

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The current research was carried out during a teaching course. The procedure of the research, which is explained in some detail in this chapter, includes preparation of the study, descriptions of the subjects, the instruments used, data collection and data analysis procedures.

#### Preparation of the Study

The following procedures were done during this study in order to accomplish the research objectives.

1. Search for and study for information related to the topic of interest.
2. Select special project supervisor and an examining committee.
3. Consult with the special project supervisor and committee and finalize the topic of the study.
4. Contact the COC and meet with the director concerning the researcher's proposal to teach an English course in their program.
5. Meet with the students for informal talks to find out their knowledge of and background in the English language as well as their expectations for the English course.
6. Design a pre-test and post-test.
7. Pre-test the students and keep records of students' English level and development.
8. Design a check-list for students' self-evaluation.

9. Plan a course of 30 hours and select a textbook (adapted from the book *Voyages* by Brown).
10. Design questionnaires to investigate the following areas: the students' experiences with English teachers in English classes; students' attitudes toward the English teachers, toward English classes and toward English language; and the effects of grade and no-grade system on students' learning.

### **Subjects**

The subjects in this study were 20 students. They were studying at the Christian Outreach Center (COC), Chiangmai and are between 18-25 years of age. They come from three minority groups including Karen, Lahu and Hmong.

### **Students' Cultural Backgrounds**

The students were from the Karen, Lahu and Hmong tribes. Some background for each tribe follows.

The Karens are different from all the other groups in Thailand in showing no traces of contact with the Chinese. Over the past 200 years they have tended to move eastward away from Burma into Thailand because of political conflicts with the Burmese authorities. Karen communities are principally concentrated in the mountain areas of the western provinces along the Thai-Burmese border, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, Tak, Kanchanaburi, and Prachuab Khirikhan. They are scattered as in some provinces in north and central Thailand including Lampang, Lamphun, Sukhothai, Phrae, Kamphaeng Phet, Phetchaburi, Uthai Thani, Suphanburi and Ratchaburi. Unlike other tribes, they have clearly defined garden and village boundaries. Each village maintains its own sense of sovereignty

and people from the outside are not allowed to cultivate land within its territory unless they have rights over paddy fields gained through purchase or succession. Customs defining kinship and marriage are quite different from those of the highlanders. Kinship among the Karen is traced through the maternal line and residence is matrilineal. Marriage is monogamous and most families are single or nuclear. Indeed, in all cases, the family stands out as the most important cooperative unit in all domestic affairs (Asia Books, 1998).

The Hmongs are the second most populous of the hill tribes. Well known for the extended family, Polygamy is allowed in their culture, yet the family is the most important basic unit of social organization. The religion of the Hmong is a combination of pantheism and taoistic shamanism with an emphasis on ancestor-worship. Indeed, the Chinese influence is obvious in all their beliefs and practices. The Hmong have a reputation in being the most independent of the hill tribes and generally look down on others, with the exception of the Mien, the other hill tribe culture that has absorbed a considerable amount of Chinese influence (Asia Books, 1998).

Hmong worship is mainly directed towards a variety of household spirits, of which the spirit of the door is particularly important. In addition, the Hmong believe in a local deity who rules the surrounding area of forest and hill. They are well known as hard-working and peace-loving (Asia Books 1998).

The Lahu originated in the Tibetan Plateau and over the centuries have migrated to China, Burma, Laos and Thailand. Today they are the third largest tribe in Thailand. Lahu society is cognitive and monogamous. The nuclear family forms the most common domestic unit and plays the most important part in the social and political organization of the village although the Lahu worship their ancestors, they are strongly influenced by Buddhism and Christianity. In Thailand they mostly follow their old traditional beliefs. As with most

other hill tribes, there is a strong feeling among the Lahu for conformity and unity within the village and as relatives are expected to support each other.

