

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes and explains the methodology used in the in-use evaluation of the coursebook. It outlines the approach taken in gathering, analyzing and interpreting the data that enables the evaluation of how the coursebook is used in this language teaching context. It gives detailed information of the research design, data collection and analysis and a pilot study.

Setting, Program and Participants

Before discussing the design of the current study, the setting, the course materials used within the program, and the participants of the study will be introduced.

The setting

A private language center in Chiang Mai was chosen as the setting for the current study. Therefore the study used intact classes, not classes created for the purpose of research. The language center is regarded as prestigious. Many students choose this institute to improve their English competence and even young adult learners decide to take courses there. It offers courses by native English teachers such as general conversational English and specialized classes such as writing, business English or tailored course of study which employ different levels and types of

coursebooks. The general conversational courses interested the researcher because they employ a coursebook suitable for this study. There are around fifteen teachers responsible for different levels in the conversation course at this language center, each teaching one or more levels. Each session lasts 1 hour on weekdays and 3 hours on Saturdays. Classes consist of 15-20 students. Each teacher uses around 5-6 hours to complete each unit.

The prospective learners wishing to register for general conversational courses need to do a placement test, containing grammar and reading sections. The learners who score higher than 35 out of 50 can have an interview test with the native English teachers who will place them to the level according to their performance in the test. The regular program consists of two introductory levels, followed by 15 other levels. Each level is 30 hours long. It is a multi-skills program designed to bring students to a 'threshold' level of language proficiency (see Appendix C for the course syllabus).

In addition, this language center holds to the communicative approach to language teaching which is consistent with the design of contemporary coursebooks. One principle of communicative language teaching is that learning a language is more meaningful and effective when used in the context of authentic communication, and students learn best by using the language as opposed to simply studying grammar rules. It also allows students the freedom to experiment, make mistakes and correct themselves.

Finally, although this language center provides achievement tests for learners, it was found that, according to the director of the center, the tests are for levels 4, 8, 12, and 15 only. Thus there are classes for which there are no tests. The classes chosen for the investigation were limited to level 1, 2 and 3 because they are free of

achievement tests. The use of the textbook will therefore not be influenced by the tests.

Course Material

Interchange Third Edition (Richards, Hull & Procter, 2005) is used in this language school as one of the main teaching materials for adult and young adult learners wishing to improve English proficiency out of class and working time. *Interchange Third Edition* is a fully revised version of *Interchange* and *New Interchange* and is suitable for this study as it is a commercially successful series of teaching materials. This edition contains recent content in each unit, additional grammar practice, and more opportunities to develop speaking and listening competence. *Interchange Third Edition* presents contemporary subjects and has a focus on both accuracy and fluency. There are four levels of *Interchange Third Edition* which are *Interchange Third Edition Intro*, 1, 2 and 3. All are composed of student's book, workbook, teacher's edition, audio program, multi media and lab program. Only the *Student's book 1* was chosen for this study because books 2 and 3 had not been used in the program at the time when this study was conducted. Other higher level learners are using *New Interchange*, the previous series. The *Intro* was excluded from the current study because the language and content are simple and it is used for low proficiency learners. Besides, there were not many courses available for observation.

Interchange Third Edition, Student's book 1 contains sixteen units. The first four units are used for level 1; units 5-8 are used for level 2; and units 9-12 are used for level 3. In the current study, it was not possible to observe the same unit being taught by different teachers, as in the study of Chathep (2006), because the setting is a private language center where not many classes are offered during the academic term like that of the university setting. Therefore the teaching of different units by different teachers was investigated. The units used for the current study were units 3, 4, 10 and 11.

Descriptions of Each Unit

As mentioned above, the units used in the current study are units 3, 4, 10 and 11. To understand some detailed information in each section of each unit, the table below gives a description of these units.

Table 1: Description of each unit used in the study (adapted from *Interchange-third edition* contents page).

