting to power relations would help to enrich language curriculum and that by responding to power relations, learners will gain confidence in their right to challenge "unreasonable and inequitable arrangements" (p. 108). Brandt and Clinton (2002) also discussed needs analysis albeit from a different perspective they termed, 'limits of the local' (p. 337), that is, a situation in which needs analysis has been so focused on the context that other factors are ignored. In this particular scenario, tensions arise when a mismatch is found between the real language needs required to complete a particular task by those required to do the task, for example hotel
service staff, and the needs as identified by those not required to do the task, that is management.

Included in discussions concerning needs analysis is the ability to provide participants with an appreciation of the immediate context and purpose for learning and how current learning related to future goals or needs.

In general, adult learners should be invited and encouraged to have input into decisions that affect them. If adult learners are to trust the process, the involvement must be real and have high probability of meaningful results. (Thornton, Mattocks, & Thornton, 2001, pp. 4-5)

O'Connor (1994) examined contextual factors in business training and suggested that the effectiveness of a particular training would be based on

How closely the educational activity reflects these realities (contextual factors) will depend on how accurately we understand and identify the real workplace interactions, cultures and relationships … The purpose of any structured activity will need to be guided by an understanding of what is actually occurring in the particular contexts in order to most appropriately respond through possible learning options. (p. 272)

Nickerson and van Nus (1999) suggested that four genres or contextual factors were needed to analyze business communication and related instructional requirements and included needs analysis, in particular those of non-native speakers, genre analysis related to the use of communication in a corporate environment, and contrastive linguistic analysis examining native and non-native use of language. Hofer and Pintrich (1997) included gender, ethnicity, and culture as three contexts worthy of study that might lead to an enhanced understanding of effective adult teaching.

While many involved in presenting short courses would appreciate the importance of participant and input at the planning stage, most seminar leaders in the Thai business community do not have the opportunity to be involved in this stage of the training.

Often none of this [pre-training needs analysis] is practical - a one-day workshop with an unknown group [as in this research] does not always allow a “needs assessment” to be done. At that point, it becomes a matter of being perceptive and flexible, of asking and listening to the answers, and of being prepared to change your plans. (Cranton & Weston, 1989, pp. 35)

It is clear that needs analysis is seen to play an important role in the training process and can vary considerably in the breadth and depth of the analysis undertaken. However, it must be remembered that while needs analysis and, in the context of this study, English language skills evaluation are seen to play an important role in effective training, in the Thai
business milieu, it is often conducted quite casually by human resource personnel who are relatively unaware of how to conduct such research and lack the tools to thoroughly investigate background factors such as, participants’ prior knowledge and skills, motivation to learn, and English language skills. The next section reviews how trainers focus on the way in which the training event will be designed and the way in which it will be presented, to bridge the gap between current and desired levels of ability or knowledge.

2.2.2.2 Instructional design.

I know I cannot teach anyone anything, I can only provide an environment in which someone can learn. (Rogers, 1969, p. 389)

Using an onion as a metaphor, effective instructional design involves carefully working through each layer until the core is reached, symbolizing a final planned program of instruction or a step-by-step lesson plan that describes how a trainer has planned to conduct a particular learning event. In instructional design, each layer represents answers to questions that range in focus from those that examine a larger picture, for example, what do participants need to learn or acquire; to questions focused on a particular aspect of the planned program, for example, what activity would be most effective at this point in the learning event.

Instructional design is defined as the systematic planning of instruction, including considering the audience, setting objectives, sequencing instruction, selection instruction strategies, evaluating learning, and evaluating instructional effectiveness. The instructional designer is the individual responsible for these activities, whether it be the instructor or the curriculum developer. (Cranton, 1989, p. 4)

Instructional design was often seen as a two-stage process that involved researching who would be involved, what they knew, and how the needs analysis would be conducted to create a time-plan for the research and creation of a course of instruction. (Broadbent, 1998) The first stage comes through a review of the findings determined during a needs analysis and can provide trainers with an understanding of the gap between existing or pre-course skill or knowledge levels and desired or post-course skill or knowledge levels. The second stage involves the design of the planned program based on this understanding and augmented by a designer’s knowledge and experience with teaching styles and activities along with their experience of similar participants involved in learning a comparable curriculum and with similar or disparate English language abilities.
Dewey (1938) discussed instructional design in much the same way, albeit viewing the process in terms of a participant’s needs. Of particular importance when discussing instructional design, is that while planning may well be comprehensive resulting in a clear outline of what is to be undertaken during a learning event, it is only a plan and, as such, must be flexible enough to adapt to conditions experienced with the learners.

He must survey the capacities and needs of the particular set of individual with whom he is dealing and must at the same time arrange the conditions which proved the subject-matter or content for experiences that satisfy these needs and develop these capacities. The planning must be flexible enough to permit free play for individuality of experience and yet firm enough to give direction towards continuous development of power. (Dewey, 1938, p. 58)

Instructional design and the creation of a lesson plan is seen as the need to judge how events can be expected to unfold, based on the material to be presented, the training strategies selected, and the participants who will attend the planned educational situation. Smith and Ragan (1999) offered a number of benefits they believed resulted from this analysis, including effective and efficient teaching.

The ‘best’ instruction is that which is effective (facilitates learners’ acquisition of the identified knowledge and skills), efficient (requires the least possible amount of time necessary for learners to achieve the goals), and appealing (motivates and interests learners, encouraging them to persevere in the learning task). (p. 18)

Ausubel (1963, 1968) suggested that it was important to recognize the dichotomy between how knowledge was presented by a trainer and the ways in which participants learned. This once again begs the question of what do we understand by learning. Although a number of more over-arching theoretical perspectives were considered earlier, those that relate more specifically to instructional design will be considered briefly here.

‘Discovery learning’ in which learners were seen as capable of creating their own understanding was contrasted with ‘reception learning’ or the direct teaching of content. Pratt (1988) looked at this dichotomy in a different light and suggested that ‘learner-directed learning’ was useful when participants have the skills, confidence, and motivation to look after some, if not all of their educational needs. ‘Teacher-centered learning’, on the other hand, was appropriate when participants lacked the skills or confidence to create their own program and required help. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) took this one step further and suggested that answers to the following four questions would provide an insight into whether learning should be learner-centered or instructor-centered:
• How much do they know about the content or skill to be learned?
• Do they really want to learn this?
• Are they confident they can learn the material or skill on their own? If not, what kind of assistance might be useful?
• Do they have a sense of how to go about learning what it is they want to know or do? (p. 39)

Determining the type of learning that will take place should also take into consideration discussions by Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956) concerning their categorization of learning types with recall, comprehension, application, analysis, and evaluation seen as cognitive domain objectives.

This categorization is often useful in lesson planning, especially in encouraging teacher to aim their objectives, when appropriate, toward higher-order, more mentally demanding outcomes. (Smith & Ragan, 1999, p. 65)

Gagné (1985) added to the discussion concerning learning types and divided probable learning results into ‘domains’ referred to as verbal information or declarative knowledge, intellectual skill, cognitive strategies, attitudes, and psychomotor skills. With each domain seen as requiring varying mental processes and therefore types of instruction, Smith and Ragan (1999) suggested that desired instructional strategies would also be different and concluded that

Thinking of learning goals in such a way can be most effective in aiding the identification of prerequisite objectives, designing effective instructional strategies, and designing appropriate tests. (p. 66)

Milne and Noone (1996) also offered a useful means to divide planned activities into categories or ‘ways of learning’, and within each category, offered recommendations and presented potential problem areas. ‘Symbolic ways of learning’ include the use of lectures and examines the various stages experienced in this format. “Iconic ways of learning’ revolve around the effective design and use of audio-visual materials. An ‘enactive way of learning’, they suggested, would include role-plays, games, and case studies, and referred to its merits with the Chinese proverb: “I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand”.

Davis and Davis (1998) examined the question of which teaching strategy to use and concluded that the question to be answered is not ‘what’ strategy should be used, but rather what strategy should be used, ‘when’. Examining seven teaching strategies, they provided a comprehensive overview that included: learning theory, applications, participant role, and trainer role, along with the strengths and weaknesses associated with each strategy. In
discussing the choice of strategy, they recommended that selection should be based on a
number of factors and concluded with a warning not to select “a strategy just because the
facilitator is comfortable with it or participants will enjoy it” (p. 413).

The reason for considering the learners is to target the strategies to what the participants can
reasonably be expected to do, to provide a good fit, and to present just the right level of
challenge. The goal is for participants to get the most out of the learning experience, and this
is more likely to occur when the Training Strategies have been tailored to their key
characteristics as learner. (Davis & Davis, 1998, p. 437)

Burns (1996) provided a useful bridge between an analysis of learning types, training
strategies, and the planning of the actual learning event in suggesting that a trainer

Must be able to evaluate, and make choices, for design and methods based on two factors:
(1) the effects the design and methods will have on different students; and
(2) your own ability to execute the training as designed. (p. 117)

Burns (1996) also suggested the need to create a set of outcomes based on the planned
content that would reflect changes expected with students. This would allow a trainer to
determine the starting level for a training event based on the participants’ pre-training
knowledge or abilities and would lead to an appreciation of what could be taught or “the
boundaries of the training” (p. 125). Her next steps involved identifying the content in terms
of audience needs, determining the depth or breadth of content to be presented, and then
grouping it into related and sequenced topics and themes. The final step, choosing a method
of delivery, included a variety of suggestions with a guide to their use based on time,
audience, environment, and outcomes.

Tyler (1949) also wrote about instructional design and, similar to Burns 50 years later,
suggested that effective instructional design required ‘continuity’, ‘sequence’, and
‘integration’. Continuity was seen as the repetition of important points in the curriculum.
Sequence was seen as the progression of tasks taking the learner through levels of enhanced
ability. Integration in instructional design, he suggested, required that a learning event be
planned so that learners would gain a cohesive view, and as such would be able to assimilate
learning into their behavior in general.

Smith and Ragan (1999) examined instructional design on a more microscopic scale
and suggested that design involved examining the various phases of a lesson that constituted
an effective learning event. The introduction, they suggested, needed to provide an overview,
to activate interest, to establish purpose, to arouse motivation. The core or body of the
learning event should help participants to recall existing knowledge to help process new information; focus attention on the target material utilizing learning strategies; provide an opportunity to practice; and, should conclude with feedback. Finally, the conclusion should summarize what had been covered and provide insight into how material could be transferred into the real world.

Moon (2001) also examined short courses and recommended a variety of course components based, in part, on the course outline suggested by Smith and Ragan (1999). Moon also included a selection of activities based on specific needs, for example, to facilitate group discussion, to encourage changes in practice, to develop or facilitate the assimilation of learning, and to encourage reflection.

Within instructional design rests another topic of paramount importance, the role of English language and the implementation of 'English as a Second Language' pedagogical tenets. Currently, English language courses based on business needs, English for Special Purposes (ESP) is increasingly seen as task-based language teaching (TBLT) where tasks may include,

A range of workplans which have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning - from the simple and brief exercise type to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision-making. (Breen, 1987, p. 23)

Instructional design is a complex undertaking involving decisions ranging from the most effective learning mode, for example, a lecture or a workshop, to what type of activity is seen to be most beneficial, for example, a discussion or a role play. Riddle (2000) wrote that training should include activities aimed at stimulating creativity, assessing innovation alternatives, focusing on the client, and implementing change. MacDonald (2001) wrote about this aspect of training and suggested that while in the world of teaching the need to have a repertoire of teaching strategies was seen as important, in training,

Subject-specific strategies for various topics are still mainly an unwritten lore. Usually the only people who are aware of them are the particulars trainers who have developed them for the purposes of their own teaching. And, unfortunately, often only a few subject-specific strategies are know to any trainer for any particular course. (p. 23)

On a more practical level DiSabatino (2002) examined current training practices and offered recommendations concerning specific activities that should be dropped in favor of creating a more effective learning event. Included in his recommendations was the advice to
get down to basics quickly by outlining the goal and expectations of learner, while avoiding overly long introduction sessions. In addition, he suggested that while recording information and pair work could prove useful, their use should be implemented only when a clear benefit could be identified. King and Lawler (2003) suggested that the single most important trend in training was the continuing demand for trainers to include technology in their training. Lawler and King (2003) also examined developing trends and suggested that training should include dialogue and reflection.

However, regardless of how thorough a course of instruction has been prepared; how much knowledge trainers might have been able to glean before entering a seminar; or, how they have planned to present learning material, things can change.

Real teachers are those who think and act strategically and with commitment. These teachers are technically proficient: they can present a lively and interesting session, or effectively facilitate a discussion. … They think, and act, at a number of levels. They have a deep understanding of themselves and of the organizational contexts in which they work. They think strategically - they ‘think on their feet’, and they have a long-term view of their work. (Foley, 2000a, p. 34)

Instructional design is an important component in the training cycle. It is during this stage that what is known about the participants, the trainer’s ability to teach, and the trainer’s content knowledge are combined into a theoretical plan concerning how participants should be helped to acquire prescribed knowledge or skills during a course designed to be presented over a given period of class time. An underlying concern remains though, in that trainers in the Thai business community have little direct knowledge of what training techniques participants might have experienced in the past, and, as a result, what type of activities are likely to be accepted or rejected. In addition, with a limited time to present material, trainers may feel constrained by the amount of time needed to instruct participants in how to engage in an unfamiliar activity. Therefore, it could well be that trainers in this context tend to be conservative in their selection of activity types with the realization that content delivery has precedence over delivery style. While research offers a great many suggestions concerning teaching theory and techniques, none of the research reviewed has examined the type of teaching activities that might be applicable in a short course involving Thai business executives.

The next stage in the training cycle includes transfer of learning. This is often reflected in participants’ personal impression of their improved abilities at the end of the
course and, unfortunately, not so often, measured in their improved ability to integrate or to apply acquired knowledge or skills in their real world. Transfer of training, whether analyzed at the end of a training session itself or in the weeks, months or years following the training are both important as they can provide a short-, medium- or long-term insight into seminar leader effectiveness from the prospective of the participants.

2.2.2.3 Transfer of learning.

Transfer of learning is generally seen at two different points in time. The first point in time is the traditional end of training evaluation or “happiness sheets” (Kirkpatrick, 1996, p. 27) used to solicit participant levels of satisfaction with a training program. Although participant observation is often seen as playing an important role in evaluating trainer effectiveness in the short-term, most post-course ‘happy sheet’ evaluations are seen as lacking in credibility as they do not deal with participant abilities or opportunities to apply new knowledge or skills in the real world.

The one method of evaluation I have found has little value is the end-of-course evaluation sheet in which the student rates the course, the instructor, the content and so on. These forms really only tell us how the student feels at the end of the program-and my experience is that students don’t really provide very useful or accurate information at that point in time (they may be tired, they are ready to go home, they may be on a high from the final exercises, whatever). (Burns, 2000, p. 219)

Measuring long-term benefits from training is invariably included in transfer of training studies and research. One of the most commonly used frameworks for evaluating training results was Kirkpatrick’s (1959, 1996) ‘Four-Step Model’ in which he recommended that sound training evaluation should incorporate four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. The first level, ‘reaction’, commonly measured at the end of a training session was meant to measure ‘customer satisfaction’. However, as Swanson (1996) pointed out, “research shows that participants most satisfied with a program are not necessarily those who learned most. High or low satisfaction can be found among low, medium, and high achievers” (p. 3).

Kirkpatrick’s second level of evaluation, ‘learning’, is difficult to specify as this level of assessment is related to evaluations based on knowledge and skills acquired which will vary depending on the content provided. Davis and Davis (1998) looked at this level of assessment to determine when an evaluation should be conducted. Measuring cognitive learning that took place during a short course was seen to be problematic, as it was difficult to determine what participant attitudes and knowledge might have before the training.
Consequently determining what portion of course results could be attributed to what had taken place during the training was seen to be complicated. This concern was also voiced by Kearney and Beatty (1994) who suggested that, “the fact remains that no completely valid means of measuring cognitive learning exists” (p. 8).

The biggest problem with evaluating training's impact on business results Richmond, Gorham, McCroskey (1987) created and extensively tested a cognitive learning scale with university students in the US. While their measure is subjective, it allows students to evaluate their own learning, which leads to Kirkpatrick’s next step in evaluating a program. In applying Kirkpatrick’s Four-step Model, participant evaluation of their learning, whether objective or subjective in nature, examined changes in behavior or the transfer of knowledge into the real world and measures learning based on, “what change in job behavior occurred because people attended a training program” (p. 52).

In their review of training evaluation, Buckley and Caple, (1995) offered a model that, while it follows Kirkpatrick’s Four-step Model, also included participant assessment of the training including their increased ability to use what had been learned and an analysis of how their enhanced ability was benefiting their work. Pepper and Christie (2001) in writing about their experiences in Australia discussed transfer of learning in a more concrete fashion suggesting that Return on Investment (ROI) should be included in course evaluation but that “whilst most Australian organizations recognize ROI has an important addition to measurement and evaluation, they often struggle with how to address the issue” (p. 8).

McDonald (1991) and Warr, Allen, and Birdi (1999) studied contextual factors in the workplace that would lead to successful transfer of learning and found that the most important factors were the opportunity for learners to apply what had been learned, which included a need for the acquired skills or knowledge in the workplace and the time to practice. Transfer of learning is an important tool in measuring training effectiveness, and is often completed as an end-of-course assessment or based on the use of acquired skills and knowledge in the real world. However, Bregman and Jacobson (2000) warned that examining the impact of training in many companies was difficult due to the complex structure and systems and that "often something that looks like an improvement when viewed in isolation actually proves disastrous for the system" (p. 71).
The three stages described here constitute a conventional and recommended approach to planning, presenting, and monitoring short-course provision. However, as mentioned earlier, one of the key distinguishing features of the Thai short-course market is that trainers do not normally have the opportunity to be involved with participants before or after the training event. As such, the consequences of this shortcoming will need to be addressed in discussions with interviewees involved in this market.

2.2.3 Summary

This review of research and related literature concerning the teaching of adults has suggested that benefits can be accrued when a trainer has a sound knowledge of the factors seen to characterize and shape effective adult teaching and learning.

The literature on adult motivation typically examines two aspects of motivation, the motivation to attend a learning event, and the motivation to make the most of the learning opportunity. Research on the motivation to make the most of a learning event has suggested a number of theoretical and practical approaches that appear to have a positive impact on creating and maintaining adult motivation to learn (see 2.1.3). The final topic in this section examined adult learning style preferences, as literature has suggested that by understanding the implications of this research, an effective trainer is offered a further insight into participants and the ways in which they can be expected to go about learning most effectively (see 2.14).

Knowledge of teaching, participants, and content are seen as the core components of professional knowledge needed to be an effective trainer. Literature on the craft of teaching has examined aspects of teaching that appear to have the most relevance in describing characteristics associated with effective face-to-face interaction between trainer and participants (see 2.2.1.1). As the role of the participant in a training event is invariably linked to most research on teaching, it has also been examined, with a particular emphasis on how knowledge of the participants relates to effective teaching (see 2.2.1.2). The final topic, content knowledge, while a crucial aspect in face-to-face interaction, has not been dealt with to the same extent. However, the literature on adult teaching has clearly commented on the need for an effective trainer to have a thorough understanding of both the content and the content as seen by or needed by the participants (see 2.2.1.3).
The literature on training provision suggests that the more complete the initial analysis, the greater the possibility that training will be effective (see 2.2.2.1). However, understanding what participants need and expect is only beneficial when the trainer has the skills to plan and implement training that will meet stated or implied participant needs (see 2.2.2.2). Increasingly, an analysis as to whether training has been effective is no longer seen to be measured by an end-of-course happy sheet, but as the literature has suggested, by the extent to which learning is transferred which is assessed by a variety of techniques and methods that often take months, even years to complete (see 2.2.2.3).

While a great deal of research and training literature offered varying insights into teaching adults, very little has dealt with the dynamics of a short course that begins with a group of participants and trainer meeting and getting to know each other as part of the training program. Due to the nature of a typical training seminar in the Thai business community, this will often include needs analysis, but this is limited to a brief evaluation of participants’ content knowledge and language ability during the early stages of the seminar.

As has been demonstrated, most adult education research has dealt with longer courses and the development of relationships and skills as a course of study progressed. Very little research has dealt with a one-off educational situation and the interpersonal and educational implications of this scenario. In addition, a great deal of the literature dealing with training has tended to blend the three stages involved in training, that is needs analysis, instructional design, and transfer of training. In short, while many articles deal with one stage in the training process, invariably these discussions include or lead into one or both of the other stages. For example, the selection of teaching techniques is often equated with what participants will be expected to do with what they have acquired. This implies that trainers will have been informed as to what will be expected of participants once they have completed the training. However, in the Thai training environment this information is often not included in the trainer's brief and, at best, is determined by the trainer once the seminar begins.

Of particular importance in this study, is the fact that the participants being taught in seminars described by the interviewees are not Western, but Thai, reflected in part by the discussion of English as a Second Language educational implications in course design and presentation. As most research and related literature that has been incorporated in this review were conducted in the West, it is critical to examine what differences might be expected when
working with a group of Thai participants. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to examine Thai culture and its implications in effective short-course training (see 2.3).

### 2.3 Thai Culture and Its Implications

This section examines the literature on Thai culture and those features of the host culture that affect Thai learners and how they are seen to enter and behave in an adult learning experience. With increased interest in Thailand and its rich and distinctive culture, a growing field of research is available.

Examining Thai culture and how its members might be expected to behave in an adult, educational seminar environment, as suggested by Bechstedt (2002), required an understanding of the collective conscience. More generally, this would require understanding,

> The sum total of the collective representations of a group, the aggregate of all values, norms, knowledge, attitudes and ideas which a group has in common and which should be integrated into a coherent world-view. (p. 240)

Hofstede (1980) suggested that this coherent world-view exists “as social systems can only exist because human behavior is not random, but to some extent predictable” (p. 14). He continued by offering his opinion concerning culture and the effect it had on the individual,

> As the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influences a human group’s responses to its environment. Culture determines the identity of a human group in the same way as personality determines the identity of an individual. (pp. 25-6)

Jackson (2002) suggested that the promotion of a Thai identity by the Thai government alongside a search for the Thai identity continued. He finished by adding that both the promotion and search assumed that Thais were Buddhist. Bechstedt (2002) wrote that due to “Thailand’s relative ethnic homogeneity” (p. 239) and the fact the country was never colonized by a Western power, as for example, Malaysia and Burma had been by the British and Vietnam and Laos by the French, the Thais had a strong idea of what it was to be Thai. He concluded that a Thai’s perceptions could be seen in what was passed on through the family and through education.

> Compared with most of their neighbors the Thai people seem to have a strong and clear picture of what it is to be a Thai, a perception maintained in popular culture and religious activities and passed on through the values and standards of parental and formal education. (Bechstedt, 2002, p. 241)
The objective in this section is to determine which of these values might affect how Thais approach learning and the persona an adult Thai might bring to a learning situation. This study, as Dubey-Villinger (2001a) suggested, must remember that, “Thai management and business culture is unique in certain aspects” (p. 105). It must be remembered that while cultural norms can often be observed, these same norms will not necessarily be observed to the same extent in all individuals.

This review of literature related to Thai culture and its implications begins with the concept of ‘consideration’ or *kreng jai* (see 2.3.1) and explains the nature of this important cultural norm and the way it can be seen to influence Thais and the way they deal with each other. Another important area that emerged from an analysis of relevant literature is the importance placed on Thai social circles (see 2.3.2).

This section paints a picture of how Thais see their social world and the ways in which they deal with various people or types of people on a daily and professional basis. Another important aspect of Thai culture relates to the question of hierarchy (see 2.3.3) and how Thais place themselves and others in order of relative importance. The next section provides a review of the relevant literature on the ways in which Thai culture is seen to impact education (see 2.3.4). This section concludes with a summary that relates this aspect to the research study being conducted.

### 2.3.1 Being Considerate - *Kreng jai*

Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996), Mulder (1997, 2000), Klausner (2002), Komin (1990), Dubey-Villinger (2001a), Redmond (1998), and Bird and Osland (2001) discussed *kreng jai* and the central role this value played in the way Thais were expected to behave in relationships with others. While definitions varied, the Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996) listing of eight ways in which *kreng jai* worked in day-to-day life offered a comprehensive description as to what it meant to be *kreng jai*.

1. Complying with other’s wishes or requests.
2. Reluctance to disturb or interrupt others.
3. Restraint of one’s show of displeasure or anger so as not to cause discomfort to others.
4. Avoidance of asserting one’s opinion or needs.
5. Reluctance to give instructions or pass orders to a superior; or to peers with more age or experience.
6. Reluctance to evaluate a colleague or a superior’s performance.
7. Avoiding the demand for one’s rights.
8. Reluctance to ask questions when one has not understood someone. (pp. 47-8)
Komin (1990), in her study of Thai psychology, suggested nine values played a role in the Thai cognitive system of which she placed ego orientation as the most important and began her analysis of the Thai ego through the lens of kreng jai, which she suggested was the root underlying various key values of the Thai, such as “face-saving”, “criticism-avoidance”, and the kreng jai attitude, which roughly means, “feeling considerate for another person, not want [sic] to impress or cause other persons trouble or hurt his/her feelings. (p. 162)

As the ‘ego’ was so important, Thais have developed a variety of ways to avoid unnecessary clashes with other members of their culture as they give tremendous emphasis on ‘face’ and ‘ego,’ preserving another’s ‘ego’ is the basic rule of all Thai interaction both on the continuum of familiarity-unfamiliarity, and the continuum of superior-inferior with difference only in degree. (Komin, 1990, p. 162)

However, the issue of kreng jai, Komin argued, was far more complex than the Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996) description. For example, she suggested that, kreng jai, in particular its relationship to criticism avoidance, was not limited to juniors, but that seniors must also show care not to criticize those below them in the hierarchy. She continued that rules suggested by Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996) worked in all directions, affecting the behavior of juniors, seniors, and peers in any given social situation. In particular, Komin (1990) provided an example related to education.

Even in academic seminars where intellectual criticism has a legitimate place, the Thai still try to avoid direct strong criticism if possible. If they really have to criticize as in the role of a critique [sic], they often end up by hiding their toned-down criticisms in general and vaguely stated terms, for the person being criticized to figure out himself. And if the person truly wants comments, he can seek out the critiques afterwards and discuss it in private. (p. 163)

Returning to the Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996) list of the ways in which kreng jai works in day-to-day life, Komin (1990) suggested that all members of society were bound by these rules.

Even a superior would also observe not to intrude too much on the subordinate or the inferior’s ego. For a Thai, this is not something to be taken for granted. They intuitively observe this root of interpersonal social rules. (p. 162)

In reviewing Komin’s comments and the list provided by Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996), it became clear that understanding Thai culture and the way Thais interacted with one another requires an acceptance of one important rule: avoid at all cost being embarrassed or embarrassing others. This will result in an overriding goal to avoid...
bothering other people, as to do otherwise would not be kreng jai. Redmond (1998) continued this argument but also suggested that kreng jai was in fact far more complex as he argued it might be translated as ‘consideration (for others)’ in English were it not for the fact that the complex calculation of emotions, ulterior motives, and relative status involved go far beyond a Westerner’s rough summing of another’s feelings. (p. 126)

Komin (1990) also criticized Redmond’s definition as too limited in that it suggested status was a determining factor, whereas she argued that kreng jai behavior is to be observed by all, superiors, equals, and inferiors, including intimate relationships like husband-wife, and close friends with difference only in terms of degree. A Thai knows how far he/she can go in displaying the degree of kreng jai, in accordance to different degree of status discrepancy, degree of familiarity, and different situations. It is a basic social rule to kreng jai. (p. 164)

If one understood and is, at all times kreng jai, by following the rules suggested by Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996) and by Komin (1990), in all interactions with members of society, that is, those lower, higher and equal in societal hierarchy, then embarrassment to one’s ego and to the ego of others should be avoidable.

Thai tradition has encouraged junior family members and young students to absorb rather than initiate, to ‘get it right’ rather than to question or express opinions, especially dissenting ones. The result of this pattern is that most Thais – even at rather senior levels – have not had extensive practice in expressing themselves in an assertive way, in either Thai or English. (Holmes & Tangtongtavy, 1996, p. 35)

The feeling of kreng jai is often offset, although never completely, with hai kiad a motivating value in which honor and respect are given. Used to motivate, it is seen when a senior shows respect to a junior for an opinion or for a job well done. Hai kiad is demonstrated when seniors treat juniors with respect. In an educational environment, it would be a professor making a maximum effort to teach. It would involve arriving on time, prepared and willing to provide students with the best lesson possible. This would be how a professor would show hai kiad, or benevolence (Mulder, 2000).

Of particular importance in this study is the need to understand the ways in which kreng jai affects public behavior, to understand how other members of a group are categorized according to the ‘degree’ of kreng jai required, and finally to examine what might cause a Thai embarrassment.
It is important for Thais to remember where they are, for example, at the office, in a meeting or at a party, and who might be in the current group and therefore who must be the recipient of kreng jai and to what level it must be shown. “Each [Thai] knows his appropriate role, appropriate means to handle interactions when rules come into contact and how far one can go” (Komin, 1990, p. 162).

However, if any factor in the current social situation were to be unknown or seen to have the potential to change, it would become increasingly important for a Thai to know exactly what to do. If the potential for embarrassment were to become unclear, special care would need to be taken to avoid any action that might cause embarrassment or conflict as, “the majority of Thais will avoid conflict. Like it or not, that’s how we’re taught and it is a deep part of our beliefs” (Niratpattanasai, Bangkok Post, 08/08/03).

This, in turn, causes Thais to adopt a certain hesitation in taking action in a situation involving unknowns. They will continue to do so until the other person or persons are recognized or have become sufficiently well known so that everyone is aware of their relative position in the new social situation. This would allow time for each person involved to know and demonstrate the appropriate behavior.

There is even a term in the Thai vocabulary for ‘appropriate behaviour’, which refers to the right behaviour at the right place and the right time. (Dubey-Villinger, 2001, p. 108)

As it is better to be safe than sorry, a smile and a nod of the head become both the best defense and offense. Mulder (2000) continued with his recommendations and suggested that attire also played an important role and that, “upon meeting, one should smile and people are expected to dress according to station in life (eventually with coat and necktie!), because presentation expresses the social persona and claim to status” (Mulder, 2000, p. 47).

This need to smile has resulted in the use of different smiles based on the situation and need. Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996) suggested that in Thailand, ‘Land of Smiles’, Thais have twelve smiles at their disposal, depending on the situation and range from a, “I’m so happy I’m crying”, smile, to a, “I’m trying to smile but I can’t”, smile (p. 25).

With many potential pitfalls for embarrassment, it becomes increasingly important for events to move along smoothly and that anything potentially embarrassing be carefully avoided or skirted.
A smile may be a sign of kindness, of forgiveness, or friendly inclinations; a smile may also be merely polite and a way to smooth interaction or a sign that one is willing to listen. … A person on the defensive may smile, and one may smile when sad, hurt or even insulted. … Thais have a smile for every emotion, and with so many nuances … the smile often hides more than it reveals. (Mulder, 2000, p. 1)

A smile can be used in any situation, as it should withstand the test of embarrassment and allow both parties to save face, to avoid embarrassment, and to “facilitate the interaction in which individuals somehow flow past each other without hindrance or obstacle” (Mulder, 2000, p. 46).

With so many unknowns when meeting for the first time, most Thais tend to behave cautiously. One never knows who a person might be until that person has become known. For example, in Thailand, there are a great many people related to the current Royal Family, highly revered in Thailand, or related to former Provincial Royal Families. One such individual, an acquaintance of this researcher, is a middle-aged man living in somewhat impoverished conditions in the provincial capital, Chiang Mai. As the oldest son in a family directly descended from the former Chiang Mai Royal Family, the deference he is shown is one of respect despite his outward appearance of someone from the lower classes.

On one occasion, he was introduced to a high-ranking government official from Bangkok. Present at this introduction, I noticed that as soon as this government official became aware that he was talking to a man with Royal Blood, his demeanor changed dramatically from that of someone used to being in control, to one of deference to the man he was meeting. However, as the government official had started the encounter with a cautious smile and a few humorous comments about the need to use English (as a non-Thai was present), neither participant had said or done anything that could be construed as embarrassing. The meeting proceeded smoothly, ending in a very late night of drinking and continued relationship building. An interesting insight into how Thais avoid embarrassment, this anecdote demonstrated two methods a Thai would use intuitively to avoid embarrassment, that is, smile and remain unassuming or make certain the situation is sanuk, or fun.

For many Thais, if it is not sanuk, (fun) it is not worth doing while for westerners if it is not serious, if there is no pain, it is probably a waste of time. Many Thais do not plan their lives with clear objectives and milestones the way we often do in the western world. They live day by day and they do not worry much about what could go wrong in the future. (Niratpattanasai, Bangkok Post, 12/09/03)
Komin (1990) suggested that this Thai love of having fun came from the constant need to maintain smooth relationships.

Most Thai social interactions are pleasant, light, might be superficial, yet fun and humourous in nature. Joyful behaviors can be observed in any Thai party, which is usually characterized by small talk, gossip, jokes, teasing one another, making fun of all kinds of non-personal inconsequential things and events, including playing with words using puns … (p. 234)

While a Thai might have one threshold of embarrassment in one situation, they might not have the same threshold in another. While one situation could provide a number of embarrassing scenarios, another might not have any. Komin (1990) suggested that the limitations of Chinese and Indian speaking Thais are always good for a laugh, although it would be hard to imagine most Thai-Chinese or Thai-Indians sharing in these humorous anecdotes. However, bilingual Thai-Chinese or Thai-Indians would be able, in turn, to poke fun at the inability of many Thais to speak only rudimentary English, despite the years of language education they have had. However, this lack of English ability, a potential subject for jokes among some Thais, would in turn, be a very touchy subject best left alone by Westerners regardless of their Thai language fluency. Niratpattanasai, (2004) also commented on the language factor and recommended that, in a Thai office, efforts needed to be taken by expatriates to adapt their English to the level of their employees without appearing to be patronizing.

Another example in Thailand, as mentioned by Komin (1990) is the Thais’ propensity to gossip and talk about others, in particular shapes and sizes. Thais have often suggested that the Thai word phomphui or plump was in fact, a cute, positive word heavy-set Westerners should not find offensive. However, although heavy-set foreigners will often be described as phomphui, they would probably never hear the word used to describe a Thai of the same size. When asked why, most Thais would simply say kreng jai and that it might be embarrassing for an adult Thai to be referred to as phomphui. In short, it would be acceptable to call a non-Thai adult phomphui, but not a Thai adult.

Aware of this variance in embarrassment thresholds, members of Thai culture need to be careful, as they know that while they might not be embarrassed by a certain action or comment, others could be. Until a person’s embarrassment threshold becomes clear, it would be best to adopt a cautious approach; that is, smile, until positions in the current hierarchy are known and embarrassment quotients understood. This would simply be considerate, or kreng jai. As it is so much better to be safe than sorry, the preferred option would be to avoid doing
or saying anything, just smile, at least for the time being, thereby reducing the chance for embarrassment and also providing time to figure things out.

To present a smile to a distant person neutralizes his potential harm, while to smile to an intimate is an expression of good humour, trust or benevolence; to show respect to a superior is a technique to be safe, to show respect to an elder is to acknowledge his benevolence and expresses one’s gratitude. (Mulder, 2000, p. 61)

The key to kreng jai comes not only from knowing how to be kreng jai, but more importantly when and to what degree kreng jai must be shown. As a Thai can be embarrassed both by offering and accepting too much kreng jai from other Thais, cues based on a variety of factors aid people in making correct decisions concerning the level or levels of kreng jai they should consider applying in a given situation. Among the cues used to decipher kreng jai levels required, age, seniority, perceived or actual frequency of social interaction, relative power and individual power are most prevalent and need to be discussed in more detail.

The next section examines Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa’s (1996) description of how Thais deal with three different groups of people and the way each group influences Thai behavior. In particular, how each group affected behavior in terms of a willingness or need to forgive or overlook behavioral mistakes or shortcomings.

The first circle, family circle, includes family members or those who would be willing to forgive quite freely. Insiders, the second circle, incorporates familiar individuals including friends, colleagues and employees or those individuals who would not be willing to forgive either easily or quickly. The third circle, outsiders, includes all remaining members of Thai society who were neither family nor familiar individuals and who would not be expected to become a member of either group. As Thais would not expect to encounter people in this group again, their impact on behavior would be minimal as there would be no need to worry about being forgiven.

2.3.2 Thai Social Circles

To appreciate how a Thai would categorize other Thais, it is important to understand how they see their world in terms of the circles or types of people encountered. Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996) classified Thai society into three circles: ‘family’, ‘selfish’, and ‘cautious’. The family circle includes all members of one’s family, both by bloodline and by marriage. Family circle would include those they live with, live near and
those they would meet infrequently, and would include all relatives from grandparents, parents, siblings, children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, to distant cousins.

Outsiders or the selfish circle, according to Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996), includes all people a Thai believed would not be encountered a second time. The term ‘selfish’ implies that because one’s own benefit would be of paramount importance, care concerning behavior is secondary to reaching a goal or objective.

Insiders, or those people considered to be in the cautious circle, include all people a Thai could meet or expect to meet on a regular basis and would include all those they work with and, in addition, a continuum ranging from close life-long friends to the cashier at the local cafeteria. It is within this group of people Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996) suggested that a Thai needs to be most sensitive about behavior and their treatment of others and, in turn, how others treat them.

Family members would be well known and expected behavior would be clearly delineated by age and position in the family. However, it is the line between insiders, the cautious circle of regular contacts, and outsiders, the selfish circle, consisting of people a Thai does not expect to encounter again, which could cause the most disquiet. At all times, there remains a concern that someone from the mass of unknown faces could become a colleague, friend, business client, or someone who might provide a service on a regular basis. A new insider could range from an unfamiliar face in the elevator to the new nanny next door. Therefore, to avoid any potential embarrassment, Thais must understand the circumstances in which they find themselves and must be confident that they have read the current social situation correctly.

The Thai are self reliant and independent in the sense that they are able to compartmentalize feelings and thoughts, expressing in the actions only what is appropriate to circumstances, to type of relationship, time and place, thereby keeping their ego self intact. (Komin, 1990, p. 190)

As each of these three circles will influence Thai behavior in almost any situation, including an educational environment, it is necessary to examine each circle in more detail and, in particular, how it might affect the behavior of a Thai taking part in an educational event. The first group described is the family circle, or the group into which one was born, and for that reason one has little choice in either selecting or leaving. The second circle dealt with outsiders, while important in Thai society, does not play an important role in influencing
the behavior expected from a Thai in a classroom situation. Insiders are dealt with last, as relationships within this group would have the greatest impact on how Thais might behave in an educational situation.

2.3.2.1 Family and its influence.

The family, an all-forgiving group, includes parents, siblings, and other relatives. Within this circle, the mother teaches that the world outside the family is hard and cruel.

