

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The progress of new technology has dramatically changed the world into an information world. People can connect with one another quicker. Therefore, communication is very important today. In addition, English is an international language that is used to link between many countries. Many countries use English as a formal language to communicate with other countries. Nowadays, more than 1,000 million people all over the world use English as a mother and second language and more than 80 percent of language used in computers. We can see English all around us on the radio and television, in books, internet, and newspapers is English.

English plays a vital role for Thai people. We get involved with English all the time. As a result, studying English is necessary for Thais. Moreover, they are more interested in learning English. In the Thai educational system, students are required to study English as a foreign language from kindergarten to university level. The objective of studying English is to focus on the learner's ability in reading, speaking, listening and writing.

Reading is one of the most important skills. People can achieve language competence by reading. As Francis Bacon, the English philosopher, statesman and essayist, said "reading makes a full man." Vacca. et al. (2000, p. 4) People can have a wider perspective and know about other countries by reading various kinds of books. A book is a device for gaining wisdom. According to the speech of His Majesty the King to librarians, "a book is essential for knowledge or for saving a knowledge bank. People can progress by reading books." ภูมิพลอดุลยเดช, พระบาทสมเด็จพระปรมินทรมหา (2543, น. 26) People who don't like reading will lose out in many ways. For example, they tend to be deceived, and can lack knowledge and confidence.

Although reading is useful for life, Thais don't have much reading behavior. In 2003, a study of Thais reading behavior showed that 35.5 million Thai people read books whereas 22.4 million people (40%) didn't read books. This figure indicates that Thai people lack a reading habit. Compared with foreign countries, a Thai reads only five

books per year while a Singaporean reads 17 books per year and an American reads 50 books per year. (สำนักงานสถิติแห่งชาติ)

The same research as above showed reasons for not reading was that 57.4 % preferred listening to radio and watching television. 48.1% had no time to read and 45.5% didn't like reading nor had no interest in reading.

According to the research, it can be inferred that Thai students didn't see the importance of reading so they spent a little time reading.

ศรีรัตน์ (2542, น.5-6) said of the reading habit of Abraham Lincoln.

He likes to read since he was young and he has ability to learn fast. He said "I can find all of what I would like to know in books."

Books are very important for everyone, especially undergraduates because they have to do research by themselves. After the students have learned how to read, they should continue increasing their knowledge. Then, the best way to have more wisdom is by reading books.

However, undergraduates have studied English in classroom but it is not enough. They should gain additional knowledge by themselves through reading when they have a free time.

Therefore, the promotion of a reading habit is very important in developing people. There are many scientists, psychologists, educators and doctors found that to promote a reading habit. It should start from when they are babies. Then, when they grow up, we have to continue to encourage them to read more until they have reading habits. Maria (1992)

As a result, to promote reading English books is a good way for undergraduates to have a higher competency in English. This can develop their study and wisdom. Therefore, to survey the factors affecting reading habits of English materials among English major undergraduates at Phetchaburi Rajabhat University will be worthwhile. English major undergraduates at Phetchaburi Rajabhat University don't pay much attention to reading English language material. Therefore, the research focuses on this group of people to find the causes, and then solves this problem.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research attempts to investigate the following points:

1.2.1 What are the factors that make undergraduates read or not read English language material?

a) Does their reading competency in English make undergraduates read or not read English material?

b) Does interest in the material make undergraduates read or not read English language material?

c) Does reading motivation make undergraduates read or not read English language material?

## 1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### 1.3.1 Main Objective

To determine the factors that increases the reading habits of undergraduates with regard to English language material.

### 1.3.2 Sub-Objective

To study whether their reading competency in English, interest in the material, reading motivation can increase the reading habit of undergraduates with regard to English language material or not.

## 1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Definitions of the terms used in this study as follows:

**Undergraduates:** are the first-third year students in the English major division at Phetchaburi Rajabhat University.

**Factors:** are reading competency in English, the interest in the material and reading motivation that can or can't affect the reading habits of undergraduates with regard to English materials. It will be measured by using the Likert Scale which illustrates a 5 point rating scale, ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5)

**English language material:** is any kind of material written in English such as text books, newspapers, brochures, magazines, journals, novels, literatures, folk tales, etc.

**Reading competency in English:** is evaluated by evaluating of certain skills in English of each student.

**Reading motivation:** is the motivation created by family and friends that affect the reading habits of undergraduates.

## **1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The survey will be conducted on the first to third year students in the English majors division of Phetchaburi Rajabhat University in Phetchaburi province to find out the factors affecting reading habits with regard to English material. The sampling was 50 male and female students. The survey will study the factors that make them to read or not read English language material.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

1.6.1 Parents will understand the way in which to promote the reading habit of English language material among their children.

1.6.2 Parents and school can deal with how to encourage undergraduates to read more.

1.6.3 This study may pave the way for further research on how to promote the reading of English material among undergraduates.

## **1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The study of factors affecting the reading habits of English major undergraduates at Phetchaburi Rajabhat University with regard to English material is divided into five chapters.

-Chapter one introduces the background, statement of the problem, objectives, definition of terms, scope of the study and significance of the study.

-Chapter two covers a review of relevant literature and research.

-Chapter three shows research methodology, describes the subjects, the materials, procedures and data analysis.

-Chapter four presents the findings of the survey, conducted by the application of the questionnaire.

-Chapter five presents conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for further research.