Titles/ Topics	Speaking	Grammar	Pronunciation/ Listening	Writing/ Reading	Interchange Activity
Unit 3 How much is it? Shopping and prices; clothing and personal items; colors and materials	Talking about prices; giving opinions; discussing preferences; making comparisons; buying and selling things.	Demonstratives; <i>this, that, these, those; one and ones</i> ; questions: <i>how much</i> and <i>which</i> ; comparisons with adjectives	Sentence stress: listening to people shopping; listening for items, prices and opinions Self Study: listening to people discussing clothing options	Writing a comparison of prices in different countries "The Worlds' online Marketplace BAY!": Reading about online shopping	"Flea Market": Buying and selling things
Unit 4 Do you like rap? Music, movies and TV programs; entertainers; invitations and excuses; dates and times	Talking about likes and dislikes; giving opinions; making invitations and excuses	Yes/ No and Wh-questions with do; question: what kind; object pronouns; modal verb would; verb+to+verb	Intonation in questions: Identifying musical styles; listening for likes and dislikes Self-Study: Listening to people making invitations	Writing a text message "Christina Aguilera": Reading about a famous entertainer	"What's the question?": Writing and asking questions
Unit 10 Have you ever ridden a camel? Past experiences; unusual activities	Describing past experiences; exchanging information about past experiences and events	Present perfect yes/no and Wh-questions, and short answers with regular and irregular past participles; already and yet; present perfect vs. simple past; <i>for</i> and <i>since</i>	Linked sounds Listening to descriptions of events Self-study: Listening to descriptions of experiences	Writing a letter to an old friend "Taking risks": Reading about unusual or dangerous sports	"Lifestyle survey": Finding out about a classmate's lifestyle
Unit 11 It's a very exciting place! Cities; hometown; countries	Asking about and describing cities; asking for and giving suggestions; talking about travel and tourism	Adverbs before adjectives: conjunctions: <i>and, but, though, and however</i> ; modal verbs <i>can</i> and <i>should</i>	Can't and shouldn't Listening to description of cities and hometowns; listening for incorrect information Self-study: listening to descriptions of vacation destinations	Writing a magazine article "Greeting from...": Reading about famous cities	"Cities guide": Creating a guide to fun places in a city

The Participants of the Study

The participants were four native English teachers who volunteered themselves for the current study. They are referred to in this study as teacher A, B, C, and D respectively. Their background information is listed below.

Table 2: The participants' background information

Teacher/ Units	Age	Nationality	Education	Teaching Experience (yrs.)
A/ Unit 3	29	British	Bachelor: Math/ TEFL certificate	1.5
B/ Unit 4	32	British	Bachelor: English Literature	5.5
C/ Unit 11	27	American	Master: Science Education	1.5
D/ Unit 10	23	American	Bachelor: Media Design	0.5

According to one of the teachers, the language center offers a training program. This Teacher Training Program involved about 25 hours of work and training. There is also a Professional Development Program which is an on-going process of learning and self-reflection on teaching English at this language center. It involves a monthly teacher exchange meeting where teachers meet and hold seminar-type lectures on a facet of TEFL. It involves self-reflective theory-based and classroom-based activities that the teacher may choose from, such as observing other teachers in action and then critiquing the lesson on a pre-defined set of criteria, maintaining a teaching journal, video-taping classroom activities and then doing a write up on it.

Native English teachers were the focus of the current study because nowadays learners themselves and parents often favor native English teachers to teach English as they are considered the owners of the target language and are believed to provide accurate pronunciation and communicative skills necessary for communicative use of English by learners. The evidence of this fact can be seen today that native English teachers teach English all around the globe to countries such as Thailand, China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, etc. for language teaching to satisfy the demands of that belief. In addition, the contents and topics of the coursebook were written and designed by westerners, thus English speaker culture may be conveyed much easier than if the teachers who share the same L1 background as the learners use the coursebook. Consequently, focusing on native English teachers, in the setting of a language school which offers support for teachers who are using a new edition of a successful global coursebook, would allow the current study to provide insights into how materials were used under favorable conditions.

Data Collection Instruments

This section gives detailed information of the relevant instruments employed in the current study including classroom observation, video recording, audiotape and interview.

Classroom Observation

Observations have often been regarded as major data collection tool in qualitative classroom research. They are most often employed to collect data on how

learners use a language in a variety of settings, to study language learning and teaching processes in the classroom setting and to sort out teachers' and students' behaviors (Seliger & Shohamy 1989). Seliger and Shohamy (1989) pointed out that the goal of observations is for "examining a phenomenon or a behavior while it is going on." They indicate the advantages of using observation in data collection as being that "they offer the study of a phenomenon at close range with many of contextual variables present, a feature which is very important in studying language behaviors" (p. 162). However, the disadvantages they find are that the closeness introduces prejudice which may affect research reliability and the presence of an observer may alter the participants' behaviors. Having realized some disadvantages of observations, the researcher in this current study decided to use video recordings for class observation as they provide elaborate data while it is not necessary for the observer to be present in the classroom making the participants feel more comfortable. In addition, recordings can be replayed for further analysis.

Thus video recordings, a type of ethnographic observation capable of allowing observation, or attempted observation, of events taking place in the classroom (Day, 1990), were used as one of the main instruments for data collection of the current study. According to Hall (2002), video recordings of communicative events and tasks are able to capture real actions as they happen in real time. They allow the researchers to study the connection between linguistic actions and organization, linguistic movement and communicative stability across time in a way that cannot be performed through any other means of data collection. However, where to put the video cameras and how many of them to use are things that researchers should consider because if cameras are placed in the wrong position or not enough video cameras are used, the data may become less reliable and the researcher may fail to understand the data as

some communicative tasks would not be captured. For the current study, only one video camera was used because the study focused on only the teachers. The camera was placed in the corner at the back of the classroom because it is easy to capture all the actions of the teachers as well as the sound quality from the teachers being good.