In the outside world one needs to care for oneself and fight one’s own battles, but the smaller world of trusted intimates cares for its members and functions as a center of stability in spite of its lack of power. One needs to participate in the world outside, but one does not feel obliged; towards one’s inside world, one is committed. (Mulder, 2000, p. 61)

The socialization a Thai receives at home is aimed at raising a productive member of society, as children are seen as an investment for the family’s future resulting in the need to ensure that a child will be ready to perform to the best of their ability (Bechstedt, 2002).

The ideal child is expected to be obedient, docile, and submissive towards its parents, showing signs of loyalty and compliance at an early age. ... Loving their parents, if mentioned at all, is not understood as an end in itself, but as an expression of the child’s moral obligation in view of all that the parents have done… Children are raised in a spirit of moral obligation giving the impression that their upbringing creates a kind of debt, which the children have to repay by taking care of their parents when they are old. (pp. 243-4)

From earliest childhood, Thais are taught that the outside world is a large, unknown, and scary place. Thai children are taught that only family should be trusted and that all relationships and encounters with members outside the family are permanent, that is, once an embarrassment has been experienced, it remains a permanent blemish. Whether self-inflicted, something to be avoided, or inflicted by others, something that would not be forgiven, an embarrassment does not become forgotten with time. Therefore, as one needs to be extremely careful at all times when outside the family, conversation and relationships with non-family members often remain superficial (Mulder, 2000, Klausner, 2002).

Thai culture does not prepare for personal openness, but rather warns against making oneself vulnerable or weak by expressing one’s deeper emotions. Consequently, relaxed interaction remains on the surface and offers no psychological depth. (Mulder, 2000, p. 65)

While the family plays an extremely important role in a Thai’s social development and support network into and throughout adulthood, it plays an indirect role in shaping the rules and norms that mold the behavior of Thais in an educational environment.
2.3.2.2 Outsiders and their lack of influence.

Family support and understanding is countered by the mass of people a Thai believes are not important and who are unlikely to become a member of the insider group that most overtly influences Thai behavior in social, work and educational environments. With outsiders, rules are limited as to how one should behave. This lack of rules, in turn, would make it difficult to be embarrassed, as no one would care about behavior and as such, most Thais do as they wish.

This type of behavior is best reflected in Thai queuing behavior (Redmond, 1998). Everyone waits cautiously and politely for the bus to arrive while observing the other players in the soon to unfold drama of getting onto the bus and obtaining a seat. Once it has been established that all players are unknown and will not be encountered again, power comes into play. Age and appearance will be judged to determine if care needs to be taken with any of the players in the current drama. Once the bus arrives, everyone is ready and begins to push and shove their way onto the bus based on physical strength and luck as to where the bus actually stops along the fifty to one hundred meters of roadside marked for buses. While it would appear order has broken down and chaos has taken over, everyone makes their way onto the bus in a fashion that leaves no one embarrassed as there are no criteria against which embarrassment can be measured.

2.3.2.3 Insiders and their influence.

Of the three social groups, family, outsiders, and insiders, it is the people one could meet on a regular basis that create the most tension in terms of how to behave. Referred to as the cautious circle (Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa, 1996), this group has the most impact on a seminar situation as it provides Thais with guidance as to how they should behave in the office and in a business-related training situation. It is within this cautious circle of insiders, people who will be met repeatedly, including colleagues at other branch offices that rules for behavior need to be understood and followed. In particular, rules and norms that will lessen the potential to be embarrassed or to cause embarrassment and those that allow all members to know their place without the need to revert to power struggles or intra-group intrigue.

To nurture quiet and orderly relationships among intimates is like caring for one’s home; maintaining compliant [sic] relationships with outsiders is rather inspired by the motive of avoiding trouble. (Mulder, 2000, p. 61)
The group, insiders, includes all people, other than family, who a Thai has accepted or might need to accept as someone they could or would need to interact with on a regular basis. A regular basis could range from a colleague at the next desk to a fellow seminar participant who might be encountered at another seminar or social function in the future.

In education, including a short course, the best approach to avoid embarrassment, would be to assume that all members of the course are in this cautious circle. First, it could cause embarrassment to treat course members otherwise, and second, as the rules for cautious circle behavior are clear and relatively easy to follow, it would be the wisest choice and the most prudent method to avoid embarrassment.

The presentation of self tends to include displaying the whole set of one’s social arsenal, and such assets should not be hidden. Even in the causal encounters, people probe to discover the other person’s social rank and, consequently, their relative social distance. … Smoothness is then expected to result, the right language can be chosen, and everybody will be at ease. (Mulder, 2000, p. 47)

However, with insiders when it could be extremely important to know how to behave appropriately, appropriateness is based predominantly on knowing and accepting one’s relative position in the hierarchy of the group being joined.

2.3.3 Hierarchy

Hierarchy in Thai society plays an important role in deciding how much power a person has and as to how a Thai should behave including a number of behavioral trends that affect how individuals enter an educational environment such as a short course. Reflected in many ways, Bechstedt (2002) mentioned the extent to which this was reflected in Thai language and in particular with urban-based white-collar workers in any work-related, educational, or social situation in which they might find themselves involved.

The Thai linguistic structure is such that it is impossible to address a person without referring to social status. Yet, notions of authority and the corresponding gestures and practices of etiquette are apparently more elaborate within the highly hierarchical systems of the civil and military bureaucracy and among the urban-based white-collar workers than among villagers or construction workers of rural background. (p. 247)

To understand the importance of hierarchy, it is necessary to be sensitive to how Thais understand and accept the world of ‘hierarchy’ in terms of power a person might wield.

Thais also grapple with the notion of hierarchy … implicitly drawn from two diverging yet related sources: karma and karuna. Both are derived from Buddhist philosophy. Karma is the
view that everything is predetermined or destined and one’s position in society is of a static nature. One is therefore born into a social class and remains in that class until death. Essentially, social mobility is neither available nor subsequently pursued. *Karuna*, … refers to the quality of being ‘merciful and kind’ in one’s dealings. This quality is best exemplified through harmonious relationships… (Dubey-Villinger, 2001, p. 107)

The rules of behavior with insiders need to be respected in both an upward and downward flow of active behavior, that is, asking or allowing seniors to speak first, and passive behavior, that is, remaining silent or in the background. Komin (1990) highlighted in her introduction to Thai cultural norms, the “Thai social system is first and foremost a hierarchically structured society where individualism and interpersonal relationship are of utmost importance” (p. 160).

Once it has been established that someone should be accepted as an insider, and their relative status in the hierarchy has been determined, social interaction at a greater level of comfort and security can take place.

While presentation of self is a primary means to keep interaction kind and pleasant, presentation also keeps individuals distances from each other because of the implicit expectation that the surface also is the essence of social reality. Consequently, the art of role-playing is highly developed and, essential for the success of the social show. The inferior little guy (*phunoi*) approaches the superior big man (*phuyai*) with a respectful greeting gesture (*wai*) that is reciprocated according to hierarchical expectations. (Mulder, 2000, p. 47)

For most Thais, the initial establishment of hierarchy in seminar group will be based predominantly on age and seniority. In a company, this would be the traditional employee and boss dyad. However, a Thai must remain careful, as in addition to age or seniority, some members of Thai society are able to enhance their position in a group’s hierarchy through their association with powerful patrons, for example, relationships with the royal family or a protégé of a wealthy or powerful business person.

In addition, a Thai’s status in a group may be enhanced through their abilities, in particular a skill that might prove useful during an educational event. These abilities could include English in an English-speaking seminar, as this skill could be used by other members of the group to avoid embarrassment about their lack of ability or confidence.

As age-based, patron-based, and skill-based factors can influence a person’s status in a group, it is necessary to study each influence in more detail and consider how each influence could potentially alter an individual’s position in the hierarchy. Age-based influence, seen as the more traditional source of status, is examined first as it is the easiest to identify. The
second influencing factor, patron-based, reflects an influence that, while not easily identifiable, must be remembered. Finally, skill-based factors are reviewed and reflect any influence members must make known, if they possess, and respected when possessed by others.

2.3.3.1 Age-based influence.

In a seminar situation, until relative status for everyone involved has been determined, age will guide the initial seniority creation system, as it is relatively easy to determine status in this way. This acceptance of age to reflect seniority is a formula and practice Thais find both familiar and comfortable.

Younger members of a group should demonstrate respect for their elders, for example, by offering them the chance to offer an opinion first. At the same time, elders must be benevolent with those younger by sharing knowledge that has come from their more extensive experience (Komin, 1990). For either group to do otherwise would be a violation of behavioral norms. If a Thai were to ignore these norms, it would be seen as a lack of respect or consideration, would not be kreng jai, and would be embarrassing for both parties.

The employee would allow the boss to look authoritative and knowledgeable even when he or she knows what is being discussed. It is another example of maintaining harmonious relationships by letting the other person feel that they are right or correct. (Dubey-Villinger, 2001, p. 108)

While harmonious relationships must involve communication between juniors and seniors, a desire to keep things neutral and to avoid embarrassment leads to things not being said or done. The respect for elders and benevolence with juniors is also reflected in the way Thais approach criticism, or anything that could be taken as criticism.

Criticism is not only disliked, it is also regarded as destructive to the social system. The superior is supposed to decide, the inferior is supposed to obey. To criticize a superior is to question the idea that the superior is always right. … Criticizing an inferior in public would also impress on all present the superior’s bad manners as much as the inferior’s inefficiency. (Cooper & Cooper, 1982, pp. 135-6)

The exchanging of pleasantries at a cocktail party or while enjoying coffee before a seminar often reflects an effort by all parties concerned to understand who is who so that they can avoid making an embarrassing cultural faux pas.
No two Thais can meet without each sizing up the other and trying to determine their relative social heights by these means. If all goes well, one agrees to be the patron (to gain respect), the other to be patronized (to gain new opportunities). Better yet, they may see each other as true equals, and thus become friends. (Redmond, 1998, p. 85)

While age and seniority are relatively easy to judge, it is also necessary to determine if an individual enjoys a hierarchical enhancing relationship based on patronage or relationships to more powerful or influential individuals in Thai society. Therefore, to avoid potential embarrassment, Thais must make certain that no member of the group has the support of a patron that might enhance their ranking in the group. Accepting a hierarchy based solely on age and apparent seniority while a practical start, could prove embarrassing if it later becomes clear that an initial evaluation of a group’s hierarchy was incorrect. The anecdote concerning the friend in Chiang Mai exemplifies this situation and that “across all social classes, the ideal seems to be upheld that life will be smooth and predictable if everybody knows his or her place and acts accordingly” (Bechstedt, 2002, p. 241).

2.3.3.2 Patron-based influence.

Another potential problem in establishing a hierarchy in a seminar situation is related to the question of who will be the patron or senior is that while two Thais are negotiating who will take the senior role, they might have existing patron-patronized arrangements. As these relationships, either related or unrelated to the current social setting, could augment stature in the hierarchy currently being created, pre-existing patron relationships must be sought out and weighed for relative importance. There might be a person present, who while younger than some, is being supported by a patron, sufficiently powerful that this chosen protégé will gain added stature in the hierarchy being established.

An example of this would be young personal assistants this researcher has often seen in a politician’s entourage. Although younger than most of the people they meet, their access to a politician adds to their stature and improves their position in the hierarchy over older people with less access to power. While a great many factors must be calculated and weighed carefully, pre-existing patron relationship could offset age seniority. However, to complicate matters, as many of these connected young people know that their ties to power could be limited, they will, in turn, try to limit their enhancement in the hierarchy to one that they feel is appropriate, and one that everyone finds comfortable.
Underlying the practice of patronage is the idea that each individual is situated, however temporarily, in a particular position in a hierarchy of relative power. Those higher up in the hierarchy seek validation of their power from among those below them, and in return, those lower down expect tangible benefits from their superiors. Patron-client relations, as conceived of by the Thai, would seem to be inimical to a class system since individuals can, and do, change their positions in the hierarchy during their lifetime. (Keyes, 1987, p. 136)

How far up in the hierarchy this additional status might move a person during a seminar would depend on the patron in question, the status of older members in the current group, and the nature of the event.

Sentiments of an inferior in relation to a superior are not only governed by feelings of esteem, respect, pleasure, honor, admiration and gratitude, but also by their emotional counterparts such as discomfort, awe, embarrassment and fright. There conflicting sentiments are a reflection of the ambiguity of these kinds of superior-inferior relationships and remind us of the fact that if stripped of their emotional components they will reveal their true essence: asymmetrical power relations based upon unequal access to power. (Bechstedt, 2002, p. 250)

The question of power could also be complicated by the fact that in one situation a specific ability, deemed useful by the group, might provide an individual with an enhanced degree of power, while in another situation it would not.

2.3.3.3 Skill-based influence.

Some skills provide an individual with a chance to move up in the hierarchy, but at the same time increase the chance of embarrassment if these skills are found to be wanting. For example, if Thais mention they are computer experts, and if this skill is seen as particularly useful in the seminar, they might be able to use this particular skill to enter the hierarchy at a position higher than their age would normally allow. However, if they were asked to do something related to computers and it became apparent that they did not have the promised skills, the group who had accepted that these individuals had a desirable skill, would be embarrassed. However, if it became known later that a group member had withheld information about a useful skill, this could also cause embarrassment, as it would be seen as inconsiderate to have concealed this potentially useful ability from the group.

Because most participants … will be keenly aware of relative hierarchy, it is loathsome to exert or press one’s position and cause other people to feel slighted or repressed, particularly when the inferior has already politely and subtly indicated his lower position. As long as the atmosphere of friendliness dominates, status and hierarchy will be accepted and appreciated. (Mulder, 2000, pp. 47-8)
The ability to speak English better than other participants would be another skill-related enhancement agent in a short-course environment. When this potentially useful skill becomes known, these English-speaking participants often become leaders in an English speaking hierarchy. As such, in a show of benevolence to those below them in skill level, they use their English for the benefit of the group. The group, in turn, shows respect and relies on these individuals to speak on their behalf when English is required. Often in a seminar, these people would be looked upon to socialize more extensively with the trainer, to gain, if possible, added insights into the trainer’s character and intentions over the course of the seminar. This would include talking with the trainer at coffee break or over lunch, while other less fluent in English, enjoyed the chance to speak in Thai with other members of the group.

However, as an English-speaking ability hierarchy could be relatively unimportant, it would only come into play if other more important hierarchies have allowed it to have a measure of importance, that is, they have shown benevolence or karuna. Finally, the establishment, acceptance, and use of a skill-based hierarchy would only be accepted if members of more important hierarchies did not feel embarrassed by their lack of ability in the skill area.

Although English speaking ability is often obvious, this idea extends to other skills and abilities that might result from a particular job. For example, in short courses and graduate classes taught by this researcher, a person with advertising experience might be expected to create attractive visuals. An accountant would be expected to know and be able to apply various accounting formulae to a case study. In these cases, the group would accept that an individual has stronger skills or abilities, and when these skills are required for the benefit of the group and to avoid members being embarrassed if something were not done or produced correctly, this ‘skilled’ individual gains seniority. However, this enhancement in stature would be limited to a particular skill and while demonstrating this skill, a person must continue to show deference and respect to those higher in other more important hierarchies that is, those based on age or power gained by patronage.

The tendency of working in a group formation may mean that individuals are reluctant to ‘outshine’ one another. This may promote uniformity in what each member of the group provides (what each member believes should be provided) and no real opportunity for one member to excel. Of course, this has implications for harmonious relationships but also for what constitutes the final product. (Dubey-Villinger, 2001, p. 111)
While it might appear to be a complicated affair to establish a dominant hierarchy in any given group, smiling, joking (being sanuk) and taking a neutral stance help to alleviate the tension. In addition, while it might be difficult for a non-Thai to follow what is happening, any group of Thais meeting for the first time would quickly form a hierarchy or hierarchies they could feel comfortable with and could accept.

While Thai participants might be comfortable with the structure of a group, the success of an educational situation, including a seminar, often depends on the attitude of those accepted as most senior. If the most senior member supports the seminar and its goals, the trainer has often been provided an added advantage. If the most senior individual is opposed to, or even neutral about the seminar and its goals, the trainer is likely to have an added burden in needing to sway this key opinion leader to a more accepting stance.

However, as those with the most seniority should understand the need to be benevolent, and if they follow the rules of their culture, they should wait to offer their opinion about the merits of a training situation until they have had an opportunity to pass judgment based on the experience at hand. Kreng jai or the need to be considerate, as suggested, works in both directions, and for the most senior individual to discount the value of a seminar or the seminar leader’s abilities before they have become clear to the group, would not be the Thai way of doing things. It would not be considerate.

2.3.4 Teaching Thais

As the goal of this research is to find the characteristics of an effective short-course facilitator in the Thai business community, and how this knowledge could be used to improve short-course effectiveness, it is important to review how Thai culture might influence teaching.

As the formal genealogical structure of Thai kin terms demonstrates, there are no equals at all. Pupils in a group on the way to school are expected to walk according to their age…. At a wedding, a funeral, or an official party, all guests set great store on addressing each other according to rank and status. All Thai people, whatever the situation, are fully aware of their own as well as everyone else’s position in the social hierarchy, and will reinforce this by appropriate manners and speech. (Bechstedt, 2002, p. 242)

Teachers enjoy a special role in Thai society. Therefore, to be embarrassed by a teacher, even if the teacher were unaware of having done so, would be contrary to Thai
expectations of how this person would behave. Likewise, it would be incumbent on Thais to avoid embarrassing a teacher, as teachers are

Thought to be a source of metta karuna, of sympathy and kindness, who makes considerable self-sacrifice for the good of his pupils, thus creating a moral debt on their part. (Mulder, 2000, p. 32)

When dealing with Thais, especially adults, the potential to embarrass is always present. This would be compounded when additional factors are added, each one having an affect that could add exponentially to the embarrassment potential. These might include calling on a younger member in the group, while ignoring seniors; commenting on the quality of a junior member’s answer, but not the quality of a more senior member’s reply; or pressing someone, regardless of age, for an answer when they do not have one. In short, a trainer must be aware of the hierarchy in the group and avoid causing anyone embarrassment.

Care should be taken to observe the pecking order in social and business situations. Superiors are seen as unchallenged, but they generally strive to get on well with subordinates. (Lewis, 2000, pp. 367-8)

The Western teacher in Thailand must be willing to accept that much of what might be considered best practices elsewhere would not happen unless great effort is placed on both teaching how to do an activity, and on creating an environment in which students can practice without fear of embarrassment.

The Thai perceive seeking knowledge as a very personal thing, and discussion or conversation is an interpersonal act. . . . Since the quest for knowledge is a personal matter close to one’s ego, and while the Thai are very sensitive in preserving one’s own, as well as another person’s, ego, an intellectual discussion, which through its process might endanger and intrude on another’s ego, is therefore consciously or unconsciously avoided (Komin, 1990, p. 128)

With this tradition in Thai education, including undergraduate and graduate courses, Thais who have been successful in the Thai system are often uncomfortable at asking questions, offering opinions, or challenging a trainer’s opinion. It is not a question of ability or lack of English, but having gone through an educational system where these skills are considered undesirable consequently they have not been developed.

Since any question asked in a lecture hall or seminar room would suggest either that the lecture or speech was less than perfect or that the questioner was incapable of understanding, very few questions ever get asked. . . . Some may get a few questions a couple of days later or a couple of months after the lecture is over. Such questions are always asked in private and
always wrapped up in a way that demonstrates quite clearly that the wretched student is too dim to understand the clear and brilliant lecture given. (Cooper & Cooper, 1982, pp. 140-1)

These traditions in education reflect a more general trend in which,

Knowledge-for-knowledge sake value does not receive high value in the cognition of the Thai in general. Education has been perceived more as a ‘means’ of climbing up the social ladder, in terms of higher prestige and higher salary pay than as an end value in itself. (Komin, 1990, p. 226)

Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996) provided an excellent synopsis of the major characteristics of Thai education and its results. A student in the Thai educational system is expected to show the teacher respect at all times, sit in class, take notes and at exam time, regurgitate answers provided by the teacher.

Thai tradition has encouraged junior family members and young students to absorb rather than initiate, to ‘get it right’ rather than to question or express opinions, especially dissenting ones. The result of this pattern is that most Thais - even at rather senior levels - have not had extensive practice in expressing themselves in an assertive way, in either Thai or English. (Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa, 1996, p. 35)

Dubey-Villinger (2001) looked at the Thai reluctance to speak up from an employer-employee point of view that reflects a number of cultural traits that could be anticipated in a seminar environment.

- Thai employees do not communicate their disagreement or dissatisfaction with how business is being conducted in their job/company.
- Employees do not assert their true feelings or opinions about a matter;
- They do not wish to participate in the evaluation of a situation/problem or even of a colleague.
- They cannot admit that they do not understand something or that they have made a mistake. (pp. 114-5)

Exams usually play a major role in awarding a final grade and so most students spend most of their time preparing for exams in which the more of a teacher’s comments one can remember, the higher the grade.

Students learn only subject matter and written texts. They do not have any opportunity to be instilled with desirable attributes. Exams and results obtained govern student success. (UB, Thai, Female, Bilingual, Submitted MED Student Paper, 2004).

In addition, at the university level, there is no real desire to get started with the content, as students in most Thai universities wish to graduate, but not necessarily to learn as
Redmond (1998) commented, “there are in Thai universities the dreams of discovery, the promise of progress, the fragrance of freedom - and little else” (p. 99).

As most teachers would not examine material they have not covered in class, the more time students are able to spend with any activity other than in dealing with course material, reduces the volume of material they would need to memorize.

University lecturers can ask after every lecture, ‘Any questions?’ and never get one. Some may get a few questions a couple of days later or a couple of months after the lecture is over. (Cooper & Cooper, 1982, p. 141)

Students in Thailand are not expected to ask questions when they do not understand. It could be embarrassing or kreng jai as asking a question could imply that a teacher had overlooked something or had not properly prepared. To avoid kreng jai, the best solution would be to remain silent in class. Later, the student, usually with a friend, might visit the professor’s office with an appropriate excuse for not having understood, “I was late”. “I was not feeling well”. In this way, the student has taken full blame for not having understood and will have gained further credit for taking the initiative. The professor is relieved of any blame, and the potential for kreng jai has been avoided when all actors play their respective roles correctly (Cooper & Cooper, 1982).

However, theoretically questioning a professor about content should not be needed. Teachers applying nam jai, that is, service to others, should know how to teach so that questions are not needed. As Redmond (1998) suggested,

Nowhere in the system is the knowledge of professors open to testing by serious freshmen. Nowhere can intellectual criticism be construed as anything but personal assault. (p. 99)

In addition, as teaching in Thailand is often seen simply as presenting material to be copied, memorized and repeated, a need for questions would seem rare. This would help to explain why Thais, regardless of their experience in other education cultures, normally minimize embarrassment stress by remaining quiet in a training session. Pathmanand (2001) suggested this could be seen in the Thai motto that the more you talk, the more you lose, and as such, it would be better to remain silent.

While in the western world we do not like to lose face, we accept it if ultimately we learn from the experience (no pain, no gain). Not in Thailand. This is why my educational consultants do not like to ask too many questions. They believe our visitors may lose face. (Niratpattanasai, Bangkok Post, 12/09/03)
Saying something in class rather than remaining silent, could increase the risk of being embarrassed. Therefore, as Thais have been encouraged to remain quiet and passively accept a teacher’s lectures throughout their education, it would be difficult for them to leave this comfort zone.

Buddhism discourages competition. Thais therefore are not overly ambitious and reluctant to initiate change. Easy work with sufficient pay is better than hard work with high pay. Authority is respected when present, but often ignored when absent. Work tempo increases or decreases according to presence of the boss. … Decisions are often ambiguous, so that nobody loses face. (Lewis, 2000, pp. 367-8)

Because of ‘hierarchy’ norms discussed earlier, Thais may form alliances or cliques in a seminar, accepting that each person has a particular and potentially useful skill. Once groups have been formed, the skills of each person would be analyzed to determine what each person could contribute for the benefit of all. For example, it might be decided that one person could offer English language skills, another creativity, while another might have access to useful materials or resources.

Training methods vary, some being in-class training, some on-the-job training. Khun Prakorn is of the view that independent learning does not work too well in Thailand, as Thais like being organized into groups and classes. Thais like the interdependent nature of group work, which works as an effective stimulus for learning. (Dubey-Villinger, 2001a, p. 149)

Pair and group work is an accepted norm in Thai education at all levels. As it is much more fun to work with other people, Thai participants will create groups with great haste and efficiency once they have been given the go ahead. If these participants have been randomly placed into groups, they will also work quickly to determine the skills available and how they can best be used for group benefit. Komin (1990) discussed this Thai interdependence value orientation and argued that it "reflects more of the community collaboration spirits and in a sense the value of co-existences and interdependence. … The value of helping one another basically motivates cooperative behaviour in the community and reinforces the sense of neighborhood" (p. 231).

Invariably, in an adult training environment, among the first questions asked of the trainer, would be whether group work is to be allowed, followed by questions about the size of the group and how groups could be formed. If participants are allowed to form their own groups, it is often clear this has already been decided as participants will have entered the room and taken seats based on knowledge gained during social pleasantries conducted before the course officially started. If they have not had time to talk with each other or they have
been randomly placed into groups, initial conversation will center on determining the resulting hierarchy or hierarchies within the group.

2.3.5 Summary

With so many rules and norms in place, it would seem that teaching in Thailand would be a minefield of potential risks and difficulties. In fact, the opposite is true. It must be remembered that most Thais who attend a course are socially competent individuals and know how to behave. In addition, once the status of each person has been determined and once one's place has been established, the social aspect or the need to have fun and relax tends to dominate.

However, when the trainer is not Thai, the content of the seminar is unfamiliar, or the demands that might be made of the participants are unknown, stress levels will be high. Participants will be worried about whether the trainer will know how to behave, or more importantly, if this trainer is likely to embarrass anyone. For example, as Niratpattanasai (2003) suggested, they will be concerned that a Western trainer might not be aware of the need to be careful with straightforward comments.

To disagree with Thais, you have to be cautious about three things - body language, tone of voice and words. We use English as a second language. It’s not easy for us to spontaneously respond or participate in English. (Niratpattanasai, Bangkok Post, 23/05/03)

These comments and other ideas suggested through this section suggest that a teacher in Thailand must be aware of and respect the important role kreng jai plays in society and the need to respect participant generated hierarchical relationships. While both aspects play an important role in Thai culture and in the classroom, fortunately they are offset by the Thais penchant for sanuk or fun. However, this desire for fun needs to be offset by a trainer’s desire or need to share or impart knowledge in a manner that best matches the needs and expectations of their adult learners. In this sense, non-Thai trainers, while accepting the importance of understanding and applying certain aspects of Thai culture, must not lose sight of the fact that they are different, which in itself can be an important part of the learning experience.

Many professionals in an attempt to improve their ability to adjust to a foreign country and student body will prepare in advance. They may read about the country and its culture. They may talk to colleagues and friends who have had the same experience or originate from the culture they are to visit. However, a counter argument suggests a guest professors should not
attempt to radically change behavior as the fact they are foreign and different may prove to be the most important learning experience for students. (Robert & Cooper, 1982, p. 142)

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the research question has been situated in the broad context of adult education, in particular the literature related to adult learners, teaching adults and the provision of training. In addition, a very important aspect of what has been done here is to consider the influences of Thai cultural values.

An important and inescapable conclusion arising from the literature reviewed here is that while a considerable amount has been written about teaching adults, relatively little has been written specifically about teaching short courses to adults or teaching in the Thai business community. This justifies the present research study but it also provides some starting points. For instance, in analyzing the literature related to adult learners, teaching adults, and Thai culture, it became clear that key aspects could be used to provide a structure for researching what characterizes the practice of effective seminar leaders in the Thai business community.

The key aspects that emerged from this analysis identified potential topics and/or questions that would need to be explored in examining the research question. In particular, discussions concerning the characteristics that distinguish adult learners from non-adult learners suggested questions related to Thai participants’ previous experiences, both in general and as learners (see 2.1.1). The review of the means to motivate adult learners involved in a training event (see 2.1.2), and learning styles preferred by adults (see 2.1.3) suggested that motivation and learning styles were both important topics to consider. Another area of potential interest was the nature, extent, and role of trainer knowledge, in particular, their knowledge of participants, content, and teaching strategies (see 2.2.1).

The literature reviewed on the provision of training (see 2.2.2) in general, and the particular circumstances of short courses, suggested the need to evaluate how effective trainers dealt with the fact that they had very little opportunity to participate in pre-training planning or the benefits of information derived from the sort of needs analysis usual in longer training programs. Finally, Thai cultural factors (see 2.3) was clearly an important aspect that needed to be addressed in this context, in particular, the nature and extent of trainer
knowledge of Thai culture and the ways in which this influenced their planning and interactions

A second area of potential interest relates to what interviewees consider participant, content, and teaching knowledge might entail (see 2.2.1) and the role and relative importance they place on each component. Likewise, the literature reviewed on the provision of training, (see 2.2.2) and the knowledge that trainers are restricted in their ability to be involved in pre and post training, suggests the need to evaluate how effective trainers compensate for this perceived limitation in their role as a trainer.

Finally, the impact of Thai culture (see 2.3) in a business training situation needs to be addressed and, in particular, an examination as to what constitutes knowledge of Thai culture and how this knowledge is applied by effective trainers.

The next chapter Methodology (3.0) will describe how ideas dealt with in the ‘Literature Review’, and mentioned here briefly, have formed the basis of a structured interview employed to shed light on how seminar leaders approached a short seminar in Thailand.
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the steps followed in a case study methodology to research the question:

*What are the characteristics of an effective short-course trainer in the Thai business community?*

The chapter begins with a short review of the research environment that led to the decision to use a case study approach. This leads into a discussion concerning qualitative research methodology and the social constructivist/naturalistic research paradigm in which this case study methodology is situated.

This is followed by a description of the application of the case study approach. Interview design and structure are then examined. This includes how ideas discussed in the literature review were incorporated into the semi-structured interview process. This leads into how participants were selected, interviewed, and encouraged to present ideas. Finally, a description is provided detailing how data was reviewed and analyzed leading to the organization of the results found in the next chapter.

3.1 Rationale

Two important factors influenced the choice of research question and how it was answered. The first factor reflects personal views concerning the nature of knowledge (see 1.4), which helped shape the formulation of the research question. The second factor was to implement the selection of a methodology (see 3.1.4) that would be most appropriate in finding answers to the research question. The final choice was to implement a case study and was based on a social constructivist rationale about knowledge, and the impact of Thai local conditions in which research was completed (see 3.2.2).

3.1.1 Introduction

As one should expect to encounter epistemological differences in others, a failure to understand one’s own views would be a serious oversight when discussing research methodology. As Romberg (1992) suggested in his discussion concerning research in mathematical education, there is a need to understand trends in research.
One must be aware of these many perspectives and the principles upon which they are based. This is important because differences in methods do not merely comprise alternative ways of investigating the same questions. What distinguishes one method from another is not only the way in which information is gathered, analyzed, and reported, but also the very types of questions typically asked and the principals or paradigms upon which the methods to investigate such questions are based. (p. 50)

An understanding of the various methods available to a researcher must include finding one’s role or position in the research being conducted and to have a firm understanding of one’s own beliefs.

A fundamental consideration is your philosophical orientation. What do you believe about the nature of reality, about knowledge, and about the production of knowledge? Research is, after all, producing knowledge about the world, in our case, the world of educational practice. (Merriam, 1998, p. 3)

The goal of the next section is to describe my philosophical orientation and how it has influenced the research question and the manner in which I have answered it.

3.1.2 Understanding Paradigms

Creswell (1998), Crotty (1998), and Green (2002), among others, suggested that for social science research to be successful, researchers must understand how they believe knowledge was created. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggested that as research was guided by our interpretation of views and beliefs, it was necessary to understand this interpreter’s voice to gain an appreciation and acceptance of how a preferred interpretive paradigm, “makes particular demands on the researchers, including the questions he or she asks and the interpretations the researcher brings to them” (p. 19).

A researcher must begin a search for an understanding of personal beliefs with ‘questions of paradigm’ defined as,

A set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimate or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world”, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its part, as, for example, cosmologies and theologies do. The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness. (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p. 200)

Basic beliefs defining each paradigm could be summarized by responses to three questions which will be employed in the following sections to examine in more detail Positivism, Postpositivism, and Social Constructivism.
Ontological: What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?
Epistemological: What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?
Methodological: How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known? (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p. 201)

3.1.2.1 Positivism.

The first paradigm Guba and Lincoln (1998) examined was positivism, which espoused an ontology based on the tenet that there was a reality that could be understood by the researcher. Positivism reflected a dualist and objectivist epistemology in which the researcher and those researched remained independent of each other, with one having no influence on the other. This need for independence precluded the participation of anyone included in the study in an effort to remain value-free and objective.

Qualitative research, within a positivist paradigm, strives to be value-free; with any people being studied not invited to participate directly in order to maintain ‘distance’ and ‘objectivity’. (Cousins, 2002, p. 195)

Romberg (1992) suggested positivism started with the goal of explaining our relationship to the world around us.

It is also assumed that what one knows can only be based on what can be observed or made observable (the empiric) and that observations are made to separate human behaviors into their constituent elements (the analysis). (pp. 54-5)

Finally, positivism employed an experimental and manipulative methodology, in which, it was believed that it was possible to find the truth in terms of replicable facts (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). In this methodology, research was concerned with verifying hypothesis with empirical tests in closely monitored and controlled environments.

Positivism has remained a useful research paradigm that has continued to provide results in the applied sciences, such as in medicine, biology, and chemistry. However, in education it has lost a great deal of its appeal as it is often perceived as inapplicable and involved too many assumptions. In part, this came from the fact that positivism did not accommodate the untidy world most educators took for granted.

The world perceived through the scientific grid is a highly systematic, well-organized world. It is a world of regularities, consistencies, uniformities, ironclad laws, absolute principles. As such it stands in stark contrast with the uncertain ambiguous, idiosyncratic, changeful world we know at first hand. (Crotty, 1998, p. 28)
3.1.2.2 Postpositivism.

Postpositivism, the second paradigm Guba and Lincoln (1998) discussed, offered a different view on how the world was seen and how knowledge was acquired. Postpositivism came from a realization that the strict tenets of positivist research were not possible and that postpositivism was based on a realization that it was impossible to find some Archimedean point from which realities in the world can be viewed free from any influence of the observer’s standpoint. They admit that, no matter how faithfully the scientist adheres to scientific method, research outcomes are neither totally objective nor unquestionably certain. They may claim a higher level of objectivity and certitude for scientific findings than for other opinions and beliefs, but the absoluteness has gone and claims to validity are tentative and qualified. (Crotty, 1998, p. 40)

Guba and Lincoln (1998) suggested that postpositivism was based on an ontology characterized as critical realism.

Reality is assumed to exist but to be imperfectly apprehendable because of basically flawed human intellectual mechanisms and fundamentally intractable nature of phenomena. Objectivity remains a “regulatory ideal” … with research conducted in more natural settings … (p. 205)

Therefore, methodology in the postpositivist paradigm was open to a wider selection of choices as “there is, according to postpositivism, no objective reality, the use of many methods is a way of capturing multiple realities and possibly a clearer picture” (Cousins, 2002, p. 199).

Postpositivist research was often seen in studies measuring the narrow examination of discrete points as it is seen to be

Reductionist in that the intent is to reduce the ideas into a small, discrete set of ideas to test, such as the variable that constitute hypotheses and research questions. The knowledge that develops through a postpositivist lens is based on careful observation and measurement of the objective reality that exists “out there” in the world. (Creswell, 2003, p. 7)

Research based on a postpositivist research paradigm remains popular and is used in disciplines ranging from science to education. Notably, in education it was seen in articles in which authors took existing measurement instruments, for example affinity seeking measures examined in the US and through examination have been able to demonstrate the overall efficacy of these instruments in a second culture, for example Nepal or the Philippines (Watkins, 1994; Volet, Renshaw, & Tietzel, 1994; Kember, Wong, & Leung, 1999).
3.1.2.3 *Social Constructivism.*

Social constructivism, the final paradigm in this discussion, offered a different view of knowledge in that, as the name suggested, “meaning is not discovered but constructed” (Crotty 1998, p. 42).

All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (p. 41)

Guba and Lincoln (1998) suggested constructivism was based on a *relativist* ontology in which a search for truth is replaced by an informed sense of what can be observed.

Realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experimentally based, local and specific in nature … and dependant for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions. Constructions are not more or less “true”, in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated. (p. 206)

Crotty (1998) also looked at constructivism in terms of interpretation and suggested that although observations could be useful, they could not be accepted as the only “true or valid interpretation” (p. 47). Ernest (1994) also commented on this aspect of social constructivism, in that “the humanly constructed reality is all the time being modified and interacting to fit ontological reality, although it can never give a ‘true picture’ of it” (p. 8).

Epistemology in the constructivist paradigm suggested a *transactional and subjectivist* framework in which investigator and research subject interact in the search or creation of findings. This, they continued, resulted in a methodology in which, “individual constructs can only be elicited and refined through interaction between and among investigator and respondents” (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p. 207).

As knowledge came through our attempts to understand our world and the subjective meanings given to experiences, researchers needed to rely on participants and their choice of subjective meanings.

The goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied. The questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation … typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons. The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting. (Creswell, 2003, p. 8)
Based on this perspective, researchers would incorporate the context in which people lived and worked to gain an idea of a participant’s setting in historical and cultural terms.

Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences-meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrower meanings into a few categories or ideas. (Creswell, 2003, p. 8)

In contrast to positivism, researchers have acknowledged that personal background would influence the study and that researchers needed to acknowledge both their own and the participants’ experiences. Finally, social constructivism offered the freedom to start research without an understanding or application of a theory to the research environment.

Rather than starting with a theory (as in postpositivism), inquirers generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning. (Creswell, 2003, p. 9)

The social constructivist paradigm most closely reflected my beliefs concerning the nature of knowledge in that “conventional knowledge is that which is ‘lived’ and socially accepted” (Ernest, 1994, p. 9). In addition, the eclectic nature of the methodology reflected in this paradigm was attractive for both theoretical and practical reasons. In this study, the search for the answer to my research question included the need to search for the questions I would need to ask. To accomplish this, I believed I would need to construct my knowledge base and questions through discussions with individuals involved in the social situation studied, that is, effective seminar leaders in the Thai Business community.

3.1.3 Qualitative Research Overview

Creswell (1998) began his discussion of qualitative research traditions by suggesting qualitative research was an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

A qualitative approach is selected when research starts with ‘how’ or ‘what’ questions and with initial research is designed to explore what was going on and not as opposed to comparing groups or finding a relationship between variables. In this respect, the current research matched this criterion in that it explored what was going on using a qualitative
paradigm which, “is ideal for phenomena that are patently complex and about which little is known with certainty” (Lancy, 1993, p. 9).

While some variables related to the characteristics of a seminar leader in the Thai community were known, it was not clear if they could be regarded as relevant. In addition, as there was also the possibility that additional, and at the time, unknown attributes might play an important role in determining the characteristics of an effective seminar leader, my research needed to assume that variables remained unspecified or insufficiently defined to prove useful. This made a qualitative approach attractive.

