

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Rationale and Significance of the Problem

At present, English, as a universal language, is increasing its essential for people all over the world. Kitao (1996) claims that English is the most widely used language. There are more than 350,000,000 native English speakers and more than 400,000,000 speakers of English as a second language or foreign language. In addition, Kitao also points out that English is used for many purposes, for example business, diplomacy, news and information, international conference, professions, and entertainment. As language teachers, we should not look at the number of English speakers but should look closely to the importance of English used in the world. This means that language teacher should consider the importance of English which is now used for everything.

In Thailand, English is also studied as a foreign language in educational institutions. Before the academic year 1996, Thai students started studying English at grade five. Since the importance of English is increasing, the Thai government realized

that. Thereby the Ministry of Education adjusted the 12-year compulsory education by providing English in the first grade with an emphasis on language skills. This benefits students who will use English in their future study or career. For the vocational education institutions, students also take English as fundamental courses and basis professional courses. English is provided from the first-year vocational level to the third-year vocational level. If they want to continue their study in higher-vocational certificate level, they can continue studying English in their first-year higher-vocational certificate level. This means that the vocational students will study English for four out of five years.

Although the vocational students had taken English for almost five years from their former school and another three years in the vocational education institutions, it is found that they need to develop their language skills (Sethasatian, 1995). Moreover, the vocational students do not have adequate practices, so they cannot communicate well in the world outside the classroom (Deeprom, 1997). Sommit (2002) claims that students' needs, between those who are confronting real situations in the workplace and those who learn English in a regular classroom, are quite different. The ones who learn English in a classroom probably want to know how to use English in communication while those who have to use English at work need to know more about how to communicate effectively in

real situations. To provide the vocational students supports for their language ability before entering the labor market, the vocational institutions, administrations, and educators need to rethink about English courses provided. Besides, they must design or adjust the curricula that must correspond to the globalization era, meet the demand of customers, and cope with the changing technology within the world economic market (Chandavimol, 1996).

### The Setting

There are more than 800 public and private vocational education institutions in Thailand; about 345 are private-owned (Bhumirat, 1999). Lampang College of Commerce and Technology (LCCT) is a private vocational college located in Chompoo Sub-district, Lampang. The college provides both business administration and technical studies. Both programs adopt the curricula designed by Ministry of Education in Bangkok.

English is required in both programs at both vocational and higher-vocational certificate levels. The vocational-certificate level students must take four courses: English for Communication 1 (Course code: 2000-1201) and English for Communication 2 (Course code:2000-1202) in their first year, and English for Career 1 (Course code: 2000-1203) and English for Career 2 (Course code:

2000-1204) in their second year. The higher-vocational certificate level requires students to take two courses: General English 1 (Course code: 01-320-101) and General English 2 (Course code:01-320-102) during their first year only.

### The LCCT Intensive English Program

With regard to the higher-vocational certificate curricula, the president of the college, who has realized the importance of English, declares the language policy of the college. He states that students should not only master their chosen vocation but also English. This led to the idea of having the second-year students in the higher-vocational certificate level, studying in Business Administration, take two English courses. The president of LCCT expects college graduates to be able to communicate with foreigners in their future workplaces. Therefore, the second year students in the higher-vocational certificate level must take two English courses in the first semester and second semester.

The College English Center had to design a Two-year English courses for the students in the higher-vocational certificate level. The Two-year English courses, therefore, is composed of four courses: 1) English 1 (Course code : 01-320-101) 2) English 2 (Course Code:01-320-102) 3) Business English Conversation 1

( Course code: 05-081-103) and 4) Business English Conversation2  
( Course code: 05-081-104). The content of the first two courses are general English, while the content of the remaining two emphasize business English.

As the language policy has been implemented for almost three years without undergoing a comprehensive assessment, the researcher found a core problem that requires an urgent solution. The main problem is that the program manager and classroom teachers may not know if the courses works effectively since it has not been evaluated. This lack of serious evaluation has brought about the failure of courses development.

Program evaluation is an important stage. Language teachers and program managers should evaluate their courses in order to improve and promote their effectiveness. Nunan (1990) suggests that in language teaching, evaluation is the process of collecting and interpreting information about educational program. Brown (1995) indicates that evaluation is the heart of a systematic approach to language curriculum design. White (1998) also supports that in language curriculum development, evaluation is an integral part that can be occurred all stages. In addition, Bhumirat (1999) indicates about the weakness of the current situation of vocational education in Thailand as follows, “ the most crucial problems quality of the output is the most crucial problem. A significant

number of graduates have weakness in both theory and practice. The issue of curriculum and process of training must be addressed". Therefore, the language program evaluation needs to be conducted so that the program manager and classroom teachers can make decisions to develop new curricula, thereby facilitating, program development.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the two-year English courses provided for the higher-vocational certificate level students at Lampang College of Commerce and Technology, Lampang province.

#### Research Question

This study aims to investigate what the LCCT English Courses teachers, students, and alumni think about the courses in terms of needs analysis, content, methodology, learners performance, assessment and evaluation.

## Significance of the Study

The researcher expects that the results of this study would help to provide some guidelines for the program managers and classroom teachers to develop the new curricula. Moreover, the researcher anticipate that this results would activate some vocational institutions to rethink about their English programs for higher-vocational certificate level students.

## Definitions of Terms

The LCCT Intensive English Courses refers to a two-year English courses provided for the higher-vocational certificate students at LCCT

Semi-structured interview refers to a tentative interview that the interviewer asks a set of questions which is prepared in advance. However, during the interviews the interviewer can ask additional questions in order to get more information.

A regular program refers to a business administration program provides in the college by using Thai as a medium of instruction. Students in the

program study English 3 periods a week.

Class size for these students are big. There are 35 up to 45 students in one class. Thai teachers in English department teach all English courses providing in the vocational certificate level and the first year of higher vocational level. Native English speakers teach only in the second year of higher vocational certificate level.

The Certificate of English Language Teaching refers to the most widely-recognised qualification for teachers of English as a second or foreign language. The qualification is awarded on successful completion of a one-month course which includes supervised and assessed teaching practice as well as theoretical understanding of teaching and learning styles.

#### Organization of the Study

In this chapter, the researcher has dealt with rationale and significance of the problem. The setting and the intensive English



courses are also clarified. In addition, the purpose of the study, research questions and the significant of the study and are presented. Finally, the researcher introduces definitions of terms.

Next, the second one, the review of literature describes theoretical background of program evaluation, the situation, and related literatures on program evaluations. The third chapter, Methodology, discusses about subject, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis. The fourth chapter, data analysis, describes the information that had been collected and analyzed. Chapter five, context of the study, provides the overview of Lampang College of Commerce and Technology and its intensive English courses. Chapter six, the last one, is a conclusion and discussion of the study. This chapter gives recommendation for ways that language classroom teachers, administrators, and program managers to work or rethink about the language program so as to make it being more effective.