

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide introductory information of the study. There are three main sections as follows:

- 1.1 Background of the Study
- 1.2 Rationale of the Study
- 1.3 Purpose of the Study

1.1 Background of the Study

The main focus of this study is to examine the novice teachers' classroom language, especially the use of L1 in an English class. The study was conducted with four novice teachers who taught English at a Thai high school in Bangkok in their teaching practicum. They were taking the Teaching Techniques in Practice course in a master degree program and were responsible for teaching an English course to high school students who were studying in Matayom 4 and 5 for one semester. Two of them taught Matayom 4 students, and the other two taught Matayom 5 students (4 classes total). The class time was once a week with a period of 100 minutes.

The textbooks used for teaching Matayoms 4 and 5 were of the same series which is Global Link. This series is prescribed by the school for teaching Matayoms 4 to 6. The theme of each unit in the books in different level of this series is mostly the same and the content is international because it is published for international sale.

The teachers were encouraged by their supervisors to use English as much as possible in their teaching in order to help students learn the language. However, there was a mixture of L1 and L2 use in their classroom teachings.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

The issue about the use of L1 in an English class has been debated by many teachers and researchers. Some of them argued that in an English class only English should be

used as the medium of instruction so that students can get more opportunities to be exposed to L2. However, it doesn't mean that L1 cannot be used in an English class, unless it is over-used (Atkinson, 1993: 2). There are some reasons to show that the use of L1 can be appropriate. First, it may be useful to exploit L1 to check that the students have, for example, understood the situation in the lead-in stage, which is the stage of building up a situation. Since before letting students begin practicing the language they must understand the situation clearly, it can be a good idea to use L1 in this case (Atkinson, 1993: 26-27). Second, eliciting language, for example, 'How do you say "suay" /suay/ in English?' This can often be time-saving and not confusing (Atkinson, 1987: 243). Teachers should often use the same pattern for eliciting because students will automatically understand the language until the use of L1 is unnecessary. Third, when explaining English words or the rules of grammar, an explanation given in L1 can be useful since a long explanation in English would disrupt the flow of the lesson, and many times there is a simple L1 equivalent for the words or expressions (Prodromou, 1992: 63-64). Fourth, when giving instructions especially for a complicated activity, L1 can be used as the reason for time-saving and clarity. The instructions can be initially given in English and then translated into L1. This can help weaker students understand the instruction more clearly (Atkinson, 1993: 27-28). However, as Atkinson stated above, L1 should not be over-used, otherwise students will wait for L1 translation and L2 will be ignored. In addition to the above reasons, using L1 may reduce students' affective barriers to English acquisition, especially for lower-level students, because it allows the students to express themselves easily with less anxiety of the language (Watson Todd, 1997: 25).

As the subjects were my MA colleagues, I observed that in their teaching practicum, there was a tendency of L1 use in their English teaching, even if they were encouraged to use English as much as possible. This is the reason why this study focuses on novice teachers who have not much teaching experience. For that reason, I would like to get more understanding about the situation of L1 used by novice teachers. Thus, I aimed at studying the proportion of L1 and L2 in an English class, the reasons behind the use of L1, and the teachers' perception on this issue.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine novice teachers' classroom language in order to find the amount of L1 used in an English class, the purposes of L1 used by novice teachers, and their perceptions on the use of L1 in an English class so that the data obtained will be used to answer these three research questions:

1. *How much L1 do novice teachers use in an English class?*
2. *What are the purposes of L1 used by novice teachers?*
3. *What are the perceptions of novice teachers on their use of L1 in an English class?*

In order to clarify this research study and to give more detailed information on the nature of the study, the related literature will be discussed in the next chapter.