

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

"English is the global language"

(David Crystal, 2003)

English is now playing an important role in our society. The global language is said to be a result of the growth of international contact. When people of two different realms using different languages meet, the need of a single lingua franca is required to use as a common language for communication. (Crystal, 2003) As a matter of fact, we cannot deny that English facilitates world communication. At the time of the expansion of British colonialism in South-East Asia in the mid 18th Century, countries like Singapore (1819), Philippines (1824), China-Hong Kong (1842), Kowloon (1860) and Malaysia (1867) were colonized by the British Empire. The British Curriculum and British Educational system were brought into these countries and since 1960, English has become the medium of instruction in higher education in several countries.

In “English as a Global Language” Crystal (2003) has mentioned a suggestion that was made by US linguist Braj Kachru regarding the spread of English around the world, and the acquisition in different ways as three concentric circles.

1) *The inner circle* refers to the countries where a traditional base of English dominates, such as United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada.

2) *The outer or extended circle* involves the spread of English that happens in non-native setting and plays important “second language” roles in a multilingual setting.

3) *The expanding or extended circle* refers to nations that recognize the importance of the English language although they do not have history of colonization by the member of the inner circles.

In our country, the spread of English usage was apparently illustrated during the reign of King Rama IV. He was well aware of the significance of educational modernization in our kingdom. During this period, a large number of foreigners were taken into the service included the well-known writer of “The King and I”, Anna Leonowen, to teach English to his children.

During the sovereignty of King Rama V, a huge expansion of English learning took place. The King’s vision on the significance of the English language has shown the outcome in terms of the establishment of schools to encourage English Language learning. Schools were opened up in the royal residence to educate young princes and sons of nobles in order to prepare them for further education abroad. Later on, a number of schools outside the palace were established to educate the commoners’ children.

Another main reason that enhances the significance of the English education happens to be the international trading that brings foreigners into the country, especially the emergence of United States as the leading economic power in the 20th century. These expatriates need schools for their children. In 1951, the first International school was established in our country and named *International School of Bangkok* or ISB. Up till now, the number of international schools has grown rapidly. According to the International School Association of Thailand’s (ISAT, 2005), now there are over 75 International schools around the country existing as members. As a matter of fact, these international schools base their curricula totally on British, American or their mother school syllabuses. Thai parents have been concerned that it could be a problem when these imported pedagogy conflict with the social cultures of our country. Bilingual school or English program therefore becomes another solution for them. As a result, not only the number of private schools that offer English program swiftly increased, but this also happened in the public schools.

In accordance with *The Association of Private Schools for English Program* (A.P.E.P), there are 122 private schools which turn out to be members of the association that offer English Program at present. 64 schools are in Bangkok and 58 are in the region. The level offers vary from Kindergarten to High school. Our target school is called *Sacred Heart’s Convent*. (SHC) It is a prominent K-12 private Catholic girls’ school serving approximately 5000 students for the regular Thai

program. Since 2002 the school has offered an English Program (EP) from Kindergarten 2 up to grade 11 (2006) with plans to expand to Grade 12 in 2007/2008. The program follows the Thai National Curricula in which 80% of the core subjects are taught in English by foreigners and approximately 20% are taught in Thai by Thai teachers.

Students who attend the English program are all Thai nationality. Teachers for the program are provided by the outsource company called “IDEAL” English Academy which is a private language school offering English-Based education. In fact, the school is a newly run English Program. A real study is required to access students’ problems toward the learning program in order to improve students learning process to reach the highest possible success.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to survey and identify the problems regarding the learning English program of grade 10 students (2006) at Sacred Heart's Convent School.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the students learning problems?
- What are the causes of learning problems?
- What are the solutions and how do students solve the problems?

1.4 BASIC ASSUMPTION

This study assumes that all subjects honestly answered every questionnaire item in relation to their personal experience in learning in the program.

1.5 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Definitions of the terms in the study are the following:

1.5.1 *STUDENTS* here refers to English program at Sacred Heart’s Convent School in the 2006 school year.

1.5.2 *TEACHERS* refers to the native speaker instructors who teach grade 10th English program students at Sacred Heart’s Convent School.

1.5.3 *ENGLISH PROGRAM* refers to an English-medium program offered by Sacred Heart's Convent school. The program uses the Thai National Curriculum with approximately 80% instructions in English and the rest in Thai as guided by the Thai Ministry of Education guidelines. In this study, the term English program and bilingual program will be used interchangeably.

1.5.4 *LEARNING PROBLEMS* refers to the problems caused by the difficulties that obstruct the learning of students.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In this study 20 Thai students who attended the grade 10 English Program at Sacred Heart's Convent school were used as subjects.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The data collected will be useful for school management and whom it may concern in order to create an awareness of the learning problems of the students and to find solutions to the problems.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of learning problems of grade 10 students at Sacred Heart's Convent school English Program in this paper is divided into 5 chapters as the following:

1.8.1 Chapter one includes the introduction, background, objectives of the study, research questions, basic assumption, definition of terms, scope of study, significance of study and the organization.

1.8.2 Chapter two deals with a review of literature related to the bilingual/English program, factors affecting language learning and problems found in Bilingual programs in Thailand.

1.8.3 Chapter three explains the research methodology employed in the study.

1.8.4 Chapter four represents the findings of the study and interpretation of the research findings.

1.8.5 Chapter five contains a summary of the study, discussion and recommendations for further research.