CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale and Statement of Problem

Presently, the English language has played a very important role in Thailand as the language of government, business, tourism, education, entertainment, etc. People who speak English well tend to have more advantages in the society. In the globalized world today, learning English language is essential for all students at every level in Thailand. More and more people are interested in learning the English language both within the country and outside.

According to the Educational Development Plan in the year 1999, the English subject is required by the government to be taught starting from the very beginning of the school period, which is primary grade one. It is even more emphasized in the private schools since those students have a chance to learn the English language from the kindergarten level. There are also many different levels of learners who are willing to learn foreign languages especially English in tutoring schools in order to upgrade their language skills.

In addition, the increasing number of learners who are eager to learn academic or business English in order to pursue their careers or study in English-medium educational institutions makes English for Specific Purposes (ESP) continues to be more common in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (Celce-Murcia, 2001:43). So English language teaching is changing and developing to suit as many different groups of learners as possible. Therefore, special subjects are important and appropriate to the various specific groups of learners. Especially in these days of learning, all learners of English language need to have specific purposes for using language in order to achieve success in communication (Wongsothorn, 2001 cited in Nelson, 2001:146).

Over the past 30 years, English for Specific Purposes has established itself as a viable and vigorous movement within the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) (Strevens 1988 cited in Silberstein 1993:115). There are clear advantages in setting up an ESP course where students have specific needs, that is to say, ESP teaching is more motivating for learners than General English. Strevens also summarizes the following four advantages of ESP: (1) it focuses on the learner's need since it wastes no time, (2) it is relevant to the learner, (3) it is successful in imparting learning and (4) it is more cost-effective than "General English". In recent years, the demand for ESP courses has continued to

increase and expand throughout the world. There is much research and curriculum based on ESP, for example, English for Business, English for Agriculture, English for Science and Technology, English for Tourism, English for Arts Students, English for Engineers, English for Hotel staff, English for Secretaries, English for Lawyers and so on. These are only a few examples of ESP curriculum.

Surprisingly, there is no research or curriculum concerning English for Architecture students. From the results of contacting four prominent publishers (in the year 2002): Oxford University Press, McGraw-Hill Press, Cambridge University Press and University of Michigan Press, it is found that there is no EFL/ESL material concerning Architecture on the market. Consequently, Architecture students cannot find any core materials published by publishers about English for Architecture to study.

However, there are some prominent universities in Bangkok, Thailand that have started to design their own in-house English textbooks for their Architecture students namely Chulalongkorn University (EAP Architecture) and King Mongkut's Institute of Technology, Ladkrabang (English for Architecture and Art). Those students are gaining their professional skills while learning English for Architecture. One would assume that the application of their knowledge from these in-house textbooks is more efficient for them when they study other courses in their field.

In contrast, the present situation of undergraduate Architecture students at Chiang Mai University (CMU) is that they have to learn the English courses in a science context, which is not quite useful or appropriate for their everyday study. This is shown in the needs analysis, which suggests that it is quite hard for them to successfully apply the knowledge gained to the Architecture field. They lack motivation in learning English inside the classroom and, consequently, they are also unmotivated to learn or are not able to use the English language outside the classroom and in their own courses. Therefore, an ESP curriculum of English for Architecture for Chiang Mai University students is strongly needed.

The first step in designing an ESP course is to define the needs or interests of the learners since the content should be appropriate and specific to them. The needs analysis is one of the prominent elements in designing the curriculum. The essential elements in the course design model developed by Nunan (1988) include needs analysis, goal identification, objective setting, materials development, learning activities, learning mode and environment and evaluation. Richards (1984) also presented the following essential elements in the model: needs analysis, objective setting, content and methodology and evaluation.

In performing the needs analysis of 60 CMU Architecture students, they were asked to answer a questionnaire, which was categorized into five main parts: the objectives for learning English, the learning styles, the materials, the attitudes towards learning English and the common struggles in learning English. They were a heterogeneous group aged between 18-22 years old.