The variables are largely unknown, and the researcher wants to focus on the context that may shape the understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In many qualitative studies a theory base does not guide the study because those available are inadequate, incomplete or simply missing. (Creswell, 1994, p. 10)

Finally, I believed that interviewee comments regarding the effective teaching of short courses would vary from one interviewee to the next based on characteristics unique to each person but nonetheless would provide useful insights based on themes and categories that would emerge from the data collected.

What sets qualitative research apart most clearly from other forms of research is the belief that the particular physical, historical, material and social environment in which people find themselves has a great bearing on what they think and how they act. Qualitative researchers reject the notion of universal, context-free generalization. (Smith, 1987, p. 175)

The qualitative methodology offered a number of approaches. The problem was to decide which inquiry method suited the research question, the research environment, and the researcher.

More importantly, the researcher must personally become situated in the subject’s natural setting and study, firsthand and over a prolonged time, the object of interest and the various contextual features that influence it. This introduces notions about the “personhood” of the qualitative researcher and what roles and relationships are formed between researcher and subject. (Smith, 1987, p. 175)

With the need for a ‘prolonged time’ to complete the study, my own position within the research and the roles and relationships needed with those I would study, it became clear a careful choice concerning the method selected was required. This choice of research method would need to allow me the ability to ensure that my results would reflect ideas suggested by the interviewees in a setting that would best allow them to do so.
3.1.4 Qualitative Research Method Selection

As with paradigms, understanding the method selected came through an awareness of the choices available and how the constructivist paradigm and the research environment resulted in the eventual choice to employ a case study approach. During the research process, four approaches were considered, grounded research, action research, phenomenography, and case study. This section describes these four approaches and reveals in more detail why a case study approach was used to find an answer to the research question.

As demonstrated in the Literature Review (Chapter 2), a great deal has been researched and observed in fields related to adult learning and education and Thai cultural influences. However, very little has been published concerning the role of a trainer providing a short course and virtually no information concerning teaching in the Thai business community. This exciting dearth of previous research, along with a strong interest in finding answers to the research question, led to the qualitative approach employed in this study.

Rather than forcing a phenomenon into pre-established classes or reducing it to numbers, qualitative research explores experience in its unconstrained complexity. The qualitative researcher invites participants to describe events through their own words and in their own way. (Walsh, 1996, p. 377)

Table 3-1 Qualitative Approach Selection Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Short Definition</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Decision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grounded Theory</td>
<td>The study of a phenomenon through personal involvement.</td>
<td>Observation and participation in the phenomenon studied.</td>
<td>Rejected: Limited ability to observe or participate in a phenomenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>Researcher as change-agent, working with group of like-minded people.</td>
<td>Group of like-minded persons willing to work together over time.</td>
<td>Rejected: Unable to create and work over time with a group of like-minded individuals with a shared objective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenography</td>
<td>Investigation into an event or series of events based on the experiences of those involved.</td>
<td>Access to persons involved in an event to discover variations in their experience.</td>
<td>Rejected: Research aim is to learn what is common among trainers involved in a common experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>Investigation into an event or series of events based on experiences of those involved.</td>
<td>Access to persons involved in an event to discover similarities in their experience.</td>
<td>Accepted: Trainers in Thai business willing to share ideas and thoughts about a common experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While a number of approaches exist within the qualitative methodology framework, the ultimate choice was to use a case study approach. The following sections discuss four of these choices and the reasons three approaches, Grounded Theory, Action Research, and Phenomenography were rejected in favor of the Case Study approach.

3.1.4.1 Grounded theory.

Grounded Theory, in which I would need to study a phenomenon by becoming personally involved, was not a feasible choice (Creswell, 1998). As will be discussed later, there was a great reluctance on the part of seminar leaders in the research environment to be observed or to share access to clients. As observation and researcher participation, both core requirements in grounded theory research were deemed virtually impossible; this method could not be implemented.

3.1.4.2 Action research.

Action Research was tried in the context of an exploratory initial study (see 3.4) but proved unmanageable within the particular culture and circumstances. In action research, the researcher often takes on the role as a ‘change-agent’, working with a group of like-minded people (Cherry, 1999). At the start of the research project, management at a large international consulting firm in Bangkok provided me with extensive support in completing an action research project with a group of their employees. However, as the original group selected faded away due to other work commitments or left the company before research could start, I was left with an action research plan but no one to work with.

It became clear that as I was not working in an educational environment with a group of like-minded colleagues, action research would be hazardous. I firmly believed that even if a second action research group could be established, either with the original company or elsewhere, there would be no guarantee that it would be seen through to a conclusion given the experience detailed above. Unwilling to accept this risk, I decided a different approach was needed based on the fact that research could only be conducted through participants willingness to be interviewed about their teaching experiences.

3.1.4.3 Phenomenography.

As I would be researching a phenomenon based on the reports of those involved in teaching, phenomenography was also considered (Trigwell, 2000). However, this research
approach did not offer a viable route to the answers needed. While respondents had experienced the phenomenon I was studying, that is, teaching short courses in the Thai business community, I was interested in learning about similarities in their experiences, whereas phenomenography looked to differences in experiences to provide meaning.

Phenomenography is one way of studying teaching from the perspective or experience of the teacher. It describes the qualitatively different ways in which people experience and understand various aspects of the phenomenon. (Trigwell, 2000, p. 63)

Therefore, while phenomenographical research was a methodological choice based on the research question, the answers would have lead to differences each trainer had experienced. This methodology was a far less comfortable fit than the one chosen. As delineating differences was not the goal of my research, phenomenography as a research approach was rejected in favor of a case study approach.

3.1.4.4 Case study.

Although the research literature is replete with references to case studies, there is limited agreement about what actually constitutes a case study. Stake (1995) suggested the name case study was often stressed as it brought attention to the question of what could be learned. Yin (2003) has suggested a case study is used, as in this project, “when examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated” (p. 7).

For the purpose of this research, I would like to suggest the following case study definition: A case study is an examination of an event or series of events when it is believed that what could be learned from some of those taking part could be applied to a similar event at a different time or place. A case study is an examination into an event or series of events where researchers believe they have sufficient insight to begin asking questions in a semi-structured interview format that could lead to an understanding or to further questions that could provide a deeper or broader understanding.

In this research, ‘the event or series of events’ was seminar leader effectiveness in the Thai business community. Although, as shown in the literature review, a starting point for conducting the research could be determined, it was not sufficiently developed for the creation of questionnaires and surveys; rather it was limited to the derivation of questions that might lead participants to reflect openly and honestly about their experiences.
The decision to focus on qualitative case studies stems from the fact that this design is chosen precisely because researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. (Merriam, 1998, pp. 28-29)

The case study method was chosen for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the number of potential respondents was limited in number. Secondly, there was a concern as to how much time participants could be asked to provide. As the research was conducted in English, this limited potential participants to those who spoke English and, in the case of non-native speakers, those willing to be interviewed in English. Finally, it was clear that participants who might agree to one or possibly two interviews would not be willing or able to allow the researcher access to their clients, students, or materials. In short, the ability to influence almost any aspect of the research process was limited to what could be accomplished during an interview (an expanded discussion of the reasons leading to this decision is provided in Section 3.3).

Based on the research paradigm, research question, and research environment, it became clear that I could use a case study approach, such as a qualitative research methodology, firmly planted in the social constructivist paradigm.

3.2 Case Study Methodology

A study should be meaningful. While this could be a subjective process, it is incumbent on a researcher to provide sufficient evidence and arguments so that readers can judge whether a study carries sufficient weight and conviction to be considered useful. A researcher must have demonstrated that naturalistic inquiry was appropriate, as without this justification, readers will be left in doubt as to the need or advisability of conducting the research in this manner.

While it might be difficult to define the term ‘case study’, a successful case study and teaching share one important characteristic that is, accountability, or standards. How did I do today? What could be better next time? The purpose of this section is to describe the procedures taken while completing the case study to ensure that the approach was methodologically sound and therefore defensible.

Different authors have recommended standards to strive for when conducting and reporting a case study. They include credibility, dependability, and confirmability (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Graziano & Raulin, 2000; Scott & Usher, 1999, Cousins, 2002). These
standards, when applied to case study research, would provide a means to measure its potential trustworthiness. Table 3-2 presents an overview of credibility, dependability, and confirmability and the various techniques recommended and how they have been implemented in this study.

Table 3-2 Case Study Standards of Authenticity

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<th>Standard</th>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Prolonged &amp; Persistent Engagement</td>
<td>Sufficient involvement to build trust with participants.</td>
<td>Four to five year, on-going relationship with many participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>Verification of research findings through multiple information sources.</td>
<td>Newspaper articles and anecdotal, experiences by the researcher and Thai and non-Thai trainers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Transcription Verification</td>
<td>Review of transcript correctness through comparison.</td>
<td>Random five-minute selections transcribed from original tapes by a second party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Member Checking</td>
<td>Verification of interview content through sample participant review.</td>
<td>Five participants were given a transcript of their interview to review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Review</td>
<td>Review of research materials conducted by knowledgeable other not previously involved in research project.</td>
<td>Results Chapter reviewed by an independent party who concurred with results based on her experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Literature and Findings</td>
<td>Quality of findings verified by sources outside research project.</td>
<td>Dealt with in The Literature Review (see 2.0) and Discussion (see 5.0).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that techniques to enhance research credibility included: prolonged and persistent engagement and triangulation. It was through the application of these techniques that I was able to identify the unique characteristics of my case. It is through a discussion of these techniques and how I used them in conducting my research that will provide the reader with an additional method to evaluate the credibility of this case study along with the results and conclusions.

3.2.1 Prolonged and Persistent Engagement

Prolonged and persistent engagement requires sufficient involvement to build trust with participants, to experience the full range of variety, and to compensate for the researcher’s presence. How much time would be required is not predetermined, but should
become clear as the research progresses. However, if research is to be credible, it must be clear that the time was sufficient to have seen all there was to see.

In this research, many of those interviewed have been in my social and professional circle for the past six years to seven years. In addition, many, through contacts with Toastmasters and Rotary Club, are friends and colleagues, even competitors in certain training projects. (Details concerning interviewees selected are discussed in Interview Sample 3.4) They have remained aware of the research and have provided extensive comments and feedback concerning their interviews.

The research process started in mid-2001 and continued until the end of 2004. During this period, ten of the fifteen participants interviewed have remained in contact and have provided additional ideas and information. In addition, seven years after I presented my first short course in Thailand, I continue to offer short courses in the business community with the last set presented in January 2006, further demonstrating my prolonged and persistent engagement with the research area and the participants.

3.2.2 Triangulation

Triangulation is the verification of research findings by using multiple information sources, multiple data collection methods, and as possible observations from more than one inquirer. A conclusion based on one person, during a single interview, by one interviewer, will not have the same value as a report prepared by a number of researchers working with a number of interviewees (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Typically, this process involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective. (Creswell, 1998, p. 202)

In this research, as I was working alone, I was limited in the collection of additional material I could collect. Triangulation was also limited in that this is the first study of its kind and consequently, the short-course environment in Thailand is not well researched or discussed in academic or professional journals. While limited in volume, triangulation over the past five years included the use of newspaper and journal articles about teaching and working with Thais. It also included very important anecdotal experiences by the researcher and by Thais and non-Thais teaching and working in Thailand. The triangulation sources found demonstrated a strong correlation with comments made by interviewees (Yin, 2003).
3.2.3 Dependability

Dependability is an important standard used in judging naturalistic studies and related to the research process. Has the researcher been careless or made mistakes in concept, data collection, interpretation, and reporting. When assessing dependability, a dependability audit, that is, an independent review of the researcher’s activities is viewed as an important step in the validation process (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In this case, dependability was demonstrated through a review of field notes, archives, and reports, and was undertaken by an independent reader to ensure the methodology was sound and to make certain meanings were clear.

3.2.4 Transcription Verification

In this research, transcription verification was completed through the independent transcription of a random five-minute sample from a selection of interviews and compared to samples transcribed by the researcher. While a few, minor discrepancies were detected; they did not affect the substantive answers given by a respondent.

3.2.5 Member Checking

With member checking, interviewees are asked to review the findings and researcher interpretations. Viewed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as among the most important techniques in establishing credibility; my prolonged exposure to most interviewees, allowed for member checking to be conducted in two stages. Five respondents were provided with a transcript of their interview with all five confirming it matched what they had said during their interview.

Finally, an instructor with a Thai university English-language graduate program conducted the independent review of the findings. She was not involved in the research project but has experience teaching short and long courses in Thailand. While she provided some insights, she did not add to the body of information she had been asked to review.

3.2.6 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the quality of the results and how adequately participants and events independent of the researcher support them. Confirmability is often completed concurrently with the independent review when the reviewer is asked if data and interpretations were internally coherent, and represented more than figments of imagination (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). This check was conducted concurrently with the independent
review, and as mentioned above, it did not offer new insights or suggest any misgivings regarding the findings and their analysis.

A reader needs to accept that natural conditions were maintained; participants were not manipulated or placed in an unnatural situation; and that I was observing and not intruding. Participants must be treated ethically and while they must remain anonymous in the report, they must have had the opportunity to comment on findings and their role in providing these findings. Understanding why I would conduct a case study to answer the research question and how it should be conducted, I now needed to plan, carry out and complete the research.

3.3 Research Setting

This section provides an overview of the research content, the interviewees selected, and how they were encouraged to share their ideas and experiences. The first part is focused on Thai cultural influences and how they affect the evaluation of short courses. The second part (see 3.3.2) describes how the research was planned and conducted to insure that interviewee ideas and experiences would be shared with the researcher.

3.3.1 Thai Culture and Short Courses

One of the most difficult aspects about living and working in an Asian culture is to understand the basic tenets that hold a society together. Often captured in one or two extremely dense words, these basic beliefs are often the core of an Asian culture. While it is possible to be liked or accepted into an Asian culture without being able to apply these basic beliefs, it is extremely difficult to be trusted.

The most important concept or value in Thai culture is kreng jai (see 2.3). This core value was explained by Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa (1996) as the need to follow wishes or requests from others and to avoid the following: disturbing or interrupting others, showing displeasure or anger, asserting opinions or needs, evaluating a colleague or superior’s performance, or demanding one’s rights or asking questions when something has not been understood.

Due to kreng jai or losing face, it could be difficult to get Thai participants to show their feelings about a short course. The easiest way to avoid making a ‘less than perfect’ seminar leader lose face would be to provide a very bland evaluation or to be absent when the
evaluation was made. This could make it very difficult to receive reliable results. However, if a senior person, for example a Human Resources Director, were to ask, most Thais would provide the best answers they could. If they did not, it would be kreng jai as it could embarrass a senior who had shown them respect, that is, hai kiad, in asking for their opinion. However, answers would remain somewhat neutral as no one would want to be singled out to explain their answers.

Researching and learning what Thais believe is a delicate balancing act. Seminar participants should not be asked what was wrong; but rather what was good and what could be improved. If things could be improved, what were they and how would you rank them? Kreng jai, embarrassing others, must be avoided.

Hai kiad, the motivation to gain respect for opinions, must be in place and nam jai, service to others, must be felt. This would be accomplished when seminar participants saw themselves as part of a group trying to understand and to improve something important for themselves, juniors, peers, seniors, company, and country (Lewis, 2000).

3.3.2 Research in a Thai Setting

The planned research had to respect cultural values in a way that would not hinder or delimit what trainers would say. This was achieved by ensuring that basic Thai needs had been accounted for in that all participants would be talking about themselves and not about others.

While there was the potential for personal embarrassment, it was thought to be minimal, as interviewees had agreed to an interview and had the option to leave when they wished (see Ethics Committee Letter for Interviewees Appendix I). Participants also had the opportunity to review what they had said and knew that they would remain anonymous. It was believed kreng jai would not be a great problem.

3.3.2.1 Action research stage.

The decision not to proceed with an action research approach is an excellent example of the importance of respecting Thai cultural values. During an early stage in the research, with encouragement and support by senior management at a leading international consulting firm in Bangkok, an Action Research team was established. The goal was to find, get to know and work with a group of Thais interested in becoming improved trainers. It was hoped that
extensive contact with this group would provide the opportunity to discover more about how to teach and work with Thais.

However, during the next three months, three of the six people selected resigned, one was transferred and the remaining two demonstrated a strong reluctance to become involved. In addition, although I had received company permission to attend seminars and interview in-house and visiting seminar leaders, I would only learn of seminars after they had been conducted or by chance during a visit to the company for other reasons. Following six months of frustration, Action Research as a viable option along with personal connections to this company faded.

As a senior manager had approved the project and as I was not able to complete my research, I needed to find a way to avoid kreng jai on the part of the Thais who had been helpful. Although we all knew the ‘truth’, I informed the company and those involved that I had decided Action Research would not work, as ‘I’ was too busy. I let senior officials know that interviews already conducted with their employees would be an excellent start to a case study approach. They were very pleased to have been able to help and suggested I contact them if I needed additional help.

To date, I have not made any effort to do so. I continue to encounter one senior human resource manager at a different company where I continue to coach her senior staff. We get along professionally and work with this company has increased, leading me to believe I had shown the correct level of kreng jai.

Faced with a major dilemma when Action Research failed, an alternative research approach was needed. Through contacts in the teaching profession, Toastmasters International and the Rotary Club of Bangkok South, I noticed a number of trainers were interested in my research and were eager to be interviewed and to introduce other trainers.

3.3.2.2 Case study stage.

When it became clear interviews could be held with a number of different participants, that is, Thai and non-Thai, male and female, from novice to a seasoned veteran, young to middle-aged, a case study approach presented itself as a viable and worthwhile option in finding and interviewing a purposeful sample.
Based on the research goal, the participants who could be interviewed, and the constraints affecting their involvement, it was accepted that ‘in-class’ observations and seminar attendee interviews would not be feasible. For example, while some seminar leaders were willing to allow an observer, even the filming of their seminars, it was clear most contracting companies would be reluctant to allow an unknown outsider take part, let alone record what might be regarded as confidential in-house company content.

While some companies might have agreed, most participants in the study were not willing to jeopardize an existing relationship with a client. Various reasons were offered ranging from confidentiality issues to the fact an independent outside observer had not been seen before and would therefore be difficult for a company to accept. Regardless of the reasons offered or their validity, it was clear that while many people were willing to share ideas and experience in an hour-long interview, they were not willing to share contacts with companies or to have an observer in class.

Having then worked for six years in Thailand, I understood interviewee reluctance to suggest any changes to a successful and on-going relationship they might have with a Human Resource Department. As an experienced educator, I was aware of and accepted the reluctance many colleagues have to being observed. Based on professional courtesy, krieng jai, and a desire to interview a range of trainers, it was clear I would be limited to individual interviews scheduled outside of a work environment.

This limitation lead to a realization that a series of interviews, building on ideas and questions constructed based on my literature review would be useful. These questions had been employed in earlier interviews conducted in the Action Research stage and appeared to be the best method to ‘recreate’ how short-course seminar leaders understood, implemented, and justified their craft. For these reasons and reasons detailed earlier, a case study method was employed to address the research question.

What are the characteristics of an effective short-course trainer in the Thai business community?

3.4 Interview Sample

Referring to the Miles and Huberman (1984) typology of sampling strategies, a sampling pattern of research participants must identify diverse variations along with an identification of important common characteristics. As stated earlier, the common
characteristics were a respondent’s active involvement in the seminar industry as a trainer and being seen as effective based on their ability to generate ‘repeat business.’

In addition, a selection of trainers involved in Toastmasters International (TI) and Rotary International (RI) was actively sought. Both TI and RI are volunteer organizations although they differ in their goals. TI helps members to improve their communication skills through public speaking. As TI centers on public speaking, I believed that trainers involved in this organization would be more aware of and able to describe their experiences in dealing with seminar participants.

RI is aimed at helping those less fortunate. Inherent in RI is the importance of fellowship, encouraged by regular attendance at weekly meetings based on the underlying view that a unified group will be able to accomplish more than would be possible by each member working on their own. Coming from various occupations, countries, and economic backgrounds, Rotarians help each other as much as they can.

Therefore, when members of my Rotary club involved in training were asked to participate, they did so willingly. Through TI and RI, I was able to find a knowledgeable group of trainers interested in helping with my research. In addition, by selecting trainers from TI and RI, I was able to allow for diversity in those interviewed and to create a purposeful sample of interviewees.

- First, it was decided a mix of Thai and non-Thai trainers would be useful to help understand the effect Thai culture might have on short-course training.

- Second, a mix of male and female trainers was considered important, again to determine if gender has any bearing on how courses are presented.

- Third, trainers with varying degrees of experience were selected to determine how experience might affect trainer attitudes and skills.

- Finally, trainers who limit their activity to Thailand and those with experience throughout Asia and the West were selected to determine how they might react differently to a predominately Thai audience.
Table 3-3 Interviewee Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Linguistic Ability</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Non-bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Non-bilingual</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>25+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Non-bilingual</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Japanese-American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Non-bilingual</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA 3</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Non-bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it might have been useful to select short-course attendees or HR executives who hired, monitored, and evaluated short-course trainers, it was decided that teaching experience was of prime importance, as the goal of the research was to determine how trainers viewed their experience in teaching Thai business executives and what they believed constituted effectiveness in this context.

All individuals interviewed provide short courses to clients in Bangkok. They share a common characteristic in that the short courses discussed, along with a majority of their experience, is limited to in-house and not public seminars. All interviewees provide a variety of seminars, most of which, if not all, are business related.

All respondents share a common factor in that they have been hired by a company to present a particular business-content seminar in English to a group of Thai middle-class business executives. All participants discussed seminars taught to groups with whom they had

2 Linguistic Ability: Bilingual – Fluent English and Thai; Non-bilingual – Fluent English, but not able to speak Thai.
3 IA: Independent Auditor as discussed in Member Checking (see 3.2)
had little or no previous contact, although some do work for larger companies with in-house training staff and facilities. Regular in-house services, such as needs analysis, level testing, group dynamics, company environment, and post-training support and monitoring are not normally part of a contract for trainers interviewed in this study.

Interviewees shared the experience of being asked to present a course, in English, with limited information concerning the attendees’ background knowledge and reasons or motivation for attending. All interviewees shared a common experience in that they would be entering, what could be described, as ‘a worst-case scenario’ in which little, and often nothing, would be known about the people attending a seminar until it had started.

It was accepted that when choosing interviewees anyone who made a large portion of their income from short-course fees or who had been conducting seminars on a regular basis would be considered. All interviewees chosen were regarded as effective in the Thai business community in that they were continually invited back to clients, (repeat business). This would suggest that they generally achieved what the client had requested (learner outcomes), in that they had engaged the participants in a manner that had encouraged the majority to remain (retention) and had received consistently positive course evaluations, (participant satisfaction). While income levels, number of courses taught per year and the size of their client base were not discussed; most participants had a group of regular clients and were being asked on occasion to create new courses.

Realizing the relationship between this group, and finding an answer to the research question was crucial; it was understood that sampling methods would play an important role in the study’s success (Scott & Usher, 1999). Fifteen participants were interviewed. This number was not predetermined, but following fifteen detailed interviews, it was clear that while subsequent interviews might result in different ways to express ideas, new ideas would not be forthcoming. As mentioned earlier (see 3.2), this analysis was confirmed when the comments made by the Independent Auditor while interesting did not provide any new insights. By this stage, most interviews were resulting in much the same pattern of experiences and advice.

The range of experience, from a beginner preparing an initial seminar to a trainer with thirty years experience, resulted in quite similar answer, suggestions, and recommendations. Finally, as most of the interviews had produced rich data, it was decided any good will or
possible further interview opportunities should be used to review results. Therefore, with fifteen interviews, sufficient data had been collected. Those who had expressed an interest in being interviewed further would be asked to help with the analysis of results. The next section describes how these fifteen people were interviewed so that they felt comfortable and were willing to share their experiences.

3.5 Interview Structure

The purpose of the interview was to allow interviewees to share their experiences in teaching short courses and, in particular, to determine what constituted an effective seminar leader in the Thai business community. While specific courses were sometimes mentioned, specific content and its potential effect on teaching were not. I wanted respondents to feel comfortable and believed that too many questions concerning content or clients would infringe on an interviewee’s willingness to share items of primary importance for the research - how they taught or saw themselves teaching.

As the seminar industry is both lucrative and highly competitive in Thailand, it was felt that allowing interviewees complete privacy concerning specific content and client base would result in more details being shared about how they conducted seminars.

The quality of the interviews and the willingness of respondents to recommend other trainers suggested that those interviewed were comfortable with the process. Maintaining professional courtesy while facilitating a comfortable, relaxed interview climate was considered of primary importance in gaining useful input.

While creating a comfortable interview climate was important, I also needed to create a favorable impression as an interviewer and seminar leader to be able to elicit full and complete responses. To accomplish this goal, I decided it was necessary to produce a series of questions to act as a guide and to demonstrate I had made an effort to understand what might be involved when teaching a short course.

During the initial Action Research stage and based on efforts to narrow the areas of discussion for the group, a 25-item questionnaire was designed to measure participant satisfaction with a short-course based on factors within a trainer’s direct control (see Appendix II). This initial questionnaire was produced during the Action Research stage to act as a starting point for a discussion with the members I had expected would join. Based on my
research at the time and a series of *Communication Research Measures* compiled by Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher (1994), the questionnaire had been designed to measure effectiveness by soliciting participant evaluation of a trainer’s contribution during a seminar.

Table 3-4 Overview Question Categories and Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Facilitator presents something valuable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator increases subject interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator gives background to ideas and concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator gives different points of views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator discusses current developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Facilitator smiles and looks at the group, not just individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator is dynamic and energetic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator uses humor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator uses an interesting teaching style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator appears relaxed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Facilitator uses easy to understand English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator uses vocal variety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator gestures when talking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator moves around the room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator uses handouts and visuals effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>Facilitator varies the activities used during the short course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator presents ideas clearly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator makes use of examples or stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator goes carefully from one topic or stage to the next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator reviews or summarizes regularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>Facilitator encourages group discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator encourages questions and gives answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator listens carefully and is willing to help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator offers personal attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator is concerned about participants’ difficulties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I selected questions from a variety of evaluation questionnaires and reflected what I considered most important at that time. In addition, items were selected with the implicit aim of encouraging discussion within the planned Action Group. Once the list had been narrowed down to 25, I divided the questions into five ‘categories’ and gave each category a distinctive title. However, as the Action Group did not have a chance to review this questionnaire, it was unclear if these ideas would have proven useful.
When this questionnaire was distributed to the 100 people mentioned earlier (see 3.5), they were asked to mark the importance of each item using a five-point Likert scale with a ‘not relevant or applicable’ option. In addition, they were asked to list the five most important items and the five least important items in numerical order. However, I encountered various problems with incomplete forms, incorrect answers, and the placement and order of questions. This clearly suggested that the questionnaire needed further fine-tuning. However, positive comments concerning the questionnaire suggested that the categories were of interest and on reflection I decided they could be used as prompts and probes in a semi-structured interview format with seminar leaders.

The five sections and the five questions within each section included: work undertaken before a seminar started included course design and planning and was referred to as ‘program’. The category labeled ‘personality’ was based on the facilitator’s perceived personal qualities. ‘Presentation’ was related to a seminar leader’s ability to speak in front of an audience. ‘Pedagogy’ reflected a facilitator’s teaching skills. Finally, ‘participants’ were asked how seminar leaders showed concern for a student’s progress.

The category ‘program’ becomes important once a course begins. Motivation (see 2.1.3) was maintained when participants saw a perceived value in the course content and therefore remained interested in the learning material. In addition, an ability to discuss different points of view and current developments was thought to be useful in helping to increase or create interest. It was very much the facilitator’s responsibility to make the program interesting and valuable and it was believed that the creation of this interest and value came about during the planning stage. If the creation of interest came about at the planning stage, what questions could trainers use to understand what they should produce to hold their audience’s attention and to maintain motivation.

The category ‘personality’ or personal qualities reflected a seminar leader’s efforts or abilities to create a friendly and professional atmosphere conducive to learning (see 2.2.1). These questions were meant to determine the role personality played in being an effective trainer. While it was clear that traditional students, that is, university or college age and level, saw ‘personality’ as an important part of their satisfaction with a teacher; the goal was to determine how trainers saw personality and its relative importance in creating an effective course environment.
The category ‘presentation’ included the ability to stand up and talk to an audience. Included in this topic were aspects related to vocal variety, the use of gestures and eye contact.

The category ‘pedagogy’ reflected a trainer’s ability to teach content in a way that will maximize participant learning (see 2.1.4). Research and the ensuing debate continues unabated as to the validity of learning style profiles, whether current scales are applicable and whether learning styles are static or changeable. However, if a trainer were to plan and execute a variety of activities during a short course, ranging from short lectures to group discussion, from theoretical matters to practical hands-on exercises, one expect that student attention and motivation would be maintained. In addition, a variety of activities based around one goal could provide a desired learning style for most participants.

The final category ‘progress’ reflected a seminar leader’s ability to be attentive to a participant’s ability to keep up with the material (see 2.2.2.2). Planning was seen as crucial, but a plan must build on a teacher’s repertoire of skills, strategies, and knowledge. Participants come to a short course with varying levels of background knowledge, English ability, and a motivation to learn or take part. While some short courses might not require active audience participation, it should be expected some participants would fall behind and have opinions and experiences that should be included. A semi-structured interview format was selected.

- Although I had twenty-five initial questions and a variety of prompts, it was not clear what questions would be useful.

- It was felt that to understand what each person thought and did, it would be best to focus on initial questions, but allow content to move in any direction an interviewee wished.

- A series of prepared questions allowed the interview to return to new starting points rather than go over the same ground.

- It was expected that while many trainers would have an ability to describe one or more areas of research interest, they would need help with others. While initial questions would be useful, subsequent questions would be required as the interview progressed.
3.6 Interview Questions

In conducting this research and as such the interviews with the fifteen interviewees, a number of assumptions were made regarding short-course dynamics in Thailand.

- Participants selected for a short course would share, although to varying degrees, an opinion that the planned curriculum would be of personal or professional value.
- Whether corporate climate encouraged transfer of training or not, seminar participants would, to varying degrees, be willing to make the most of a learning opportunity.

As described above, the 25 questions were divided evenly into the five categories: Program, Personality, Presentation, Pedagogy, and Progress. Each of the five questions found in each category, included initial questions to determine if the interviewee would be

- Interested in the category;
- Willing to share their ideas;
- Able to share; and
- Willing to answer further questions I might have.

It should be noted that while most interviews covered all five categories, not all items or questions were necessarily covered.

3.6.1 Program

How do Thai business people value a seminar? Are they interested in the content? If so, how do they show this interest and how do you work with this interest. If not, how do Thai participants show a lack of interest and what can you do to encourage interest in content? What do Thai participants expect from a Thai or a non-Thai seminar leader? Does this expectation change the way a course is prepared? What special needs should be considered when preparing for a Thai audience?
3.6.2 Personality

How do you behave during a seminar? Do you smile? How do you look relaxed? How do you get to know participants? How much do they learn about you? How do share? What advice would you have for a first-time presenter in Thailand regarding personality? What happens if you make a cultural faux pas? Are Thais forgiving of mistakes by foreigners? What does a person need to be careful about in terms of personal characteristics? What should a person avoid doing? What should a person try to do?

3.6.3 Presentation

How do you present material in an interesting and professional manner? Have you taken into consideration potential language barriers? Is there a need for vocal variety, gestures or to show enthusiasm and does this help increase interest and attentiveness? Do you move around the room or do you remain at the front or behind a desk or podium? How do you work with handouts and visuals? Do you look at participants and talk to them one at a time? How do you see your role as a trainer? What is more important: content or delivery? What advice do you have concerning presenting material?

3.6.4 Pedagogy

How important is the sequencing of material? How should a course move from easy to difficult, active to passive, lecture to hands-on work? Are participants aware of what is being presented or has been presented? Are they clear about what they are expected to do and how? How do you teach? What activities work well for you? What activities are difficult to start, see through or finish? How do you deal with slow or fast learners? What activities do you use? How do you arrange a session in terms of activities and timing?

3.6.5 Progress

How attentive are you to a group’s mood? How do you recognize the group’s mood? How do you encourage discussion, comments, and questions? How do you relate short-course material to the participants’ world? How do you encourage participants to take chances? What do you when students are working in groups? How do you get feedback from participants? How do you give feedback? What are your concerns when teaching Thai participants?
I hoped that this research would shed further light on these and other issues related to teaching an effective short course in the Thai business community. These questions were to be the starting point for each interview. In addition, they would provide subsequent lines of prepared questioning if required while interviewing each interview in an atmosphere that would encourage each individual to share their ideas. These efforts to create an interview conducive to sharing are described in the next section.

3.7 Interview Procedure

The initial interviews were conducted over a fifteen-month period. The first group was interviewed early in the research, April and May 2002 as an introduction to the initial Action Research. A second and different group was interviewed over a two-month period in December 2002 and January 2003.

All participants had a basic understanding of the research and why I wanted to interview them. RMIT University’s Ethics Procedures required participants to understand the research being conducted; their role in this research and to sign an agreement that their participation was voluntary. It was determined that the ethics letter would provide the background information a respondent might want or need. (see Appendix I)

Each interview started with a shared understanding of why they were being interviewed and how it would be taped, transcribed by myself, and then coded to protect their identity. In dealing with friends, colleagues, and other professionals, sharing a relatively small market and meeting frequently at social and professional events, it was important that “engagement without deception” of any type be established and maintained before, during, and after each interview (Bryce, 2002).

In particular, I needed participants to know that:

- I was interested in what they had to say about how they taught not what they taught.
- That what they said would not come back to haunt them later.
- That what they shared about a client would only be used for academic and not professional purposes.
Each interview lasted a minimum of an hour and not more than ninety-minutes. Interviews were arranged in coffeehouses, restaurants, or the interviewees’ place of business or home. As I previously knew all but three interviewees, it was necessary to arrange a social environment in which we felt comfortable and left the interviewee content with their participation.

Although, it was felt that rehearsed answers might be more valuable, it was decided that this would be asking and expecting too much of friends and colleagues. If some did and some did not review the questions in advance, interviewees who had taken time to reflect on their answers might be tempted to provide the best answer and not an answer based on what they really do when teaching a short course in Thailand. It was felt that spontaneity in answers would be important.

Once a respondent understood that I wanted to know about their experiences teaching business content courses to Thai executive, the interview format, and the five major sections to be dealt with, a time-consuming distraction, ordering food or coffee was provided to allow each person to review and negotiate what was expected. Based on this short informal discussion, I was able to determine the best place to start, which usually reflected the order found on the interview schedule, that is, preparation, personality, presentation, pedagogy, and progress. In addition, the use of these different terms and the somewhat confusing arrangement of topics provided a useful discussion concerning meaning, the topics in each section, what was missing and what might be misplaced. While a great deal of preparation had been undertaken, each interview flowed quite smoothly based on a somewhat limited number of questions.

- Why do you like teaching in Thailand?
- How would you describe teaching here? In general? Compared to other countries?
- As a trainer in Thailand, what advice would you give a trainer before they arrived?
- What advice would you give them about what to expect in class?
- How do you organize a seminar?
- How do you solicit or deal with questions?
How do you deal with tardiness?

How do you receive feedback from the participants?

What do you do at the start of, during, and after group discussions?

What differences would a Thai audience expect with a Thai or non-Thai trainer?

What other advice would you offer a new trainer?

3.8 Analysis

Immediately following each interview, all tapes were transcribed with all portions related to ordering a meal or coffee omitted (see Appendix III). Transcripts of each interview were coded to ensure interviewee confidentiality, labeled, and stored in safekeeping along with the signed ethics letter.

An initial analysis was completed with each individual interview. First, I excluded all socializing and question clarifications. During the initial analysis, potentially useful comments were isolated and placed into a FileMaker Pro Data Base (see Table 3-5) for future use with each comment entered into the database with a descriptor or descriptors reflecting the extract’s focus or foci. (Lancy, 1993)

During this analysis, no attempt was made to impose any pattern on the descriptors, which resulted in a wide range; many with like, or duplicate meanings, which included: acting skills, teaching skills, being yourself, relax, advice, alert, appearance, passion, preparation, respect, advice, direct questions, face, warm up, and interest.

These original descriptors reflected a respondent’s use of terminology or definitions. The goal of the initial analysis was to determine if sufficient information had been collected to answer the research question. Following fifteen detailed interviews, it was decided sufficient data had been collected, as new ideas were not forthcoming.

During the second holistic analysis, all information in the database was re-examined as a unit. At this time, original descriptors applied during the first analysis were refined, which resulted in a variety of similar descriptors, for example, ‘comfort’, ‘be comfortable’, ‘be yourself’, ‘avoid stress’ and ‘nervousness’, being changed to a second-level descriptor ‘comfort’. In addition, contrary views were noted, which varied from opinions about the
importance of various aspects of teaching a short-course to disagreements with views held by other interviewees.

During the second analysis it was determined that these five original questionnaire categories that is, preparation, personality, presentation, pedagogy and progress, were proving restrictive and that a new set was needed. A full review and re-analysis of all the comments and the emerging themes resulted in the creation of six new categories that allowed for a more efficient grouping of the emerging themes. The six new categories were: Understanding the Audience, Getting Ready for the Audience, Planning for the Audience, Teaching the Audience, Connecting with the Audience, and Solving Problems with the Audience.

Table 3-5 Data Analysis Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Topic/Theme</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Analysis Topics:</td>
<td>Thai, make interesting, not raise hand, be more interactive, entice people to respond, shy</td>
<td>The first thing he needs to know, the culture, that a Thai person is shy in any workshop. They nod their head, they might know if they understand or not, have a question. They might not raise their hand. So he has to have a way of making it interesting, entice people to respond by throwing some questions, to be more interactive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Analysis: Theme</td>
<td>Thai Behavior in Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Analysis: Theme</td>
<td>Pedagogy: Questions with Thais</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Analysis: Theme</td>
<td>Teaching the Audience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation as Used Results</td>
<td>Teaching Thais</td>
<td>The first thing he [a trainer] needs to know, the culture, that a Thai person is shy in any workshop. They [Thais] nod their head. … They might not raise their hand. So he [trainer] has to have a way of making it interesting, entice people to respond by throwing out some questions, to be more interactive. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this time, twenty-two themes emerged. These themes have remained viable, although they have gone through a number of changes in terminology based on comments provided by the independent auditor and the five interviewees who were asked to review their comments. These themes will be listed following the description of the fourth analysis.
During the third analysis, all comments attributed to each ‘theme’ were examined to ensure that a thick, detailed description or a complete “development of issues’ was supported by the data (Stake, 1995). In addition, this analysis also served to confirm the discreteness of the twenty-two emerging themes.

As with earlier analyses, but to a lesser extent, intuition became an important factor in placing comments into a theme and each of the twenty-two themes into one of the six categories. Although difficult to describe, this intuition was based on my increasing familiarity with the research and the setting, as I was continuing to teach short courses in the Thai business community and to meet with many of those interviewed.