### **Institutional Background**

Although the COC was started in Thailand in 1997 by Pastor Jonathan Wicker, the original church is in Australia. They now have 9 branches in Thailand located in Chiangmai, Chiangrai, Vang Bod (Petchaboon), Fang (Chiangmai), Huay Sai (Chiangmai), Phitsanulok, Lamphun, Hot (Chiangmai), and Wungtakry (Chiangmai). Students are assigned to preach at these churches and some of them go on to start new churches and outreach points in other districts. There are 8 Thai and 12 Australian staff. The Thai staff speak some English and the Australian staff speak some Thai. Indeed, both sides still have difficulty communicating with each other. The majority of the Australian staff are nurses while the majority of the Thai staff are from minority groups, usually hill tribe. The Thai staff accompany the Australian staff and visitors to evangelize in villages and to help with translation. Those who start churches often have visitors from overseas. There are two services held each Sunday, one in the morning and the other is in the evening. For the morning service an Australian pastor is often invited to preach, needless to say in English. The preaching is then translated from English to Thai by the Thai pastor, but the institute aims to have students help with the translation as well. This is one of the motivations the students have in learning English. The evening service, on the other hand, is conducted in English without translation. There are many foreigners from all over, including tourists, that attend these services. The majority of the students and Thai staff attend the service as well.

### Instruments

The instruments for identifying positive human relationship were the following:

1. Informal interview was conducted before the course started in order to investigate the students' experiences and attitudes in former English classes, and with the former English teachers, in general. The information from the interview was useful in the course planning.
2. Questionnaires were constructed to investigate the students' experiences in English classes and with English teachers, and the students' attitudes toward English teachers, toward English classes and toward English language, and the students' opinions on grade and no-grade systems.
3. The Pre-test was conducted through oral interviews to find out the students' English proficiency before attending the course in order to provide suitable English lessons.
4. The Post-test was conducted through oral interviews in order to find out the students' improvement of English proficiency after the course compared with the Pre-test.
5. The interview rating form was adapted from the book **Testing English as a Second Language** by David P. Harris, p. 84. The rating was used in order to give scores to the Pre-test and Post-test which include five areas of assessments: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.
6. T-test was used to calculate the score of the Pre-test and the Post-test because it is the most significant statistic for comparing two means.
7. A checklist used to check students' understanding after each lesson was adapted from the book **Voyages: Getting Started** by H. Douglas Brown (1998). The checklists were filled out by the students in order to give them the opportunity to do self-evaluation. Such format is one of the possibilities to reduce anxiety in testing.

8. A text book, **Voyages; Getting Started** by H. Douglas Brown (1998) was used as the main teaching material. It was selected based on the following considerations:
  - 8.1 Appropriateness to the level of the students' English ability.
  - 8.2 In harmony with the course objectives including the communicative approach purpose, learner-centered and the use of every day language.
  - 8.3 Recent publication
9. Extra curricular activities and informal situations.
10. Pictures cut out from various magazines to be used as classroom material.
11. A tape recorder to be used during the interviews for the pre-test and post-test.
12. Other teaching materials such as post cards, calendar pages, flash cards, etc.

#### **Data Collecting**

The data were collected during the course of teaching a total of 30 hours, divided into 90-minute periods which met twice a week.

#### **The Method of Teaching**

The classes were carried out using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method of teaching at the beginning of the course in which the students could recall their knowledge of English as an adjustment period. It was used for two weeks or 6 hours. Later, the communicative approach was used until the end of the course.

#### *Total Physical Response*

Total Physical Response or TPR is a second language method. As mentioned previously, James Asher (Brown 1994) is the developer. TPR is related to language acquisition.

Language classes often make students feel tense or anxious. So, the creator of TPR, James Asher, was looking for a method that would help learners to have as little stress as possible so that they would feel comfortable and would enjoy learning. Furthermore, he described TPR to help learners deal with both the listening and the acting of language learning. He was aware that when children learn their first language they do a lot of listening before they can speak. This listening is accompanied by physical responses, for example, moving, reaching, grabbing, looking, and so on. He designed TPR to help learners deal with both the listening and acting.

In TPR, the teacher is like the director of the play; while students are the actors. The teacher gives commands and the students act them out. For example: "Please open the window" "Please close the door" "Please stand up" "Please sit down" "Please pick up the book" "walk to the door", and so on. Interrogative sentences are also easily dealt with. For example: "Where is the book?" (Students point to the book ).