The results of needs survey can be briefly summarized as follows. Firstly, the students were asked about the objectives in learning the English language and the first three objectives were 1) speaking with foreigners, 2) reading English textbooks and 3) getting good jobs. Second, when they were asked about their learning styles, most of them preferred group work since they thought that they could brainstorm ideas and helped each other to complete assigned tasks. Moreover, They wanted to learn conversation since they need more practice in speaking and listening skills. Third, the materials section of the questionnaire reflected students' need for a variety of architecture materials and a strong desire for computer use. Students preferred computers first, books, video, pictures second and magazines placing a close third for preference.

Next, when the students were asked about their attitudes towards learning the English language, most of them agreed that they prefer reading for getting the main idea and also understanding the underlying

meaning the writers were presenting in books. Considering error correction, students wanted spoken and written correction but many felt threatened when it occurred. Finally, the researcher found three common struggles that the students experienced when learning English; they were grammar, speaking, and pronunciation.

In addition to constructing the questionnaire for the students, the researcher also made classroom observations in the subject lectures and observed that the Architecture students had poor ability in English communication with their English native speaking instructors. Moreover, they were also unable to understand meanings from reading their texts. This was obvious in their presentations when they were asked to explain what they had studied. The students always used technical terms from the texts but could not explain their meanings.

Furthermore, the researcher also met with the teaching staff in order to discuss the frustrations and the problems that the Architecture students encountered in order to design an English course for them. In the discussion, it was clearly found that the communication and presentation skills were the most problematic issues for the Architecture students since they had low abilities to present their projects in the English language.

To illustrate, the total major course requirement for undergraduate Architecture students at CMU is 34 courses. There are four courses that

they have to study with the English native speaking instructors and present their projects in English. Moreover, they may have to prepare to present in English for six studio courses and two thesis courses if the English native speaking instructors join in evaluating and commenting on their projects. Therefore, they need to improve their English communication and presentation skills for their studying and in the future.

1.2 Aim

This study aims to design a course of basic English lessons with an emphasis on speaking, reading, listening and writing skills respectively for undergraduate Architecture students.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the study are:

1.3.1 To design a course of basic English lessons for undergraduate Architecture students in order to improve their overall performance in the English language with a primary emphasis on speaking followed by reading, listening and writing skills respectively.

1.3.2 To develop students' proficiency in using the English language in the Architecture field.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is explained as follows:

1.4.1 Subject: The subjects were 16 students from the 2nd and 3rd year of the Faculty of Architecture at Chiang Mai University. They were one male and three females from 2nd year. Six males and six females were 3rd year students. They were a heterogeneous group aged between 18-22 years old. They all have already taken or are taking the Fundamental English for Science I, Fundamental English for Science II and Oral Expression I.

1.4.2 Content of the Study

The contents of this study are based on a needs survey of undergraduate Architecture students from Chiang Mai University. The subject matter includes activities of the design processes: conceptual design, schematic design, design development, final design and effective project presentation.

1.4.3 Variables

Independent variable: Basic English lessons which emphasize speaking, reading, listening and writing skills respectively.

Dependent variable: The four basic English skills abilities of undergraduate Architecture students.

1.4.4 Length of the Study

This study will be done from November 1st 2002 to December 27th 2002, and includes a total of thirty hours of instruction.

1.5 Definition of Terms

A. A course of basic English for undergraduate Architecture students: The basic English lessons used to develop undergraduate Architecture students' ability in English language with a primary emphasis on speaking followed by reading, listening and writing skills respectively. There are five main units (18 lesson plans), which are topics closely related to the basic design processes: conceptual design, schematic design, design development, final design and effective presentation.

B. Learners/Students: Second and third year undergraduate students from The Faculty of Architecture, CMU who have already passed or are taking the English for Science I and II and Oral Expression I. They volunteered to join the course.

C. Students' English proficiency: The students' abilities in using the English language in order to present their projects and do the pretest and the posttest. Experts and peers assessed the students' abilities in presenting their projects at the end of the course by using the presentation evaluation form. The pretest and the posttest were used before and after the teaching periods to evaluate the English abilities of the students.

1.6 Significance of the Research

The researcher expects the following benefits from this research:

1.6.1 The research can provide curriculum design, materials development and teaching techniques for the field of Architecture.

1.6.2 The research can be used as a guideline for the administrators or any institutions to design specific English courses to meet the students' needs and their study fields.