

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study, a summary of the findings, discussions of the findings, conclusions and recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore grade 6 students' needs in learning English in a private school in Bangkok in order to improve and create the English curriculum and appropriate teaching materials to use in the school.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

Subjects: The subjects used in this study consisted of grade 6 students in the 2008 academic year at St. Dominic School. The total number of subjects for this study was 190 students.

Materials: The instrument was a questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions and a five-point Likert Scale. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts; (1) asking for general background, (2) asking for English language needs.

Procedures: Questionnaires were used as the instruments to collect data and were distributed by hand to 190 grade 6 students at St. Dominic School who were requested them to return questionnaires within one week. All data received from the questionnaires were analyzed using the SPSS program in order to obtain the mean scores and percentages.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 General background of the respondents

The majority of the respondents were 12 years old. Most of them had a G.P.A. of more than 3.75 and most of them rated their English abilities (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as fair.

5.2.2 English language needs

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

Finding

The results of this study show that the majority of the respondents needed to study English for their future careers. The first range of the students had G.P.A. more than 3.75. Most of the respondents rated their English abilities (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as fair. The most appropriate language for instructors to use in class was mostly English, with some Thai when necessary and the most appropriate language for respondents' colleagues to use in class was mostly Thai, with some English when necessary. In terms of English instructors, most of the respondents preferred an equal number of Thai and native speaking instructors and preferred to study in large groups (more than 5 students). They would like to study English 4 days/week and 60 minutes/day. Moreover, they preferred period 1 to study English. The overall English skills were needed with high level. They extensively needed listening skills the most while writing skills were needed the least.

The Degree of Need for Speaking Practice in English Courses

Speaking practice in English courses was extensively needed. The students extensively needed correct accent the most, but they had moderate need for presentations.

The Degree of Need for Listening Practice in English Courses

Listening practice in English courses were extensively needed. The majority of them extensively needed Listening practice in English courses in watching English soundtrack movies the most, whereas listening to English radio broadcasts was the least needed practice or ‘moderately need’.

The Degree of Need for Reading Practice in English Courses

Reading practice was extensively needed. The majority of them were extensively needed practice using an English-Thai the most, whereas reading literature was the least needed practice or ‘moderately need’.

The Degree of Need for Writing Practice in English Courses

Writing practice was extensively needed. The majority of them extensively needed writing e-mails/memorandums the most, whereas taking notes from textbooks was the least needed practice or ‘moderately need’.

Descriptive Statistics for Activities Useful in the Respondents’ Idea

The majority of the respondents viewed that language games were the most useful activities.

Descriptive Statistics for the Topics that the Respondents Would Like to Learn

The first prior topic, the respondents would like to learn is game followed by sport and adventure. Mobile phone or shopping are the topic they would like to learn the least.

Grade 6 students who have different G.P.A.’s had different needs to learn English skills. Furthermore, Grade 6 students who had a G.P.A. of more than 3.75

needed English Speaking, Reading, and Writing skills the most. Grade 6 students who had a G.P.A. of 3.51-3.75 needed English Listening skills the most.

5.3 DISCUSSION

This section discusses the interesting points found from the findings as follows:

5.3.1 General Background

In terms of general background, the average age of the respondents was 11.67. The range of their age was between 10-13 years. Since the respondents were grade 6 students, their age was in the same range.

The first and second range of GPA more than 3.75 and between 3.51-3.75 with the percentage of 27.4 and 18.4, respectively was relatively high. However, there were also a lot of students whose grade were under 3.51; thus, to conduct the English curriculum, the English background knowledge of the learners should be considered.

5.3.2 English Language Needs

According to the study, it was found that the respondents needed to study English for their future careers (67.4%). This showed that the students have realized that English is essential for their careers in the future. The students' opinion was in line with the employers and employees' opinion which was supported by the research of Prof. Dr. Pranee Kullavanich's study of foreign language teaching and demands in the Central Western and Eastern provinces of Thailand (2004) showing that both employers and employees viewed that English, Chinese, and Japanese were the foreign languages which have a high level of need, especially English, which had a higher level of need than the other two languages.

The respondents saw that mostly English, with some Thai when necessary, was the most appropriate language for instructors (61.1%). According to Chomsky (1965, 1972) and Pinker (1994, 1998), there is another theory that emphasizes nature of knowledge of language. In this view, humans process a language acquisition device or LAD, an innate predisposition or ability to acquire language expertise. Children are

preprogrammed to learn language, and the environment merely serves as a catalyst for language development. Generally, if children learn a second language in an environment of native speakers, they acquire the accent of a native speaker. However, at St. Dominic School, Thai and native speaking instructors will emphasize different skills. Native speaking instructors will focus on speaking and listening, whereas Thai instructors will focus on reading and writing. The primary students will study English with native speaking instructor two periods a week while studying three periods a week with a Thai instructor. From the observation, the researcher found that the respondents always enjoy themselves when they study with native speaking instructors because of two reasons. Firstly, native speaking instructors are very kind from the respondents' points of view which are different from Thai instructors who are always very strict due to the school policies emphasizing on students' disciplines. Thai instructors have to manage the class according to the school disciplines and at the same time to teach and take care of all of the students in class; therefore, they cannot be as kind as native speaking instructors. Secondly, the activities were set up by native speaking instructors focusing on language games which let the students enjoy practicing while Thai teachers always focus on reading and writing (grammar and structure). Thus, the students feel more serious than when they study with the native speaking instructor.

