

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

At present, English is a globally used language and a necessary language for every country. The increasing importance of English as a medium of communication in the current decades of increased globalization is undeniable (Tongra-ar Rapin, 1997). English plays an important role in every continent, even in Asia. There has recently been a great increase in demand for English throughout the East and South East Asian region (Kirkpatrick, 1997). Makhan's article "Learning Languages Orientally" in *Explorations and Innovations in ELT Methodology* (1991) stated that not only did most Asian nations need English primarily for social survival, but also as an additional language of learning. Such a language serves cognitive needs – the retrieval and generation of knowledge of Halliday. English is not only used as a native language in English speaking countries, but most non-English speaking countries like Singapore, Japan, or China also require English for communication.

This language plays a major role in the current world of globalization. As a result, English is very essential in the international levels in all areas of communication, business and others which impact necessity of English language in education. Thailand like many other countries in the world has accepted that English is one of the most useful and essential languages and subjects. In Thailand, English plays a great role in education. The growing importance of the English language as a medium of communication and its continuing widespread use today make it imperative for the Thai education authorities to concentrate on efforts to improve the teaching and learning of the language. Kirkpatrick (1997) provided some examples about the importance of learning English that South Korea and Thai governments have realized the importance of learning English and have introduced English into the primary curriculum. At present time, the teaching of English language in Thailand is relied on Thailand Eight National Education Development plans of 1997-2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001).

In 2001, fundamental curriculum stated that English is a compulsory subject starting from Primary 1 onwards. Its main purpose is not to teach knowledge of the language as they used to, but to use the language for communicative purposes (Suwat Changlek, 1980). According to the main objective of English education in Thailand, focusing on proficiency in English language, Puntakerngamorn (1998) pointed out that the curriculum aims to cultivate two linguistic abilities: an ability to access to the society and culture (Socio-Cultural Function) and an ability to use English to communicate effectively, grammatically and appropriately (Cognitive Linguistic Function). For the primary level, the objectives explained by the Ministry of Education are to provide general knowledge and basic skills, experience in using language and to indoctrinate positive attitudes towards learning English (Thailand TESOL, 1982).

Since English learning is greatly important nowadays, in order to create and develop curriculum, Kusalin Pattanakittipong (2006) pointed out in her research that development in curriculum often begins with deciding how the curriculum designer can state the specific needs and wants of learners. Because the learners know what they can do and cannot do with the target language and what language skills are most essential, they are often considered the best judges. If teachers understand their students' needs, accomplishment in teaching and learning will occur.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is greatly important to focus on needs of the students to efficiently study English. This study will analyze and examine the students' needs. The result of the study will help teachers and involved people to be more interested in improving and creating a curriculum and appropriate teaching materials to use in the school.

Therefore, this research is an attempt to answer the following question:

What are the needs of grade 6 students in learning English?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this research are as follows:

To explore grade 6 students' needs in learning English at St. Dominic School in order to improve and create English curriculum and appropriate teaching materials to use in the school.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1. **Grade 6 students** refers to the students who studied in grade 6 at St. Dominic School in the 2008 academic year.

2. **Needs** refers to the needs of the students who studied in grade 6 at St. Dominic School in the 2008 academic year.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 This study is conducted with the samples selected from grade 6 students in the 2008 academic year at St. Dominic School. The total number of subjects for this study is 190 students.

1.5.2 This study aims to explore grade 6 students' needs at St. Dominic School in learning English

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will reveal the needs of grade 6 students at St. Dominic School in the 2008 academic year. The findings will be useful for the teachers teaching English subjects at St. Dominic School to improve teaching materials, practices and policies.