CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background information of this present study. It is made up of nine sub-categories including the background of the study, the rationale of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, statements of hypothesis, the scope of the study, definition of terms, the significance of the study, and the overview of the thesis.

1.1. Background of the Study

English is nowadays considered one of the essential factors for many business firms due to its significance in becoming the socioeconomic medium of communication (Robinson, 1980: 98). This perception seems to agree with Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) (cited in Pattanapichet, 2009:1)'s idea of the dynamic power of this lingua franca mentioning that English holds so much importance in being of economic power and in great chances to access to the technology and expertise. Unquestionably, a good command of English will benefit those who mainly work in the business in which English is a medium of communication.

Nation and Newton (2009) remarked that though perceived as a hidden process, listening also plays a critical role when making the speech communication. Lynch (2009: 3-4) further suggests that listening comprehension is the first goal that needs to be reached although a variety of factors and problems such as the speed of speaking, use of unfamiliar idioms or expressions would make it difficult to understand the language.

However, chances for listening to authentic English resources in everyday life for non-native speakers like Thai students are quite low unless they meet foreigners, watch satellite television, or listen to English broadcasting radio (Burton, 1997: 330-332). Many schools and colleges, therefore, may give their students chances to practice listening skills themselves with commercially published English listening materials available where contents or activities, details of culture, and tradition presented inside might be irrelevant or not meet students' actual needs (Tomlinson, 2003:50).

Garder & Miller (1999: 96-122) , on the other hand, note that self-instructional materials, which are specially produced according to the needs of students, may enable students to move further towards the goal of learning with more responsibilities and help nourish the habit of learning outside the traditional classroom. Tomlinson (1998) also believes in the dynamic power of the specially produced materials by suggesting that an emotional engagement with those materials will create an emotional response among students and motivate them to use the materials. Therefore, specially produced self-instructional materials that suit the learning needs and the background knowledge of students will definitely increase their learning interests and awareness of learning objectives.

1.2. Rationale for the Study

Since Thailand opened its markets to the outside world, the demand for proficiency in English among workers is increasing. According to Thailand's Ministry of Public Health, hospitals in Thailand were estimated to earn 19.826 billion in Thai baht from 730,000 foreign patients in 2003 (Harryono et al., 2006). Many nursing colleges, therefore, may accordingly provide English for Specific Purposes courses

(ESP) such as English for Medical Professionals, English for Nursing Communication, Reading and Writing for Medical Purposes for their student nurses to prepare them to tackle the situation where English becomes a medium of communication (Lewis & Hill, 1999).

In the context of educational settings, however, listening courses may be relegated to a hasty topic-driven session wedged between reading and writing because they are regarded as more manageable skills (Field, 2008:1). Encouraging students to learn by themselves outside a normal classroom can lessen this problematic situation. Self-instructional materials based on an analysis of needs of students can be an effective solution for students who have special needs. Self- instructional materials may bridge the gap between teachers' needs and the actual needs of students and enable them to feel a greater commitment to move further towards their expected goals of language learning (Gardner & Miller, 1999: 105-108; Dickinson, 1994: 68-87).

According to the discussion that the researcher made with student nurses from several nursing colleges in Bangkok, some published English listening materials included in their language courses contain irrelevant contents and activities to the students' real needs despite the production of in-house materials. This situation has motivated the researcher to develop the package of self-instructional materials (SIMS) to enhance listening skills for student nurses based on their needs and evaluate its effectiveness against the criteria. The researcher hopes that upon the completion of the development of self-instructional materials, student nurses would be able to demonstrate a higher level of listening skills in English and be more interested in seeking more knowledge autonomously in the outside world.

1.3. Research Questions

The questions for this study are as follows:

1. What are the needs of English listening skills for student nurses?
2. How can self-instructional materials to enhance English listening skills for student nurses be developed?
3. How effective are the developed self-instructional materials?
4. What is the attitude of student nurses towards the developed self-instructional materials?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to

1. Investigate the needs of English listening skills of student nurses.
2. Develop self-instructional materials on English listening skills for student nurses.
3. Examine the effectiveness of the developed self-instructional materials.
4. Study the attitude of the student nurses towards the developed self-instructional materials.

1.5. Statements of Hypothesis

To examine the effectiveness of the self-instructional materials (SIMS) to enhance listening skills for student nurses, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. The developed self-instructional materials are at a standard criteria of efficiency at $E_1/E_2 = 80:80$.

2. The English posttest scores are significantly higher than the pretest score. ($p \leq 0.05$)
3. The student nurses have a positive attitude towards the developed self-instructional materials.

1. 6. Scope of the Study

Participants and variables in the study are as follows:

1. Participants
   - The population of the study is 300 student nurses ranging from the first year to the fourth year in School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital, Bangkok.
   - Participants of the study consist of 30 student nurses ranging from the first year to the fourth year from the School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital, Bangkok.
2. The variables of the study are as follows:

   The independent variable is self-studying with the developed SIMS

The dependent variables are the level of effectiveness of the developed SIMS and the attitude of the participating group of student nurses towards the developed SIMS.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

Due to the nature of self-instruction that may affect the results of the study, some limitations should be acknowledged as follows:

1. The study deals with the self-instruction. In this case, the top concern of this self-instruction is on encouraging student nurses to see their learning progress of

English listening skills after using the developed self-instructional materials instead of making a very high score in the pre-or posttest.

2. The self-instructional materials were developed from needs analysis of 300 student nurses of School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital, Bangkok, not from the needs the stakeholders namely teachers or administrators. Therefore, the score interpretation of the needs was solely based on these 300 participants and may not be representative of the population of student nurses in Thailand.