Individual intuition is the richest and primary source of subjective understanding in qualitative research. “… The qualitative researcher typically becomes very familiar with the research phenomena, including the actual field setting, and notes and memories of interviews and of observations. This knowledge is compared with prior experiences, theories and formulations of problems in a process that is often subliminal. Through immersion and contemplation, findings emerge”. (Firestone and Dawson, 1988, p. 210)

A fourth and final analysis or interpretation of the data was completed by reviewing all the comments attributed to each of the twenty-two themes and to review all themes in terms of the original six categories. This analysis of themes and categories suggested a refinement of the six categories into four new categories would result in a distribution of comments into themes and themes into categories that would best allow interviewee comments to flow in a natural progression that followed the pattern of most interviews.

Interviewee comments delineated into twenty-two themes and four categories were shared with five interviewees during a second interview to ensure data reflected their comments. In addition, a complete set of interviewee comments was shared with an independent observer. SW is a Canadian currently teaching in a Thai MBA program and at the time had recently submitted her PhD thesis to an Australian university. She has extensive teaching experience in South East Asia and in Thailand and is involved in both longer, more traditional academic programs and short seminars.

SW was given a draft of the Results Chapter and interviewed concerning her experiences in teaching short courses and the results contained in this report. As an outside, independent observer experienced in teaching short courses to the Thai business community, her feedback was used to review the way the results had been presented and to recommend refinements or changes to the four categories and twenty-two themes I had identified.
3.9 Summary

In this chapter, I have explained why qualitative research was undertaken and what this means. This was followed with a description of the process that lead to the choice of a case study approach, and how this approach was employed to ensure the research and the results presented in the next chapter were produced employing a sound case study research approach. Finally, a description has been provided detailing the four-stage data analysis and the steps taken in creating the framework used in the next chapter, in which as Peshkin (1993) suggested, “the proof of research conducted by whatever means resides in the pudding of its outcomes” (p. 23).
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

The literature review (see 2.0) has located this research within the fields of adult teaching, adult learning, and Thai cultural influences in areas seen as associated with teaching and learning in a short course, Thai adult environment.

The previous chapter detailed how the research was conducted, including the local conditions that led to the case study approach, the interview structure and questions employed, and finally the four-stage analysis that lead to the organization and content included here. The purpose of this chapter is to present and explore the findings that have come from an extensive analysis of the interviews conducted in the search for answers to the research question:

What are the characteristics of an effective short-course trainer in the Thai business community?

The following categories: Understanding the Audience and Their Culture, Preparing for the Audience, Teaching the Audience and Connecting with the Audience emerged from an exhaustive analysis of interviewee comments and original categories derived from the Literature Review. Each category consists of related themes that emerged from the data and the literature review.

The first category (see 4.1) presents evidence that illustrates how trainers applied their background knowledge of Thais and Thai culture when planning a short course. Included in this category, and of particular importance, is the theme of ‘saving face’ or kreu ng jai, that is, the desire to avoid causing embarrassment, or to be caused embarrassment. As many interviewees discussed how cultural influences influenced their choice of seminar activities and techniques, this is an important area to consider in relation to the seminar leader effectiveness.

The second category (see 4.2) concerns the ways in which interviewees described their seminar preparation based on how they anticipated Thai participants would react and what they believed Thais expected in terms of course content and teaching approaches. Themes within this category move from broader discussions of participant behavior and expectations in a classroom situation, described above, to a more detailed report of what interviewees expected from Thai participants.
The third category (see 4.3) summarizes trainers’ comments concerning how they taught Thais and the repertoire of teaching skills and techniques they believed were needed. Specifically, themes within this category examines how interviewees conduct the face-to-face portion of the training event, from first contact through to the use of specific teaching activities, for example, dealing with questions and answers, ensuring discussions went according to plan.

The final category (see 4.4) studies interviewees’ comments related to specific teaching styles and ideas about how interviewees endeavored to help participants feel comfortable through humor, stories, and the Thai desire to make everything they do in enjoyable or sanuk.

Unless otherwise stated, comments provided throughout this chapter reflect a majority view and are representative of comments offered by interviewees. Atypical comments will be identified, although they are limited in number. Throughout this chapter and the next, the fifteen people interviewed are referred to as trainers, seminar leaders or interviewees with each person identified with a unique two-letter code to maintain confidentiality. The term ‘participant’ is used to describe any person who attends a seminar offered by a trainer, seminar leader or an interviewee.

Table 4-1 offers a summary of the fifteen interviewees. Each interviewee has been identified in terms of nationality, gender, and linguistic ability. Linguistic ability has two distinctions in this research: bilingual reflects the ability to speak Thai and English; non-bilingual reflects the ability to speak English, but not Thai. An ability to speak a third language was not deemed significant and was not included. The final two characteristics, age and experience, are provided for comparison, but are not included with the quotations provided and were not included in Table 3-3 Interviewee Details provided in Methodology.

Before examining each of these four categories in detail, it is important to note that all interviewees, at all times, spoke about Thai and non-Thai seminar participants with the utmost respect. Any comments that might be considered as negative should be taken as a voiced concern and not a complaint. Any comment that might be taken as stereotyping should be taken as an attempt to understand or explain, and not to simplify.
Table 4-1 Interviewee Details and Professional Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Linguistic Ability</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GT</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HW</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Non-bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JM</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KT</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LZ</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MB</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Non-bilingual</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>30+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Non-bilingual</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QL</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Japanese-American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Non-bilingual</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VK</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Understanding the Audience and Their Culture

Many interviewees stressed that participants attending a seminar arrived with varying knowledge and experience. They might come from different companies or industries, have unrelated jobs, and varied educational backgrounds. In addition, trainers mentioned that participants might have diverse personalities and arrive with varying expectations and needs.

You have people from different walks of life. They have different backgrounds. They may come with different reasons. Out of curiosity; or just come because they have to; because they have nothing else to do, instead of shopping. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

Without an appreciation of potential participant characteristics, planning would be difficult. Therefore, as NC suggested, before beginning to plan a seminar, it was necessary to gather information.

Get as much intelligence about the audience as you can. Find out who they are, what they do, what their peculiarities are. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual 19/12/02)

JM mentioned the need to know about the participants to be able to plan her course in some detail.
I have to know the objectives to analyze their objectives and what content they need and the other activities that will help them to understand more. (JM, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 25/04/02)

Working in the Thai business sector, trainers discussed a number of core parameters within which they were able to begin planning. They assumed that most, if not all, participants would be Thai and therefore, when planning and teaching, interviewees commented on the need to consider the influence Thai culture might place on a range of factors and decisions they would need to make and deal with.

Within the category, Understanding the Audience and Their Culture, six distinct themes emerged as significant when examining interviewee comments: Teaching Thais, Dealing with Kreng Jai Considerations, Managing Thai Educational Influences, Analyzing Seminar Leader Cultural Influences, Accepting the Role of Appearance and Participant Expectations, and Choosing Attire to Meet Participant Expectations. These themes and the evidence that has led to their identification are discussed below.

4.1.1 Teaching Thais

This theme provides a general overview of comments provided by interviewees concerning teaching short courses attended by Thais and provides an insight into how interviewees dealt with cultural issues when they taught Thais.

In discussing how to teach a predominantly Thai audience, a voiced concern was the need to dispel stereotypes held of participants in Thailand and in Asia, as they were often quite different to the reality experienced in the classroom. While teaching Thais came across throughout the interviews as an enjoyable experience, interviewees commented on the advisability of knowing about Thai culture before entering a Thai classroom.

When asked about teaching in Thailand and in Asia in general, interviewees often corrected ‘misconceptions’ about what to expect in a Thai seminar.

I was sat down by the boss and lectured, “You cannot do the things you do in Australia with Asian participants, you cannot challenge; you cannot confront. There are a whole lot of things, terms of the way you do things; you cannot get direct feedback, all sorts of things like this”. Now, what I found, in fact, over probably the next three years, was that you could do exactly that. You just have to set the context differently. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)
Throughout the interviews, there was a constant respect for participants and a sense of enjoyment at being able to work with Thais.

I like it here, people, in general, go out of their way to make you feel comfortable. … If you are effective, they [participants] will let you know. They will make you feel good about it. If you are lousy, they will not go out of their way to blast you. They will just back off the situation and never go to it again. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

In particular, the Thai sense of humor and hospitality were mentioned as being two compelling reasons for teaching in Thailand, complimented by the Thais desire to learn.

Because of the sense of fun, the sense of ridiculousness Thais see in situations, the genuine warmth they show people. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

They [Thais] are receptive. They do want to learn. … They are polite, respectful, things like that. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

Liking Thais as a people was an important need mentioned in many interviews and it was suggested that if a trainer did not like Thai participants, they should “fake it”.

Without getting too mushy about it, it helps if you really like the people [Thais] or get yourself into a frame of mind. If you do not like them [Thai participants], fake it. Or, if you are feeling indifferent, get yourself up a notch or two. “I really like you, being with you”. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

While these comments might appear insincere, both Thai and non-Thai interviewees acknowledged that it was extremely important for Thais to believe a trainer genuinely liked them and the need to establish a relationship.

It has to be from the trainer himself, more than any other [thing]: teaching, presentation aids, more than power point, more than overhead projectors or more than any object he might use as props. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

They [participants] will relate to you, anywhere, but especially here, [Thailand] if you are acting natural, if they trust you are delivering your training with sincerity. (SW, Japanese-American, Non-bilingual, Male, 03/02/03)

As it was frequently difficult for most interviewees to describe Thai participants in isolation, they often compared teaching in Thailand with other countries. This allowed the opportunity to provide a further insight into the subtle differences they believed distinguished Thais as a unique group. Ranging from content relevancy to attitudes about time, a picture of how interviewees viewed Thais as adult participants emerged.
HW talked about cultural differences at length. Providing seminars that deal with corporate changes that could affect participants, he described distinct cultural differences regarding content relevancy and what different people wanted to hear.

In the US, to some extent in Singapore, the kind of questions being asked are, I would say, more relevant to the substance of the message. In some other countries, and Thailand I would give as one, people are looking really … from the angle of what’s in it for them and why should they take this on board. They [Thais] are not quite looking at it the same way. … They [Thais] are looking very much at, “Does this mean any organizational change in my little bit? How am I personally going to be impacted by it?” I don’t see so much of that in other parts of the world. They [Thais] may have different motivation than other places, [that is] for themselves [as a Thai employee] rather than for the good of the company. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

SW, a Japanese-American with teaching experience in Japan and Thailand, offered a short overview of the seminar atmosphere he had experienced in both countries.

The Japanese group would be far more solid, serious in their expectation. You’d better be ready to teach me something or it’s a waste of my time, serious attitude. Whereas the Thais, there seems to be a slightly more informal atmosphere. (SW, Japanese-American, Non-bilingual, Male, 03/02/03)

Interestingly, the need to compare Thai with non-Thai participants overseas was referred to by KT, a Thai trainer with extensive study and work experience in the US. In his interview, KT provided a contrast between Thai and Western participants in terms of motivational differences.

When a Westerner goes to a short course, they go to learn and participate. A Thai goes because the company sent them. They do not really have to bring anything back, or they just go to kill time, they are not really participating in the seminar, in other words, the level of interest is different. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

NC, an Australian and long-time Thai resident, also discussed cultural differences at length and offered a contrast between Thais and Australian Aboriginal cultures.

Thais won’t like this comparison, how similar the Thais were to some Aboriginal cultures. … They’re very dissimilar in terms of spirituality, but they’re very similar in their attitudes toward time. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

NC also commented on his experiences with Vietnamese and Thai participants and offered a specific example about how he saw Thais as being more concerned with appearances than content.
The Vietnamese were concerned about appearance, but not at the expense of substance, whereas the Thais, the classic sort of Thai conference, there’s no place to put your papers on the lectern because it’s covered by flowers. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

To support his argument that appearance was more important than content, NC provided another example concerning the significance of the outward show. While not directly related to teaching a short course, it illustrates the importance many interviewees stressed that Thais placed on ‘form over substance’.

I was invited to Chulalongkorn [Thailand’s leading university] to hand out postgraduate diplomas in Irrigation Science. … I knew none of the students, knew nothing about the subject, but the professor was a friend and he wanted a foreign academic to do it. It didn’t matter that I had nothing to do with their course, had never met them before, we both got up, held the certificate, smiled for the camera … we did that for sixty students. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

On a personal and very positive note, on a short intensive English seminar for a government office, another instructor and I were supported in our efforts to create a professional atmosphere through the efforts of the opening ceremony’s most important guest, the Deputy Director. With opening ceremonies scheduled to start at 9:00 a.m. on the first day, the Deputy Director not only arrived on time, but had also prepared a short speech in English and Thai. The official opening was completed in 15 minutes. This fact combined with her timely arrival, knowledge of what was taking place, comments concerning the seminar’s importance, and her efforts to use English, created a professional impact we were able to build on and benefit from throughout the seminar.

Both Thai and non-Thai interviewees discussed the need to understand other aspects of Thai culture when planning specific facets of their seminars. For example, trainers mentioned the need to provide a wide range of questions to encourage participants to become involved and to create an interactive environment.

The first thing he [a trainer] needs to know, the culture, that a Thai person is shy in any workshop. They nod their head. … They might not raise their hand. So he has to have a way of making it interesting, entice people to respond by throwing out some questions, to be more interactive. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)
MB’s comments concerning the need to ‘wai’ reflected his strong opinions about the need to understand and abide by local cultural norms.

The wai here is very important to Thais, it shows respect, it is a greeting, it is a handshake. If you don’t wai here; they don’t want you. (MB, Danish, Bilingual, Male, 07/01/03)

TX, a Thai, was not as emphatic as MB, a non-Thai, concerning culture, but TX did suggest it was necessary for a seminar leader to have made some culture-related preparations.

Try to figure out the value systems… what is going to tick them off, what is not going to tick them off … all the idiosyncrasies that exist. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

In Thailand, interviewees, of all nationalities, suggested that these ‘idiosyncrasies’ would include specific concerns about Thai culture. In his comments, TX was very specific and commented on both kreng jai and hierarchy.

Before they come over … read three books … essentially three levels of background on Thailand, cultural aspects, historical aspects, and factual stuff. From there, if they go to that much effort… fine-tune it. The face stuff [kreng jai], the different levels [hierarchy]… a lot of stuff we do not have in English. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

Other interviewee recommendations for a first-time trainer in Thailand included the need to be relaxed, to be ready, and to be clean.

Be relaxed, do not be up tight, do not speak too fast, speak clearly, and use lots of stories and examples. Make sure you look good, dress well, make sure you do not stink. This [Thailand] is one of the most smell prone countries in the world. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

The important thing you have to do is to be able to create an easy-going, relaxed atmosphere. I think that is the number one thing, and then obviously you have to deliver your message. You have to do it in a relaxed way, but we all have our different ways. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

One question asked concerned whether a Thai audience would be forgiving of any cultural faux pas a trainer might commit. Most trainers, while realizing they might make a mistake, were, with the exception of MB, a non-Thai, clear in their opinion that Thais would be forgiving, but not if they thought a trainer was being patronizing as exemplified in the comments offered by TX, a western educated, Thai trainer.

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4 The wai is a traditional gesture used when greeting or thanking people. Made by placing the hands together with the palms and fingers touching, both hands are raised to varying levels, with the two thumbs touching the
There is a lot of forgiveness if there is effort. If you don’t demonstrate effort, they [Thais] won’t counter with effort. They are not going to take, for the most part … the days where they accept a Westerner as an authority, just because they are a Westerner … In terms of knowledge, Thais are a bright bunch. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

However, while trainers found it useful to appreciate how to teach Thais, they also warned that too much effort to adapt to Thai ways was also a concern.

If you try to adapt too much, the Thais will see you are a phony as well, as would a Western audience. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Interviewees were clear that a general understanding and knowledge of Thai culture along with efforts to make participants feel comfortable were important factors in creating an effective seminar environment. One facet of Thai culture frequently discussed was kreng jai and the central role interviewees saw it playing in the shaping of Thai behavior in a seminar.

4.1.2 Dealing with Kreng Jai Considerations

Concerns with the kreng jai played in both Thai and non-Thai interviewees’ planning and later presentation of a short course to Thai participants were mentioned frequently during the interviewees and reflected their concern with this extremely important facet of Thai culture.

Extremely difficult to define, kreng jai is an exceedingly important characteristic of Thai culture affecting Thais in most social situations, educational or otherwise. To repeat one definition provided in the Literature Review, kreng jai means:

Complying with other’s wishes or requests. Reluctance to disturb or interrupt others. Restraint of one’s show of displeasure or anger so as not to cause discomfort to others. Avoidance of asserting one’s opinion or needs. Reluctance to give instructions or pass orders to a superior; or to peers with more age or experience. Reluctance to evaluate a colleague’s or superior’s performance. Avoiding the demand for one’s rights. Reluctance to ask questions when one has not understood someone. (Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa, 1996, pp. 47-8)

As Thais find it difficult to describe kreng jai to non-Thais, they often explain indirectly with examples. When QL, a Thai interviewee, was asked to define kreng jai, she offered the example, “I don’t like it when the facilitator pays special attention to me” (QL, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 23/04/02). TX also used an example to describe kreng jai; “You have nose, chin, or chest depending on the level of respect being shown. The higher the hands are placed and the longer they remain in a position, the greater the respect or thankfulness being expressed.
to pace yourself; so you don’t end up being overly blunt” (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03).

Another important result of kreng jai was the voiced concern that Thais were often seen as quite reluctant to express their concerns.

If Thais have a concern, they will never tell you directly that there is a problem. (SW, Japanese-American, Non-bilingual, Male, 03/02/03)

As kreng jai was seen as playing a central role in determining how Thais behaved in a given situation, trainers discussed the need to be careful with how they dealt with Thai participants to avoid potential kreng jai situations. This necessity was reflected in the need to remember that something that might not embarrass a non-Thai could embarrass a Thai.

What I would say about working in Thailand; you have to be extraordinarily careful not to demean, not to embarrass, and not to put someone on the spot. Even though you think you may not be doing it, you can bet your bottom dollar that you are doing it. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Other suggested examples of what kreng jai meant in terms of specific behavior included the need to avoid conduct that would be seen as inappropriate in an adult education environment regardless of culture.

We have to show respect. We can’t laugh at people in a non-derogatory sort of way. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02

Well, obviously, you shouldn’t go barging ahead asking someone that is obviously looking down and trying to avoid you. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Another important aspect of kreng jai was related to hierarchy and as GT commented, participants’ expectation that seniors would speak or be asked to speak first.

You can see that they have something interesting to say, but it is either junior staff or someone else. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

In practical terms, interviewees suggested that kreng jai included the need to make certain everyone had an opportunity to speak and, specifically, the need to involve younger participants who might not want to bother their elders with their thoughts or want to be seen as showing off. Non-Thai and Thai trainers, also commented on the need to treat senior participants in a manner that would not cause them any embarrassment and that would lead to an improved opportunity for all participants to become involved.
In Thailand, of course, generally, you have to be very careful you don’t get just the opinion of the most senior person, which typically is what can happen. So we mix the groups around, we actually lay some ground rules. We identify the most senior or the oldest and we actually, very carefully and very politely, move them into the background. We might make them the scribe for instance, because they are still the leader then, they get a lot of face [respect]. That way the rest of the group can get involved in the discussion; otherwise, you only get one point of view. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

If I had to have somebody senior in the audience, I would have to somehow incorporate them into the program. I mean if they had to be there, if I could not possibly get them out. I would have to pull that person out and make them somehow integral to what I was doing. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

The question of hierarchy in Thailand was important for the trainers interviewed, as it reflected ideas contrary to what they were accustomed to in terms of adult group dynamics when teaching in other countries.

Thais are not used to where everyone is equal in the room and the senior person is there to facilitate, to get the conversation going, to challenge ideas and to get them to challenge each other’s ideas. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

The influence of kreng jai was also reflected in interviewees’ comments concerning the need to avoid confrontation by not questioning participants until it was clear they were capable of answering and the idea that once a participant had made a comment, importance be placed on not criticizing the comment offered or the person responsible.

You never ask a question unless you know that person can answer the question. Another example might be to not challenge someone’s viewpoint, or ridicule or make a judgment on it. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

While trainers suggested a reluctance to have any participant excluded from a seminar, in teaching Thais, the exclusion of one or two senior participants was seen, by both Thai and non-Thai trainers, as the best way to ensure that overall a greater number of participants would take an active role.

If we need to have participants interact, many times we recommend taking the senior person out of the picture entirely. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

Another aspect of kreng jai that appeared to cause concern was the Thai reluctance to be confrontational, regardless of the reason.

Thais would never confront you with the truth about what they are thinking. If you have been impolite in their opinion when you first met, they would never admit it. They would never say “you were impolite”, but that’s what they felt, that’s the way you were when you met them the
first time and if you want to work on [rectifying] that situation, it may take you six months or a year, or forever or never. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

Even if a seminar leader were not up to standard, it was felt that most Thais would remain quiet. In discussing a disappointing seminar he had attended, NC, an Australian, expressed his impression as to how kreng jai had affected the audience’s reaction.

He was never challenged. No one yawned loudly. Many people did depart come lunchtime, but for the morning; they sat there. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

These comments would suggest that Thai and non-Thai interviewees saw an understanding of kreng jai as important. First, understanding what could cause a Thai to feel kreng jai, would allow a trainer to avoid situations that might cause it. Second, this understanding could lead to an evaluation of how to instruct or lead Thai participants through an activity or exercise and therefore, the implementation of best methods to ensure that most Thai participants would take part without feeling kreng jai.

4.1.3 Managing Thai Educational Influences

The need to take into consideration Thai education influences led to discussions in which trainers describe how they dealt with Thai educational influences and how they expected participants would behave in a seminar. A related theme that emerged was how the Thai educational system was seen to have influenced the behavior of participants in a classroom environment.

Thai interviewees and, to a lesser extent, non-Thai interviewees echoed many of the features described in Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomizawa's (1996) review of major characteristics of Thai education (see 2.3.4), for example,

The teacher is a dictator. Whatever the teacher teaches, the students must believe and only listen. In Thai culture, children cannot argue with the teacher, as it will seem aggressive. Therefore, students do not know how to think or how to make an analysis, as it is teachers who find data, and then only teach, with students not given a chance to show their thinking. This destroys students’ potential, as there is not any development in their thinking process. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

These comments would suggest that many participants would not have had the need or been provided the opportunity to develop skills in questioning a teacher’s lectures or analyzing how to apply learning outside the classroom. This was reflected in one suggestion that “Why questions won’t get you very far” (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02).
In a more specific example, FC, a Thai interviewee, in discussing a course planned for participants not familiar with a more participatory style of seminar, mentioned that due to her participants’ educational experience, she expected some would be uncomfortable having to discuss or do activities other than listen to a lecture.

A lecture … does not have any activity. I am not sure whether doctors will feel comfortable with discussion. … I am not sure if nurses can understand and make a discussion. (FC, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 13/01/03)

However, while Thai participants might not have had experience with the skills needed to take part in a seminar the way a trainer might like, interviewees believed that Thais could acquire new skills despite their educational background.

Thais from the Thai schooling system always expect to get the data and the answers, and if you can help them realize it is not actually the answers that they should be looking for, but actually a way for themselves to find the answers. If you get that through and I think, it’s quite easy … no more difficult than anywhere else. … The response is good; people really want to engage in learning more. That is the important thing. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Despite Thai emphasis on appearance, they do want to learn something. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

BN also argued that Thais were interested in learning, but that bringing Thais into the learning event would require seminar leader efforts.

The students I have worked with have been extremely hard working and have applied themselves. When I hear other people talking about laziness, or lack of attention, I believe strongly that it is a lack of [trainer] comprehension, lack of ability to get through to that individual, to bring them into the discussion. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

NC was more specific and suggested that Thais would answer questions; however, trainers needed to be careful about what they asked, and how they would ask it.

Contrary to popular belief, you can ask Thais questions. Contrary to what you read in some of the textbooks. You just need to be careful about the questions you ask. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

WG, an Australian trainer with extensive experience throughout Asia, also disagreed with stereotypes often attributed to Thai participants and suggested that education in Thailand was not the negative force some people might believe.

That they [Thais] won’t offer opinions, that they won’t challenge, that they won’t ask questions if they don’t understand, that because of the way they’ve been taught they are very
black and white in their thinking and find it difficult to think in gray, … I find is just not true.  
(WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

GT also disagreed with some stereotypes used to describe Thais, in particular the belief that Thais could or would not ask questions and suggested that the presence of a free press in Thailand proved otherwise.

If there was a cultural aspect of not wanting to, not being able to ask questions, how could we have such a free press here in Thailand? I am not saying it [the press] is good, but they do ask questions. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

GT then described how he dealt with questions and conducted group discussion.

I don’t find it a problem to get people to actually speak in Thailand if you take time from the beginning to break down barriers and actively engage in communication. Making it clear you know that usually in the traditional Thai way of doing things, this is not done, but you really want them to, not just say, actually engage at the start of the session with what you want them to do, then it is not a problem. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Many interviewees agreed with GT, and felt that although Thais might not have had experience with a particular training strategy, they were capable of doing almost anything once that they had been shown how and given the time to practice.

It doesn’t really matter, whether discussion and breaking through is in English or Thai, it is the mindset of contribution. Once you break through that, people are very happy to yak among themselves in Thai and with someone like me, asking them, what is the gist of what came out of that? They are perfectly capable of doing it [discussion], but it is breaking through that cultural, that way of learning they have had up until this point. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

However, as many agreed it could be difficult to initiate two-way communication, they would often select a presentation style seminar.

Most of my seminars have been presentations, lectures, teaching type situations, not relying much on feedback method, part of that is my own personality, [not willing to push Thais to do something they might be uncomfortable with even though it might work] part of that is knowing that you get very little response from audiences here. If you try to, even when you are trying to draw them out, it’s very difficult, very difficult. I’ve seen good attempts at discussion. But I’ve never really seen the kind of open exchange in Thai that I have in English. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

There was also a voiced need to remember that some activities, while possible, might violate norms of Thai culture. TX, a Thai interviewee, offered the only example of such an activity and went on to explain that brainstorming, while it could work, it was not widespread as the format is contrary to Thai conversational patterns.
A brainstorming session in Thailand is a rare event because they [Thais] are not that way; to be able to do a dynamic parallel conversation is unheard, one, because it is rude, there is a sequence to conversation here. You don’t speak while another person is speaking. You don’t interrupt a concept train while another person is trying to get theirs out. It’s completely different here. It’s a rare event. They’re not as experienced. It doesn’t mean that they’re not capable. If you give them enough run time, within a couple of sessions, they are probably as good as anybody. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

While many non-Thai interviewees had more confidence that Thais were capable of doing anything in a seminar a trainer would expect of a Western audience, for example, brainstorming or role-play, both Thai and non-Thai interviewees felt that Thai participants’ lack of experience, or no experience at all, could prove to be a barrier to implementation and could therefore affect planning.

Behavioral norms expected of Thai participants in a Thai educational environment might lead a trainer to believe participants are either lazy or do not care. However, the experience of many of those interviewed suggested that although Thais might not display some of the behaviors expected in a Western seminar, they were capable, for the most part, to adapt to the expectations of a seminar leader looking for active rather than passive participant involvement. However, some skills would need to be acquired, as would be true of Western participants experiencing, for example, brainstorming for the first time.

While Thais could be asked to do almost anything a Western group would be expected to do, seminar leaders commented on the need to take care to avoid expecting Thais to behave or react in the same fashion as participants in the West. This understanding as to the importance of culture was seen by Western interviewees as a need to understand how their own Western culture might influence their classroom behavior and what they might need to adapt or avoid.

4.1.4 Analyzing Seminar Leader Cultural Influences

During the interviews, non-Thai interviewees shared comments, vis-à-vis the need to understand their own, that is, North American, Scandinavian, or Australian, cultural background to avoid potential difficulties or pitfalls that might occur as they taught Thais.

Reflecting on cultural influences, many Western interviewees discussed the need to evaluate how their own culture might have affected their background and experiences. BN, an American raised in Thailand with the exception of few years in the US to attend university, provided a description of how he saw American cultural influences affecting his seminar
planning. In particular, he discussed the need to be careful with terms and ideas an American audience could be expected to share and understand, but not necessarily a Thai audience.

I didn’t realize how many cultural things had slipped into my presentation. … It’s references to things that you don’t think twice about, it could be as simple as TV programs, advertisements, commercials everybody knows who comes from the US, but you don’t know coming from here. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

This important question of language was also viewed in terms of the vocabulary a native speaker might use.

When you speak a foreign language, and this applies across the board, you pick up not just the words; but also the culture along the way, and the Thais, who speak English very well, have picked up some of the cultural baggage, if you will, from English. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

An example of the need to be careful with country-specific vocabulary would be the game of baseball and the way Americans take terms from this game and use these analogously in non-sport related discussions. For example: ‘To get to first base’: to enjoy an initial success; to ‘strike out’: to fail; and ‘to throw a curve ball’: to make an unexpected conversational comment or offer. While someone familiar with baseball would understand these examples, they would be unfamiliar to most native and non-native speakers from countries in which baseball was not prevalent.

WG offered a clear idea as to what he believed a Thai audience would expect during a seminar once they learned he was Australian and the approach he took to overcome any stereotype that Australians were easy going. This need arose from the fact that the majority of his training involved presenting new directives or policies created in a US-based head office that he must present to a Thai audience in a limited time and with the expectation all participants would understand what he had to disseminate.

If they know I’m Australian, they’re expecting someone who’s a bit of a lad; who they might find difficult to understand; who is probably very easy going; who laughs a lot. What they get from me often is the sternness. There’s a real business like approach to things initially to set the tone; then I change. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

It should be noted that unlike other interviewees, WG worked with participants who were well aware of a seminar’s content before it started, (corporate change) and were often concerned about what was to be presented and how it would affect them personally. A second aspect related to the influence of appearance was the reported need to be prepared for Thai
attitudes concerning personal appearance, which might be quite different than would be expected in a non-Thai environment.

4.1.5 Accepting the Role of Appearance and Participant Expectations

This section deals with voiced concerns about the stereotypes that Thais might hold concerning seminar leader appearance. In particular, this theme reflects seminar leaders’ comments concerning their opinions of appearance factors outside their control, that is, the issue of race.

Appearance are physical characteristics over which trainers did not have any control but nonetheless, many agreed, appeared to play a role in Thai participant expectations. Comments related to physical characteristics centered on the question of race and nationality and was seen as an important concern from the perspective of many seminar leaders interviewed.

We [Caucasians] have an advantage and a disadvantage to begin with. We’re perceived as being total outsiders and given, if you will, lee-way for being total outsiders, whereas, Singaporeans, Malaysians, Indians are not given that same lee-way. They’re expected to know some of the things and to react in Asian ways. They [Thais] are thinking about their stereotype, their mindset is going to be different. They’re going to give me a break because I’m a total Auslander [foreigner]. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

When asked specifically if Thai participants would be upset if a long-term Western resident could not speak Thai and whether this would be a disadvantage, most interviewees agreed it would not normally be an issue.

No, no, you’re not expected, [to speak Thai] in fact being from a lesser class of human being [non-Thai or in his case Caucasian], you’re not expected to know anything about the language. Whatever little thing you know is vastly appreciated. I’m only being a little bit facetious, but not that much. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

All Thais are extremely surprised if you speak a couple of words [of Thai] … (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

When asked about racial concerns and his experiences as a Japanese-American, SW mentioned that he had encountered positive comments from Thai participants about being Asian American.

"I’m glad you’re teaching us, foreigners, Caucasians are scarier”. (SW, Japanese-American, Non-bilingual, Male, 03/02/03)
However, he continued that this view was only a first impression and that he would see it change as the seminar progressed.

They’re just talking about a first impression, which is meaningless, because at the end of the day their impression changes, no matter whom; in the end, it’s the results. (SW, Japanese-American, Non-bilingual, Male, 03/02/03)

Many of the interviewees were asked if a Thai audience would behave differently with a Thai or Western trainer. To set up a contrast in which all items would remain the same except the trainer, respondents were asked specifically if, on a one-day seminar, a Thai audience would expect a Thai trainer in the morning and a Western trainer in the afternoon to be different. Most agreed that a Thai audience would expect morning and afternoon sessions to be quite different, in particular the use of English, which is discussed in more detail later (see 4.3.4).

Life isn’t fair always. One, the stress level is higher in the afternoon obviously because it’s supposed to be English, whatever, but everyone is also expecting it will be higher quality, it will be the final truth, that’s because he is a foreigner [Westerner], and he’s here, so therefore by definition he knows more perhaps than the Thai does. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Interviewee opinions about the differences between Thai and Western trainers included the need to refrain from justifying why a non-Thai had been invited to teach.

You should never start by justifying what you are doing because you are already justified by being there and being a foreigner, by definition you know what you are talking about. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

This contrasted with GT’s comments about what Thai trainers needed to do if they wished to be accepted as knowledgeable.

If you, as a lecturer [Thai] can succeed in creating some kind of aura around you, exposure in media and so forth … established you are someone people listen to so therefore interesting, even if you don’t say anything. Which is a bit like what I was saying about being a foreigner; the right face … they expect this guru [Westerner] knows what he is talking about so therefore they listen. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

KT, a Thai trainer, also commented on the difference between expectations and suggested that because a trainer was a foreigner, participants’ anticipation about the quality of the seminar would be greater.
In general, when you bring a foreigner, wow, okay this person must be great. He might not know anything about the subject but you already have a higher expectation than a Thai speaker. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

It was also mentioned that Thais often expected a difference in style in the way a Thai and a non-Thai would teach.

The Western style is more structured. Tell them the organization, what topic, how long it will take, structure, more structure, examples, and the other activities. Thai style depends on the instructor because if that instructor has the techniques or gives the message quite funny, it attracts attention and not the structure. (VK, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 04/04/02)

While interviewees saw race and nationality as influencing participants, it would also appear that for the most part it was on a short-term, superficial basis. While short lived, predominantly the non-Thai interviewees placed an importance on the role an initial impression had in establishing a relationship with Thai participants and also mentioned the need to dress and behave appropriately as part of an effort to create the ‘correct’ impression as a ‘teacher’.

4.1.6 Choosing Attire to Meet Participant Expectations

The need to dress and behave according to one’s expected role as a ‘teacher’ was one area of appearance interviewees saw as being particularly important. Thais, it was mentioned, have a very clear expectation of how a seminar leader should dress.

It’s important to look the part. You have to look like ajarn, [teacher] preferably an ajarn yai, [senior teacher] especially at Thammasat; [famous Thai university] you have to look like you’re very important, that you know your stuff. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

GT not only offered advice on what to wear, but also offered stage directions to enhance the effect clothes might provide a trainer.

Well obviously, I mean, it is better to go over dressed than under dressed in a business sense. You should wear your dark suit and shirt type of thing, and perhaps, at the start, take that suit off and untie your tie, whatever, because it’s part of the package perhaps. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Interviewees accepted that Thai seminar participants would have a clear idea of how a teacher or business trainer should dress. This need to meet expectations, in terms of appearance, also concerned non-Thai trainers who talked about the need to dress to match
Thai expectations of a ‘teacher’, that is, a tie and jacket, skirt and blouse, rather than a more casual look acceptable in their home country.

The way you dress is very important. You have to dress appropriately for the job you do. In Thailand, as a teacher you should wear a long sleeve shirt, a tie, be groomed nicely, a nice pair of pants, you have to look decent. That’s important. If you are a female teacher, you have to dress very appropriately. You have to dress, may I say, above the audience. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

In all my 30 years in Australia, I never wore a suit and only rarely a tie. Whereas in Thailand, I don’t bother with the suit, but I always wear a tie and sometimes a coat. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

All comments concerning attire originated with non-Thai interviewees, whereas Thai interviewees did not consider it a factor to be worth mentioning. Although not a part of the interview process, it should be noted that all Thai interviewees were dressed in business attire when interviewed, whereas a number of the non-Thai interviewees were dressed quite casually. It would seem that what non-Thais felt needed mentioning, was understood as a basic fact by the Thai interviewees.

While the comments presented in this section have dealt with cultural issues that might well be experienced both in and outside the classroom, interviewees also provided an insight into how they went about preparing for a Thai audience, in part based on the ideas discussed in this section and with comments that that follow in the next section.

4.2 Preparing for the Audience

Based on experience, many interviewees realized that at the start of a seminar many of the participants would not have a clear idea about why they were attending a particular seminar and what to expect in terms of content and presentation. If material had been distributed before the seminar, it was doubtful that all participants would have had or taken the time to review it. In addition, there would remain a concern as to whether all participants had received the material.

I should have given them the handouts before the class. However, I do not think they would have read them before class. (JM, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 25/04/02)

An examination of the comments associated with how interviewees planned for a seminar with Thai participants yielded four distinct but related themes. The first theme, Meeting Participant Expectations concerns what interviewees believed Thai participants
expected from a successful seminar. Making Certain of Content Relevance summarizes comments about the importance trainers placed on participants understanding the relevance of the content presented in terms of workplace needs. Organizing the Content describes how trainers saw Thai culture or participants influencing the creation of their lesson plan. Finally, Timing the Program, deals with a voiced need to understand the use of time, punctuality, and pacing when working with a group of Thai participants.

4.2.1 Meeting Participant Expectations

A common concern expressed by interviewees was that participants often did not know much, if anything, about the seminar they were attending and what to expect. In addition, interviewees expressed a concern that because participants often had a limited idea as to how or when they would need to demonstrate new skills in the work place, motivation to take part was often seen as being limited. In particular, seminar leaders discussed how these factors had the potential to curb participant levels of interest or motivation at the start of a seminar and how they dealt with this concern.

Thais either go because the company sent them, when they come back they do not really have to bring anything back, or they just go there to kill time, they are not really participating in the seminar, in other words, the level of interest is different. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

A common theme with both Thai and non-Thai interviewees was the view that participants often arrived at a seminar with little or no understanding of why they had been told to attend.

They [Thais] like to learn, but because the purpose was never made clear to them in the first place, they see it more as an opportunity to see their friends. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

The key to this comment was the first few words, “They like to learn”, a theme mentioned repeatedly as a reason why participants might decide to remain in a seminar.

If they like the atmosphere, if they think they’re learning something, they’ll stay. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

Everybody comes to the course to get something back. They should get some valuable message back. (QL, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 23/04/02)
The suggestion people should leave with ‘something’ included somewhat esoteric viewpoints such as this one offered by KT, a Thai trainer, about what should happen during a seminar.

You can plant a seed and hope it will grow, you don’t have to give them [participants] the whole garden, but you give them seeds, some examples, what ever, and they go back and prosper and grow. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

In contrast, WG, a non-Thai, suggested a more practical analysis was needed and to examine seminar content from the participants’ perspective.

I’ve addressed their issues, the outcomes they wanted and presented them in such a way they can buy into and use. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Adding to the theme that participants wanted to learn, trainers mentioned the need to meet participant expectations by ensuring training goals were known and understood.

I work on what I would like them to take back and what is the objective I want to get across. Then I work around how to achieve it. Lecture material alone, flip charts, overhead projector, and handouts, do not always work. You have to have something tangible, either workshop or some sort of participation from the audience … so I always plan some workshop, examples, activities that allow them to see the point I am lecturing. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

WG described one method he employed when his understanding of anticipated and actual participant expectations diverged.