Bowen and Madsen (1985) also explain that the teacher may give commands while simultaneously performing a physical action as a model. After the first few times, the learners should have learned the appropriate association between word and action. Furthermore, Bowen and Madsen (1985) suggest that the teacher or commander should give commands one at a time and wait until every learner is ready for the next one. The procedure can be repeated as many times as necessary for each new set of actions and vocabulary that is introduced to the learners.

Richards (1985) describes the TPR syllabus as sentence-based with basic vocabulary and grammar. Items are selected according to the ease with which they may be used in the imperative form to initiate actions. Asher (1977 cited in Richards 1985, p.29), says that "vocabulary must be concrete and situational, and the verbs selected must be action verbs.

The progression of items is from concrete to abstract, and syllabus items are presented in sentence patterns.” At the beginning level the learners are primarily recipients and have no control of what is said. At the more advanced level, learners may also give commands to other learners. Furthermore, group and pair work may be used as well. The teacher is the one who has freedom to create appropriate activities and to select what material is taught. His/her role is as a drill master, director and motivator. Audio-visuals play primary role in this kind of teaching. The activities used are usually command-based drills. Meaning is communicated by accompanying gestures, mime, and demonstration. Written and spoken forms are presented at the same time. Errors are allowed and not corrected initially. The method emphasizes comprehension before production.

Brown (1994) states that TPR also has its limitations. It is especially effective in the beginning levels of language proficiency, but then loses its distinctiveness as learners advance in their competence. After students overcome the fear of speaking out, classroom conversations and other activities proceed as in almost any other communicative language classroom.

Since the students were beginners in this study, TPR was a helpful method. The students enjoyed the learning more when they had the opportunity to act more than speak. It was also a useful way to learn new words. After two weeks, Communicative Approach was introduced in the class.

### *Communicative Approach*

Brown (1994) cites four characteristics that describe the Communicative Approach namely:



1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times, fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
4. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts (p.245).

Halliday (1994) adds that Communicative Approach refers to having students communicate with each other and with the teacher.

During the course of this project, dialogues, drills, small group work and pair work were used to enhance communication. The students often had the opportunity to interact with each other as well as with the teacher. Moreover, the students were encouraged to communicate with speakers of other languages than Thai (foreigners) outside of the classroom using the contents they studied.

#### **Informal Interview**

The interview was informally conducted in the Thai language to find out general background experiences and attitudes of the students in English classes and with the English teachers in order to plan the appropriate course and content (see the interview details in Appendix A. p. 92 ). The students were encouraged to answer the questions honestly and told that their answers will not affect them in any negative ways.

*Interview questions*

1. How many years of English classes have you had?
2. Do you like to learn language?
3. Did you study with Thai teachers or a speaker of other languages than Thai?
4. If you studied with a speaker of other languages than Thai, how did you find them in comparison to Thai teachers?
5. How did you find the classes?
6. What problems did you find?
7. What were the experiences you had in the English classes and with the English teachers?
8. How much did your teachers encourage you?
9. Why do you want to study English? What are the advantages of learning English?
10. Do you believe you have the ability to speak English well?

**Questionnaire**

Seven separate questionnaires were distributed to the students after the course. The questions asked were about their two former English teachers and the teacher who is conducting this study. The two former English teachers were the most recent English teacher and the former teacher before the most recent English teacher. Because of human limitations of memory, only information about two former teachers were used to find out about students' attitudes toward English teachers and their experiences with them. The students were asked to check the appropriate boxes to give the answer to each question. One of the questionnaires was a question-answer regarding the students' opinions toward grade

and no-grade systems. The students were asked to write their answers in the space provided after each question. Moreover, the students were encouraged to answer all of the questions freely and were assured that their responses will not be used against them in any way (see Appendix C. p. 104).

### **Pre-test**

The pre-test was conducted in English as an informal oral interview. The aim of the test was to find out students' English language oral proficiency.

#### *The Pre-test Interview Procedure*

1. Decisions were made in advance about interview methods and rating standards.
2. Interviews were conducted in a quiet room (classroom).
3. Sufficient time was reserved for each interview.
4. The interviews were recorded by tape recording and note taking.

