

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the rationale for the study, the purposes of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, and the definition of terms.

### **Rationale for the Study**

The use of the Internet is widespread today. People use the Internet for different purposes: entertainment, checking and getting information, buying products online and so on. Some people use the Internet to learn languages. However, using the Internet for educational purposes requires additional skills from the student, new attitudes towards learning, and students need to adopt new roles and responsibilities in this new learning environment.

The Internet provides an easy access to four skills, which are necessary for language learning. It is known that English is the most commonly used common language in the world and nobody can argue of the online community with the importance of foreign languages, especially English as a lingua franca. Therefore, it is vital to learn English and it becomes easier when the Internet is used as a tool to learn in the virtual learning environment.

On the Internet, reading involves more of readers' interpretations of texts and of the writer's stance than in a paper reading environment; when a third factor, Internet technology, is involved, reading also becomes a selective process that requires special skills to scrutinize the Internet's abundant visual and non-textual features (Coiro, 2005; Schmar-Dobler, 2003 as cited in Huang, Chern and Lin, 2009). Educators recognize that the computer technology and language learning programs may enhance the language acquisition from both independent and collaborative learning environments, and the language experiences as well (Kung, 2002 as cited in Wang, 2008).

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is an instructional method which is used in learning environment to enhance students' proficiency by using computer. CALL provides multimedia of video, sound, graphics, and texts, which allow students to be exposed to the target language and its culture and also facilitates comprehension in listening and reading (Chun and Plass, 1997 as cited in Chen, 2008).

The CALL programs are popular in foreign language learning today because of their benefits to the students to enhance their language proficiency. Moreover, students can study anytime and anywhere. Teachers and students can take advantages from various activities on network. Besides, computer can promote learning interaction between students and teachers. Finally, computers can help classroom teaching with a variety of shared materials and approaches on the network.

As CALL is applied in learning environments, forms of using the computer for learning include e-learning and blended learning. Blended learning is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences – not a layering of one on top of the other (Archer, Garrison and Anderson, 1999 as cited in Garrison and Kanuka, 2004). Blended learning which e-learning is integrated to a course is an effective and low-risk strategy for today's learning. With computer, a wide variety of materials and activities can be applied to a course. Students will not get bored easily and they may become more active (Wang, 2008). Furthermore, Internet information and communication tools provide flexibility of time and place and the reality of unbounded educational discourse. These reasons show how the best utilize both face-to-face and online learning for purposes of higher education (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004).

However, while students are interactive with computer, unpleasant side effects may occur; for example, frustration, confusion, anger, and anxiety. For foreign language online reading, students may be faced with both foreign language reading anxiety and computer anxiety. Tanyeli (2009) mentioned that when the native language is not English, students usually have fears and worries about not succeeding to learn. However, it is the students who motivate themselves with the help of their institution and lectures to overcome their anxieties.

There have been relatively few discussions of anxiety and second language reading; for example; in one study scholars found that reading in a foreign language is indeed anxiety provoking to some students, and it is a specific anxiety type distinguishable from general foreign language anxiety that has been linked to oral performance. Moreover, it is found that the levels of reading anxiety vary by the target language and seem to be related to the specific writing systems. Besides, it increases with their perceptions of the difficulty of reading in foreign language (Saito, Horwitz and Garza, 1999).

Computer anxiety was a phenomenon when using a computer. Computer anxiety has been defined as the fear, apprehension and phobia felt by an individual when interacting with a computer or when they think about using a computer (Hardman, 1993; Howard, 1986 as cited in Chua, Chen and Wong, 1999).

Some researchers, on previous studies, investigated the relationship between computer anxiety and computer experiences, while other looked into the relationship with age, gender, culture, attitudes, computer performance, self-efficacy, or cognitive abilities (McIlroy, et al., 2001; Tekinarslan, 2008; Mahar, Henderson and Deane, 1997; Beckers, Rikers and Schmidt, 2006; Meier and Lambert, 1991; Rosen, Sears and Weil, 1987; Beckers and Schmidt, 2001, 2003; Rosen and Weil, 1995a, 1995b; Henderson, et al., 1995; Raub, 1981).

Today, integration of the CALL towards language learning is widely practical in Thailand. Teachers and students are exposed to this environment in teaching and learning process. At present, there is no study relating to foreign language reading anxiety and CALL anxiety in Thailand. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate the issue on Thai students.

### **Purposes of the Study**

The current study was intended to investigate students' English reading anxiety and CALL anxiety in blended learning.

### **Research Questions**

The study tried to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent did students have English reading anxiety in blended learning?
2. To what extent did students have CALL anxiety when they use e-learning?
3. What were the students' perceptions towards using e-learning in their reading course?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study focused on the effect of foreign language reading anxiety and CALL anxiety in blended learning. The present study would be of great significance, first, to the course designers who may make use of the information from this study to make changes or to improve on their courses. Furthermore, this study would benefit future researches about using blended learning for reading courses as well as other courses.

### **Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The study employed a survey method to export students' English reading anxiety and CALL anxiety in blended learning of 75 third-year students majoring in Biology who enrolled in the Reading Academic English course in the first semester of the academic year 2011 at Naresuan University, Phitsanulok were the subjects of this study.

The current study collected the data in the middle of the semester (the eighth week). Therefore, this was a short-term study done on a limited number of participants. Its result might have to be validated by further longitudinal studies. In addition, the study focused on anxiety stemming from English reading activities through the Internet; hence it could not be assumed that the Internet activities on other skills would yield the same results. In order to test CALL anxiety, this study mainly focused on the negative learning cognitions factor, the positive learning cognitions factor, and the enjoyment factor.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following terms had been identified operationally:

1. English reading anxiety is an unpleasant feeling that is typically associated with uneasiness, apprehension, fear, or worry when reading English.

2. Computer-assisted language learning anxiety is the feeling of uneasiness, worry, nervous and apprehension when using e-learning. This study mainly focuses on the negative learning cognitions factor, the positive learning cognitions factor, and the enjoyment factor.

3. Blended learning is the combination of classroom learning using printed reading materials and e-learning for extra activities to enable students to learn anytime and anywhere.

4. Perception is the process by which an organism attains awareness or understanding of its environment by organizing and interpreting sensory information. All perception involves signals in the nervous system, which in turn result from physical stimulation of the sense organ.