



Associating linguistic competence with job specifications

A machine tool company with 180 employees based in a provincial town launches the production of powerful machines, which are to be installed in factories producing specialized steel products. The high degree of specialization leaves the company with only two principal competitors internationally. The machines can thus be sold to industrialists anywhere around the globe. The average price per unit is in excess of 1 000 000 Euros.

Problem

The manager seeks to develop a linguistic policy that will assist him in his objective of establishing the company as the world leader in its field. He assigns a three-year period for the attainment of his objectives. Working in consultation with TOEIC staff, the company management defined its requirements for each department as to how many people should speak English, and at what level.

Analysis

The Company has four principal departments:

- The Design office (70 staff) has a permanent need for 6 or 7 people able to talk with clients and prospective clients about their technical requirements. Staff also need to speak with technicians on the Computer Assisted Design Software hotline in order to resolve problems arising in the use of the CAD software. As the discussions are essentially one to one, a level of 600 TOEIC points is required.
- Production staff (65 staff) have little need for English on a day to day basis, however, two teams of qualified workmen may be required at any time to install machinery anywhere around the world. Basic, survival English is needed, so a level of 400 TOEIC points is identified for those concerned. The foremen managing the teams need to handle more complex situations so a level of 600 points is chosen.
- Sales Staff (8 people) must be able to adapt their language to the needs of their different customers. They also need to respond spontaneously in English during conversations, thinking in the target language. Not only do they have to follow conversations in meetings, they are also required to make convincing presentations themselves. A level of 800+ TOEIC points is chosen.
- Administration (20 staff) Two or three of the secretaries must be able to send marketing information to international clients and relay information back to sales, development and production staff. Minimum level of 600 TOEIC points, with at least 350 Reading Subscore.

Action Plan

The personnel are informed of the company's English requirements. Key staff are informed they will be tested, e.g., all sales staff; other staff are informed that additional career opportunities may be available to those having an appropriate level of English, testing being carried out on a voluntary basis. A language-training plan is established and the local training organizations invited to submit their offers.

Results

The results of the first session of the TOEIC test make it possible to form training groups; regular test sessions after each year of training make it possible to verify that the objectives are being achieved.