#### *Scope and Content of the Pre-test Interview Questions*

1. Questions asking for personal information.
2. Questions asking for general or basic English ability.

### **Post-test**

The post-test was conducted as an oral interview after the course of teaching was completed. The interview was adjusted to suit each interviewee and each situation in the interview. The questions were not always asked in the same sequence.

### *The Post-test Interview Procedure*

1. Decisions were made in advance on interview methods and rating standards.
2. The interviews were conducted in a quiet room (classroom).
3. Sufficient time was reserved for each interview.
4. The interviews were recorded by a tape recorder while the researcher took some notes.

### *Scope and Content of the Post-test Interview Questions*

1. The interviewer directed the conversation by asking each interviewee to give some basic personal information about himself or herself.
2. The interviewee was given an opportunity to describe a color picture in detail – describing a person.
3. The interviewee was asked to perform certain actions according to commands.
4. The interviewee was asked to answer yes/no questions – to check understanding.
5. The interviewee was invited to a party – to check response to the invitation.
6. The interview questions were based on the content of the lessons being taught and the text book *Voyages*.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Interview Rating for the Pre-test and Post-test**

The ratings have numerical values in this case, a range of 1 to 5 points. Each rating is given a behavioral value or description. Sometimes, as a further refinement, the rated qualities are weighted to reflect the several speech components. For example, two or three times the weight given to fluency might be given to grammar ( Adapted from Harris 1969 , p. 84).

*Pronunciation*

- 1 Pronunciation problems so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible.
2. Very hard to understand because of pronunciation problems. Must frequently be asked to repeat.
3. Pronunciation problems necessitate concentrated listening and occasionally lead to misunderstanding.
- 4 Always intelligible, though one is conscious of a definite Thai accent.
- 5 Has few traces of Thai accent.

*Grammar*

- 1 Errors in grammar and word-order so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible.
- 2 Grammar and word-order errors make comprehension difficult. Must often rephrase sentences and/ r restrict himself to basic patterns.
- 3 Make frequent errors of grammar and word-order which occasionally obscure meaning.
- 4 Occasionally make grammatical and word-order errors which do not, however, obscure meaning.
- 5 Makes few (if any) noticeable errors of grammar or word-order.

*Vocabulary*

- 1 Vocabulary limitations so extreme as to make conversation virtually impossible.
- 2 Misuse of words and very limited vocabulary make comprehension quite difficult.

- 3 Frequently uses the wrong words; conversation somewhat limited because of inadequate vocabulary.
- 4 Sometimes uses inappropriate terms and/or must rephrase ideas because of lexical inadequacies.
- 5 Use of vocabulary and idioms is virtually that of a native speaker.

### *Fluency*

- 1 Speech is so halting and fragmentary as to make conversation virtually impossible.
- 2 Usually hesitant; often forced into silence by language limitations.
- 3 Speed and fluency are rather strongly affected by language problems.
- 4 Speed of speech seems to be slightly affected by language problems.
- 5 Speech as fluent and effortless as that of a native speaker.

### *Comprehension*

- 1 Cannot be said to understand even simple conversational English.
- 2 Has great difficulty following what is said. Can comprehend only "social conversation" spoken slowly and with frequent repetitions.
- 3 Understands most of what is said at slower-than-normal speed with repetitions.
- 4 Understands nearly everything at normal speed, although occasionally repetition may be necessary.
- 5 Appears to understand everything without difficulty.

(adapted from **Testing English as a Second Language** by David P. Harris)

### T-test

The t-test is used to analyze the pre-test and post-test in this study. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) describe the t-test below:

The t-test is used to compare the means of two groups. It helps determine how confident the researcher can be about the differences found between two groups. It is advisable when presenting the t-test results, to precede them with a descriptive statistics table displaying the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), standard deviation (S.D.), and size of sample (N), in order to provide a better insight into the data. A slightly different t-test formula is applied when the comparison is between two or more performances of the same group, compared at two different times (such as pre- and post-tests).