Interviews

To complement the data collected from recordings, the four teachers were retrospectively interviewed in order to elicit some teacher beliefs and factors that contribute the decision to adapt, supplement, emphasize and omit some sections in the coursebook. Some of the questions that were used during the interviewed are given in Appendix B. Additional questions were included after viewing the videos.

Based on Seliger and Shohamy (1987 p.166), an interview is categorized as personal and offers a level of detailed information collection, free response, and flexibility that may not be revealed by other procedures. Moreover, the researcher can get information and data that could not be predicted in advance. In the current study, the interviews were used with four native English teachers to get some detailed information of how they use the coursebook, especially what factors and beliefs that influence the coursebook use as well as the metaphors or similes they choose to describe the coursebook. The interviews were conducted about one week after the videotaping of one unit was done. The interviews were semi-structured consisting of specific and defined questions determined beforehand yet at the same time allowing some elaboration in the questions and answers. In addition, some questions were added after the videos were viewed. In order to make the data eliciting metaphors or similes used by the native English teachers to describe the coursebook become more

reliable, the question (about metaphors or similes) was submitted to them via email. This was to give them some time to think of the metaphors or similes carefully before reporting to the interviewer. The information gained from the interview was audiotaped and transcribed later, both to save time during the interview and in the belief that the information could be captured in more detailed than recording or taking some notes of the main points and information given during the interview.

Data Analysis

Before going in details the analysis of the data, the definitions of the terms task, modified task, unmodified task and supplementary task need to be clarified.

Task

To define the term task, this study took Littlejohn's view (p.198) that a task is any proposal for actions to be taken by learners that has the direct aim of learning. Tasks that were observed in the classroom, no matter whether the contents are from the coursebook or teachers are referred to as classroom tasks. Coursebook tasks are tasks described in the coursebook. These tasks can be used in an unmodified way, can be modified, or can be supplemented by other tasks.

Unmodified Tasks

Unmodified tasks refer to tasks that the teachers used according to the instructions in the coursebook. For example in the grammar section, the coursebook

may require the learners to fill in gaps individually after attending to an explanation and the teachers follow that. Understanding the characteristics of unmodified tasks can help gain an insight into how the coursebook is used and allow comparison with modified and supplementary tasks.

Modified Tasks

Modified tasks refer to tasks that the teachers modified from the coursebook instructions. For example in the grammar section, the coursebook may give instructions for the learners to fill in gaps individually by writing after attending to an explanation but the teachers may let the learners fill in gaps orally and work with their partners. Understanding the characteristics of modified tasks can help understand how the characteristics of modified tasks differ from those of the coursebook tasks and give information on the role the coursebook is playing in the classroom.

Supplementary Tasks

Supplementary tasks refer to the additional tasks the teachers bring into the classroom that are not found in the coursebook or teacher's manual. Identifying the characteristics of supplementary tasks can help in understanding the role of the coursebook. The same analytical checklist, described below, was used to analyze supplementary tasks.

Analytical Checklist

In order to make analysis of classroom recordings and coursebook more systematic, a checklist was used. Using checklist adds to reliability. Skierso (1991 p. 440), citing Tucker, suggested that “checklists should consist of a comprehensive set of criteria based on the basic linguistic, psychological and pedagogical principles underlying modern methods of language learning and these criteria should be exhaustive enough to insure assessment of all characteristics of the coursebook.” However, McGrath (2002) claimed that the method has its potential constraints. For example, the systematicity (or inclusivity) referred to previously is just a strength if the criteria or categories a checklist is composed are relevant to the specific context where it is to be employed. An “off the shelf” checklist tends to need tailoring to suit a context.

The checklist used for the analysis of both classroom and coursebook tasks was adapted from that of Littlejohn (1998) because this checklist can reveal the characteristics of both classroom and coursebook tasks. Although his checklist was originally designed for pre-use evaluation and analysis of coursebook tasks, it can be used for in-use evaluation, to analyze classroom tasks as well. The checklist comprises of task features such as discourse control, focus, operation, participation, input to learners, expected output, and source and nature of content. However, some task characteristics under each feature were adapted (see appendix A) and supplemented to fit in the classroom tasks. For example turn-take, initiate, respond and not required, were changed to discourse control, little control, tight control and not required respectively. And in the feature of input to learners and expected output, some task characteristics were added such as oral discourse and written discourse

which refer to any written or oral words, phrases and sentences combined in meaningful ways.

