

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The English language is rapidly becoming one of the global languages for communication, business, education and several other essential reasons. Therefore, it is one of the required subjects of every University curriculum including Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. Every student has to learn it whether he/she likes it or not. Importantly, nowadays, without English, Buddhism could not be promoted and propagated far into the Western societies.

In order to select and design appropriate materials for students, the “needs of students” is one of the important aspects to be considered practically. In fact, the learner is a good source of information when planning a course syllabus. Learners’ need was theoretically of prime importance in learner-centered approaches, but needs analysis was seldom carried out in the General English classroom (Seedhouse, 1995, pp.59-70).

At the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, there has not been any generally available study conducted regarding English language needs analysis of students since the Faculty of Humanities has been established. Therefore, the question of current English language needs analysis was unanswered. Furthermore, when considering change to be a constant factor in all aspects of learning, the researcher finds a needs assessment should not only be conducted during the planning stage of the syllabus, but also should be a continuous process of gathering information about the learners’ current English language needs (Brahmakasikara, 1996).

For first year Buddhist monk students, it is necessary to study their English language needs because English is a required subject for them and they cannot proceed to their higher studies in the future if they lack knowledge of the English language. To know what students really need is to ask them what they need. According to the Humanistic educators, the learners or students should have a say in what they should be learning and how they should learn it (Nunan, Candlin and Widdowson, 1988: p. 72).

Besides, learner-centered education also provides for consultation and negotiation between the educator and the student (Johnson, 1989, p. 72), which results in equally significant roles. Thus, according to recently educational trends in language learning, planning a course syllabus did not merely involve the experts' or the institution's pre-conceived needs of the learner, but the learner's self-expression of his/her language needs.

These ideas made me interested in conducting a needs analysis at the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. In this academic year, 2549/2006, the total number of first year students at the Faculty of Humanities is 106 students who were divided into two separate groups, the first group was all Thai nationals whose total number has 61 students, and the rest foreign students whose total number was 45 students. It is necessary for me to know each group's needs regarding English language separately, and outcomes of the findings will be used to compare the groups with each other.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the establishment of the Faculty of Humanities, there had never been two separate classrooms for Thai and non-Thai students, nor was a study of the English language needs conducted. In academic year 2549/2006, it was the first time that the first year students had been divided into separate classrooms due to their different nationalities. The Thai and foreign students came from five different countries. From the outcomes of this study, I will obtain what each group's English language needs.

In order to know these two separate groups' English language needs, it is necessary for me to do this study of the needs of Thai first year students, and foreign first year students of the Faculty of Humanities by using a questionnaire that will bring me expected outcomes. How will the outcomes of this study provide these two separate groups' English language needs to be used for redesigning an appropriate syllabus or curriculum that may meet the students' needs and their future studies and career?

It was hoped that outcome of each group's needs would be significant because of these two separate groups' previous backgrounds of education, cultures, customs,

environments. It is important to know the language needs that can help develop new syllabuses to meet their language learning needs and increase their motivation in their studies and career in the future.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The three main objectives of this study were as follows:

1.3.1 To identify the English language needs of Thai first year students at the Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

1.3.2 To investigate the English language needs of foreign first year students at the Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

1.3.3 To compare different findings relating to the English language needs of Thai and foreign first year students at the Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The definitions of the terms used in this study are as follows: -

1.4.1 **Needs** refers to the gap between a student's present language skills and his/her desired future language skills. In general, the skeletal structure of the definition of needs is most often expressed as a gap between a current state of affairs and a desired future state (Johnson, 1989: p. 52).

1.4.2 **Needs Analysis** is the process of collecting information from the learners of English language at four different skills, listening, reading, speaking, and writing. In addition to these, activities to improve learning English language and materials that should be selected to meet the different groups' language needs. Needs analysis in this study will include the objective and subjective needs of learners' learning language.

1.4.3 **Objective needs** are based on the analysis of personal data about learners. These refer to the factual information that could be collected from learners such as name, age, language proficiency level, educational backgrounds, previous learning experiences, and other factors that were external to learners (Nunan, 1988, p. 4).

1.4.4 **Subjective needs** are often described as ‘**want**’, ‘**desire**’, ‘**expectations**’, or other psychological manifestations of a lack (Brindley, 1984 as cited in Nunan, 1988, p. 44).

1.4.5 **Opinions** about the four language skills are specific subjective needs, which refers to the degree of usefulness of activities to develop skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing and they also include other important aspects in learning the linguistic features, such as grammar and vocabulary in detail, materials, activities and class participation.

1.4.6 **Thai students** who are Thai nationals are the regular first year students at the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. The total number of Thai first year students was 61 students.

1.4.7 **Foreign students**, who came from the different five countries, Shan state, Union of Myanmar, Laos, Bangladesh, Nepal and Cambodia, are the regular first year students at the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. The total number of the foreign first year students was 45 students.

1.4.8 **Four Skills** are Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing of English Language.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 This study will identify and analyze the perceived English language needs in terms of four skills, listening, reading, speaking and writing, and moreover, materials, activities, grammar and vocabulary of the needs of both Thai and foreign first year students at the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University of the second semester in this academic year 2549.

1.5.2 This study aims at only Thai and foreign first year students at the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and excludes the other students at different Faculties.

1.5.3 In the academic year 2549, there were 61 Thai first year students and 45 foreign first year students at the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

1.5.4 Outcomes of this study may be used for developing English materials that may meet the English language needs for both Thai and foreign first year students at the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 This study will provide information about the students' needs to instructors who can use the outcomes to develop materials for their students' needs.

1.6.2 Its findings will be beneficial to instructors who can predict and solve problems that may happen to their language teachings.

1.6.3 This study will be fruitful to both Thai and foreign students in the way they desire to improve their language learning.

1.6.4 This study will also provide appropriate guidelines to instructors to select appropriate materials to meet their students' level best.

1.6.5 This study will help develop the human resources on Buddhism for the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

1.7 HYPOTHESES

The outcomes of this study will show whether there will be significantly different language needs between the Thai and the foreign first year students of the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University or not.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The presentation of this study has been divided into the five chapters. Chapter one will discuss backgrounds of Thai and foreign first year students at the Faculty of Humanities of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. In chapter two, a review of the related literature on theories of needs analysis is going to be presented based on the relevant different perspectives.

In chapter three, the research methods that have been used in this study will be presented. In chapter four, the results of this comparative study between two groups' language needs will be presented in statistical charts together with explanation. In the final chapter, there will be discussions, suggestions and conclusion about what has been investigated.