I’ll literally stand up and make a statement. “I’ve got a sense here this is just not working, and I am not sure why it’s not working. Let’s stop, look at your outcomes you want … let’s look at the brief I’ve been given, because often, the brief could be out a bit, and let’s refocus”. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Other respondents saw participant expectations differently. NC, for example, suggested participants would sometimes arrive with an idea of what they would learn. With this in mind, at the start of a seminar, he would make an effort to determine what participants expected which, in turn, would provide an idea concerning changes he might need to make.

One of things I always do, is ask people at the beginning what they want to know. I don’t ask them to stand up and tell everybody. I have them write it down. It’s their secret and then it becomes my secret. So then, I know what their expectations are in a general sense and sometimes it is things that I have left out and that night I need to go back and put in. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)
In general, the responses grouped in this theme suggest that participants often attend a seminar with limited understanding about why they need to attend or what they would learn. With this in mind, both Thai and non-Thai trainers considered it important to provide an overview as to what participants would accomplish during a seminar, and as such discussed the need to ensure that content was relevant to participant needs.

4.2.2 Making Certain of Content Relevance

Interviewees agreed it was important to understand as many shared characteristics of their participants as possible so that they could determine how to relate the planned curriculum and activities to their participants’ situation, needs, or environment. Ranging from the use of examples to being able to relate learned skills to a specific job context, trainers felt the need to make certain participants remained aware of a seminar’s content relevance to their situation or work place.

TX, a Thai trainer, suggested that if he could demonstrate the relevance of what he would be presenting, participants often made an effort to listen and to take part in the seminar.

You have to show that they [participants] should listen to you for x reasons [for] y reasons and that you are putting in a tremendous effort to meet them on their own ground. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

Likewise, non-Thai interviewees indicated that it was particularly important to share with Thai participants what they would be doing and why they would be doing it.

Thais, of course, do have a very high degree of hierarchy so they will generally do what they are told without knowing why. But that is a very dangerous generalization, because a) you are going to get a number of Thais who won’t do that, will ask why are we doing this, and b) those who, perhaps, won’t question why, usually want to know why. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

I would say why we are there, what the point of this is. I would try to make it relevant to, make them see that it is relevant, that would be the starting point, see why they are there. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

Interviewees were clear that despite the fact participants were often unaware of why they had been sent on a training course and often had little understanding of how they might use what was being presented, there was a consensus among Thai and non-Thai trainers that participants should return to the workplace with ‘something’ they could use.
You have to give them what they want, [that is] something they can take back and use. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

Relevance of an application of the information directly into their work place where they can achieve better performance. The evaluation of a presentation program is that they go out and their sales go up. That’s a perfect evaluation. A management development program, it may be they find it easier to talk to their people, their meetings run smoother, they’re better in planning, so it’s direct relevance, that’s the way they see it (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Say you are doing something as dusty as policy, if you can make it very interesting, something that affects their lives, or well being, if this becomes clear to them, it can be a major motivator. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

Drawing attention to the issue of adult learning, NC commented on the need to ensure that content was related to what the participants were or would be doing.

Remember the audience I am dealing with is not school kids. Usually professionals, people who want to apply on Monday what they learned on Friday. … People, especially, adults, need to know why they are going to do something, normally, because they won’t get much out of it if they don’t know why. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

Trainers also expressed the need to ensure participants were aware of content relevance by making certain efforts were taken to ensure selected content remained germane.

Really, the only concern is how I transfer the learning to them in such a way that they can use it immediately. I am always reevaluating. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

By keeping the topic relevant to the audience, it was suggested other benefits would accrue, including an encouragement for participants to be punctual and to help alleviate kreng jai related concerns.

They like to see relevance and validity, what they want from it. You hear lots of things about laziness in their thinking, approach to things, not really willing to go the extra mile, kreng jai that comes in a lot, where they will not challenge existing points of view. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

While content relevancy was seen as important, trainers suggested Thai participants would often view content somewhat differently than participants in other cultures.

It becomes more of the individual impact. … I am not saying people elsewhere never care how changes or new ideas are going to affect them. I think they are; but they tend to be a bit more sophisticated [than Thai audiences]… they [non-Thais] deal with that later, off line. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)
When asked to explain in more detail, HW discussed the differences he had experienced with male and female participants and, on reflection, suggested that while his comments might reflect both genders, they would be more applicable to men than women.

Generally, I’ve found women tend to be more responsible than men. Or in a business context or engaged in a discussion from a point of view of what’s good for the business, as opposed to the guys, what’s in it for me. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

As many Thais attending a seminar are busy and unwilling to sit through a session they do not find useful or interesting, interviewees often organized their seminars so that participants could gain the most benefit, but at the same time leave when they wanted.

It depends on the type of seminar, some seminars start with a wide range of audience. … Started with an update, brief description, some basic knowledge where anyone could listen and enjoy. Later … deeply into the subject and it became boring. … Some people went just half a day; the second half, they did not come back. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

Thai and non-Thai interviewees alike were clear about the importance they placed on making certain content was relevant to participants and commented on the need to organize a seminar so that every participant could take part in whatever way best met their needs.

It depends on the target, the audience. I think about how to convince them, to make them join me. Sometimes the participants just keep quiet; so it gets harder to convince or to make them enjoy, so I have to come back to something basic, close to their life, give an example, make a joke. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

While Thais reportedly enjoy examples from overseas, the use of too many overseas examples or the lack of Thai examples was seen as having a potential negative impact.

I think making references to practices in other countries should be minimal, because the audience would like you to focus on what is relevant to them. If you keep referring to other countries, it means you have not really researched your target audience. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

MB, non-Thai, also mentioned that he saw his ability to get an audience involved depended on the topic he was teaching and the number of participants attending a seminar.

It really depends on what you talking about, what your subject is, what the particular issue you are into. Obviously, you’d like to interact with the class as much as you can. The more you interact, the better. This is also difficult because if you have a large class, you can only interact with so many. And you may have lost another 50 per cent of the people because you only interact with a few and only a few will hear what these people say and what you say, and then it becomes a discussion between you and a few students. I do not actually advocate that at all. I do not think this is a good idea, I prefer lecturing classes rather than interactive unless the class is very small. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)
Interviewee comments analyzed here would suggest that Thai culture and Thai expectations appear to have an impact on how some interviewees adapted material and the way they presented it. Specifically, there was a need to inform and remind participants about the relevance of the content they would be studying. Often not clear before the seminar, once Thais could see the relevance of what was being presented, they were seen as being more apt to take part, at least initially, in the course being presented.

4.2.3 Organizing the Content

The need to organize content is included in this category as although content organization would be reflected in the actual teaching of a seminar, interviewees tended to include content and its organization as an important component in their planning or preparation stage.

Yes, the planning is different in a number of ways. Sometimes it depends so much on the audience. The language of the presentation has to be different and therefore the planning of handouts etc. A fair bit of attention has to be paid to language. That is one thing that comes to mind. With both groups, I would try to find out as much as I can about the students. Probably with the Thai group, or any quote ‘group’, not the same as me, would probably be more important. Exercises, exercises that you ask people to do; I always pay a lot of attention to insuring they are very clear. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

Both Thai and non-Thai seminar leaders shared recognition of the underlying need to understand the topic they were presenting.

Logical, for example, I have to understand the concept; I mean the topic, what to cover. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

The major thing is the technical skills because I do technical courses so the main thing I am looking for is technical. If that person is not good with technical matters and delivers the wrong message, I decide on that point. Presentation skills are second tier. (QL, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 23/04/02)

The audience needs to be able to feel you are confident about the subject. You are not reading it to them. You are able to emphasize a point. … They trust when we say something. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

I try to ask questions and if they cannot answer, I try to give more examples because my topic is quite new for them. (JM, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 25/04/02)

Obviously knowing what you are presenting and instead of focusing on the presentation material, focus on the audience … (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)
GT suggested that as content would often be the same regardless of where he taught; it would need to be introduced differently with Thai participants.

The actual content, the facts and figures … that would obviously be the same, but I would put a very strong emphasis to create a relationship with the group I have to start with. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

With an audience that would not have prepared in advance for a seminar and could have varying backgrounds in the area being presented, interviewees believed it was important to ensure that content was introduced at a pace that would not intimidate or patronize their participants. This is one area of concern that, while it reflected comments from both Thai and non-Thai trainers, appeared to be a concern more readily expressed by Thai trainers.

You have to do it in a non-threatening manner; have to pace it appropriately; have a level of detail that is appropriate. … (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

As will be discussed later, the use of English (4.3.4) and the need to incorporate terms or phrases that might require a simplified definition was seen as a useful phase in planning content.

Explain in easy words, not too technical, examples related to background, summarize all content. Second, should also have a key point. [Then include] more explanation about the message. (JM, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 25/04/02)

QL and JM, two Thai trainers, also discussed the importance of content and the need to organize it along with a variety of different activities as varying points.

The flow of the content is quite important by itself … it should be sequenced or something … have an activity inserted … I focus more on the content and the key message than the facilitation style. (QL, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 23/04/02)

I have to analyze their objectives and what content they need and the other activities that will help them to understand more. (JM, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 25/04/02)

In discussing a disappointing seminar she had presented, VK, a Thai trainer, suggested the next time she would make an effort to find more ideas and teaching skills to employ.

I should have more activities and more examples to go with my explanation. I went back and … I found questionnaires and group discussion to present … (VK, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 04/04/02)

KT also suggested this approach and his need to make certain content remained interesting for his participants.
Just lecture, no other activities is quite boring, no structure… When I do a seminar… the first thing I do is ask them about the topic, maybe some definition or clarification of what they understand, what this topic means… and then bring them to the content I will deliver. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

In Thailand, seminar leaders commented that using practical activities, in lieu of lectures, was well received and recommended that it be incorporated into a program.

I would ask him if he has prepared to mix activities with lectures or not, theory or not, If he has a lot of theory to explain, I would recommend to lower the lecture part and to increase the activities. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

MB also saw the need to plan content with a view to creating interaction among the participants.

You have curriculum; you have content you want to say when you go about your teaching. It is how you say it; the way you interact with the students that makes a success of what you are actually doing. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

In addition, as participants might possess varying backgrounds concerning the content, English language abilities and motivation to remain, interviewees commented on the need to carefully organize content and how it should be presented to their participants.

Lay things out very clearly, a) sub-point one, sub point two, I’m going to have three sub-points sub-point one, sub-point two, sub-point three, b) sub-point one, sub-point two, sub-point three. I think that approach is much more effective because I think people have been trained to accept that kind of input. Very structured and very clearly structured. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

It is very important to have an agenda in advance, and have it all set up, whatever you do; otherwise, you just waste your time and their time. This is one area where I do not give freedom. You [the trainer] are in control; you’re the one who conducts a seminar. You’re the one who decides what’s to be done. You have to do this. This is part of the job. It [the program] is all formed in advance. They [participants] know they will break into groups before we start. The timetable is laid out, it’s all there, the lecture will be this period, then break up, lunch, report back by four, tell the audience, discussion, all planned in advance. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

These comments suggest that Thai participants appeared to appreciate it when a trainer explained how content and activities were organized and as this explanation was seen as making it easier for them to gain an understanding of what they would be doing. As the comments by MB have suggested, it is also important to have a schedule planned.
4.2.4 Scheduling the Program

Another facet of preparation identified by both Thai and non-Thai seminar leaders was the importance of careful scheduling, which included participant tardiness and the initial pre-seminar waiting period, the need to schedule additional activities with a Thai audience and the need to allow for a longer activity session with some activities.

When preparing material for a Thai audience, interviewees discussed the importance of creating a manageable schedule for a seminar. JM offered a comment about her use of time and how she would plan a course a second time.

I would try to tailor the course to time. Time limits made it hard to explain. I knew I couldn’t cover the entire lesson and would need to ask them to read later. (JM, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 25/04/02)

As indicated earlier, a factor interviewees saw as related to their effectiveness was that most knew very little about the participants they would teach until the seminar started. One of the consequences mentioned was an inability to manage time effectively. In particular, Thai interviewees commented on problems they might encounter if there were too many questions, difficulties with the material or if interviewees found time allotted to a session too brief.

It was slower than I planned because sometimes they had questions or I had to explain if they could not understand. I would try to explain more or give them more examples. Finally, I spent more time than I planned. Because, I think that in Thai style, they did not keep to the time plan. (JM, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 25/04/02)

LZ was clear about the use of time and how it related to teacher quality and offered a sample plan as to how a lesson should proceed and what should happen when finished.

A good teacher … keeps good timing of the program, after, one break, or before the break, he should try to give five minutes for a debriefing of what he has covered. To come back to the audience and to make certain they have the message. Every session of this type, allows the teacher to know where he is. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

Regardless of whether a short course was three hours or three days, non-Thai interviewees, in particular, saw the need to keep the time between changes in content or type of activity quite short.

I usually go on a rule of thumb, a very flexible rule of thumb, of no more than twenty minutes of input. Max. Input for twenty minutes, it might be lecture. It may be something else. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)
If the audience is very large, it is very difficult, short lectures should not be for more than 10 to 15 minutes. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

I have a balance, of the hour no more than 10-15 minutes input, the rest of the time would be them working and debriefing and if there’s a video or whatever. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

You shouldn’t really lecture nor have a session more than 20 minutes. Sometimes you have to push through things. Sometimes you can actually get in some group discussions. It depends on the subject. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

When answering questions about how they planned a seminar, trainers talked about the use of time in a number of ways. While many mentioned how long they would spend providing input, FC, a Thai trainer, felt the need to talk about how she had planned a complete one-hour session.

The lecture is only 30 minutes, and then in 20 minutes, discuss the research or the activities they can do, some kinds of play games, like that, at the end of an hour, ask questions again. Some may have a video demonstration some may have a discussion. (FC, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 13/01/03)

Timing and the variety of activities used with a Thai group were also reported as important components in planning. In most cases, Thai interviewees viewed Thais as a group who enjoyed a variety of activities, with a liberal allotment of breaks provided.

Some lecture, some break, some activities, some examples, come back for more lecture, maybe some activities. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

I believe lectures would only be half, perhaps 60% should involve interaction or participation or a mixture of some good activities, but in an hour maybe one or two because you should not have too many. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

In my curriculum, I wrote strategy, tips for trainers, so, they [doctors and professors] know how to manage an hour properly, but they can change, as they are more expert than I am. The lecture is only 30 minutes and then 20 minutes to discuss the research or activities they can do, some kind of game, at the end of an hour, ask questions. Some may have a video demonstration; some may have a discussion. I’ve written it step-by-step, what we have to do in that activity, what points I would like to emphasis. (FC, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 13/01/03)

Another voiced concern with teaching in Thailand and non-native speakers of English was the additional strain and effort participants might need to understand. Therefore, it was recommended by both Thai and non-Thai interviewees that planning take into account potential language problems and the needs of participants who might be less fluent in English.
Planning is different in a number of ways. Sometimes it depends so much on the audience. The language of the presentation has to be different and therefore the planning of handouts etc. ... Exercises that you ask people to do; I always pay a lot of attention to ensure they are very clear. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

I would make it [a session] shorter, just because it is harder work for them [Thais] to get a grasp, make break a little longer, be less formal, an informal time to discuss ‘what was all that about’. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

If participants were not fluent, many trainers felt a 90-minute session might need to finish earlier as participants might be tired from prolonged exposure to English.

Language [English] really comes into it. If they are not really fluent, I will typically break after an hour, hour and fifteen minutes. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

Another time-consuming element discussed was the need to explain both what was expected during an activity and why an activity was being conducted. Therefore, when preparing, interviewees planned for the time they would need to ensure participants knew what they were going to learn and why.

When you set up a session, telling participants this is the point of the exercise and then get into the substance, can take time. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

Interviewees, in addition to providing comments concerning the various aspects of planning they would include and the way in which they might prepare differently for a Thai audience, also offered a number of ideas and suggestions in how they would approach the teaching of a Thai audience.

4.3 Teaching the Audience

As mentioned in Methodology (see 3.0), while content questions were not asked, due to professional courtesy, all fifteen interviewees shared a great many comments related to how they would spend their ‘teaching’ time with participants, from first contact, before the ‘official’ start of the program might start, and through the variety of activities they might ask participants to try.

A detailed analysis of comments by seminar leaders concerning the teaching skills and techniques they would use with participants yielded eight discrete but related themes. Getting Started looks at the dual start norm interviewees found common in Thailand that is, an on-time start with those present and a delayed start with those who arrived late. Creating and Maintaining Interest deals with the voiced need to ensure participants were interested in the
content from the outset and throughout the seminar. Keeping it Simple covers the need interviewees expressed to make certain content was presented in a manner that participants find easy to understand. Using English, reviews seminar leader comments concerning efforts to take into consideration that most participants were not native speakers of English and as such, the stress they might feel while attending a seminar presented in English. Paying Attention to Participant Reactions includes comments concerning the use of audience verbal and non-verbal cues to determine if a seminar was progressing as expected. Applying Teaching Skills presents comments interviewees supplied concerning skills they believed are needed when working with groups of Thai seminar participants. Questions and Answers, includes how trainers engaged participants in two-way communication, that is, between a participant and a seminar leader. The final section, Encouraging Group Discussions, reviews the steps interviewees associated with setting up, monitoring and debriefing their Thai participants taking part in a group discussion activity.

4.3.1 Getting Started

Most trainers stated the need to begin on time. However, they added that was often difficult, as many participants do not arrive on time. Therefore, they expressed a need to be prepared to fill in time while waiting for stragglers. While not all seminars have participants arriving late, it was a concern, as both scenarios, that is, a late start or an on-time start, are related to the need to create the correct impression and to establish the desired atmosphere.

Many interviewee comments, primarily, although not exclusively by non-Thai interviewees, concerning time reflected the idea that for most Thais, time was seen as quite flexible and that starting on time was not something participants normally expected to happen.

The concern with time is very rubbery. … There is not really an expectation things will necessarily start on time. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

It should be noted that while many Thais in business have a nine-to-five schedule, this is rarely the case in practice. During many conversations with participants in longer courses or seminars, I have been surprised at the hours many Thais spend away from home each working day. First, to avoid heavy traffic, many arrive at the office early. In one case, a participant mentioned that she arrived at 6:00 a.m. and then went to a sports center. In another case, a participant mentioned she arrived at her office at 6:30 a.m. to secure a free parking space and then slept in her car until close to nine. However, most Thai office workers buy something for
breakfast, go to their office, and start work. In the evening, again to avoid heavy traffic, many leave late with 7:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. quite common.

To compensate for the long hours in the office, lunch is usually quite long, up to two hours if errands need to be completed. Lunch is often the main socializing period of the day and provides a chance to buy food for the evening meal at home and other small items on sale at markets. In this sense, as suggested, time is quite rubbery.

In my experience, most participants arrive late to a seminar due to one of two reasons. First, if the seminar is in their office or office complex, they might have been at their desk completing an important task. Second, if the seminar is away from their office, they might have miscalculated the time needed to arrive, as in Bangkok it can take an additional one to two hours to travel a kilometer from an office.

The Thai attitude to time, according to NC, appeared to differ when compared to the attitude he had experienced in Vietnam.

Starting time was very casually regarded by the Thais. We might well start at nine, but the first hour is mainly talking and eating. The contrast was that when I got to Vietnam, and the way I describe it, as soon as your dot hits the spot, we’re in business in Vietnam. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

How many would be present at the scheduled start time and how long the start should be delayed was a key decision trainers mentioned needed to be reviewed carefully.

They can’t second-guess the time, the time is a given and they’ll come. … More than a one-day seminar, you have to start, no matter what. … A one-day seminar, then you can make some judgments. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

While it might be expected that international organization employees would have a different attitude to time, SW suggested this was not always true.

Interestingly, it depends on the organization. If it is multi-national organization and the culture is an expectation that people turn up on time, everyone will be there on time. But often, you get people coming in half an hour late, hour late. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

When asked specifically how many participants would be present from a group of 20, interviewee answers ranged from a low of 12 to a high of 16. Concerning how long interviewees would wait to start, answers ranged from an ‘on-time’ start regardless of the number present to a more typical 10- to 15-minute wait to a maximum 30 minutes.
The actual asking of the participants present whether a seminar should begin and make it difficult for those absent, or wait and waste the time of those present, was used by WG as one method to help defuse the lateness dilemma.

What I do often, I explain to the group, some people are late and really I don’t want to punish you for being on time, however, in terms of the importance of everyone getting the message, would you mind if we waited half an hour. Immediately they get on the phone to the people who are out there because they always know and typically, get in starting the program in half an hour’s timeframe. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

NC prepared coffee and snacks for those who were on time to enjoy while waiting for others ‘stuck in traffic’, as he saw a definite benefit to this initial chat time.

I sometimes ask the organizer if we could have coffee and stuff available. So that if you do have people late, you can invite students to get a cup of coffee or whatever. And then of course, that can be quite useful chat time to find out what the students are on about, where they are from. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

This use of the waiting time to get to know participants was repeated as it was seen as offering a chance for trainers to build relationships and to learn more about the participants they would be teaching.

I would wait a bit, but the small talk can actually start that relationship building, breaking down the barriers. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

I just generally, chitchat and wander around just warming up, what’s happening. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

One suggested method to deal with the lateness concern was to use a ‘get to know you’ opening format. While this might not include all participants, it offered a trainer an opportunity to get to know some of their participants.

I would introduce myself and then I would ask people to introduce themselves. That gives you another cushion, 10 minutes, maybe, 15, to allow latecomers to show up. There is always going to be someone late, particularly on the first day. Then you go on from self-introductions, to an overview of the course, and then you start the material, that will be about 25 minutes into things. Then you probably have everybody. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

The use of the waiting period for the trainer and participants to get to know each other and to provide some ideas about the course also provided trainers with a chance to create a comfortable atmosphere and relationship.
The ones there would be very squirmish, kreueng jai in a Thai way, feeling sorry for me, not knowing how to behave. If I just quietly wait, they’d assume I’m angry and when it actually starts, it would be even more difficult to build relationships. I’d definitely start talking to people. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

While some interviewees felt that some participants would arrive late, others argued that this was not always true.

When the course is of great importance to participants and their job, I find they are more likely to turn up on time; time is probably less rubbery. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

That is not at all my experience. … People have been on time. They want to be there. … I have not had that issue. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

Whether a seminar leader started on time or waited to allow stragglers the opportunity to be present for the ‘official start’, interviewees were clear about what they would include as part of their ‘official start’. Many suggested that the most important initial goal was to create interest in content by explaining what participants would be doing and why the training would be useful.

One, are you very clear on the purpose, do you know why you are doing this? Why are these people being forced to come together ‘wasting’ their time, you have to be very clear to make them feel their time is not being wasted. If you cannot do that, then no matter what you do, it’s going to be a waste of time. Guaranteed a lot aren’t clear on that. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

Then say what we’re going to be doing today. These are the outcomes we want. This is what the program looks like. This is how we will be following it. This is the way we work, very interactive, lots of opportunity for you to speak, ask questions, so I set the tone. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

In this way, trainers were able to work towards creating a level of comfort during the early part of their seminar.

I will at least do some ice breaking, something to break the ice between the audience and myself, and if the audience is new with each other... Either I tell some jokes, make sure they are comfortable with me and then I start with the outline, what I will be covering. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

This opening trend, covering administrative and personal details was a common theme and followed much the same pattern in most short courses as this ‘pre-start’ time was seen as useful in helping participants to feel comfortable with their surroundings.
Welcome them, make sure everyone is comfortable, they know where the toilets are, this is the breaks, in other words, I give them some comfort level in terms of them knowing what the day will look like. Then say what we are going to be doing today. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Regardless of how they started a seminar, interviewees mentioned that efforts were needed to create a feeling of comfort during an extended warm-up period.

Spend a lot more time up front, helping them [Thais] become more comfortable with me, me becoming comfortable with them, so a lot more, what I would call warm-up time. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Most interviewees mentioned using a comfortable opening routine, one that would permit them to have some fun and to ease tension as in this example shared by GT, a non-Thai interviewee.

First, I would start by trying to get some laughter to release tension of some kind, which could be anything. I myself would tell a short joke in Thai or a joke with myself in Thai. If I were to advise someone that does not know Thai, I would still advise him to learn a phrase, saying he doesn’t speak Thai and he is very sorry about it or something like that. Basically sort of reduce the person in a way that takes it down to a common level where he opens up, makes the people realize they can laugh … Basically talk about himself from the perspective of the audience; or what is relevant from their point of view, not just an ordinary CV, but more about why he is there. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

One Thai interviewee, VK also offered practical advice concerning the start of a seminar and how to provide participants with an overview of the seminar’s content.

The first thing I do is ask them about the topic, maybe a definition or clarification of what they understand, what this topic means first, and then bring them to the content I will deliver. Do they understand words before we go into details? Someone may have different meaning or thinking on what this mean and so I can know they have different backgrounds. (VK, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 04/04/02)

The need for this warm-up period was perhaps best seen in GT’s contrast between teaching a Thai and a non-Thai audience, in this case Swedish or European.

I would spend a longer time starting the whole thing than I would in Sweden, for instance, or Scandinavia or Europe where one can go pretty much get down to business immediately. This in order to, to reduce the sort of built in tension there is [in Thailand]. Everyone is kind of stressed-out, because it’s a language issue; it’s other issues, there is the teacher in Thai culture is sort of high up on a pedestal. I need to reduce tension to be effective in actually delivering the message that would probably be the same [as in Europe]. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)
A common thread in these comments was the need to accept that some participants would be late and to make the most of the wait time to get to know those who had arrived on time. In addition, non-Thai trainers, more so than Thai trainers felt the need to demonstrate that while waiting was troublesome, it could not be helped. Taking this attitude, not getting angry and therefore, in the eyes of the Thai audience, not embarrassing yourself, was seen as a first step in creating a favorable impression that would enhance a non-Thai trainer’s ability to start a seminar on a positive note.

Knowing a seminar was likely to start late means a seminar leader needs to prepare in advance for a long wait period. Whether this time would involve one-on-one talks over coffee with those who had arrived or the entire group, efforts should be made to relieve the tension felt by participants present.

4.3.2 Creating and Maintaining Interest

The question of how to maintain participant interest during a short course appeared to fall onto a continuum regardless of whether interviewees were Thai or non-Thai. At one end, humor and jokes were used to keep participants involved, while at the other end, the awareness of content importance and relevancy were employed. KT provided concrete ideas that reflected the humor and joke end of the maintaining interest continuum. In these comments, he provided ideas, that while they might sound a bit childish, based on his experience, they have worked well.

I think of questions about the subject, the topic, either something new or you throw back some question related to what you said before. To make sure they understand, have some hand raisers whether anyone understands. An effective method is giving gifts. If anyone gives the right answer, you get some gift. … A two or three hour seminar, where the speaker has a very short time and needs to get across very quickly, things like that work quite well. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

At the content relevancy end of the continuum, KT, a Thai trainer, saw a distinct need to analyze an audience and to ensure that the topic was engaging.

You make it of interest to them. … If they already have an interest, you have to make certain you give them something of interest. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

Interviewees suggested that participants would become interested when a seminar leader was interested in, and knowledgeable about, what they were teaching.
If you believe what you are talking about, if you can express yourself in a way they can relate to, then you succeed. … You’ll have 20% who will enthusiastically go along with everything you say. They will love you. Then you’ll have half the class who think this is great, this is a good teacher, he’s passionate, he’s enthusiastic, he talks with a passion, he loves his subject, and he’s professional. You have to know what you’re talking about and if you’re passionate about what you’re talking about, you’ve won over 80%. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

If the person is energetic, comes out with a lot of energy, has already shown he knows about the subject … already made the seminar interesting, energized the group. Someone with a lot of vocal variety in speaking, not monotone, not come up and point some laser on a chart (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

In discussing why Thai participants might be disappointed in a seminar, JM suggested that a boring message and a bored trainer would be two reasons.

Bored, maybe he has a good message, but boring. (JM, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 25/04/02)

Maintaining interest was not based on one idea, rather, as SW mentioned, it required a variety of techniques and effort to make certain an audience remained interested.

I don’t think there is any one technique. I think questions come out of curiosity, being made genuinely interested, and so therefore, the key really is engaging them from the very beginning. If you don’t have their hearts and minds in the first hour, it’s going to be difficult the rest of the day. Once they lose interest and lose focus, you’re not going to get any questions, period. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

The need to make certain seminar participants remained interested was seen to relate to the need to keep content simple, yet meet the objectives set for the seminar. In short, there was a reported need by Thai and non-Thai trainers to pace material to participant background and ability.

4.3.3 Keeping it Simple

Trainers talked about their need to maintain interest, to keep the audience active, and to demonstrate care and respect for the audience. Both Thai and non-Thai trainers also commented on the need to remember their participants, what they might be worried about and as the seminar leader to ensure their message reached as many participants as possible.

He should not have to explain twice or three times, it should be clear from the first instance of him mentioning these words. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

A person who listened, adjust to what they found, quickly and accurately, get it out in the least amount of fluff. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)
Three pieces of advice: keep it simple; keep it simple; keep it simple. Keep it simple in terms of overall organization. Keep it simple in terms of language, without being condescending, but keep it within limited vocabulary, and keep it simple in terms of coming back to your main point. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

As part of an effort to keep content simple, interviewees suggested the need to continually link one part of the seminar with the next.

I always link the program, what we’ve just covered is this; this is what we are going to cover after break. “When we come back from break; now remember what I said, this is where we are going now”. Linkage is critical to any program. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Interviewees also suggested the need to take time to explain theories carefully, which should include both the source and practical examples.

The clarity of the message is important. … When you have a theory when you have a fact to share, you should quote the source. When you have a theory to share, you must be careful that theory does not confuse the audience. A theory had better have illustrations to support so that it can be practical and not just theory. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

Keeping it simple was seen as an important concern seminar leaders need to review and ensure. Related to this need to keep content simple and at a level participants could follow was the need to monitor their use of English as the medium of instruction.

4.3.4 Using English

One important concern shared by interviewees when teaching Thai participants was the question of English and how to deal with potential language barrier concerns, as many trainers suggested they would or could not use Thai during all or parts of a seminar.

Even though I mostly hold teaching or whatever I do, presentations, in English, I start by saying they can ask questions in Thai. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Don’t try to use Thai language unless your Thai is good. Be relaxed, don’t be up tight, don’t speak too fast, and speak clearly... (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

When dealing with non-native speakers of English, Thai and non-Thai trainers shared the belief that they needed to monitor their English language speaking speed and clarity.

My advice is to expect that what he [a new teacher in Thailand] considers normal pacing [English speaking speed] could be fast. He should check the pacing with the audience, whether he is too fast, too slow or just right. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)
I’d make a very strong recommendation that you lay down your script and practice until it becomes second nature, the ability to keep your pace below, certainly 120, even better 110 words a minute, with pauses, with slowness, the pace is definitely a problem. Thais have a very difficult time with different accents, so if you can keep the pace slow enough they can probably make out whatever accent. I would also limit vocabulary if I could. … The idea being to bring it [vocabulary] down to about 3,000 or 4,000 words, only use special words where required for a particular line of business. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

The need to take care with speed and clarity was mentioned as particularly true with content produced overseas that would need to be adapted for a non-native audience, while making certain it had not been changed in any way.

If we talk about the dissemination of corporate direction, content has to be the same. We would refer to local examples to make it relevant, but the content, the basic message has to be the same otherwise it is not serving its purpose. The difference in Thailand would be I always slow down; I don’t speak Thai so I slow down in my communication in English. I did the same in Portugal, so I am used to speaking – slowly – and – clearly – about the point I am trying to communicate. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

If speed was adapted, KT, a bilingual Thai trainer, for example, was clear it would be best not to mention this fact as not much would be gained and a great deal could be lost due to participant embarrassment or the kreng jai factor.

Thai people are exposed to English from the Western world, the majority will be from the US, someone who speaks US English, tends to speak fast, so they need to speak slowly. They cannot mention, “I tend to speak fast”. Thais do not like to be looked down. [kreng jai] To a Thai that is a bit of a let down or look down. “You don’t know much English, so I will speak slowly”. It [speaking slowly] could be advantage, but I would see it as a disadvantage when a foreign instructor begins by mentioning, “I will try to speak slowly, go ahead and speak slow if you need to ask me a question”. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

MB, a non-native English speaker provided a different insight into the English question. As a fluent, albeit not native English speaker, he appreciated where participants might have trouble. In addition, as he suggested, as a non-native speaker, he saw his English as not so bound by culture.

I have a big advantage being a non-native English speaker. … I do not use English acronyms, slang, I use the English I’ve been taught and that’s the way I speak and it goes down very well with Thais. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

Language was also suggested as a potential barrier to discussion as participants who were weak in English might be reluctant to speak but it was mentioned that this should not be interpreted as lack of interest or ability, rather just a fear of English.
I think it is more related to language issues to get interaction going, even though they understand you, they are not as comfortable with discussion expressing themselves in English so it is a problem when it comes to interaction. I think most lecturers misinterpret this as being afraid to come up with their own opinion. That is not the issue; it is actually more related to not being able to express it in terms of language [English]. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

The question of confidence in English was seen as important and was suggested as one reason why some participants appeared more prepared than others to offer an opinion.

There are some people, who in the Thai context have greater confidence about their language ability, confidence in terms of performance management; meaning they want to look good; they know they have a good answer. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

I don’t think people here are any different from anywhere else in terms of intellect, they understand concepts just as well. It’s maybe a language function, that if you teach them in Thai, they are probably faster than us [Thais and non-Thais who are comfortable in English]. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

WG talked about the problem he encountered with the use of English and offered a method to compensate for participants who might be having difficulty.

What we find is often you get one or two people whose English, who are more used maybe to American English, the American accent, they struggle with the Australian accent. Very early in the program, I identify where these people might be and I give a lot of time to group discussion and what’s happening in the group discussion is translation by people who do understand for people who don’t and they still get involved that way. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Another pattern was described by GT who suggested that often a group discussion included a few minutes during which more fluent group members would help weaker members with understanding of the content leading into the current discussion activity.

If someone is slightly less versed in English, they actually update each other and get to talk about what you actually said so it is not necessarily interacting with you, but should try to go around, so they are allowed to talk to each, especially if it is done in English. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

According to WG, Thai participants staring back at a seminar leader with blank faces was not necessarily as problematic as one might be lead to believe, rather it might reflect the fact participants were, in fact, busy listening and translating.

No, no often it [blank faces] is because they’re listening, they’re taking in the English; they’re translating into Thai. … It’s a very dangerous area, I know I make assumptions sometimes, but it is so dangerous that you could misread the whole group. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)
The evidence presented here would suggest that while it was important to remember that many Thais speak and understand English with comfort and skill, it is a second language. Both native- and non-native-speaking trainers shared the view that they needed to take care that their use of English matches the expectations and abilities of the participants they are teaching. There is a need, therefore, for trainers to pay attention to participant behavior to gauge their reaction and to know if changes might be needed. Not surprisingly, this also emerged as a theme from the analysis.

4.3.5 Paying Attention to Participant Reactions

The need to use participant feedback through non-verbal signs, such as looking lost, refusal to nod; or verbal signs, that is, non-involvement in a discussion were a common idea identified by seminar leaders. One reason for a concern about participant reaction was the possible need to restart a seminar if events had set off in an inappropriate fashion or direction. However, to know if a seminar should be restarted or certain sections needed to be reviewed, both Thai and non-Thai trainers discussed their need to be able to monitor and understand Thai participant reactions.

You need to realize that this [a seminar] is going perhaps wrong now and actually stop, take it easy and get things back on track. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

While some trainers found it difficult to explain exactly how they were able to determine if things were going well, WG for example, was able to offer one idea as to how he could often determine if everything was going as planned.

I’ll get a sense from the group. They’re just not interested in what’s happening, they’re talking about other things, there’s a lot of discussion going on that’s not relevant to the program, there are a whole lot of things. You know, I could say it’s a gut feel, but a gut feel is based on observation, you know, just sensing, you know; that things are just not right. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

During this part of the interviews, trainers provided a number of non-verbal cues they were able to recognize and understand. LZ suggested that his participants provided him with a number of ways to read how a seminar was progressing.

You will find the nodding, and signs that they are following. Or, you will find faces turning left and right; that is the opposite; they look left and right to other people, to find allies or to learn whether he is alone. … I think any trainer with experience can sense from the facial and eye contact whether the audience is with them or not. … Give a lot of signs or messages to the trainer whether participants understand. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)
Active feedback was also mentioned by both Thai and non-Thai trainers as an effective method to gain an insight as to how participants were handling seminar content and in many cases, both groups of trainers included examples of student behavior and what this behavior reflected.

A good presentation means that if he gives a lecture, the participants will pay attention. No one is sleeping. If they have questions, he will spend time answering. It means they are interested in that topic. (FC, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 13/01/03)

When I’m up there, I can see it in a heartbeat. I can see the expressions, I can see the feedback from the people who are there, and I can tell whether I’m not getting through. A lack of a comprehension expression, for lack of a better word. But it is clearly there, clearly when, you’re making eye contact but there’s no contact, the eyes are meeting, but you’re not. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

You will have noticed the goldfish looks of boredom in the seminar, so you know things are not going to well, you may have tried to work out what is going on here and in the break, there will not be as much interaction with you. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

For many interviewees not only did participants provide feedback subtly during a seminar itself, but also during breaks and during lunch.

If they are not having a good time, they won’t usually come up to you except for the social niceties. If it is going extremely well, there will be a lot of interaction usually. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

If the seminar is going well, it means people enjoy it, the material is interesting, and there is much more to be given till the end of the day, you will find a lot of people will approach the instructor and ask a lot of questions and talk among themselves about the subject. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

Just have a listen to what the buzz is, what’s going on outside, what are they talking about, are they talking about the seminar, are they talking about something completely different. If they are talking about something completely different, that worries me. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Interviewees commented on the value of break-time feedback as one reason they often organized shorter sessions with more breaks.

Ninety minutes is perhaps too long, should have a couple of breaks in there because that is when you get a lot of your feedback. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

Participation in group-work was also mentioned as providing a “good way of getting good feedback” (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02).
Often you can tell from the group discussions, the output from group discussions. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Group work, it was suggested, offered an opportunity to evaluate participant feedback, especially if participants were not interested in what they have been asked to do.

The other thing Thais will do, if what they have been asked to do, appears to them to be irrelevant or not interesting or something, when they get into their group, they will do something else, which can be some other bit of work they find interesting, or just have a chat. They don’t actively resist, it will be a passive resistance. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

Thai participants provided both Thai and non-Thai seminar leaders with a great deal of feedback concerning a seminar. Attentive faces during the seminar, animated conversation at break, and active participation in discussion were a few examples provided by interviewees as means used by to demonstrate their feelings about a seminar.

4.3.6 Applying Teaching Skills

Teaching and understanding how feedback is provided by participants is important and, as shown, can come while lecturing, while monitoring group discussions, and at break times. With this in mind, seminar leaders commented on the need to be comfortable with participants regardless of the situation or activity.