Analysis of Tasks

Before the observation of classroom tasks took place, the coursebook tasks were analyzed by using the checklist. This was for the researcher to understand the tasks in the coursebook better and to enable the researcher to identify whether the tasks the teachers used were unmodified, modified or supplementary tasks. During the video viewing, the classroom tasks in the observed lessons were analyzed by the same checklist, and unmodified and modified tasks were identified. After that, the coursebook tasks and corresponding modified tasks were compared to reveal the differences in their task characteristics.

Analysis of Interview Data

Another viewing focused on supplementary tasks. For the analysis of this stage, the adapted checklist of Littlejohn was again used, revealing the characteristics of supplementary tasks.

To understand better why the coursebook was used in the way that it was, the teachers were retrospectively interviewed to elicit factors influencing coursebook use including their beliefs about teaching and learning as well as the metaphors they used to describe the coursebook. With respect to metaphors, the thematic classification of McGrath (2006) was used. In McGrath (2006), teachers' images were categorized into four themes: Guidance, Support, Resource and Constraint. Each

theme was arranged vertically in a rough order which reflects at the top, in the category of Guidance, the apparent acceptance by teachers of at least some degree of control by the coursebook, and at the level of Support and Resource, a willingness by the teachers to take control of the coursebook. While these first three categories express, to different degrees, a relatively positive attitude towards coursebooks, the final theme reflects a range of negative reactions to the constraints imposed by coursebooks. Table 3 gives the classification McGrath made from his study. The data about metaphors for coursebooks in this current study were classified by using a similar table containing four themes of metaphors followed by instances supporting each theme.

Table 3: McGrath's thematic classification for teachers' images for coursebook use.

Theme	Instances				
Guidance	map	path	guideline	lighthouse	compass
Support	petrol	belt			
	railing	blind man's stick	anchor	scaffolding	teacher's parachute
Resource	oil in cooking	rice	cake ingredients	daily bread	
	supermarket	convenience store	handbag	umbrella	menu
	salad	music house	rainbow	ring for the finger	
	tool				
	stone	coal mine			
Constraint	road block	millstone	straitjacket		

A Pilot Study

To test the data collection instruments for reliability and validity, Seliger and Shohamy, (1989 p.184) suggest that before the real data is collected, researchers should try out their instruments with other participants or conduct a pilot study to make it possible to revise and modify the procedure on the basis of new information. They define reliability as concerned with whether the data collection procedure is consistent and accurate and validity as the extent to which the data collection procedure measures what it intends to measure.

Given this, a pilot study was conducted with one native English teacher to see whether the instruments worked with the participant in a particular setting. Some problems arose. First of all, the manager when receiving a permission letter of request from the researcher gave permission for a video camera to be used for the pilot study and selected one teacher to be piloted. After recording, the teacher was asked if he was happy when the video camera was present. He said that he was uncomfortable with the camera and requested that the researcher only observed and took notes instead. What was learned from this is that video recording for observation is quite a sensitive issue. Some teachers may not feel happy to be video recorded; therefore for the real data collection, the participants need to be asked beforehand if they are willing to be video recorded. More importantly, it is better to have participants who volunteer themselves and really wish to see the tapes for professional development as then researchers can give the participants copies of the recording and they can view the tapes for self improvement if they wish to.

Second, during the pilot study, the researcher employed discs in the form of mini DVD, believing that this would save costs and time because they could be

viewed immediately without converting them to the VCD or DVD. However, mini DVD can be recorded for only 30 minutes maximum, making researcher presence in the classroom necessary to change the mini DVD and thus interrupt teaching. The problem was avoided in real data collection by using cassettes for recording instead as they can capture a maximum of 2 hours of action; thus the researcher can just leave the camera in the classroom after setting it up and come back 5 or 10 minutes before 2 hours. At that time it is break time for students and teachers, so no interruption results from this.

Third, as the pilot study site was a small language center, there were not many classes offered and only approximately 4 to 6 students in a class. The teacher from the pilot study claimed that it may not be possible to obtain the data as group work and communicative tasks may be hard to implement. Consequently, the researcher decided to change the setting to a more prestigious and bigger language center, believing that there would be more teachers volunteer themselves for data collection and a classroom of 15-20 students would allow the researcher have more data.

Finally, one good thing found from the pilot study was the position to place the camera. It was found that the position in the corner at the back of the classroom could capture every move of the teacher and the sound quality was very acceptable; therefore in the real data collection, the video camera was put in that position.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was limited to a sample of four native English teachers (four male teachers) in the private language center in Chiang Mai. Their

English teaching experience ranged from 1-5 years. The coursebook used for data collection was also restricted to *Interchange Third Edition*, Student Book 1. One different unit of each teacher was observed for further analysis.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discussed the methodology of the current study by giving the detailed information of the setting, participants, coursebook, and instruments for data collection and analysis and the pilot study. The next chapter presents the findings.

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