3. During the main study (the implementation/ evaluation phase), 30 voluntary student nurses were recruited for being the study group. The majority of these voluntary student nurses were fourth year student. As being voluntary, these 30 student nurses may share similar characteristics in terms of being industrious and studious. Besides, they were allowed to choose the unit to study, do the activities that they were interested in, and study with their own learning styles and at their own paces.

4. The process of administering both pre-and posttest in this study was not systemized in the way that the study group of 30 voluntary student nurses was not tested in one testing room. Instead, they were allowed to do both tests in their own rooms within the limited time, without the monitoring of the researcher, and were asked to report their test scores via Facebook to serve the nature of self-study. Therefore, this might affect test reliability.

1.8. Definition of Terms

The key terms used in the study are as follows.

1. Needs

"Needs" are gaps between what someone knows and what someone needs or wants to know and those gaps exist because of the lack of knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Kitchie, 2008: 97). "Needs" in this study refers to the students' demands for skills of listening in English to comprehend any English spoken forms of information and initiate the specification of self-instructional materials that student nurses would like to have. The data of needs are collected via needs analysis.

2. Needs Analysis or Needs Assessment

Needs analysis is "the process of determining the needs of which a learner or a group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities" (Richards et al., 1992: 242-243). In this study, the analysis of student nurses' needs involves the necessities of English listening skills, which student nurses feel they lack and want to practice their English listening and self-instructional materials based on course objectives and findings from document research. The analysis of student nurses' needs in terms of lacks and wants/expectations come from the questionnaire. The information obtained will be used as the basis for designing the specifications of the self-instructional materials.

3. Self-Instructional Materials

"Self-instructional materials" are materials for self-studying in which individuals' preferences of learning styles, contents, and other relevant aspects can be acquired by themselves and at their own paces (Detaramani, 1999: 124-125). Self-instruction materials in this study are a package of handbook with CD whose contents

are designed and developed based on the exact needs of the student nurses. The self-instructional materials contain five units where activities and exercises are applied to let the student nurses learn by themselves. The self-instructional materials are developed based on Six T's approach of Stoller and Grabe (1997) and the approach of writing instructional materials of Nunan (1995) and Tomlinson (2003).

4. English listening skills

English listening skills are skills of receiving information on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and spoken word order in either forms of words, phrases, or sentences and retaining or registering them during the communication (Nunan and Miller, 2002: 5).

English Language Development Center (ELDC) in Thailand and the Canadian English Language Benchmarks Assessment for Nurses (CELBAN) all witness its importance by proposing their own benchmarks of necessary English listening skills for nurses who wish to successfully work in any English speaking workplaces and some of their common skills are noticeable. In this study, therefore, English listening skills are summarized from those common skills and relate to the followings:

- recognize vocabulary related to the health science;
- retain chunks of language in short-term memory;
- recognize reduced forms of words e.g. *I'll, I'm gonna*;
- recognize typical word-order patterns e.g. ..., *aren't I?* , ..., *isn't it?*;
- recognize stress and rhythm patterns, tone patterns, or intonation contours;
- detect key words such as those identifying topics and main ideas;
- guess meaning from context;
- understand inferred information e.g. speaker's attitude or intention;

- recognize basic syntactic patterns; and
- detect sentence constituents such as subject, verb, object, and prepositions.

All skills mentioned above are measured by the listening comprehension test before and after using the developed self-instructional materials.

5. Student nurses

Student nurses are nurses in training who are undergoing a trial period of offering both physical and psychological support to the patients (Sapountzi-Krepia, 2007: 1-2). Student nurses in this study are 300 student nurses studying during the first year to the fourth year in academic year 2011 of School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital, Bangkok.

1.9. Significance of the Study

Academic knowledge in teaching and learning English particularly in the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is enhanced by the present study in three aspects as follows:

Theoretically, the study can reflect some theoretical aspects of ESP, which provides some insights and contributes knowledge concerning communication skills for specific occupation and the materials development that are suitable in particular aspect in the field of ESP especially for the Nursing Purposes since most of the previous studies in English for Specific Purposes are still focusing on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) rather than English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) (Supatakulrat and Wasanasomsithi, 2005:21) (cited in Vasavakul, 2006:8).

Pedagogically, the findings of the study can provide insights into the process of the development of self-instructional materials specifically for the student nurses

which cover an aspect of an ESP material design i.e. from needs analysis to material development and evaluation of its effectiveness after implementation.

Practically, this study attempts to link the knowledge of research and application in an applied context. It demonstrates the concept of putting theory into practice. The usefulness of the materials designed and developed in the study are ready-made materials that can be adapted and applied by researchers or teachers whose interests are in the same field.

1.10. Overview of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five main chapters as follows:

Chapter I describes the background of the present study regarding the need of a particular listening modality for student nurses. To fill such a gap, a development of self-instructional materials (SIMS) to enhance listening skills for student nurses has been proposed in which the needs analysis is the first requirement for such development.

Chapter II reviews the underlying principles and concepts that are considered relevant and necessary for the development of the proposed self-instructional materials. Such concepts are definitions and types of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), ESP materials development, needs analysis, and significance of English listening for nurses.

Chapter III covers the research methodology of the study. This includes the research design, research instruments, methods of data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter IV presents the results and findings from the study. Information from the needs analysis to the materials development and materials implementation has been demonstrated.

Chapter V summarizes the study, discusses the findings, and suggests recommendations for further study.