It has to be someone who doesn’t need to be in control all the time. Many people develop that comfort level with public speaking and stay in control to the exclusion of any sort of interaction or output. If they get a question, they cut it off. Don’t break my train of thought, you know let me finish my speech. It’s about being comfortable talking to groups; but it is also being comfortable with things thrown at you that you are not expecting. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Another opinion concerning teaching mentioned by interviewees was the need to determine what style of teaching might be preferred and to match this preference with the required teaching skills or techniques.

A good teacher is someone who keeps good timing of a program. After or before break, he should try to give five minutes for a debriefing of what he has covered. Come back to the audience and make certain they have the message. Every session of this type, allows the teacher to know where he is. … To do this with charisma. … He would lead the audience, establish what they have understood, take a break, and come back for more. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)
In addition, trainers expressed the need to structure and present material so that their participants would have a chance to learn what had been presented and have an opportunity to demonstrate this knowledge through interaction.

You may have a very boring subject; you may have a most interesting subject that you carry through to your audience by being able to interact with some individual person in the audience. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

There was also an understanding that a connection between the trainer and participants needed to be established and maintained. In particular, both Thai and non-Thai interviewees were explicit in how material should be presented.

Rather than speaking to a slide or speaking to the data, I talk to the audience about the framework and where it fits. (PF, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 10/04/02)

I try to do as much as I can with two-way communication. For example, I will ask questions to test understanding. (JM, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 25/04/02)

Presentation skills mean you know the subject, if you keep looking at a chart, reading a chart, reading your presentation, it means that maybe they are not yours. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

Just speak naturally, don’t memorize things … If you memorize things you will have to focus on what you need to remember, so you forget the audience, everything has to come naturally. (VK, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 04/04/02)

Continuing with presentation skills, interviewees mentioned other techniques, such as walking around, gesturing and appearing animated that seemed to be important in helping create a connection with participants.

I walk around at the front and … if I do not need to point at anything and have a wireless microphone, sometimes I walk toward the middle of the room to make sure I capture some of the audience at the back. … I do not like to stand still at the front. I like to walk around a bit, go out to the audience and talk to them, ask questions, go around, especially with a seminar of 20. … You need to be visible. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

NC also talked about how he moved about and used gestures and in his interview painted a vivid contrast between how he saw Thais teaching and some of the techniques he seemed to be able to get away with.

Most Thai professors sit very rigid, don’t move around very much. That is not the way I teach. I believe it is important to be sensibly animated, not Donald Duck. I remember on a course … when someone would answer a question, I’d throw a toy. They loved it, absolutely loved it. Now you have to be careful, this was the third day of a course that had started with 30 and
grown to 50. I knew most of them and had a good laughing relationship so I could chuck little koala bears. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

It was also recognized that a seminar leader must be able to present material using a variety of teaching or presentation skills. This was reflected in a number of specific comments offered by Thai trainers.

I know my voice is not very exciting, so I try to add some games or something in the class. Some other people might have their own strengths some presentation style to help. (QL, Thai, Female, 23/04/02)

A lot of the flashy things, let’s say you do power point and you have lots of flash, cartoons, moving pictures, things like that are not really the highlight, will throw participants off the subject, so make it simple. You can mix and match, you can have some power point; you can have some video clips. You can have some music; something added in, mix them around. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

The presentation would be different, voice, personality, hand movement, gestures, everything, presentation. (FC, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 13/01/03)

While ‘chucking koala bears’ to moving around and using vocal variety in a clear and well thought out presentation of content material were mentioned as useful in creating a positive learning environment, specific problems and issues related to classroom dynamics were also discussed. In particular, interviewees talked about how to solicit questions from a Thai audience who, they felt due to cultural and educational background and experience, were not practiced or comfortable asking an educator questions.

4.3.7 Soliciting Questions and Answers

If a seminar was to be more than just a series of lectures during which participants were expected to sit, listen and take notes, it was acknowledged that a variety of activities needed to be included. Whether these activities included a specific question and answer exchange or an activity, seminar leaders suggested participants would need to ask questions.

However, it appeared that this would be difficult with a Thai audience as they might have a perceived weakness or shyness concerning their question asking ability based on a lack of experience or due to a perceived weakness in English. In either case, seminar leaders, particularly the non-Thai, suggested the need to find a method to encourage questions in a non-threatening manner. Often this was accomplished as suggested by NC, through the acceptance of some behavior that would normally be unexpected in an adult classroom.
There were good questions coming from the students. This was one of those groups where their English was quite good. They felt confident asking questions, and they were quite good questions or note passing. This is where students who can’t speak English so well, pass their questions to more confident speakers and then he or she will ask on their behalf. This was a good indicator. They were animated. They were laughing at the right bits. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

Some of the ideas suggested for soliciting input and questions also reflected a more traditional approach to questions and participant input although there was a voiced need not to offend or embarrass participants who might be willing to respond but based on the kreng jai factor be reluctant to take the chance.

I start with, “Do you have any questions?” Sometimes people will rise to just that, it depends on how well they know you. If it’s blank faces, then I try to make it more specific, or point to a person, and say, “what about this?” Just force the issue. You have to be careful with that because if the individual is uncomfortable in the language or hasn’t understood it, or is shy, or whatever, then they are going to feel really bad in trying, as the face thing [kreng jai] is worse than elsewhere. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

To get more interaction, I would still encourage them to ask questions, but not answer them immediately. “Really this is a good question, are there any other questions” and physically go close to the group. Actually, go out and ask, “What do you think of this question?” Actually physically point at people and say, “… Do you think the same, or do you have some other aspect of this before I answer the first one?” (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

While it might appear difficult to start a question and answer session with Thai participants, interviewees were clear that it was possible. However, they were also explicit that they needed to allow for an easy, no-lose-of-face [kreng jai] escape.

If you’re going to ask a specific person a question, try to make it in such a way that he or she can divert the question… at the same time, be encouraging, with a little encouragement classes here can respond extremely well. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

I try to establish eye contact and hope someone will answer on their own, usually they do. I’m not going to cold-call timid people in a paid session. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

Another useful technique to solicit questions was to start a question and answer session with sample questions provided by the trainer. In doing so, trainers expressed the hope participants would be encouraged to ask questions based on the model provided.

I normally salt a [put in my own] question. I will ask, “Are there any questions?” and normally, I seldom get a response … so in the end, I salt. I don’t give it [the question] to a person in the audience, I say, “Often at this point, somebody asks me about …”, and then I answer the question I’ve raised and most often that’s enough to get questions going. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)
Although it would be expected that any question would be welcomed by a trainer, interviewees also expressed the need to control, if not ignore, questions that were off topic or of limited interest to a majority of the participants.

If the question is relevant and your answer pertains to the subject, then they will have some interest in it. If the question is leading too deep into some area, other members will lose interest. I normally break off these questions, “We can discuss this off-line, during break, or come and see me”. Ask other people, and throw back some questions to bring out more questions. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

Maybe, ask a couple of questions and then I’ll say, clearly this is of interest to you, in the break if you would like to follow up, I’m more than willing do that but let’s give everyone an opportunity to ask questions. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Another concern, during the course of the seminar, and in particular during group discussion and follow up question and answer sessions was the need to hear from as many seminar participants as possible and to politely control one or two people who might try to dominate. Often these questions come from a participant who was more comfortable in English, while those who might be shy or weaker in English could easily be overlooked.

I would tell … people to shut up for five minutes and make a special effort to solicit input and ideas from people who need time to think about it, time to discuss in their local language. You have to find ways to get non-English speakers to contribute. Otherwise, the whole conversation will be dominated by one section. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

In particular, with larger groups, trainers accepted that it would be unrealistic to expect every participant to be equally involved or equally interested in what was being discussed. This meant they needed to balance between encouraging a dialogue, but at the same time realized it would not always include every participant at any one time.

Whether their answers are effective or not is another question, but I feel they are more forth coming. Am I talking about everybody? No. We are always on about a percentage of a group. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

Interviewees agreed that questions and answers played an extremely important role in their seminars. They also suggested that while it might be difficult to initiate questions, a variety of techniques appeared to be successful in encouraging participants to make the effort. Another important session in many seminars discussed by the interviewees was group discussions and as with questions and answers, comments included useful techniques and ideas applicable with their Thai participants.
4.3.8 Encouraging Group Discussions

Group discussion was seen as an important element in many seminars. It was felt that group discussion, in which a trainer circulates from group to group to monitor progress and to deal with concerns and questions, worked well in Thailand as it allowed participants to work in small groups, which Thais appeared to enjoy and often did extremely well.

Even I learn many things from them [group sessions] because of the different ways of thinking, and normally group work, small group; there will be some nice outcomes. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

Interviewees also commented that small group discussion allowed a group and not an individual to offer ideas, thus reducing the embarrassment factor for many participants.

You put them [participants] in groups to discuss, but you are praying one of the people will be able to ask questions. I find quite often, if you ask individuals to tell you what they think, it is quite difficult. But, put them in groups and ask one person to speak, they always find one person to speak; it is a rare group that doesn’t… Somebody will stand up to represent a group, but not themselves. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Group work allowed participants to share ideas and to make certain that they had understood. In an educational environment in which trainers expressed a concern that participants might be reluctant to ask about something they might have not understood, interviewees found that the same reluctance might not be so strong when participants were together. Group work sessions were also seen as providing weaker participants the chance to catch up with content or to ask each other about something they had not understood.

They actually update each other and get to talk about what you actually said so it is actually, not interacting with you, but you should try to go around, they might ask something… (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

In dealing with group discussion, interviewees commented on each stage, that is, forming groups, encouraging group discussion, starting group work and finally, debriefing once a discussion had finished. When it came to forming groups, trainers either let participants form their own groups or made groups for them.

If it’s the first day, it’s a matter of convenience, they’re sitting with people they feel comfortable with … I’ll usually group them right there and then, if it’s the third or fourth of these things [group discussion], I will randomly mix them as long as it doesn’t cause too many logistical problems. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)
With participants who might know each other, trainers sometimes implemented different criteria in implementing group.

I see who is there and decide in advance. I do not leave anything to circumstances. Because it is a waste of time to let them pick. You have to organize them in advance. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

Returning to two themes discussed in the literature review, both kreng jai and hierarchy were mentioned as being relevant. In particular, while groups were being formed, trainers suggested, more so with non-Thai than with Thai trainers, that senior members should be assigned to a particular group or all placed into one group together. In this way, it was suggested chances would improve that more participants would be encouraged to speak.

In Thailand, generally, you have to be very careful you don’t get just the opinion of the most senior person, which typically is what can happen. So, we mix the groups around. We actually lay some ground rules. We identify who the most senior people are, and we very carefully and very politely, move them into the background. We might make them the scribe, because they are still the leader then, they get a lot of face. That way the rest of the group can get involved in the discussion. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Interviewees also commented on the need to take into consideration the nature of the seminar and the material presented when forming groups. This could be based on a desire to have group composition consist of participants who were similar in background and experience or, on the other hand, quite different.

If the subject is organization dependent, or if it’s subject dependent in some other ways, it might be that within one company or a number of different companies, you might have reasons for actually having people from the same company in a specific group. You might have reasons for not having them in the same group; it very much depends. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Although benefits were seen in arranging groups in a particular way, it was suggested that it was often best to allow participants to decide for themselves how they would like to divide into groups.

I’ll just take a step back here. I always check these things out with either the people running the show or the students about what they would like to do. How do they like to do things? Some like to be broken into groups by numbers, others quite clearly want to self-select. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/03)

One useful constraint mentioned was the need to limit the number of people in each group. In this way, it was felt group dynamics and discussion results could be enhanced. While the numbers varied, four with a maximum six was mentioned as most beneficial.
Typically four, maximum six, once you go beyond that it becomes unwieldy … it just generates more discussion and they really never ever reach a consensus, or reach a direction or a point they are making. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

If you go through something, have them discuss, divide them up into three or four. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Once groups have been formed and started to work, trainers commented on the fact that their role changed from an administrator to a facilitator. As this stage could also result in problems, both Thai and non-Thai seminar leaders voiced a need to ensure participants were led very carefully into a discussion so that everyone knew what was expected.

Be very, very clear with your instructions about what you want; the outcome you want from the group. Be very clear, repeat it a number of times, write it down, and then monitor as you walk around. Otherwise, they [participants] get off track. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

First, the discussion must be very clear, they must know if there is a need to find a leader, and whether there is going to be feedback. You have to tell them in advance. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

Once discussion began, trainers, regardless of their nationality, suggested it was important to move around to make certain each group was working on the topic in a similar fashion or direction.

Just to make certain they are following instructions, and they are progressing, checking to make certain the instructions you gave are followed and they are not going in the wrong directions. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

If you leave it totally open, saying read this case study, write something on a flip chart, and report back, you’re going to get people going off in different directions. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

When you start the group discussions, workshop, you visit all of them; you talk to them, see how they are progressing. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

If someone has maybe two or three pages on a flip chart, I will go through it. … Say, “What do you mean by this? Let’s expand on this”. I’ll control it that way, I’ll say, “Well this is linked to this, isn’t it?” I’ll actually summarize. If we have timeframes we need to keep to, otherwise, discussions could go on all day. I like to control it that way. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

While many respondents felt the need to visit each group, MB was not clear about the need, although he did suggest that visiting groups was an opportunity to see if participants might have questions.
I don’t find it important [to visit every group]. It’s not very important for the groups’ works. It’s important to show interest. … Just let them work. … If you want to go around, fine. … I’ll check as they may have questions. You control a bit by going around. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

Other trainers voiced a different view concerning group discussions and whether each group should be visited and how their time should be distributed between groups.

You don’t need to spend as much time with each group each time. … If there are ten groups … after three groups, you’ll probably not get so much more information. … Choose other groups next time and do the same. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

I try to get around to all them, but one group might take longer than another … There is the possibility I could miss a group that actually has a need I don’t notice. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

When deciding which group to visit first, trainers commented on the need to identify the group having the most difficulty. However, in looking for signs a group that might be having difficulty, interviewees recommended to wait, as they would not want to misjudge a delay in starting as confusion, as in many cases this wait time reflected the time needed by Thai participants in a group to establish roles and hierarchy.

Typically, I’ll watch what’s happening in the groups and often even in mixed cultures you can tell whether there is confusion or whether there is focus on what is happening. … Have a look, see what’s going on, and work with the group where I think I might not have made it clear enough. Often I’m wrong, because what I interpreted as confusion, in fact is just the setting of their own roles within the group … their own hierarchy up in a very polite way. Often I’m wrong, but at least I go out and check. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

While the goal in visiting each group was to ensure a group was on the right track or to see if they had questions, it was observed that often participants use a seminar leader’s visit to their group to ask personal questions or to make certain their group was moving in the right direction. Therefore, when visiting groups, primarily non-Thai trainers suggested it was important to allow a group to control what would happen when they visited.

I listen first and I don’t sit down. I often squat, listen, and see if it [the discussion] is on track. If it seems to be, I’ll still wait and see if they have a question, because often they will ask a clarity question. I’ll be silent, then they will feel comfortable and then they will ask the question. … So I won’t specifically ask a question, what I’ll do is just be there as a listening post and so they feel they can ask a clarity question or just ask if they are on the right track often or is this what you want, that sort or thing. I really just become a kind of sounding board at that stage. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Just really chatting, if there is any particular thing they are interested in and didn’t understand or want to ask … to create an easy-going atmosphere, more than actually reinforcing what
I’ve said. … As a group, they can ask you more intimately and then you can take that question and highlight it. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Often the final stage with group discussions was to ask each group to present their findings. While this might provide significant benefits for the group presenting, it appeared to be debatable as to how useful a debriefing session was for other groups.

Particular group members usually get a lot out of their group presenting, they can be bored rigid by other groups presenting but as part of the learning process it is useful. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

If you’re setting things up with very specific needs, then people sense there are answers and want to hear what other groups have. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

While the quality of participant comments during a debriefing session might vary, trainers felt there was a benefit to conducting it if, for example, it had not been possible to visit every group, this session might provide feedback about time allocation for the next discussion.

I’ll find out how the groups are working and the way they are thinking, so in the second discussion I’ll spend more time with the groups that perhaps didn’t come out with as in depth answers…. Often one group will clearly stand out above everyone else and they do not need any help. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

The debriefing session was also seen to be important as it offered an opportunity to provide participants with feedback and encouragement.

After the presentation or after they have given the outcome of their discussion, give them feedback. “Yes, I listened to you; here is what you’ve done”. Give them encouragement that what they’ve done is good. (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

Despite the benefits in conducting group presentations as part of the debriefing process, interviewees saw weaknesses in the method.

Running short courses for 25 years or so, presentations session, I feel are a real problem. They give groups something tangible to show … but find them an incredible waste of time usually because groups tend to be saying the same thing over-and-over, in some cases … the worth of what they present does not necessarily reflect how good the discussion was. I have been searching for other ways to do this, and having experimented, I usually fall back on the plenary session. It’s a headache. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

These comments by NC and the fact that he was not happy with a particular activity and had been looking unsuccessfully for a replacement, reflects the need to constantly review
and revise teaching skills and repertoire. Inherent in a need to revise was the number of interviewee comments that could be grouped into categories related to the need to connect with the audience. Varying in scope, they provided a further insight into how interviewees reported they worked with Thai participants.

4.4 Connecting with the Audience

Trainer’s commented on the need to connect with participants during a short course with their comments concerning their efforts to connect with an audience included in four distinct themes. Building Relationships reports comments offered by interviewees concerning the need and approaches they employed to build a relationship with their participants. Incorporating Stories and Examples deals with how trainers used stories and anecdotes, in particular, those in some way Thai-related. Employing Humor includes comments about the voiced need to incorporate humor or to keep a seminar fun. Working with Thais offers an insight into the ways seminar leaders believed their personal style played a role in helping to create a connection with Thai participants.

4.4.1 Building Relationships

The need to build a relationship with an audience was seen to be a trainer’s first obligation.

It is the relationship you need to build first. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

However, both Thai and non-Thai interviewees stressed the need to keep in mind that this relationship must establish a relaxed atmosphere in which Thais felt comfortable.

I can’t speak on behalf of other nations, but Thai people generally like things a bit relaxed. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

It is impossible to beat the system in terms of, “I will do it my way”. It doesn’t work, so you need to work, be able to, not adapt to the Thai way of teaching or the Thai way or Thaiifying your message, but you need to adapt to the Thai rhythm, Thai flow. … Relaxed, light, fun, you need to show people you enjoy being with them and sharing with them. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Relationship building was seen as beginning with a seminar leader’s initial self-introduction, which in turn would help to create an indelible initial impression.

What you say, and how you introduce yourself, makes about 80% of the impression the student will have of you. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)
In addition, this introduction was seen as creating a feeling of trust as participants would now have information about the trainer and what they would be expected to do during the day.

It (building a relationship) is all a matter of trust, why should they listen to you, unless you establish why they should listen to you, they are just going to hear you, which is not very useful. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

While initial introductions were seen as important, trainers were also clear about the need to continue building a relationship with their audience. Returning to the question of trust, all interviewees discussed the importance of being seen as sincere.

There have been a number of studies of transference of emotions in psychotherapy in particular. A lot of times, it came down to very specific things, like being a good listener, didn’t validate, didn’t judge, understood the situation, but later on what they found was, that it was almost a charismatic thing going on. Someone was put in a position of power and empowering back, but a lot of if was really just a genuine interest in the person or the ability to communicate a genuine interest and a genuine warmth with the person’s situation and helping them understand what they could do differently in that situation to make it better. It was indefinable and it had to be sincere. It could not be insincere because people would pick it up in a minute. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

I think any audience will very quickly recognize if the presenter is going through the motions. (HW, American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

I think any audience would have to be assured that you actually believe in what you are trying to put out. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

One suggested method to show genuine interest in an audience was to demonstrate knowledge about Thailand, even for a trainer who had just arrived.

He could just start by sharing immediate experiences, or during the few hours or few days he has been in Thailand, what he has found that could be relevant to the topic he’s going to cover. It’s easily supplying enrichment to the audience. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

This recommendation to use Thai examples or relate experiences or impressions gained while in Thailand was a common thread through many interviews. While many ideas and examples could be used, the use of stories and examples based on Thailand were frequently referred to by trainers as an effective means to relate to the audience.

4.4.2 Incorporating Stories and Examples

The use of examples and stories was mentioned by many trainers as an effective method to reach participants. Through stories, both practical and personal, participants were
seen as becoming more involved in the implications or the message contained in what was being presented.

[Stories are] the ultimate teaching technique. I think it cuts across culture that story telling, whether it’s a short example or an actual blown out narrative, (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

They [Thai audience] love anecdotes. That’s when I’m most effective, when I’m telling stories about company growth, and all that, they love it. But then again, doesn’t everybody. I think they love it because when I tell those stories, it’s my own and there’s passion there. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

While some seminar leaders did not like to place themselves as the central character in events in which they might not have been involved, the use of true, personal stories and experiences was seen as a powerful means to help participants understand ideas and to get to know trainers and their experiences.

Many stories come from business books; those would be Western context. My Japanese experiences are based on what I learned there and what I read. Stories can come out of Thailand, out of New York Times articles, out of jokes; stories come from all sorts of sources. But, I’ll always try to make them personal so they’ll learn about me in the context of whatever is being taught. (SW, Japanese-American, Male, Non-bilingual, 03/02/03)

Explain things afterwards with theories, but they need very practical examples all through whatever you’re doing, you need to show some practical issues, what experience, preferably spice it up with your own, put yourself in the middle if you can. … Even if you have to make it up, where you did something and that happened. As light as possible and then go into the theory behind it. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

Typically I find everyone wants to hear stories, whether they are funny or not, they want to hear your experiences, they want to hear how other people do it, how other companies do it, so I use a lot. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

Stories and examples were also seen as useful when giving instructions concerning expectations of participants during an activity or group discussion session.

Yes, for instance, what I’ll do is say, “now the task before you is to do this, this is the outcome we want” then I will come back and say, “let me give you an example of how that would work”… typically that is okay. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

I think it helps if they give good examples. It helps participants to understand even better. Some things when you talk, they generally do not understand. If you give an example, they see that in real life. (QL, Thai, Female, 23/04/02)

With the advisability to incorporate stories stated quite clearly, it was also apparent that “whether they are funny or not” played a secondary role in a trainer’s ability to create
participant interest. When asked what might cause a seminar leader to fail with Thais, JM, a Thai, mentioned lack of examples as one reason, “maybe he has knowledge, but he cannot explain clearly, no examples” (JM, Thai, Female, Bilingual, 25/04/02).

It goes back to creating a relationship and the atmosphere, it has to be fun, it has to be much more so here than anywhere else. … You need to; even it is a serious matter, to try and to make it light. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

While trainers commented on the need for stories to be humorous and therefore useful in making a seminar ‘light’ and fun (sanuk), there was also a concern to ensure humor was employed to help relieve tension and stress and to help build a positive relationship and emerged as a theme in its own right.

4.4.3 Employing Humor

The use of humor, in particular with Thais, was seen as being important, with the condition that a trainer be careful.

If there is a good purpose, when you understand that you should be more humorous than being serious, that will ease the audience, immediately establishing a rapport. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

While it was seen as relatively easy to entertain or get a laugh from a Thai audience, trainers also suggested that care be taken that humor was not at a trainer or participant’s expense. Knowledge of humor and how it was seen in different cultures reflected a need for both Thai and non-Thai trainers to be particularly careful with certain types of humor.

Certainly, I tend to use a lot of humor. However, humor can have difficulty making it cross cultures. Therefore, you need to be knowledgeable about what is funny and what is not funny. For example, jokes against oneself are pretty funny in a Western setting, but not necessarily that funny in an Asian setting. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 19/12/02)

Non-verbal types of thing, I do not recall, usually from my observation, it is verbal. It can be jokes or funny stories; … it cannot be just any joke. It has to be relevant. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

During a discussion concerning humor, WG shared an example that while somewhat personal, was clearly seen as humorous and at the same time relevant.

I introduce myself, Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome my name’s WG, I’m from Australia, and I always use jing-joe, which is kangaroo. I always get a laugh out of that. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)
There was a strong voiced concern for caution in what was used, as the choice of the wrong ‘humorous’ material could be detrimental. For example, as LZ, a Thai trainer, suggested, try to avoid “non-political, non-religious” (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03).

If you want to relate to a sense of humor the Thais relate to, that’s fine, but do not impress or try to impress with your own humor from your own country. They might not understand it all. It just makes you look like a fool. (MB, Danish, Male, Bilingual, 07/01/03)

Humor can have difficulty making it cross culturally; therefore, you need to be fairly knowledgeable about what is funny and what is not funny. For example, jokes against oneself are funny in a Western setting, but not necessarily that funny in an Asian setting. To tell a joke about yourself can be funny, but better to tell it about a third party, preferably someone who is not there. (NC, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual 19/12/02)

The use of humor was also seen a providing an important balance with Thai interviewee comments that if participants felt things were sanuk (fun) they might overlook the fact content was otherwise boring.

Because the content itself is already boring, so if the instructor has a sense of humor it keeps them [participants] going. (QL, Thai, Female, 23/04/02)

If there is a good purpose, when you understand the audience, it [seminar] should be more humorous than serious, that will just ease up the audience, immediately establishing a rapport. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

However, it was also mentioned that a trainer needed to make certain an audience was not swayed into believing a seminar was great through fun activities, even though it might be lacking in substance.

They [participants] think a good course has to be fun, which is not true. I think when they say an instructor is good; they only look at if they had fun. (QL, Thai, Female, 23/04/02)

While humor was seen as playing an important role, it was not something trainers believed could be learned or forced if a trainer did not have an innate sense of humor.

It’s like what Louis Armstrong said about jazz, “If you have to be taught it, you’ll never know it”. (PF, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 10/04/02)

Interviewees suggested that if trainers wished to use humor, they needed to be able to appreciate and understand the humor they had decided to employ, as it needed to reflect good taste and reflect well on their teaching.
4.4.4 Working with Thais

How trainers incorporated their distinctive character traits when working with Thais was a discussion very much couched in personal opinions. However, one common idea mentioned was the need to have an ability to energize a group of participants.

If the person is energetic, comes out with a lot of energy, has already shown he knows about the subject … already made the seminar interesting, energized the group. Someone with a lot of vocal variety in speaking, not monotone, not come up and point some laser on a chart (KT, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 15/01/03)

It all depends on the trainer’s charisma. I am sure that the trainer’s charisma. If people are not participating, it is not the audience with the problem. Action also has to be relevant to the topic being addressed. He can use it as an energizer, if it is part of the training; anything of that nature is viable as long as it not too long, that it is done for a good purpose. (LZ, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 20/01/03)

When teaching Thais, it was mentioned that it was not so much a question of changing to a Thai style, but adapting to local conditions.

To create a relaxed atmosphere you have to be relaxed yourself. Really, you should be able to relax, create that feeling around you. You need to be able to be serious, but you need to be able to relax and sometimes go with the flow instead of being rigidly stuck to what you want to do. (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02)

A group of Thais, it was suggested, would be disappointed in a seminar if a trainer’s efforts to establish rapport were not noticeable and that a trainer should be, or at least appear to be, someone who cared about and was interested in participants’ well being.

The appearance, the facial expression that’s very important, the facial expression, is such that even though he could be saying the same things as the previous person whose comments were good, he doesn’t come across as warm and enthusiastic. (BN, American, Male, Bilingual, 28/01/03)

For a trainer, someone outgoing, lots of energy, clarity in their thinking processes, their ability to be able relate to people, their ability to not be judgmental, their ability to listen, their ability to ask questions. (WG, Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 22/01/03)

4.5 Summary

An analysis of the results has lead to the identification of four categories and twenty-two themes. Each category and its related themes offered an insight into various facets of preparing to teach and teaching Thai business people from the perspective of the fifteen different effective seminar leaders.
The first category has illustrated the need be sensitive to the participants and their culture. This was discussed in terms of what trainers might expect Thai participants to do during a seminar, and aspects of Thai culture and behavior that might be incongruous with the way they teach in other cultures.

The second category provided insights into how effective trainers employ their understanding of Thai culture and the behavior that this might prompt, in sensing, during the planning stage, where difficulties will lie in working effectively with Thai participants. One important aspect of this lies in the acceptance of the fact that many Thai participants do not know what to expect in a seminar with a particular trainer. This adds to a trainer’s responsibility to ensure that content relevancy is explained and demonstrated throughout the seminar.

The third category demonstrated the variety of activities interviewees implement in the face-to-face teaching of their Thai participants. In particular, this category dealt with how effective seminar leaders intuitively analyze and monitor participant abilities and attitudes from first contact onwards in an effort to adapt previously prepared materials, content and activities, to the continually unfolding and changing perspective they have of their participants in terms of motivation, abilities and comfort levels.

Relationship building skills and the techniques effective seminar leaders employ in demonstrating respect for the participants they teach constitutes the final category. This was discussed in terms of the importance effective seminar leaders place on establishing a positive relationship with their participants, the selective use of humor and the inclusion of Thai stories and examples in their teaching.

Overall, the comments from both Thai and non-Thai trainers covered the same topics with the exception of what to wear, which was mentioned by non-Thai interviewees exclusively. While both Thai and non-Thai interviewees were concerned with discussing actual teaching skills, Thai interviewees tended to provide more practical ideas about how they taught than the non-Thai interviewees. However, comments from both groups reflecting concern with this topic indicate that teaching skills were seen to be important by all interviewees. Likewise, while both Thai and non-Thai interviewees appeared to be concerned with aspects of a seminar that related to relationship-building, it was the non-Thai interviewees who tended to use examples to explain how they dealt with maintaining a
comfortable learning environment. Once again, it should be stressed that as Thai and non-Thai both expressed views on this matter, it would appear that this concern also crosses cultures when discussing teaching short course with Thai business executives.

The aim of the next chapter is to review the categories and themes dealt with in this chapter to address the research question,

What are the characteristics of an effective short-course trainer in the Thai business community?
The goal of this research was to determine the characteristics of an effective short-course trainer in the Thai business community. The results presented in the previous chapter categorized interviewee responses to a range of questions framed by the research and professional literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Both Thai and non-Thai interviewees drew on their experiences of teaching short courses to members of the Thai business community to provide a variety of responses to the questions asked. However, invariably, interviewees qualified or elaborated their responses with additional, unsolicited comments on the ways in which their knowledge of Thai participants influenced their decisions and actions before and during their teaching of a short course in this context.

The interviewees’ persistence in this regard was a surprise. The interview questions covered a range of topics concerned with teaching, for example, course design and planning, the facilitator’s perceived personal qualities, the ability to speak in front of an audience, teaching skills, and ways in which to show concern for participant progress (see 3.5). Therefore, it was expected that interviewee responses would focus primarily on content knowledge and the ability to present this content effectively.

While this was the case to some extent, a strong and pervasive feature of each of the categories that emerged from the analysis of the interview data, was the importance that interviewees attributed to their knowledge of Thais and Thai culture. This is reflected in the description of each category: ‘understanding the audience and their culture’ (see 4.1), ‘preparing for the audience’ (see 4.2), ‘teaching the audience’ (see 4.3), and ‘connecting with the audience’ (see 4.4). This predominate feature can be captured in the simple but powerful adage, ‘know your audience’.

The notion of ‘knowing the audience’ needs to be distinguished from ‘knowledge of participants’. ‘Knowledge of participants’ refers to a specific knowledge of learning needs that might be derived from needs analysis or long-term involvement with students. ‘Knowing your audience’ refers to knowledge of Thais and their host culture and the resulting norms and values that can be identified.

The assumption that effectiveness would be described in terms of content knowledge and how to present it, was based on the nature of short courses in this context (see 1.2), in particular, the fact that most trainers in the Thai business community do not have the
opportunity to meet with participants before or after a seminar. In particular, both Thai and non-Thai interviewees commented on the stress experienced by the trainer due to a lack of knowledge about the participants and the stress experienced by the participants due to a lack of awareness concerning what they might be asked to do. While content expertise and a varied teaching repertoire remain essential, the paramount importance of having an understanding of Thai participants emerges as a dominant feature of what characterizes an effective seminar leader in the Thai business community.

This chapter will address the research question that prompted this study by proposing eight characteristics of effective seminar leaders in the Thai business community, teaching a short course using English as the medium of instruction (see 5.1). These will be elaborated and discussed in more detail in Section 5.2. The implications of these findings for the preparation of short-course trainers in the Thai business community, and adult educators more generally, will be discussed in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 respectively.

5.1 Effective Short-course Trainer Characteristics

While the characteristics of effective short-course trainers in the Thai business community reflect aspects of conventional wisdom with respect to the teaching of adult learners (see 2.2), the results have shown that an over-riding consideration in determining effectiveness in this context, is the extent to which trainers are aware of and remain sensitive to key features of Thai culture.

In particular, what lies at the core of both Thai and non-Thai trainers' effectiveness, is an ability to adapt to the needs of teaching in a Thai cultural context while, at the same time, inviting participants who are members’ of that culture to accommodate some of their (the trainer’s) expectations of adult learners engaged in a short course. In particular, interviewees commented on the need to follow a pattern of instruction that did not reflect a more traditional lecture format typically associated with post-secondary education in Thailand. This is an important observation that is rarely if ever noted in the literature on adult training, although the reflexivity inherent in this situation is consistent with a socio-constructivist view of learning discussed in the situated cognition literature (see 2.2).

While other factors such as content expertise, the selection of the material being learned, and a varied teaching repertoire were clearly valued, a consistent and common thread in interviewee comments was the need for a keen awareness of the social norms that identify
Thais as a cultural group. This knowledge and the role it plays in influencing the planning and presentation of an effective short course was seen to permeate every aspect of the learning experience and as such could not be ignored in considering how the results might be used to address the research question. With this in mind, the four categories and twenty-two themes were considered as a whole in the light of this over-riding element. This led to the identification of eight key characteristics of effective seminar leaders in the Thai business community. These are listed below and will be discussed in more detail in the section that follows.

Effective seminar leaders in the Thai business community:

- are aware of *kreng jai* and the pervasive but potentially restricting role it plays in Thai social interactions, and while they respect and accept this as valid, it is seen as being malleable;

- are able to demonstrate to Thai participants that they know and care about them as Thais and as individuals, and that what is expected of them is genuinely believed to be in their best interests;

- realize the need to create a positive relationship with participants and make full use of the entire training day, including breaks, to meet with and to get to know individual participants;

- are confident in their knowledge of the content they plan to teach and their repertoire of teaching skills, and are capable of using both to ensure that a potentially unfamiliar style of training is acceptable to those attending;

- know that planned events may not proceed as intended from the very start, and therefore plan for additional time or have an alternative plan on hand to use if needed;

- appreciate that Thai participants may need additional explanations and activities to ensure they are aware of the relevance of what they are being asked to learn and that they have necessary skills to do so given that relatively little is provided about participants’ knowledge and skills in this context;
• know that while Thai participants expect a valuable learning experience that may require them to move outside their comfort zone, they also expect the training to be enjoyable; and

• are aware that most Thai participants in a seminar presented in English are learning in a foreign language and are able to respond to this by adapting the pace, vocabulary, and content to match participants’ abilities without appearing condescending.

The goal in the next section is to discuss each characteristic and comment on the extent to which it conforms or conflicts with conventional wisdom on adult education and Thai culture.

5.2 Commentary

The literature reviewed has suggested that effective trainers need to know what they plan to teach and how they plan to teach it (see 2.2.1.1 and 2.2.1.3 respectively). Likewise, as the evidence in Section 4.2 and 4.3 shows, effective trainers in Thailand have an extensive knowledge of the content to be presented and the skills to teach this content for maximum participant benefit.

However, more importantly, as repeatedly reported in Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.4, effective trainers have an appreciation of and a respect their participants as unique individuals, and as a group in terms of their relatively predictable behavior patterns. It is this knowledge that enables effective trainers to assiduously revise content and the ways in which it is presented.

It should be noted that the evidence for these characteristics, indeed, aspects of the characteristics themselves, actually overlap to some extent but that for the sake of emphasis and clarity they have been separated here.

5.2.1 Working with Kreng Jai

Effective seminar leaders are aware of kreng jai and the pervasive but potentially restricting role it plays in Thai social interactions, and while they respect and accept this as valid, it is seen as being malleable.
It is difficult to encounter a discussion of Thai culture that does not introduce the concept of kreng jai and the Thai need to avoid embarrassing others or being embarrassed by others (e.g., Komin, 1990; Klausner, 2002). As clearly indicated in interviewee comments reported in Section 4.1.2, kreng jai is an extremely important aspect of Thai culture and permeates into virtually every aspect of Thai social life, including a short course event. For example, the pervasive role played by both kreng jai and hai kiad (see 2.3.1) is reflected in the hierarchical system that Thais create in each new social situation. As mentioned in Section 4.3.8, if Thais are given the opportunity to learn who is in the group, what their relative position is, and how they are expected to behave, inter-personal conflict is kept to a minimum as to do otherwise could be embarrassing.

However, while kreng jai as described in the literature might appear to a non-Thai to be a debilitating norm enacted in accordance with fairly rigid and implicit rules, both Thai and non-Thai effective trainers do not share this view. On the contrary, they appreciate what aspects of kreng jai can be readily adapted given the creation of a mutually agreeable relationship with the participants. An example of this modification is the contrast between the reluctance of students to ask questions, described in the literature (e.g., Komin, 1990; Holmes, Tangtongtavy, & Tomizawa, 1996) and the reality, reflected in the comments reported in Section 4.3.7, that participants are more than willing to answer questions and occasionally have to be told to stop. Among the eight traits found, the role of kreng jai appears to be most at variance with research and writings dealing with this aspect of Thai culture. A number of possible explanations can be offered that reflect the specific nature of this research study. In particular, the fact that interviewees were discussing seminars offered in English and not Thai might play a role in that participants using English rather than Thai might not feel the same level of kreng jai influence as when using Thai. A second factor could be that interviewees were discussing participants who through educational and work experiences might be more experienced and also comfortable in a Western-style seminar in which participant behavior might be different than in a Thai-style seminar. However, it remains unclear why there appears to be a dichotomy between the way kreng jai is described in the literature and the experiences shared by many of the interviewees. This is an important issue for further research, as it is the only characteristic among the eight suggested that is at variance with what can be found in the literature dealing with Thai culture.
5.2.2 Demonstrating Respect

Effective trainers are able to demonstrate to Thai participants that they know and care about them as Thais and as individuals, and that what is expected of them is genuinely believed to be in their best interests.

Effective trainers, in particular non-Thai trainers, acknowledge the value of Thai culture and their experiences in Thailand. However, as the evidence in Section 4.4.1 reported, if they are a non-Thai, they are not expected to behave like a Thai at all times. However, while expected norms of behavior for Thai teachers were presented in the literature (see 2.3.4), effective trainers are aware that many of these norms do not need to be respected to the same extent found in the literature.

While some ideas might seem trivial to a trainer unfamiliar with Thai culture, for example, the wearing of a necktie mentioned in Section 4.1.6, non-Thai trainers voiced their understanding that as effective trainers they are aware that by wearing a necktie, they demonstrate one example of their understanding and respect for Thai traditions. However, trainers are also aware of expected teacher behaviors they can adapt. For example, instead of remaining seated at a desk provided for the trainer at the front of the room (see 4.3.6), both Thai and non-Thai trainers recognize it is possible, even desirable, to move around the room and interact with participants on a personal level.

