

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) discussions of the findings, (4) conclusions, and (5) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to survey the attitudes of Fundamental English Course II students towards using the SALC in English language learning at Thammasat University. In addition, the study aimed to investigate the problems and comments that the students have regarding use of the SALC so as to provide the appropriate materials, which suit their requirements, improve the facilities, and better facilitate their use of the resource.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

The subjects of this study were 100 first-year Thammasat University students who had studied and completed the Fundamental English Course II during semester 2/2006.

A questionnaire divided into 3 parts was used as a research instrument in this study. Part 1 reported the personal information of the subjects including gender, age, faculty, and the number of years they have studied English. Part 2 was about their use of the SALC in terms of frequency and purposes of use. Part 3 was designed to survey their attitudes and satisfaction as well as collect additional comments and recommendations about using the SALC.

Once the questionnaires were completed and returned, they were checked and verified for data entry and analysis. Frequency and Percentage were used in this study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 Personal Information of the Subjects

The findings illustrate that most students who engaged in this study were female (69%) and aged 19 (63%). The largest numbers (42%) were from the Faculty of Sciences and Technology, followed by 20% from the Faculty of Engineering and 15% from the Faculty of Social Administration. Approximately two thirds of them had studied English for 6-15 years, those who had studied English for 6-10 years accounted for 36%, while 33% had 11-15 years of studying English.

5.2.2 Information Regarding the Subjects' Use of the SALC

About half of the students (52%) went to the SALC only once for every 2 weeks whereas 32% visited it only a few times during the whole semester. Only 1% used it more than twice a week. Moreover, the majority (68.7%) went to the SALC just because they were assigned tasks from the teachers while 16.8% visited it for enjoyment and entertainment purposes and only 14.5% utilized it for practicing and developing English skills on their own.

5.2.3 Subjects' Attitudes and Satisfaction Towards the SALC, Including Comments and Recommendations

5.2.3.1 Amongst the 4 rooms available at the SALC, the students visited and utilized SALC 1 the most (97%), followed by SALC 4 (61%), SALC 3 (54%), and SALC 2 (52%). The most important reason of those who had never used these rooms was similar; they were not assigned tasks which required using resources and facilities in such rooms, as indicated at the proportion of 33.3% for SALC1, 48.3% for SALC 2, 44.6% for SALC 3, and 44.9% for SALC 4. In other words, they visited only the rooms which provided the information they needed to complete the assignments that teachers told them to do. Moreover, they also stated that the English skills provided in some rooms were not skills they wanted to practice, the rooms were not attractive to visit inside, the resources provided were not for enjoyment and entertainment purposes, and the rooms were too crowded.

5.2.3.2 Regarding the students' attitudes and satisfaction level towards the resources and facilities, as well as atmosphere and staff service provided at the SALC, they were very satisfied with the overall aspects of SALC 4 the most since all aspects were rated very satisfied whereas the atmosphere and staff service provided in SALC 1 were rated moderately satisfied otherwise all were very satisfied. SALC 2

was the third ranked as most aspects were rated very satisfied except the difficulty level of instructional media (CD-ROMs, Internet, and Websites), the amount of equipment (computers, headsets, and microphones), and the staff service which were rated moderately satisfied. SALC 3 was ranked the last because many aspects were rated only moderately satisfied, including the quality and difficulty level of edutainment media (movies, language learning videos, and English-practice games); the amount, quality, and ease of using equipment (TVs, video players, and CD players); the atmosphere; and staff service. It is worth pointing out that staff services were rated moderately satisfied in all rooms excluding SALC 4.

5.2.3.3 Only 21% of the students had ever consulted the lecturers who took turns to sit in the SALC to provide consultations. The majority of them (17 students) clearly understood how to make better use of available resources and facilities according to their own purposes. On the contrary, the largest part (20 students) of those who had never consulted the lecturers (79%) mentioned that they did not have problems in using the SALC and could find the required information by themselves.

5.2.3.4 Most students (54 from the total of 92 students) benefited from using the SALC. They could practice and develop their English skills as well as receive the opportunity for self-directed learning (26 students). However, some problems obstructed them as the majority (22 from the total of 63 students) had difficulty with too many unknown vocabulary items that they could not clearly understand when they read and listened. The SALC's opening hours were another obstacle since they also had to attend normal classes at the same time as it was opened (11 students). Another problem found was the crowd of users in the SALC (9 students).

5.2.3.5 As mentioned by 60 students about what they like the most in using the SALC, about one third of them (21 students) liked enjoyment and the entertainment provided (movies, games, and songs), and around one fourth (13 students) liked the English reading materials. Nevertheless, a number of students (7 out of 34 students) disliked the loud noise the most when using the SALC. In addition, they also disliked the rooms' size (6 students), the insufficient seats (5 students), and the lack of enough equipment for services (5 students).

5.2.3.6 For further improvement of the SALC, most students commented and recommended that there should be more rooms with enough resources and facilities provided (24 students). Also, the availability of materials together with instructional and edutainment media should be up-to-date (18 students), the atmosphere in general should be improved to be more attractive for visiting inside (7 students), and the staff services should be improved as they are supposed to be more helpful and caring (4 students) when they have been asked for assistance from the students regarding use of the SALC.

5.3 DISCUSSIONS

Regarding the survey of Fundamental English Course II students' attitudes towards using the SALC in English language learning at Thammasat University, it could be inferred that the SALC needs to consider several factors influencing its use so that the teachers and related officials can provide more appropriate resources and facilities which suit the students' needs.