However, it is interesting that the most appropriate language for respondents' classmates to use in the class was mostly Thai, with some English when necessary (47.9%) and they also preferred the instructors to be an equal number of Thai and native speakers (61.1%). R. Keith Sawyer (2006) revealed that the need for safety (both physical and psychological) is central to the creation of a learning environment. Although it seems fairly obvious that learning requires a sense of physical safety, psychological safety is less often acknowledged. Psychological safety can be defined as a sense of comfort willingness to take risks and be oneself, and a feeling of acceptance. In addition, Diane Larsen Freeman (1986) stated that students' security is initially enhanced by using their native language. Where possible, literal native language equivalents are given to the target language words that have been transcribed. This enables clear meaning and allows students to combine the target language words in different ways to create new sentences. Based on the findings of this study, it can be

inferred that the respondents have grown up in a Thai speaking environment; therefore, they did not understand and were not familiar with the foreign language and this probably made the students feel insecure and uncomfortable to use or communicate in a foreign language. As a result, they did prefer mostly Thai, with some English when necessary to be the most appropriate language for their classmates to use in the class and this possibly led to the reason why they also preferred the instructors to be an equal number of Thai and native speakers.

Chomsky (1965, 1972) and Pinker (1994, 1998) also revealed that the study of bilingualism has shown that a student's first language, one other than English, can effectively be used as a resource for learning in schools. Therefore, the result which revealed that the most appropriate language for respondents' classmates to use in the class was mostly Thai, with some English when necessary the former language can effectively be used as a resource for learning in school. When the students do not understand the second language, English, they can consult with their friends in the class in Thai to make their meaning clear and this will lead the students to combine the second language words in different ways to create new sentences as stated by Freeman.

From the study, it showed that to be proficient in English, the samples should participate and communicate with their classmates by means of English skills. Therefore, most of them preferred to study in large groups; in order that they could practice all English language skills and when they practice language skills in the large groups, they would feel more confident and learn how to cooperate to one another as Freeman (1986) revealed that students can learn from their interaction with each other as well as their interaction with the teacher. A spirit of cooperation, not competition, can prevail.

Chomsky (1965, 1972) and Pinker (1994, 1998) also supported that social development is the process of human development in which individuals learn how to interact with others and understand themselves as social being. In group discussions, students do not just respond to teacher-initiated questions, they respond to each other's questions in an open discussion format. One of the advantages of group discussions is that they allow students to interact with one another directly, and thus to develop

interpersonal skills. The general goals of effective group discussions are to encourage students to learn how to listen to and understand one another, to accept different points of view, and to evaluate the opinions, beliefs and attitudes of themselves and others.

Moreover, the study found that most of respondents viewed that period one, which is conducted from 8.45 to 9.25, was the most preferable of period to study English (28.4%). Normally, the first period is the duration that the students are fresh and enthusiastic; they will be eager to study and can pay more attention in the class than in the afternoon period. However, it may be difficult to set up English subject for the first period everyday since there are other subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and Thai etc. which have to be switched in each day and period.

From the findings of the research , the samples needed listening skills the most, whereas the second need was speaking skills, followed by reading skills while they needed writing skills to study English language the least. This result is related to the survey of Rost (1991) who stated that progress in listening will provide a basis for development of other language skills. The importance of listening in second and foreign language learning is admirably summarized in a recent publication by Rost (1994):

1. Listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin.

2. Spoken language provides a means of interaction for the learner. Because learners must interact to achieve understanding, access to speakers of the language is essential. Moreover, learners' failure to understand the language they hear is an impetus, not an obstacle, to interaction and learning.

3. Authentic spoken language presents a challenge for the learner to attempt to understand language as native speakers actually use it.

4. Listening exercises provide teachers with a means for drawing learners' attention to new forms (vocabulary, grammar, new interaction patterns) in the language.

In short, listening is essential not only as a receptive skill but also to the development of spoken language proficiency.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

5.4.1 The reason the students study English is that the students have realized that English is essential for their careers in the future.

5.4.2 For grade 6 students, they viewed that mostly Thai, with some English when necessary was the most appropriate language for instructors and they also preferred an equal number of Thai and native speaking instructors.

5.4.3 Most of the students viewed that period one was the most preferable period to study English and they needed to study English 60 minutes per day.

5.4.4 With regards to the needs of English skills, listening and speaking were needed to study as the first two priorities of grade 6 students.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research.

5.5.1 This study was conducted to survey the needs of Grade 6 Students' Needs in Learning English at St. Dominic School only. There should be an investigation at other primary levels because there are few surveys for the needs of primary students in learning English. The results of each level of the students will certainly reflect different needs which should be considered as a valuable source of information for developing and improving effective courses and materials for their learning.

5.5.2 Although it seems that the students needed to practice listening and speaking as the first priorities, reading and writing practices should not be ignored and should be integrated with other skills.

5.5.3 The results showed that most of the students nowadays needed to study English with modern media such as watching English soundtrack movies, writing e-mails/memorandums; therefore, for future research, there should be an investigation into needs of learning English through modern media.