5.2.3 Creating Relationships Efficiently

Effective seminar leaders realize the need to create a positive relationship with participants and make full use of the entire training day, including breaks, to meet with and to get to know individual participants.

Although the literature on teaching adults recognized the importance of obtaining information about the participants during pre-training needs analysis, (e.g., Thornton, Mattocks, & Thornton, 2001; Vella, 2002), it does not discuss other opportunities that allow trainer and participants to get to know each other, in particular, those outside scheduled training time. However, the evidence reported in Section 4.3.5 suggests that this is an important feature of an effective trainer’s practice in this context. Effective trainers fully appreciate the importance of establishing a positive relationship with their participants and
recognize that a training session entails spending the entire day with participants and not just the scheduled training hours.

As suggested in the evidence reported in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.4.1, effective trainers see the benefit in some participants arriving late and rather than seeing this as an inconvenience, they see it as an opportunity to get to know some of the participants and to begin to establish a comfortable relationship. In addition, as reported in Section 4.3.5, rather than scurry off to be alone, effective trainers realize that break time and lunch time are extremely valuable occasions during the training day to receive feedback about the content and the participants’ perspective on the training program. In fact, both Thai and non-Thai interviewees reported that they purposely plan an initial break earlier than might seem appropriate as they realize that break time ‘buzz’ will provide more feedback than can be expected in class.

5.2.4 Employing an Unfamiliar Style of Teaching

Effective trainers are confident in their knowledge of the content they plan to teach and their repertoire of teaching skills, and are capable of using both to ensure that a potentially unfamiliar style of training is acceptable to those attending.

Effective short-course trainers in the Thai business community know the content and how to teach it appropriately. These two needs clearly reflect both the literature on teaching adults (e.g., Banner & Cannon, 1997; Rogers, 2002) and interviewee comments recounted in Section 4.1.3. However, effective trainers realize that what might be interesting content in other cultures will not necessarily appeal to a Thai audience to the same degree and may need to be tailored accordingly. The inclusion of Thai examples versus the reduced use of overseas examples, suggested in Section 4.4.2, is one example of how effective trainers adapt content to a Thai audience.

While the importance of understanding the content and an ability to present it effectively reflects views found in the literature (e.g., Banner & Cannon, 1997; Rogers, 2002), effective trainers, both Thai and non-Thai, do not regard the potential repertoire of teaching activities in the same restrictive manner as was suggested in the literature on Thai culture. While Thai education is seen as rote learning undertaken by students passively sitting through long lectures (e.g., Cooper & Cooper, 1982; Redmond, 1998), the evidence reported in
Section 4.2.4 supports the view that most interviewees reject this view and rarely, if ever, spend longer than 20 to 30 minutes presenting information in a lecture-style format.

Effective trainers, as supported by the evidence reported in Section 4.1.3, appreciate the educational experience most Thais have undergone and realize that their style of training might be new to the participants. However, with the exception of brainstorming, interviewees clearly believed Thais could successfully participate in and benefit from any teaching activity they felt they needed to employ.

5.2.5 Going with the Flow

Effective seminar leaders know that planned events may not proceed as intended from the very start, and therefore plan for additional time or have an alternative plan on hand to use if needed.

As described in the introduction, (see 1.2) trainers in Thailand do not normally have the opportunity to meet with participants before or after a training session to conduct a pre-course analysis. Considered an integral step in effective training, (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000; Thornton, Mattocks, & Thornton, 2001), this aspect of training is typically lacking in the Thai training environment.

Often provided with limited background information, both Thai and non-Thai trainers have no alternative but to accept that what they have been told is correct until they have had the chance to meet the participants. The evidence reported in Section 4.3.1 reveals that even effective trainers generally begin a training session with trepidation but a strong motivation to ensure that what they have planned meets the needs of the participants.

In the words of one interviewee quoted in Section 4.4.4, “to create a relaxed atmosphere you have to be relaxed yourself. … Go with the flow instead of being rigidly stuck to what you want to do (GT, Swedish, Male, Bilingual, 28/12/02). If a break goes a bit too long, it is often characterized in term of more time for feedback. If participants take too much time settling down to do an exercise or discussion, mentioned in Section 4.3.8, effective trainers wait as participants might be helping each other to understand what to do and who should do it.

The evidence in Section 4.2.2 points to effective trainers’ appreciation that Thais might be uncomfortable experimenting with new learning activities and therefore know they
will need to provide additional background concerning the reasons for the inclusion of a particular activity. In addition, both Thai and non-Thai trainers expressed that they might need to allow participants additional time to become familiar with what they are expected to do, in particular, with activities that might be unfamiliar (see 4.2.3 and 4.2.4). Where participants needed time to get started, interviewees, regardless of their nationality, were of the view that participants should be allowed the time needed without being pressured. The evidence reported in Section 4.2.1 has also highlighted effective trainers’ ability to stop what they were doing if it becomes obvious something is wrong and would adopt a different plan of action, for example, a change in exercise, or even a complete change in program.

5.2.6 Making Learning Relevant

Effective seminar leaders appreciate that Thai participants may need additional explanations and activities to ensure they are aware of the relevance of what they are being asked to learn and that they have necessary skills to do so given that relatively little is provided about participants’ knowledge and skills in this context.

Training in the Thai corporate world is often based on the desire to find a solution to a particular problem without any consultation with those who require this support. Although the literature on training provision discussed the importance and benefits in having participants involved in planning a course (e.g., Banner & Cannon, 1997), in the Thai market, the vast majority of participants in a short course will not have had this important opportunity to be involved in course planning. In fact, as evident in the comments reported in Section 4.2.1, participants often arrive at a seminar without any idea, or vague at best, as to why they have been sent.

Interview comments reported in Section 4.2.3 reflected the efforts effective trainers take to ensure that sufficient practice has been provided so that their participants will understand the importance of what they are learning and so that they will not be apprehensive about their abilities at the current and ensuing skill or knowledge levels. Therefore, as seen in the comments presented in Section 4.2.2, effective Thai and non-Thai trainers share the view that it is beneficial to continually provide participants with an understanding of what they will be learning and the importance of the content in terms of their on-the-job needs.
5.2.7 Ensuring Participant Comfort

Effective trainers know that while Thai participants expect a valuable learning experience that may require them to move outside their comfort zone, they also expect the training to be enjoyable.

Effective trainers in this context are not expected to be comedians, but they generally have a sense of humor they can share with the participants. This is supported by the general comments reported in Section 4.1.1 in relation to the Thai desire to have fun in everything they do and the more specific, humor-related comments reported in Section 4.4.3.

The literature on teaching Thais (e.g., Mulder, 2000; Niratpattanasai, 2003), has suggested that for Thais if anything they do is not fun, then it’s not worth doing. However, effective seminar leaders know that their successful attempts at humor should not take away from the need to engage with the required content. While participants might have had fun throughout a short course, if they have not learned the skills or knowledge they had expected, Thais will not consider the training or the trainer to have been effective. The evidence reported in Section 4.4.3 indicates that effective trainers are keenly aware of the need to balance the presentation of the content with fun. In this way, training is accomplished in a pleasurable manner befitting the important Thai cultural norm to make everything they do fun.

5.2.8 Adapting the Use of English

Effective seminar leaders are aware that most Thai participants in a seminar presented in English are learning in a foreign language and are able to respond to this by adapting the pace, vocabulary, and content to match participants’ abilities without appearing condescending.

With the exception of one interviewee, all trainers discussed short courses they offered in English. While the question of short courses taught in Thai was addressed to offer a contrast between a Thai and non-Thai trainer (e.g., 4.1.4); the emphasis in this research focused on short courses taught by native and non-native speakers using English as the medium of instruction and not the content of the instruction. Therefore, this particular characteristic would not be applicable in a course being taught in Thai to a group of participants who were uniquely Thai.
The evidence provided in Section 4.3.4 indicates that the use of English is a constant cause of concern for all effective seminar leaders. As such, effective trainers appreciate Thai anxiety about potential embarrassment and how the use of the English language features in this distress. Although the concern with the use of English was mentioned in the literature on teaching Thais (e.g., Niratpattanasai, 2003), was limited to the view that Thais might be weak in English, effective trainers realize that if the level of English they employ is either too simple or too difficult, the potential for embarrassment becomes increasingly prevalent.

The evidence reported in Sections 4.1.4 and 4.3.4 illustrates that effective trainers quickly and efficiently monitor participant impatience about their use of English if the speed, vocabulary, and grammar are too easy, or alternatively, participant discomfort if the trainer’s English is too difficult.

5.2.9 Summary

The eight characteristics of effective seminar leaders described here reflect a range of abilities associated with effective training in an environment where most trainers have very limited prior knowledge of the participants they will be teaching. However, effective seminar leaders in the Thai business community compensate for this lack of specific details with a thorough understanding of their Thai participants as a cultural group that share a common cultural background reflected in recognizable traits.

It is the effective trainers understanding of these traits and their ability to integrate this knowledge into their planning and delivery that are the keys to their effectiveness. At the same time, the importance of knowing the content and having the skills to present it effectively must not be discounted, as it is trainers’ strength in both these areas that allows them to adapt to the needs and expectations of their Thai participants, for example, the emphasis on appearance or the use of Thai examples in their teaching. However, this successful adaptation also reflects their fundamental skill at employing their understanding of the particular social norms and expectations of Thai participants which is different to the view represented in the literature on the role played by kreng jai, or the behavior to expect of Thai adults in a learning situation. For example, interviewees commented on aspects of Thai participant behavior, specifically, asking questions and offering opinions, which appear to be in direct conflict with what is found in the literature.
The effective Thai and non-Thai trainers interviewed in this research appreciated the complexities involved in teaching Thai participants, and as such, have provided a clear understanding of the importance they place on the characteristics that have emerged from the evidence reported in Chapter 4 and the discussed here.

5.3 Recommendations for New Trainers

Effective trainers in the Thai milieu understand their own and the participants’ cultural background, and they know the training environment they plan to create with their Thai participants. In creating a comfortable relationship with participants, trainers have the ability to push these same participants to do things they might not normally accept, for example, they can ask direct questions and expect to receive answers (see 4.1.1). However, as the evidence in Section 4.4.1 indicates, they know from experience that before these demands can be made, they need to build a genuine sense of trust and an open, non-threatening relationship with the participants they are teaching.

Non-Thai trainers with extensive experience teaching in Thailand know, for example, the value of not getting angry or impatient or being funny (see 2.3). In analyzing this reality, evident in the comments throughout Chapter 4, experienced trainers in Thailand know what concepts found in the literature need to be accepted, for example, do not get angry or impatient, be funny (see 2.3). On the other hand, they are not as willing to accept some ideas often included in discussions related to kreng jai such as the advice not to ask questions or to give direct feedback (see 4.1.1).

In this context, knowledge of the participants in terms or how they have been shaped by their host culture, typically placed in the background in conventional literature on training, is moved to the foreground with content knowledge and teaching skills suitably filtered through this knowledge. This research clearly demonstrates the paramount importance of having experience in teaching a particular audience, in this instance, members of the Thai business community, but it also demonstrates that content expertise and teaching skills remain an integral part of being an effective trainer.

In short, effective seminar leaders in the Thai business community know their participants and, based on this knowledge, adapt content and teaching in a way they believe will best suit the needs and expectations of their Thai participants.
When trainers’ knowledge of the participant’s culture is limited, in particular, where they are unaware of the specific cultural norms and values that are likely to impact a training environment and how these might be harnessed to achieve intended seminar outcomes, they will have difficulty in creating an effective training environment. This suggests that a trainer with little knowledge of Thai culture needs to be made aware of what will provoke a negative reaction or what is required to create a positive one.

In this regard, a primary concern in creating a valuable training program for new trainers in the Thai market will be to ensure that they have the ability to identify the various facets of Thai culture coupled with skills and techniques to ensure that they can apply their knowledge in face-to-face encounters with Thai participants. The sample-training program provided here includes an initial phase during which trainers are provided with the required understanding and appreciation and a second phase to provide authentic practice.

**Phase One: Providing an Understanding and Appreciation**

The first phase requires the presentation and practice with the various facets of Thai culture identified in the literature. Following the pattern suggested in this research, this includes short, no longer than 20- to 30-minute sessions, spent in presenting information in a lecture-style format followed by extensive practice. This practice begins with watching videos to provide new trainers with the opportunity to observe the way Thais interact with each other. By presenting samples of both appropriate and inappropriate behavior, new trainers, through observation and discussion, gain a better understanding of what it means to be kreng jai. Short role-plays follow to review and provide practice with many of the appropriate samples of behavior from the video clips and, in particular, those that are part of the day-to-day routines associated with kreng jai.

One aspect of kreng jai new trainers need to appreciate is that the greatest fear participants will have in a seminar situation is the potential for a trainer to embarrass himself or herself or a participant. Through the use of role plays centering on their own fears, new trainers become aware that this fear in their participants, if not quickly abated, will result in Thais feeling extremely uncomfortable and eager to leave as quickly as they can (see 4.2.2).

In helping new trainers coming into the Thai market, one aspect of cultural acclimatization central to their success with Thai participants centers on their ability to behave in the manner Thais see as congruent with that of a teacher. This includes the goal to have
trainers an understanding of the need to dress appropriately (see 4.1.6), not to be overly concerned about late arrivals (see 4.3.1), and regardless of the content, be prepared to make the learning event enjoyable (see 4.4.3). Another training goal is to inform new trainers of the benefits effective trainers in this market experience as they socialize with participants during break and lunch, as these are considered vital opportunities to receive feedback about their performance and to get to know the participants (see 4.3.1 and 4.3.5).

In the course of their training, new trainers in the Thai business community need to be made aware that needs analysis, if it has been conducted and provided, should be verified once the seminar starts. They should also realize that participants are often uncertain, perhaps completely unaware of the content that will be presented until the seminar actually begins (see 4.2.2). As such, part of their training includes providing or enhancing skills that enable trainers to quickly assess participant knowledge of the content being presented, participant experiences with the content and participant levels of comfort with the activities planned.

Another goal is to provide trainers with an appreciation that Thais will not necessarily voice their dissatisfaction (see 4.1.2). Therefore, as part of their training, new trainers are provided with the ability to monitor the ways in which Thais demonstrate their feelings concerning the content being presented, the way in which it is being presented, and the language in which it is being presented (see 4.3.5). Coupled with this knowledge, new trainers are also made aware that while they might need to make changes to a program or the way they teach to make content more accessible and attractive for Thais, they recognize that nothing is gained by mentioning this fact.

New trainers will be encouraged in their efforts to present a lively and energetic learning experience (see 4.4.4) and will be aware that while they may make a cultural ‘faux pas’, Thais are forgiving of trainers who are trying to do their best. As such, trainers appreciate the benefits gained in finding and sharing a few comments about Thailand or their time in Thailand even if it is very limited (see 4.4.2).

New trainers in the Thai environment require a full understanding and acceptance of the distinctive influence that is wielded by the concept of kreng jai in Thai social interaction. While an appreciation of the general literature related to kreng jai will be useful (see 2.3.1), the findings of this research have shown that trainer effectiveness is largely determined by the depth of this knowledge and the extent to which it can be utilized to achieve the specific
purposes of the short-course seminar in the Thai business community (see 4.1). The second phase of this program provides trainers with experience in the real world so that they gain confidence and skills in their ability to teach a short course.

**Phase Two: Authentic Practice**

New trainers are assigned to work with experienced trainers and expected to observe if instructed and to follow the experienced trainers’ cue if requested. For example, an experienced trainer asks new trainers to create a detailed lesson plan for a portion of the seminar, for example, planned activities, time allotted for each activity, expected results and outcomes, and contingency plans. New trainers then observe the skills and techniques employed by the experienced trainer to teach the same portion of the seminar followed by a discussion to compare and contrast what new trainers would have done and what they saw being done. This provides new trainers with further insights into what aspects of their lesson plan that might have worked and those in which they might have experienced difficulties. New trainers are gradually assigned to teach longer and longer portions of the seminar, with shorter periods of observation by the experienced trainer, until the trainers feel comfortable conducting an entire short-course without supervision or observation.

While there are potential pitfalls, new trainers with a strong knowledge of what to expect, should be effective with Thai audiences (see 4.1.1). However, they will not be encouraged to experiment with participants or to change from pre-planned routines as they will not have sufficient experience to understand when, and how they can encourage Thai participants to move outside of what literature suggests is Thai participants’ comfort zone or embarrassment threshold. In short, while the chances are strong that new trainers in the Thai market with some exposure to these ideas and skills will be seen as effective, their training will probably remain somewhat formulaic until they gain the level of experience and understanding demonstrated by the fifteen effective seminar leaders interviewed in this case-study research.

**5.4 Training Industry Implications**

Teaching adults in a culture different from one’s own is fraught with concerns. In particular, concerns mount when the cultural ‘divide’ also includes a potential ‘language barrier’. Trainers working with a new group of participants need to have more background knowledge of the participants than what is normally provided from needs analysis. While, it is
important to know the gap between existing knowledge and desired levels of knowledge, about the participants’ previous experience with the content and style of presentation, trainers going into a new culture need to know more about this culture and the participant behavior and expectations than what is normally provided in cross-cultural ‘how-to’ manuals and guides. Trainers, in the words of one interviewee, need

To figure out the value systems… what is going to tick them off, what is not going to tick them off … all the idiosyncrasies that exist. (TX, Thai, Male, Bilingual, 03/02/03)

These subtle nuances of culture need to be acquired by trainers who are teaching participants from a culture they do not know. With most trainers lacking the time to gather this information themselves; detailed briefing sessions, advice from other trainers familiar with the culture, movies, and TV dramas could prove useful. However, it will be crucial that sources of information be vetted by trainers familiar with that culture.

5.5 Summary

The literature and ‘how-to’ manuals on short course provision highlight the importance of content expertise and the craft of teaching, while viewing trainers’ knowledge of participants gained through pre-course needs analysis as a secondary source of information for course design and presentation. This is a major weakness in the current literature related to short course provision, in particular, when the difference in culture between trainer and participant becomes increasingly pronounced, as was the situation in this study.

However, when an understanding of the social norms and values that impact all aspects of a short course, that is, ‘knowing the audience’, is placed in the forefront of the discussion concerning seminar leader effectiveness, it assumes its indispensable role in determining the effectiveness of a trainer in the Thai business community. Without this understanding and a related capacity to make use of this knowledge in the design and conduct of short courses, trainers are unlikely to be effective in this environment.

The next chapter will summarize the research project from its inspiration through to its conclusion and will close with recommendations as to how this research can be continued in the Thai business community or transported to the teaching of adults on short courses in other cultures.
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

The goal of this research has been to identify the characteristics of an effective seminar leader in the Thai business community. The study originated from my experiences of teaching short course in this community and the desire to enhance my effectiveness in presenting these courses.

However, in an attempt to learn more about teaching short courses to Thais, it became increasingly apparent that a gap in the research and related professional literature on teaching Thai adults and the teaching of adults in a short-course situation. As research could not provide the answers needed, the only alternative was to instigate a study of my own. This desire led to the research reported here and, most importantly, the outcomes discussed in the previous chapter.

The following sections provide an overview of the research project and the steps taken in completing a thorough review of the pertinent literature and in finding and applying a research method.

6.1 Study Purpose and Design

My first need was to determine what literature related to the teaching of short courses in the Thai business community that might help in finding answers to the research question. Whilst a great deal has been written about adult education from a variety of perspectives, much of this material was not applicable in this study, for example, studies on adults returning to formal education or adult education and its role in promoting social equality. Fortunately, a selection of literature did appear to explain various dynamics involved in teaching adults in a short-course environment. The following sections will briefly summarize the major research areas reviewed for the purposes of this study.

The first major area of interest examined research on adult learners and demonstrated the importance of an adult’s experiences, the motivation to take part in learning, and the role that is played by learning style preferences in distinguishing the unique characteristics of an adult learner. Research based on activities in the classroom, an area of personal experience, led to a review of the literature related to the knowledge and skills needed to teach adults. This included the need for a trainer to employ their knowledge of content in course design and planning, and to select the appropriate teaching techniques based on this content. The next
area of interest included research on training, the area in which I needed to improve. This research examined the role and importance of the stages typically recommended in training, that is, determining participant needs and objectives, preparing and presenting the course of instruction, and providing for participant application of acquired skills or knowledge once a course is completed.

As I was conducting my research in Thailand, I needed to examine Thai culture and its implications in the area of adult education. In particular, I needed to examine those aspects that were likely to affect the behavior of adult Thais in a short course, learning environment. The first, kreng jai, or being considerate, investigated this important facet of Thai culture and how it permeates into virtually every aspect of Thai social life. The next section examined how Thais divide their social world into groups of people and the varying the norms of behavior expected within each group. The final aspect dealt with the Thai need to determine one’s position in a hierarchy based on a variety of changing variables. The section concluded by examining literature on teaching Thais and examined how Thai educational experiences have helped to create a classroom personality ‘typical’ for a Thai adult.

The literature reviewed led to an appreciation of the field and helped place my study in a wider context. It also served to identify a number of starting points for investigating the research question. However, I needed to find a research method that would allow me to verify the validity of the ideas identified from the literature and to determine their efficacy in defining the characteristics of effective seminar leaders in the Thai business community.

The selection of an appropriate research approach proved to be a challenge. Although I had a clear understanding of what I wished to research, I was uncertain as to the questions I would need to ask. Therefore, a qualitative methodology appeared to be most appropriate. My first plan was to employ action research, as this approach appeared, at the outset, to offer the best probability of success. However, when it became clear action research would not be feasible; I decided to undertake the study using a case study approach.

My first obligation was to place my case study within a wider perspective of the various paradigms along with my own beliefs concerning the acquisition of knowledge. I also needed to ensure that my case study would maintain its integrity. I accomplished this goal through the application of six criteria associated with a rigorous case study project.
To investigate my research question, I selected and interviewed fifteen trainers regarded as effective in the Thai business community. The criteria employed to select effective seminar leaders in the Thai business community was based primarily on their ability to generate repeat business, which I felt reflected their effectiveness with my target audience, that is, the Thai business community.

With fifteen interviews completed and a realization that further discussions with additional interviewees or repeat interviews with those already interviewed would not provide additional insights into teaching short courses in the Thai business community, I ended this stage of the research. I decided that any goodwill remaining would be better utilized in maintaining a relationship that would allow me to return for further answers or to verify those already offered.

The interviews were transcribed and placed into a database for analysis. The analysis of the results involved four stages during which the data was continually assessed and evaluated. This proved to be demanding and required extensive reviews, a growing insight into the comments provided, and the acceptance that intuition would be an important constituent in my ability to uncover patterns in interviewees’ reported thoughts and behavior. The outcome of this effort is reflected in the four categories that emerged from the analyses of the interview transcripts (see 4.0).

The first category highlighted the importance of trainers’ extensive knowledge of the participants as a cultural group and highlighted the importance interviewees placed on their understanding of Thai cultural norms in relation to their effectiveness. Working in the Thai business community, seminar leaders discussed the core parameters within which they were able plan a short course. They assumed that most participants would be Thai and therefore, when planning they would consider the influence Thai culture might have on their decision making in relation to the preparation and conduct of short courses.

The second category focused on the need for trainers to base their planning of the content matter to be taught during the seminar based on their understanding of Thai participant needs and expectations. An examination of the comments associated with how interviewees planned for a seminar with Thai participants yielded concerns with what interviewees believed Thai participants expected when they attended a seminar. Comments also centered on the need for participants in a seminar to understand the relevance of the
content in terms of workplace needs, how Thai culture influenced the creation of a lesson plan, and finally, the use of time and pacing when working with Thai participants.

The third category emphasized the face-to-face teaching component and the various skills and techniques trainers employed with their Thai participants. A detailed analysis of seminar leaders’ comments concerning the teaching skills and techniques discussed the means effective trainers employed to start a seminar and to ensure participants remained interested in the content from the outset and throughout the seminar. In addition, trainers need to make certain content was presented so that participants could understand what was being taught and included the need to take into consideration that most participants were not native speakers of English. The use of verbal and non-verbal cues, two-way communication, that is, between a participant and a seminar leader, and the setting up, monitoring, and debriefing Thai participants as part of a group discussion also featured in needs associated with effectively teaching Thai participants.

The final category centered on the need to build and maintain a positive relationship that trainers believed was central to their effectiveness with a Thai audience and described the approaches effective trainers employed to build a relationship with their participants. In particular, the use of Thai-related stories and anecdotes and the need to incorporate humor or to keep a seminar fun were often cited as ways in which effective seminar leaders create a connection with their Thai participants.

6.2 Major Findings

The results proved to be a surprise. As I had accepted that trainers in Thailand do not have the opportunity to receive much information about participants before a course and with limited time to make changes once a program started, I believed that the key to effectiveness would lie in the areas of subject matter knowledge and teaching proficiency. However, while these two factors remain important, they are far outweighed in significance by the depth of knowledge trainers have about the participants in terms of the expected norms of behavior that come with being a member of Thai culture.

Effective trainers know their participants, perhaps not individually, but certainly as a group with recognizable traits that reflect a shared Thai cultural heritage. Effective trainers are more concerned with the expectations of the Thai participants they teach than with the proposed content or their repertoire of teaching skills. In short, effective trainers place their
knowledge of Thai participants at the forefront in their planning and decision-making. This has been clearly illustrated in the characteristics of an effective trainer described in Chapter 5 and the subtle and not so subtle ways they adapt seminar content and the manner in which they teach in the Thai short-course market. However, the key to effectiveness in teaching short courses lies predominantly with trainers’ talent at balancing efforts to adapt to the needs of teaching in the Thai culture, while having members of this culture adapt to their needs as trainers.

The social constructivist literature (e.g., Ernest, 1994) focuses almost entirely on classrooms reflected in mainstream constructivist literature or workplaces (e.g., Swanson, Narman, & Linn, 1995; Kivinen & Ristela, 2003) as reflected in situated cognition, where it is possible, because of the time available, to establish a classroom culture or workplace culture with its own norms and values. In these cases, the norms and values of the society-at-large are placed in the background to some extent simply because it is possible to establish, make explicit and thereby foreground the specific norms and values instituted for the purposes of learning in the classroom or workplace.

In the case of short courses, this is fundamentally different as there is no time to establish a locally relevant learning culture with negotiated, agreed norms, and values. Consequently, the dominant social norms and values are those that come into play to impact the way in which everyone involved in the learning event behaves, that is, they are foregrounded. As such, effective trainers will be those who are most able to recognize, respect, and tap into the dominant social values and norms to facilitate learning just as effective teachers are the ones who work very overtly to establish a local learning culture to facilitate learning.

Current research, professional publications, and ‘how-to’ manuals refer to the knowledge of participants as one factor in the creation and presentation of an effective training event, along with content knowledge and teaching skills. However, this literature does not highlight the need to know the participants and their culture to the same overwhelming extent demonstrated by effective trainers in the Thai business community.

An effective seminar leader in the Thai business community employs what is normally considered ‘background information’, that is, knowledge about the participants and their
culture in terms of its dominant norm and values, and places this information in the ‘forefront’ during their preparation and presentation of a learning event.

6.3 Directions for Further Study

In examining directions for further research a myriad of opportunities become apparent. An initial area of interest relates to the dichotomy found in this research between ideas suggested in the literature review concerning the role kreng jai would play in determining participant behavior and the reality discussed by both Thai and non-Thai interviewees. In particular, research could examine the different role kreng jai might play in a training event conducted in English and/or by a non-Thai trainer.

This area of research could also include how a shared learning community is created during a short course, despite the limited amount of time available. What constitutes a social norm or value? Once identified, what is their relative importance and does this change to reflect different situations or individuals involved? How are cultural norms and values, for example, those associated with kreng jai, learned or acquired by members of that culture or by individuals who are not members of that culture? What are the important cultural norms and values in other cultures? If participants from more than one culture take part in an event, how are the potentially varying norms and values blended?

A third area of interest relates to the environment in which this research has been conducted. Could the research and the results be transferred to a long course, other cultures, with participants not in a business community, or any combination of these features? For example, what are the characteristics of effective university professors in Thailand? What are the characteristics of effective short-course trainers in Japan? What are the characteristics of effective trainers in the technical field in Thailand? What are the characteristics of effective university professors teaching science courses in Taiwan? What are the characteristics of effective trainers from one company, for example, IBM, teaching at another company, for example, Ford. Will a core set of characteristics be apparent or will each ‘cross-cultural’ event require a different set of characteristics.

A final area for further research involves examining how to share these characteristics with new trainers in the Thai business community. What skills need to be taught and what skills should acquired through practice or observation? This field of research could also lead
into a study to examine the relative importance of the eight characteristics identified in this study.

The short course remains a relatively open field for research. However, with the growing demand for skillful trainers throughout the world, research that could provide additional insights into improving the efficacy of a short training program, in particular training or seminars in which the trainer and participants come from different cultures, would appear to have a wide appeal with researchers and practitioners.

6.4 Conclusion

My search to improve my ability to teach short courses in Thailand has led to the identification of the eight characteristics presented and discussed in the previous chapter. I am confident that the application of these characteristics will improve my confidence and ability to teach short courses in the Thai business community. However, it will be up to those who follow to determine how they wish to employ the findings presented and the advice proffered.
REFERENCES


Zhao, R. & Orey, M. (1999). *Implementing the scaffolding strategy with the computer.* Presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, Houston, TX.
Seminar Leader Effectiveness: Teaching Short Courses in the Thai Business Community.

APPENDIX 1

Ethics Committee Letter for interviewees
My name is Tim Cornwall and I am a graduate student currently studying for a PhD in FELCS at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University in Melbourne, Australia.

The topic of my PhD is, Seminar Leader Effectiveness: Magic and Mystery in Teaching Short Courses in the Thai Business Community.

In this research, I would to learn what the most important factors are that lead to facilitator effectiveness. I believe that if I can understand the qualities and skills that lead to effective teaching in a short course, I will be able to help other facilitators increase their effectiveness.

I would like to interview you for about an hour and to tape your answers. During the interview, I would like to ask you questions about seminar content, the seminar leader and your opinions about teaching in general.

All your answers will be completely confidential and I will make certain all your comments and the tape are kept safe. I may use your comments in my research, but will never mention your name.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time and any unprocessed data may also be withdrawn.

A dissertation will be submitted to RMIT and may later be published in Thailand.

For further information you can contact me on 01 834 8982 or my senior supervisor Dr Diane Siemon and in Australia. (61 3 9925 7916).

Thank-you

Tim Cornwall

For any further details about completion of this form, or for additional supporting material, please contact the Secretary of your Faculty HRE Sub Committee or the Secretary to the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee c/o University Secretariat, (03) 9925 1745.
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the Thai Business Community.

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire
Participant Evaluation of Short-Course Success (PESS)

- A short-course may be called a seminar, demonstration, or lecture.
- A short-course is any course over 90 minutes and up to three days.
- A facilitator may also be called a teacher, instructor, or seminar leader.
- The participant in the short-course may be called a student or attendee.

I would like your opinions about your short course.
Please do not write your name, as this questionnaire must remain confidential.
Please provide a response for every statement and the question on the back.

Section One: Instructions: What helped to make this course successful? For each statement below, circle the number that best represents your opinion about that statement.
0 = not important  5 = very important  X = not relevant/applicable

The facilitator...

A) presented something valuable or useful.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

B) adapted content to our needs or situation.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

C) provided background to the content.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

D) gave different points of views.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

E) discussed current developments.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

F) was friendly
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

G) was dynamic and energetic.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

H) used humour.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

I) enjoyed being with us
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

J) appeared relaxed.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

K) used easy to understand English.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

L) had a good speaking voice.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

M) gestured when talking.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

N) moved around the room.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

O) had eye contact with us
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

P) varied the activities used.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

Q) presented ideas clearly.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

R) made use of examples or stories.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

S) used handouts and visuals effectively.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

T) reviewed or summarized regularly.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

U) encouraged group discussion.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

V) encouraged questions and gave answers.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

W) listened carefully.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

X) understood our reasons for learning.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

Y) was concerned about our difficulties.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 X

Please Turn Over
Our facilitator...
A presented something valuable or useful.
B adapted content to our needs or situation.
C provided background to the content.
D gave different points of views.
E discussed current developments.
F was friendly.
G was dynamic and energetic.
H used humour.
I enjoyed being with us.
J appeared relaxed.
K used easy to understand English.
L had a good speaking voice.
M gestured when talking.
N had eye contact with us.
O used handouts and visuals effectively.
P varied the activities used.
Q presented ideas clearly.
R made use of examples or stories.
S used handouts and visuals effectively.
T reviewed or summarized regularly.
U encouraged group discussion.
V encouraged questions and gave answers.
W listened carefully.
X understood our reasons for learning.
Y was concerned about our difficulties.

Section Two: Instructions

Step One
What five (5) items were most important, effective, or useful in making the course a success?

Write the correct letter next to each rank:

_____ Most Important Item.
_____ Second Most Important Item.
_____ Third Most Important Item.
_____ Fourth Most Important Item.
_____ Fifth Most Important Item.

Step Two
What five (5) items out of the items not chosen were most unimportant, ineffective, or useless in making the course a success?

Write the correct letter next to each rank:

_____ Most Unimportant Item.
_____ Second Most Unimportant Item.
_____ Third Most Unimportant Item.
_____ Fourth Most Unimportant Item.
_____ Fifth Most Unimportant Item.

Section Three: Instructions

Answer each of the statements below with your opinion.

1 = strongly disagree  2 = disagree  3 = undecided  4 = agree  5 = strongly agree

_____ I liked the program.
_____ I liked the trainer.
_____ I liked listening to the facilitator.
_____ I liked what I did during the course.
_____ I liked the support I received.

Thank-you for your help.
Seminar Leader Effectiveness: Teaching Short Courses in the Thai Business Community.

APPENDIX 3

Two Sample Interviews
Sample Interview One

Non-Thai

Australian, Male, Non-bilingual, 50s, 25+ years experience with short courses.

TC Could you give me an idea what variety of courses you have done.

NC A very broad range of courses, including a wide range of audiences, starting back, probably in 1978, 77, 78. And they were, initially I was short course co-coordinator for rehabilitation services so manpower training, health professionals and that sort of things. Moving on to short courses with aboriginal staff aboriginal managers in the Northern Territories for a number of years, then short courses in Perth, Melbourne etc., working at a range of different cultures. Short courses in SE Asia, Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand of course, Papa New Guinea of course. As well as with universities, within in a university course you have a lots of short courses.

TC But you have been based in, primarily in Bangkok for a while now.

NC I have been coming to Thailand since 1996, but I have only been based in Bangkok for the last three years.

TC And you are doing short courses?

NC Yes, the reason for coming to Thailand was short courses.

TC Who have you been doing short courses with?

NC NGO sector, various universities inside and outside Bangkok, most recently with a range of Burmese political organization on the Thai/Burma border run by Ang Chang government in exile, that was just last month.

TC Unlike a lot of people I have interviewed, you have a lot more experience throughout Asia, and perhaps lead into a different type of question. The Thais will always say that they are different. Doesn’t matter in what area and surprisingly, I guess they are right. What is your opinion as far as short courses are concerned?

NC I think the Thais are less different than they think they are, as probably we all are less different than we think we are. However, there are differences, that was illustrated most strikingly when I did a bit of a grand tour of Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam and running short courses in Thailand, but also much briefer seminars in those other places. One of the things that hit me was how similar the Thais; the Thais won’t like this comparison, how similar the Thais were to some Aboriginal Cultures. In this sense, they are very dissimilar in terms of spirituality, etc, etc, but they are very similar in their attitudes toward time and attitude to, their very informal attitudes in some ways. What struck me was that in Malaysia, people were pretty organized; it was fairly easy to run courses for people in Malaysia. The Chinese model dominated. So that was useful for a Westerner. In Thailand, the short course I ran changed from day to day. It was just extraordinary. It was probably the first course I’ve ever run where the population
increased as the course went on. We started with low thirties and finished with some fifty plus in the course. There was no feeling on the part of the Thais that there was anything wrong with this, this was fine to bring in new people. If it seemed to be a good course, let’s tell our friends and our work colleagues and they can come. Also, starting time was very casually regarded by the Thais. We might well start at nine, but the first hour is mainly talking and eating. And then the contrast was, that when I got to Vietnam, and the way I used to describe it is, as soon as your dot hits the spot, we’re in business in Vietnam. There was the normal hellos, how are you, would like tea or coffee, but then, it was very focused, straight down to business, very confident, etc. But in Thailand, far more casual. The Vietnamese were concerned about appearance, but not at the expense of substance, whereas the Thais, the classic sort of Thai conference, there is no place to put your papers at the lectern because the lectern is covered by flowers. That to me, kind of sums up this predominance of appearance over substance. Okay, we don’t care where the lecturer puts his notes, as long the lectern looks good.

TC  You mentioned that the Thais and the aboriginals have the same attitude towards time, in that…

NC Very rubbery…I mean some aboriginal cultures are extremely relaxed about time, waiting around for a day or two is no problem. Thailand is not quite that relaxed. There is not really an expectation that things will necessarily start on time.

TC If one aborigine has been waiting around for two days for a friend, and his friend shows up, does that friend apologize.

NC No, no, they might explain, other things cropped up. But no, not much apology.

TC Because here, correct me if I am wrong, there is always, someone is always late, and the first thing always do is apologize.

NC That’s true actually.

TC I find that different, I find it in a seminar here, and you have probably seen it, where if they come in late, they will come in and wait the room. Or if they have to leave early. Now the seminar you mentioned that started with thirty and went to fifty. Now, how do you think, you don’t think the participants who came on the third day had any complaints or

NC Yeah, considerable flexibility was required by me. I found myself at nighttime, rewriting the course each night because we had a handful of extra people involved. These people were about middle management level in NGOs mostly, in charge of things like the Klong Toey Women’s program or HIV Program, so they were fairly sensible, serious people and I would have to a little bit of a catch up for their benefit but also it was useful revision for everybody else.

TC Do you think that on a seminar, revision and follow-up is important?

NC Yes, extremely.

TC Do you think it is more important than elsewhere?
NC I don’t know. I think it is generally important.

TC Right, appearances, you mentioned. You gave one example, can you think of any other examples where appearance might be more important than substance.

NC Sure, I was invited along to Chulalongkorn to hand out postgraduate diplomas in Irrigation Science. Now, can you imagine how much I know about Irrigation Science?

TC Probably not much.

NC Zero. I knew none of the students, knew nothing about the subject, but the professor was a friend of mine, and he wanted a foreign academic to do it. It didn’t matter that I had nothing to do with their course, had never them before, but what we did, was we both got up there, hold the certificate, smiled for the camera, boom, we did that for sixty students. So that it a beautiful example of appearance over substance. It didn’t matter, as long as I was a foreign academic.

TC I look back on when I got my diplomas and it wasn’t like that at all.

NC And probably the person giving you the diploma had something to do with it.

TC He was the Chancellor…

NC I am not even associated with Chula.