5.3.1 Materials, Instructional and Edutainment Media, and Equipment

The SALC currently provides a variety of materials and media that are useful for the students' learning and daily life as well as help developing their English skills. As stated in the findings, the students are very satisfied with overall aspects of the materials and media in the SALC except for the quality of those in SALC 3 and the difficulty levels of those in SALC 2 and SALC 3 as some resources are out-of-date and not suitable for students' level.

Thus, media and materials provided should consistently have a variety of types, contents, topics, and levels of difficulty. That is, the SALC should have media and materials' types that are paper-based, computer-based, and audio-visual. The contents should also be updated and have various topics according to students' needs and interests. In addition, their difficulty levels should be clearly identified so that users can choose materials that suit them best. Instructions provided should clearly state the steps of how to use the materials, especially for what the students have to do, what objectives will be achieved i.e. SWBATs, and what skills will be developed. Besides, the language of all the instructions should be uncomplicated or simplified and could have some examples for clarification in order that students will

find them easier to use. Moreover, to promote the materials, the SALC should announce and introduce the arrival of new materials to the students i.e. posting on signboards. Such materials should also be placed in an attractive or eye-catching corner for easy access by the students.

Regarding the equipment, the students are moderately satisfied with the amounts of equipment provided in SALC 2 (computers, headsets, and microphones) as well as the amount, quality, and ease of use (TVs, video players, and CD players) of those in SALC 3. Thus, the SALC should provide enough such equipment, fine quality, and attach instructions for easy use.

5.3.2 Atmosphere

The survey result shows that the students are moderately to very satisfied with the SALC's atmosphere. The first half of them were very satisfied with the atmosphere of SALC 4 (49.2%) and SALC 2 (40.4%) while SALC 3 and SALC 1 were rated moderately satisfied by the second half at 40.7% and 38.1% respectively. This implies that the current atmosphere is fairly attractive and supportive. Nonetheless, the quietness, the amount of seats available, the temperature, the decoration of the rooms, and the way books and materials are displayed should be improved as these aspects support good atmosphere for learning as well as make the rooms more attractive and supportive for students' use of the SALC.

5.3.3 Staff Service

According to the findings, the students are moderately satisfied with the overall staff services (including the clerical person and technical staff) except for SALC 4 which was rated very satisfied. Thus, it can be implied that the staff are relatively helpful in providing services to them. Nevertheless, all staff should be service-minded and friendly to facilitate students' use of the SALC enthusiastically, i.e. guiding the students to locate their required materials, explaining to them how to properly use the resources and facilities, and assisting them to solve the technical problems found in using the equipment. For this reason, they should know well about where the media and materials are kept and what kinds of materials are appropriate for practicing language skills required by the students. Lastly, the lecturers who take turns to sit in the SALC for providing consultation services and giving advice

regarding students' learning strategies should be at an easy access corner of the SALC that could be simply reached by the students.

5.3.4 Miscellaneous

The SALC normally opens weekdays from 9.00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The students found that it is quite difficult to manage their time to visit and use it, as they have to attend their normal classes at the same time as its opening hours. Thus, the opening hours should be considered for adjustment so as to facilitate students to be able to use the SALC before and after their scheduled classes, or whenever they have available time. This way may help them to spend their free time in a useful way. In addition, they probably feel more comfortable and happy doing things there because they do not have to be rushed.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

This research study has attempted to find out the attitudes of Fundamental English Course II students towards using the SALC in English language learning at Thammasat University, to see what factors affect their use of the SALC and how they perceive the value and usefulness of using it. The findings present the fact that the overall aspects of the SALC have an effect on its use. The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

5.4.1 The SALC should provide media and materials that are selected to relate to students' learning and daily life. They should also be up-to-date and have variety in both type and content to serve the various interests of students. The levels of difficulty should be identified to suit students' levels. Also, sufficient and clear instructions have to be provided to ensure the students understand what they have to do and what objectives will be achieved (SWBATs). Furthermore, the equipment should be of good quality and enough for the service required. It should be easy and convenient to use as well.

5.4.2 An attractive atmosphere should be provided to build a supportive and friendly learning environment. Several factors necessary for such a learning environment include quietness, a suitable temperature, the decoration of the rooms, the seating arrangement, and the way media and materials are displayed.

5.4.3 Related to the staff service, the available staff should be service-minded and friendly to facilitate students' use of the SALC enthusiastically i.e. guiding the students to locate their required materials, explaining to them how to properly use the resources and facilities, and assisting them to solve the technical problems found in using the equipment. For this reason, they should be well-informed about where the media and materials are kept and what kinds of materials are appropriate for practicing language skills required by the students. Lastly, the lecturers who take turns to sit in the SALC for providing consultation services and giving advice regarding students' learning strategies should be at an easy access corner of the SALC that could be simply reached by the students.

5.4.4 The adjustment of the SALC's opening hours should be taken into consideration as students would be more comfortable to visit and use it both before and after their normal classes or whenever they are available.

Last but not least, it is expected that the implications of this study will be useful for the SALC's adjustment in providing more appropriate resources and facilities which suit students' language learning requirements. In addition, the curriculum design could be adapted to promote students' use of the SALC as a part of autonomous learning. Moreover, the findings can also be used as guidelines for teachers to establish positive attitudes among students towards using the SALC.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the stated findings and conclusions, this study may pave a way towards further research regarding how the factors relating to students' use of the SALC could be developed in such a way that students would benefit from utilizing it, and how to make the independent learning more successful so that the students finally become autonomous learners.