TC Now, when you, one-way to look at this, maybe hard to admit, but have you had a short course here that really did not work.

NC I had part of a short course that really did not work. I was running a series of seminars at Thammasat and it was on policy, social policy. With due modesty, I think I am very good at teaching that area because it can be a very dry and dusty area, but I have managed to make it interesting for all levels of students over the years. So, it was a series of seminars, the first four went fantastically. It was for doctorate level students, in law and social administration and also a number of staff sitting in also. It was going terrifically, so we would do social policy and globalization, social policy and poverty, urbanization and stuff like that and it was going fantastically, and in the final seminar, now we are dealing with doctoral level students and staff, not dealing with high school kids. In the final seminar, I presented three theoretical approaches, which are in considerable tension, there is considerable conflict between these and the trick is - how do you pull these together. I noticed after about twenty minutes, that I was starting to get that gold fish look. That eyes glossed, mouth open. We had arranged to stop for the monks to have lunch, as you know they have to eat at special times, so I did a quick whisper to ask if we could stop early because I could see that things were not working. And so, I spoke to him during the break, it turned out to be quite a long break to allow the monks to eat and for us to work sort things out. He reluctantly, he actually didn’t want to be seen to be criticizing, which is another characteristic, not just of Thais, but other Asian groups, but I was fairly insistent that something was not working, I began asking, these are doctoral level students, they do have to do theoretical critique, etc. And he said, eventually it came out, that want to know how to. They want to know how
policy worked. They really didn’t want theoretical critique, they didn’t want to have to
deal with the very demanding mental gymnastic of holding three very conflicting
theories in their mind at once, and to try to hold those contradictions. So I transformed
the lecture, sort of, by carving out two of the theories, which left us with one, and then
able, transmogrify that one theory into how to. Step one, step two, step three, and it all
worked out. The goldfish look disappeared; questions began to appear.

TC You mentioned that the first four sessions went well, how did you know? What gave
you the impression that things were going well?

NC Good question. There were good questions coming from the students. This was one of
those groups where there was fairly good English. So, either people felt confident asking
me questions, and they were quite good questions, or, have you seen that note passing?
Where the students who can’t speak English so well, pass their questions to more
confident speakers, and then he or she will ask on their behalf. So this was a good
indicator. They were animated. They were laughing at the right bits. Another indicator.
We’re not talking about evaluation, but rather what kind of feedback.

TC For example, when you looked around the room, were people looking at you? Would
they give any sign that they were enjoying?

NC They would respond if we can go with an example that was mildly amusing, they would
get it. This was important because sometimes people don’t. And they laughed. They
participated very well in the exercises. I will give you another example from another
seminar series, if I can. I was dealing with a group of people and one of exercises I
asked them to do was a network analysis. So, do their organization network, their people
network, etc, in small groups of four or five. As I walked around the groups, I noticed
what they were producing was very high quality indeed. This was the best network
analysis I had ever seen. This meant a) that they had got it. they must have understood
the stuff quite well. B) they probably had a natural aptitude, you know. I dealt with
Australian postgraduate groups and others and they were not performing as well as this
group. And I noticed two of them; the Mon Women’s Association and some Karin
Youth group had this incredible small network. The Mon produced a wagon wheel, and
the Karin Youth mob produced this very skinny little network, looked like a collapsed
TV antenna, very odd. But the other groups, theirs were great, including international
contacts. Pretty impressive stuff. I had a talk to the Mon Women’s people about their
wagon wheel, and it turned out that it was true reflection of how they worked and so
forth, everyone talked to. They had to change.

TC So you went over and talked to this group. And, then would you sit down with them or
stand up?

NC Sit down usually.

TC How many in this group?

NC About five.
TC You took a look at their wheel, they explained what it was, and then realized they were doing the right thing. What they had drawn was what was true. They hadn’t misunderstood the instructions.

NC That’s correct.

TC That was your first thing you needed to check. Now you have realized that they are doing is the right thing, but what they have done is not very, not really, in this case not a good network.

NC Means that their reality, political and in terms their organizational reality has some serious inadequacies.

TC And you talked to them when you were in the group? And in that group, did they ask you specific questions? Why you thought the wheel was…

NC No other way around, there were probably five people in the group, probably from five different organizations, the Mons are sitting there with their wagon wheel, and the others have got these fantastic spider web sorts of networks, with everybody named, and they know who is who, etc. The question, the way it works is not to say to the Mon lady, why is yours so hopeless, but rather to, ask her, is she seems confident enough, or those others, what are the differences between these. And then, if it became clear from that discussion that the Mon Women’s Association, or her part of it, was fairly underdeveloped, they had no international donors for example. I want to come back to another point. The Karin Youth Mob, not the usual Karin Youth, this was a particular, Karin Youth Liberation Front, they had this collapsed TV antenna of a network, and I said, well, and they were working on their own, and have you got, don’t forget international donors and all that stuff, and they said, we don’t have international donors. Now everybody else did, I asked why is that. They said, well we’re not allowed to. What do you mean you’re not allowed to? Well we buy weapons, again we had a situation where the network was a true representation of how they worked, and they had to work on very tight cell structure because of the nature of their activities, which was military.

TC When you put them into these groups, how long had you been lecturing?

NC Not long, I usually go on a rule of thumb, a very flexible rule of thumb, of no more than twenty minutes of input. Max.

TC When they discuss. You lecture for twenty minutes…

NC Input for twenty minutes; it might be lecture; it may be something else.

TC When they start work in groups, do you organize the groups or do you allow them to pick their own?

NC It varies. It is something I always check out with whoever is, if I am running something within someone else’s course, for example, I always check that, do people self-select or do you just mix them up yourself, or one, two three. Now I learned that working in the aboriginal arena. They have a number of relationships, which are non-speaking.
relationships, like mother-in-law and son-in-law can’t talk to each other. And, with their…

TC Boy, a lot of cultures would like that.

NC Yeah, mother-in-law and son-in-law can have a joking relationship, where they can never discuss anything serious, can have an insulting relationship, where they can be insulting to each other, but not directly, he can say it to the wife, or the mother can say it to her daughter, like what a dick he is, but never directly. What it means, there are various people you can’t put together.

TC Do you find that is, in a general seminar, a problem here?

NC Not really, I think it is useful to be aware of gender, and also to be aware of age issues. Sometimes people are more comfortable in same gender groups and same age groups. But, it’s not the huge issue it is with aboriginal groups,

TC But it is something…

NC To be sensitive to.

TC Let’s say you have 25 people and there are five distinct age groups. And you had to make a group, and in Thailand if you let them make a group, what do you think the breakdown would be. Five groups by age, or people sitting closest to each other, male or female.

NC I would suspect that people sitting closest to each would be associated with each other, many times Thais come to a seminar in pairs. Age, similar groups, also geographically close, as they are close for a reason.

TC After a discussion is over, do you find that the groups make a presentation or do you review for them?

NC Just, I’ll just take a step back here. I always check these things out. Either the people running the show or the students about what they would like to do. How do they like to do things? Like with the students recently, they like one, two, three, four, five. They like to be broken into groups by numbers, others quite clearly want to self-select.

TC But after you have given them input for 20 minutes, now you are going around, do you find yourself spending the same amount of time with each group?

NC I try to make a point of doing that, but it often doesn’t turn out that way. One group will work more easily than another group, so obviously, just with regards to these bloody presentations, having been running short courses for 25 years or so, these presentations session, I feel they are a real problem. I do think they give the groups something tangible to show as a result of their work, but find them an incredible waste of time usually because groups tend to be saying the same thing over and over, in some cases, and also, the worth of what they present does not necessarily reflect how good the discussion was. I have been searching for other ways to do this, and having experimented, I usually fall back on the plenary session. It’s headache.
TC How do you think the other members react?

NC I think that the group members, the particular group members usually get a lot out of their group presenting, they can be bored rigid by other groups presenting, but, as part of the learning process it is useful. They get to show and tell.

TC If you were going to give advice to someone doing their first workshop or seminar here, let’s say for arguments sake, 20 minutes of input is quite easy for most experienced people. After 20 minutes they are going to be doing group work, what advice would you give to someone who is knew to teaching Thais about that transition from end of what you have talked about, to getting them started. The reason I ask…

NC At the nitty gritty level.

TC I find teaching in Canada or Austria, that if I break people into groups, they immediately start, or there might be a few questions, one person may ask, you get immediate feedback that your instructions have been understood. But here, you have now asked them to break into groups, but no one person is going to stick their hand up and say, is this what you want us to do,

NC Right, or why.

TC You might go around to different groups and find that you have to explain it to all of them. What advice would you give to a first-timer?

NC Remember too, that people’s level of English might be a concern. Another thing, if you are working with a translator, both in Thailand and elsewhere, the translator can either add or diminish the effectiveness of what you are doing. So, towards the end of your twenty minutes it is important to do a really clear, simple summary. This is the road we have come down, this is where we started, this is what we covered, this is where we got to. Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you told them. You do this summary; therefore, having got here, making sure all the translator knows what you are going on about. We will consider this question, or using, you will now have a chance to do a network analysis, to use an example again from the other day, in other words, write the question up, very clearly, double check, it doesn’t matter. If people are being shy or non-responsive, always, ask is there something that I have not been clear about, is there something you want me to be clearer about, not do you understand.

TC We talked a lot about one aspect of doing seminar, the parent, helping, when you are working, how do you encourage the groups to discuss or do you need to.

NC First, I am normally dealing with adults, in the trade, in the business, in what ever it is and normally interested in what we are dealing with, so there is not usually much need to encourage them to focus on the material at hand, I guess by making it interesting. Say you are doing something that can be as dusty as policy, if you can make it a very interesting matter, something that affects their lives, or well being, and this becomes clear to them, that can be a major motivator.
TC One of the ideas, when, for example the group was doing the networking, and they may not be interested because they don’t know why they are doing something, is that important?

NC Sure, but not as important in Thailand, people, it is as important in Thailand as elsewhere, but people will not always acknowledge that. People, especially, adults, need to know why they are going to do something, normally, because they won’t get much out of it if they don’t know why. Thais, of course, do have a very high degree of hierarchical so they will generally do what they are told without knowing why, but that is a very dangerous generalization, because a) you going to get a number of Thais who won’t do that, will ask why are we doing this. And b) those who, perhaps, won’t question why, usually want to know why. They will be more accepting than some cultures, in Papa New Guinea for example, if they think something is a wank, they won’t do it.

TC Yeah, whereas here they will perhaps do it, but kind of minimal.

NC Yeah, tokenistic, the other thing Thais will do, other groups, if what they have been asked to do and appears to them to be irrelevant or not interesting or something, when they get into their group, they will do something else. Which can be some other bit of work they find interesting, or just have a chat. They don’t actively resist, it will be a passive resistant.

TC Also, if a group doesn’t gel or they don’t want to do it, they leave one after the other. So when you go to visit, they say the leader is away. Someone makes a phone call. They still look as busy as everyone.

NC Appearance matters.

TC I look at a seminar as five stages, planning, presentation, now when you are planning a seminar, is there anything in particular you do to insure you are going to have success with a Thai audience?

NC Get as much intelligence about the audience as you can, find out who they are, what they do, what their peculiarities are. And also, short courses are being offered within other courses, ask how the course is going, especially in Thailand and when working with translators. I have developed expertise working with translators having worked with quite a number. Your translator ends up being your co-teacher, and so, therefore, you need to set aside enough time to be able to go through the course interestingly in this fashion with the translator, in a sense teaching them, and you want them to ask if something is puzzling.

TC You are not talking about simultaneous, are you? You talk for a couple of minutes…

NC Less than a couple of minutes, sometimes phrase by phrase. Or sentence.

TC Do you find that frustrating?

NC No, not frustrating, but it can be very difficult, I have often had to reteach bits, but that is actually good news. If you find, that people are, in fact, asking you to go over
something again that means the teaching has been successful, in a paradoxical sort of way, because, they are not confident to say they don’t understand.

TC Some people have suggested that is the problem. Here in Thailand, the long course give the professor, if you do not understand something your are making the professor loose face, the Thai way, so they wait till you are in private, which is one reason why profs here work 8 to 5. In a short course students have that chance. When you take a break, what is your usual routine?

NC I usually go outside, or depends, quite right, it is often at the break with what they do not understand, you can often get a sense of how many people do not understand or is it a one-off. That’s actually quite true.

TC You have done a lot of these courses. It is now first morning break. You have been going ninety minutes and it is going well. Everyone has coffee at the same place. Describe, you look around and think this is going well, what is happening during the break that gives you this idea?

NC Usually people will come up to you and say things like, I hadn’t thought about that before. Or whatever it is about, or that stuff about xyz was quite interesting, could we have a bit more abc. That sort of thing. Informal feedback. Good point, 90 minutes is perhaps too long, should have a couple of breaks in there because that is when you get a lot of your feedback.

TC Let’s say you are at a seminar or conducting a seminar and you walk out at the first break, and you think this is terrible. Will it be different what they people are doing at that break.

NC I think there is, if they are not having a good time, they won’t usually come up to you expect for the social niceties. Certainly, if they are right in, they will come up and talk to you. If it is going extremely well, there will be a lot of interaction. Usually. You will have noticed the goldfish looks of boredom in the seminar, so you know things are not going to well, you may have tried to work out what is going on here and in the break, there will not be as much interaction with you.

TC Let’s say you have 50 people in a seminar for the first 90 minutes, and it is not going well, now, how long before the first person gets up and leaves?

NC Well, sometimes they don’t. You assume a situation where people feel free to do that, but often they won’t. I would guess, half an hour. I have only been in a couple of situations where it went bad. Worst was Thammasat that was incredible. Normally, I would do what I have always done; when things go bad, I’d call a halt.

TC And that would be back to the goldfish look. I have been to seminars that are really bad. What I see is a lot of people getting phone calls.

NC I’ll keep an eye on that. At Thammasat where things weren’t going well, people weren’t leaving.

TC But they had been with you before…
NC Yeah, they were living in hope that things would change.

TC There would be a loss of face. How long do you have to be working with a group of people that you have gained enough face?

NC Extremely. I would say it is number one, top priority.

TC I would like to go back to one thing, you mentioned that time is rubbery in Thailand, but is it always rubbery.

LG Not always, when the course is of great importance to the participants and their job I find that they are more likely to turn up on time, time is probably less rubbery. In a northern course that I ran, I was amazed at nine o’clock in the morning they would all be there. In fact, the course was a little bit out of town, my driver was late, so the person who was late, was me.

TC One of the things we talk about in teaching is the 60 or 70 per cent rule. You give people something to do, and you for 60 to 70 per cent to finish, but with time so rubbery, if you had a seminar and you expecting 40 people and ten are there at nine, what do you do?

NC Personally I don’t start. I know some people do, but I would normally leave it for about 10 minutes. 10 – 15.

TC I know the feeling. I know some students will be late so I plan to spend the first 10/15 minutes doing something related, but not important.

NC Also, I sometimes ask the organizer of the course, if we could have, if it is physically possible to have coffee and stuff available. So that if you do have that situation you can invite the students to get themselves a coffee or whatever, and then of course that can be quite the useful chat time to find out the students are on about, where they are from.

TC You mentioned that Thais, in your experience, are so interested in theory, but more practical application, so to a Thai. I have heard it suggested that Thais are good at old stuff, and foreigners at the new stuff. When you are actually planning the material, so you have suggested, 20-minute input, do something, and you have also suggested in the first break not be so long in the morning… go an hour. You mentioned to give feedback. But now, it is two weeks before the course and you are planning. With your experience teaching Thais and compared to a group of westerners in Sydney, would the planning be different?

NC Yes, the planning is different in a number of ways. Sometimes it depends so much on the audience. The language of the presentation has to be different and therefore the planning of handouts etc. A fair bit of attention has to be paid to language. That is one thing that comes to mind. With both groups, I would try to find out as much as I can about the students. Probably With the Thai group, or any quote group, not the same as me would probably be more important. Exercises, exercises that you ask people to do; I always pay a lot of attention to insuring they are very clear.
TC You are suggesting that it would be clearer here. In your experience, you said that appearance was more important than substance. To the success of a seminar in Thailand how important is your knowledge of the topic compared to your ability to present it in a way they like.

NC The two are not contradictory and both should be of high standard. Ability to present is always most important. Interestingly.

TC Basically, your teaching style? Would you say there is a difference: short and long, Thai and non-Thai. Say you are doing a one-day seminar with Thais, what differences would there be in the way you would want to present, your teaching personality so to speak, than in Australia.

NC I would be a lot more careful with humor. Certainly, I tend to use a lot of humor in presenting. However, humor can have difficulty making it cross culturally, therefore you need to be fairly knowledgeable about what is funny and what is not funny. For example, jokes against oneself are pretty funny in a western setting, but necessarily that funny in an Asian setting. To tell a joke against yourself can be funny, but better to telling it about a third party, preferably someone who in not there. That is one aspect, be careful with humor, important what you wear, quite important. In all my 30 years in Australia, I never wore a suit and only rarely wear a tie. Whereas in Thailand, I don’t bother with the suit, but I always wear a tie and sometimes wear a coat.

TC We were talking about appearance and substance. I recently had an interview, and it was only five minutes.

NC It’s important to look the part. You have to look like ajarn, preferably an ajarn yai, especially at Thammasat; you have to look like you are very important, that you know your stuff; that you are well turned out.

TB The actual pedagogy. You mentioned 20 minutes of input or whatever.

NC I try to make it as interactive as possible.

TC How do you make it interactive?

NC Contrary to popular belief, you can ask Thais questions. Contrary to what you read in some of the textbooks. You just need to be careful about the questions you ask. Why questions won’t get you very far. What questions will. Ask questions, are these questions to the group as a whole or to individuals.

TC Are these questions to the group as a whole or to individuals.

NC At first the group as a whole.

TC And hope or expect that someone will answer.

NC But if that doesn’t, zero in.

TC In your experience do think someone will answer?
NC Usually, yeah, remember the audience I am dealing with is not school kids. Usually professionals, people who want to apply on Monday what they learned on Friday. Except the doctoral students at Thammasat.

TC I call that the Monday morning rule. How important is that here?

NC With the groups I deal with extremely important, extremely. They want to know how to, okay.

TC Have you talked to other people doing short course here or teaching. Do you think that is typical across the board?

NC I’d say so.

TC Lets take a look a few concrete examples. You’re teaching a one-day course on research methodology. What would a group of Thais expect to get from that?

NC They want to know, certainly why they need to know. They may need to know it because of assessment or whatever. Research methodology is usually directed towards like academics not professionals. Also the particular Thais I am teaching a lot of research to, they wanted to know the difference between what I was teaching and what they already knew. They wanted to know what the newness was and also, then of course, wanted to touch on how to do it. And the wanted all conundrums resolved. No tensions or contradictions left.

TC One of the mistakes that people might make when they come here is that it is a developing country, but most of the people who show up for a seminar are extremely well educated. They might not have very good English, that doesn’t matter, there Thai. You’re saying that they come in with a pretty good background, but looking for new ideas or a new angle or answers.

NC And often with another agenda, as opposed to many Westerners who have actually come to something on qualitative research because they want to know more about qualitative research, most Thai academics who get into qualitative research because they need to know about qualitative research advance their career.

TC If we take it one step further, when the one-day seminar is over they don’t want to be left with the question should I be doing action or grounded research, they want to leave knowing that it should be grounded and how to do it.

NC Or they want a really good understanding of the array, they are not that extreme that they would say we only want to do grounded. They certainly want a good understanding of the whole lot, and where, one of the most difficult areas to teach, say like in an area like research, those really puzzling areas of research, like for example, dismissing objectivity in qualitative research. Hard enough to get around, but it is a basic thing to understand why.

TC Let’s go back to your NGOs. When they come, do they have a specific agenda in mind? If your seminar meets this agenda, they will be happy. If it doesn’t, what will they do?
They may still be happy because they have learnt something beyond their agenda. The fact that the seminar may not have completely met their agenda may mean it that surpassed it. So one of things that I always do is ask people at the beginning what they want to know. I don’t ask them to stand up and tell everybody. I have them write it down, it’s their little secret and then it becomes my little secret. So then, I know what their expectations are in a general sense and sometimes it is things that I have left out and that night I need to go back and put in.

And if it is a one-day seminar, put in, in the afternoon.

Yeah, if it is the sort of thing that I have at my fingertips.

We have talked about successful seminars, but if you were giving advice to somebody, or you have probably been to some pretty seminars here, not yours.

I just remembered related to your earlier question about preparation. In Thailand, I use many, many more examples to illustrate things.

Have you been to a bad seminar by somebody else here?

Yeah, yeah.

Why was it bad?

Because the person appeared to have no interest in how the people, whether people learned the stuff or not understood or not. Basically, this person went through the motions.

Did the Thai audience pickup on that?

Yeah, they did, but they were Thai polite. He was never challenged, no one yawned loudly, many people did depart come lunchtime, but for the morning, they sat there. It was bloody awful. I do remember a speaker at a short course, who didn’t know his stuff. One guy in particular I thought, what he’s done is read an article half an hour before he got here and that showed. Despite Thai emphasis on appearance, they do want to learn something. This guy had nothing to teach them.

Yeah, appearance before substance, but it is not 10/90.

Yeah it’s more symbiotic.

Being animated is important, in the west, using gestures, moving around. You mentioned being ajarn,

Most Thai professors sit there very rigid, don’t move around very much. But that is not the way I teach. I believe it is important to be sensibly animated, not Donald Duck. I remember on the course I ran in Klong Toey, when someone would answer a question, I would throw one of these toys to them. They loved it, absolutely loved it. Now you have to be careful, this was the third day of the course that had started with 30 and grown to
50. So, I knew most of the people and had a good laughing relationship so I could chuck little Koala bears.

TC I met one teacher who wears all black because he says it doesn’t give the students anything to look at except his face, which they need to do for pronunciation.

NC Is this your idea or his.

TC His…

NC It might be useful for English but I think it is a bit dramatic.

TC They have had a successful one-day course

NC I think a Thai, would probably choose this one, I like being taught by the trainer. Followed by I liked being taught by the trainer. Male or female?

TC As an organizer put them in order on what you think is important for you to do.

NC You need to careful about eye contact. For example, there are some gender issues there. So, if you are a middle aged male teaching, you need to be sensitive to how much eye contact you can make with say young females. There is a classic on TV, two very creepy American guys who are just awful, on one of the teaching channels. They often do this contrast between American and British English, which they usually get wrong. They are such creeps you can see some of the young girls just cringing.

TC Anything missing?

NC Yes, I reckon, without getting too mushy about it helps if you really like the people or get yourself into a frame of mind. If you don’t like them, fake it. Or if you are feeling indifferent, get yourself up a notch or two, I really you, being with you…

TC Have we overlooked anything?

NC Yes, politeness, respect, genuine, believable, the Bistek categories. The famous survey of patients, politeness, respect, genuine, honest, believable.

TC Who did this research?

NC Bistek, a classic, in the therapy area, people said nothing about the people’s skills, their effectiveness. We have to show respect, we can’t laugh a people in a non-derogatory sort of way. We also have to make sure you’re not a bull-shit artist cause people are not silly, especially with a course over a few days.

TC Do you think Thais like the teacher to share with them?

NC Than with westerners, yeah, but they don’t want to much, but yes they want to know who you are, what sort of person you are.
TC If you were going to give advice to someone fresh off the plane, they were going to do a three-day seminar with some people you know, two or three pieces of advice, what would you tell them?

NC With regard to teaching here as elsewhere… Don’t try to use Thai language unless your Thai is really good. Be relaxed, don’t be up tight, don’t speak too fast, speak clearly, use lots of stories and examples. Make sure you look good dressed well, make sure you don’t stink. This is one of the most smell prone countries in the world.

TC Final question. What would be the one factor, the one way that would be the quickest road to failure?

NC Well, I’ve seen it, a teacher make sexual advances towards a student. Talking about adult students… causing people to lose face, making jokes at their expense for example.

TC If you were to ask me, sure, make sure people don’t lose face, but there are so many factors, there will be the expert who isn’t so you have to make him shine. You’ve told them to be advanced speakers of English, but their not, so

NC And be aware of who is in the group. What is their status, position. Know who you are talking to.

TC Great.
Sample Interview Two – Thai

Thai, Male, Bilingual, 30s, 4 years experience with short courses.

TC Seminar leader effectiveness what makes it different from a long course and what makes it different here in Thailand.

KT I have taught university courses, first year computer, for about a year, after that I did technical training for technical people, seminar/workshops type and short seminars from two days, to a week, but my part would be half a day and other people would be doing the other part.

TC When I look at a seminar I look at different stages, but let’s start with basics. You studied quiet a bit in the West an when you look at short courses here or in the USA, as a participant do you notice any differences right off?

KT Yes, when a Westerner goes to a short course, they go there to learn and participate. They have a very high expectation about what they are going to get from the seminar, in other words, get their money’s worth. A Thai, either go there because the company sent them, when they come back they do not really have to bring anything back, or they just go there to kill time, they are not really participating in the seminar, in other words, the level of interest is different.

TC Let’s say you have a seminar for a group that is interested here. How would you make it interesting for a group of Thais?

KT First, again, Toastmasters, you analyze your audience, you make it of interest to them. It has to be a win-win situation. You have to give them what they want, something they can take back and use. It has to be of mutual interest, they have to be interested in it. If they already have interest, you have to make certain you give them something of interest, something tangible, something they can take back.

TC To take back and think about or to use?

KT Both, I was thinking about, you can plant a seed and hoping it will grow, you don’t have to give them the whole garden, but you give them some seeds, some examples, whatever, and go back and prosper and grow.

TC If a foreigner comes here to teach for a day, what differences will he notice?

KT English.

TC What about it?

KT A Westerner comes from abroad? The first thing he needs to know the culture that a Thai person is shy in any workshop, they nod their head, they might know if they understand or not, have a question; they might not raise their hand. So he has to have a way of making it interesting, entice people to respond by throwing some questions, to be more interactive.
TC What kind of question is good?

KT I would think some jokes to get them interested in you and questions asking about the subject, the topic, either something new or you throw back some question related to what you have said before. To make sure that they understand, have some hand raiser whether anyone understands. An effective method is giving gifts. If anyone gives the right answer, you get some gift. If it is something like a two or three hour seminar, where the speaker has a very short time and he needs to get across very quickly. Things like that work quite well.

TC When you are planning a seminar, you mentioned analyze your audience, what else is important when working with Thais.

KT I work on what I would like them to take back and what is my objective that I want to get across. Then I work around how do I achieve that. The lecture material alone, flip charts, overhead projector, handouts does not always work. You have to have something tangible, either workshop or some sort of participation from the audience, all or some, would benefit a great deal, so I always plan some workshop, examples, activities, allow them to see the point I am lecturing. So, I would plan something, at the minimum would be examples and example.

TC When you are doing a seminar, how would break up that first 90 minutes?

KT Let’s say I have 90 minutes, the first 90 minutes, and this is my first time with this audience. I will at least do some ice breaking, something to break the ice between the audience and myself, and if the audience is new with each other, let’s say this is small group of people, 10 to 20, then different ice breakers will do. If there is a large, let’s say it is a large audience, hundreds; a different type of ice breaking will have to be performed. Either I tell some jokes, make sure they are comfortable with me and then I start with the outline, that will be my outline, what I will be covering, some lecture, some break, some activities, some examples, come back for more lecture, maybe some activities.

TC How long would you lecture? What would you recommend as a good time to lecture?

KT Thirty minutes, 45 at most, before you break into groups to do different activities, break them up.

TC When you put them into groups, do you go around and visit the groups?

KT Yes, definitely.

TC Why do you do that?

KT Just to make certain they are following instructions accordingly, and they are progressing on, checking on them to make the instructions that you gave are followed, and they are not going in the wrong directions.
TC  What advice would you give to someone planning? Thai or foreigner, they have no experience.

KT  In the planning stage, get them involved in all, you have visual, enough visual aids, something simple enough, pack in all your information, what we say, a lot of meat, less gravy, and make it interesting, how would you make your seminar interesting, fun. It’s fun to learn.

TC  How do Thais show they are interested?

KT  When there is a lot of participation, you can always get feedback at the end, but that is too late. You have to sort of get it right there and then, interactive, where you plan it, rehearse, you give your material, and when it is more fun, is when you get lots of participation, so you try to include a lot of those including in your lecture and in a workshop. Normally what I do, after a workshop or something, have some them do a presentation, come up and speak, what are their findings, some sort of summary where the whole group come up or something.

TC  Do you do that with everybody?

KT  Depends on the size of the course.

TC  Do you find the participant presentations are valuable?

KT  Yes, even I learn many things from them because of the different ways of thinking, and normally group work, small group, there will be some nice outcomes. I found that even some seminar that I conducted for a large organization; the outcome from the seminar is actually used in the company. That is where they take it back and implement it if it works, that’s feedback.

TC  When you do a one-day course, or even two-day, you get a break at 10.30. Let’s say the seminar is going well, what will happen at that break.

KT  If the seminar is going well, it means people enjoy it, the material is interesting, and there is much more to be given till the end of the day, you will find a lot of people will come and approach the instructor and ask a lot of questions with the instructor, and talk among themselves about the subject.

TC  And if it is not going well.

KT  If it’s not going well it is too technical, it’s boring, it’s has no interest to them, they just go off, talk to the teacher about other stuff most likely, or just pay no interest to whatever the teacher has told them, no more further questions, normally questions about what you have said.

TC  We have been talking about preparing, five areas, planning, personality of the person, presentation, the teaching, and the follow up to make certain they understand, planning, character, the actor, the teacher the parent. But, in Thailand, you studied in the West, in Thailand what personality is most successful as a trainer?
KT The personality that I think that is most successful, if the person is very energetic, he comes out with a lot of energy, he has already shown that he knows about the subject, and he has already going to make the seminar interest, energize the whole group. Someone with a lot of vocal variety in speaking, not monotone, come up and just point some laser on a chart and all that. Need to take the audience or, the audience, where you want to, where you want to lead them to in other words, you must have a leader, must have confidence. In other words, I have seen a lot of reputable names that cannot teach. They can be professor, they cannot teach, they do not have any analogy to relate the subject to the audience, the audience does not understand, in other words, you are not down to earth, you are high in the clouds, you need to be able to get into the audience, understand them, and then energize them and then teach them.

TC Do you think it would be different for men and women teachers?

KT To my standard no, but I feel that men tend to have a little bit more of a dominating character, in other words, if the audience are mixed men and women, most likely all of them will listen to a teacher who is a man. If you a woman as a teacher, some men might not agree or might not accept the concept so well, because she is a woman. Especially in Asia, equal rights, or the belief that women are the same, still plays some role, although it is not bid, I think that men still feel that way. It makes some difference, if a woman is going to be the instructor, you need to make sure the introduction, the credentials, must be even much, much better to make the audience at least accept her at the beginning.

TC What teacher personality would Thais not like?

KT Teacher personality, a Thai is very timid, and does not like a lot of confrontation, does not like a lot of sort of like, put down or argument. So, some instructors, especially when you try to sell something, sometime you put down other people, give arguments, for example, if you are selling a product, always give bad points about other side, chauvinistic, or show off, like that, a Thai does not really like.

TC What presentation skills does a facilitator need to be good?

KT Presentation skills mean that you know the subject, in other words if you keep looking at your chart, reading your chart, reading your presentation, means that maybe those are not yours. The audience needs to be able to feel that you are confident about the subject, you are not reading it to them, you are able to emphasize a point. A lot of the flashy things, all like, let’s say you do power point and you have lots of flash, a lot of cartoons, moving pictures, things like that are not really the highlight, will throw them off the subject, so make it simple. You can mix and match, you can have some power point, you can have some video clips, you can have some music, something added in to mix them around. Presentations skills means you know about the subject, you can present it very well, you create a presentation that is very easy to understand.

TC What else would be useful?

KT Familiarize with the equipment, familiarize with the stage. I like to show up early to check out the venue or the location where I teach. If possible, I like to plan for it. In other words, I will ask the organizer to arrange a room the way I want it, how far the last person will be sitting from the projector so I know what font size I need to use.
TC  Do you walk around at the front to move around?

KT  I walk around at the front and if I am not using the presentation, I do not need to point anything and they have a wireless microphone, sometimes I walk toward the middle of the room make sure I capture some of the audience at the back. It depends on the location. But, I do not like to stand still at the front, I like to walk around a little bit, make sure I use my body language, I go out to the audience and talk them, ask questions, go around, especially with a seminar with 20, it is okay to walk around. If you a large style, over 100, I think, it would be difficult to walk around. So you need to be visible up there so focus up there.

TC  The next area is the actual teaching. What would you advise someone about their English.

KT  Thai people are exposed to English from the Western world, and the majority of them will be from the US, someone who has US English, tends to speak fast, so they need to speak slow. They cannot mention I tend to speak fast. Thais do not like to be looked down on. Many of them do not know much English, if you have already since I am speaking English and I am speaking fast, I will try to speak slow as much as possible. To the Thai that is a little bit of a let down or look down, where, yeah you don’t know much English so I will speak slow to you. It could be advantage, but I would see it as a disadvantage when the foreigner instructor start to say that, I will try speak slow, just go ahead and speak slow, if you need to ask me a question, just raise your hand.

TC  What accent is difficult?

KT  Actually, English, Welsh, and people who have English with an accent, like an Indian accent, Asian, people from Korea. I have been in a lot of seminars and I talk to a lot of Thais, many people come out and say I don’t know what the heck he is talking about. I find myself having a hard time with some instructor. For native speakers, no problem, But for Thais, I would rank from American accent, must speak a bit slow, pronunciation is correct; people from down south tend to have a different pronunciation. Canadian and American, pretty much, Thai people can understand, cannot differentiate. English people, fine, but really, really English, that’s difficult.

TC  Aus or NZ

KT  Australia and New Zealand, they also have different accent. If they speak with a really, heavy, heavy accent, Thai people might have a problem for sure, definitely. Korean, Japanese, Indian speak English; make sure they speak very clearly.

TC  When you start you give an outline, what do you do before you take a break?

KT  Well, in theory, if you can break exactly where you want to break, then normally you will have either a slide or one of the slides that summarize what you have said. But sometimes, you might run over time or something, at least go back to first chart, we have discusses this, this, this and when we come back we will continue with this, this, this before lunch or before we end the day. Just always keep a road map on where you are going to be taking them, so in other words, they do not get lost.
TC Let’s say you have a two-day seminar, Tuesday and Wednesday with 30 people. At 9.00 on Tuesday, how many people will be in the room, out of thirty?

KT If your seminar starts at nine, when you first start, I would think that 75% would be in your room, on time. Whereas in Thailand, if you normally say, if plan to start at nine, there is a Thai standard time where you say come register at 8 or 8.30, introduction, maybe, well Thai people tend to come in a bit late, depends on the traffic.

TC Let’s say a two-day seminar is eight, 90-minute classes, or you have eight, 90-minutes courses at a university, with the same content. But the seminar is at a hotel, how does being at the hotel change the learning situation?

KT Depends on the audience. Let’s say these seminars cater to working people, not students, a feeling of going back to school is really not exciting. Now, if it is being at some of training institute sounds better than at school. Hosting in the hotel lifts up the type of class of seminar, they feel important. The location already, you are excited to go to a hotel, with facilities, get some good break, tea coffee, people will be serving you. You will get a good lunch around there. You are already excited about going to a seminar at a hotel. Whereas, if you go to a school, yeah I am going to get a school lunch around there, cafeteria open area, no ac, hot, depends on the institute.

TC People come to a seminar because they want to learn, but what else do they come to a seminar for? What else have you done at a seminar?

KT Well, people also go to seminars to meet people, meet people, and exchange business cards. Why would they want? Sometimes they get paid. When they go to a seminar up-country, across town, the get allowance, benefits, depends on what benefits, whether they want to learn or not. But connections are important.

TC Progress, your students are doing things in groups. How do you show your students you care? Is it important to show them?

KT When you start the group discussions, workshop, you visit all of them, you talk to them, see how they are progressing. If possible, you should have an assistant, or another instruction who is there and can assist you to go around and assist. Also, after the presentation or after they have given you the outcome of their discussion, you give them feedback. Yes, I listened to you; here is what you have done. In other words, a sort of grading. Give them encouragement that what they have done is good.

TC Let’s say you have five groups of five, and you are standing at the front, which group do you go to first.

KT I will see that, which group that I think might have trouble, and then I approach first. I don’t have to visit the first one.

TC What have they done to give you that idea?

KT Could be level of participation. See the group at the back, people sitting in the back have less attention, I would think, and my personal view, they might not hear that well, or
they might be talking when I am giving instructions. And so, I might approach the people at the back, or people who have not participated so much.

TC When you do questions and answers, what do you do?

KT Then I answer, if possible, I repeat the questions so that people at the back can hear. Now that is good practice, but does not always happen when a lot of people are throwing questions at you.

TC If two or three are asking lots of questions, how do the others feel?

KT If the questions are relevant and you are answering pertaining to the subject, then they will have some interest in it. If the question is leading on leading on, too deep into some area, other audience will lose interest. So normally, break off the question. We can discuss this off-line, discuss this during the break, or come and see me. Ask other people, and throw some questions back at the audience to bring out more questions.

TC Now, if you go to seminar, how long does it take you to realize it is not going to be good?

KT As an audience, I would give it half an hour. The first thing I would notice is the environment. I am already there because I am interested in the subject. Or I am there for a purpose. So, whether in half an hour, whether it meets my purpose or not, because I will get an introduction from the instructor or maybe what they will be covering as they start off. I am going to be really feel that I am going to have an interesting day or not, or it is going to be a boring day, a very tiresome day.

TC You know about seminars. Do you think other people agree with you? Does it take them longer to realize?

KT Maybe, maybe take them longer. It depends on the type of seminar. Some seminars start with a wide range of audience. I can give you an example of technical seminar, where the instructor would start with some update, brief description, some basic knowledge where anyone can listen to and enjoy the subject and later on in the course, he goes deeply into the subject. It becomes boring for other people, it could be space language where you do not understand a word, and then become boring, some people go to a seminar just a half day, listen to it, and when it is finished, then the second half of the day, they do not come back.

TC Because?

KT Because, they don’t think the subject is not interesting or too difficult.

TC One-day seminar, a Thai speaking in the morning, a foreigner in the afternoon, same topic area, will the topic area be divided between the two and is there an expectation what each will do?

KT Speaking for myself, my experience I would expect the Thai will share knowledge about what he knows about the Thais, so he knows a foreign speaker, he think he will bring his expertise from abroad, he will not share his expertise from Thai.
TC  It has also been suggested that when foreigners are speaking it is expected will be more new stuff. The Thai gives the theoretical background and brings you up to a certain part, and then the Expat talks about the new stuff.

KT  No, not correctly, because sometimes there is no new stuff in the world, in other words they well expect, they will have a higher expectation from the foreigner, at the moment, Asians, at least will Thais will view the foreigner as having more expertise. This is in general which is not true in my own opinion. Some Thais with experience in this area, will say, well, they will judge by the content not by the character. In general, when you bring a foreigner, wow, okay this person must be great. He might not know anything about the subject but you already have a higher expectation than a Thai speaker.