

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the rationale and the statement of the problem, the objectives, scope, and significance of this study. Important terms are also defined.

1.1 Rationale and Statement of the Problem

According to a statement of the New National Education Act (NEA) the learning process shall aim at calculating sound awareness of acquiring a thirst for knowledge and capability of self-learning on a continuous basis. (National Education Act B.E.2543 (1999, p.4)). The new National Education Act also promotes self-study and lifelong education. As a result, teachers should plan to help students learn not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom to support the students learn independently.

Lampang College of Commerce and Technology (LCCT) has recently constructed a Self Access Center which is called the Independent Self-study Center (ISC). ISC is a place which offers students the opportunity to pursue learning in their own preferred manner and at their own pace. Sheerin (1989) suggests that the first aim of setting up and managing ISC facilities is to enable learning to take place independently. Students are able to choose and use learning facilities provided in ISC to study on their own and they should be able to assess their own performance.

Individualized instruction provided by Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) has been used as an adjunct to classroom instruction in some cases (Chapelle & Jamieson, 1983).

Having an established Independent Study Center will help eliminate many problems occurring in teaching and learning English language at LCCT. The first problem is that the students who enroll in LCCT have different English proficiency levels and background knowledge. Some students are highly proficient in English, some are average or below. They are discouraged from learning English because they cannot understand and catch up with what teachers have taught them in class. They complain that they cannot speak, read or write English because they have not mastered these language skills. They need more time and more exercises to practice outside classroom. ISC can serve their needs.

Another problem is that students who enroll at LCCT have experienced various styles of English learning and teaching. This is confirmed by interviews with 7 experienced English teachers. They say that some students prefer the audio-visual approach to grammar-translation approach. Some are familiar with memorisation and/or learning by doing. Rubin and Thompson (1982) state that good language learners can find their own ways and take charge of their learning. Such students learn with different styles and skills in language learning depending on the situation. Moreover, Dunn (1990) also demonstrates that if students know their learning styles, they will learn more with less effort and remember better because they are using their strengths. If teachers can provide them with appropriate teaching approaches that correspond to students' learning styles, they can achieve more in learning English. In the ISC, students are free to select any supplementary materials to learn and improve English according to their own style.

The third problem is class size and room size decrease the potential of teaching and learning. Class size is too big – about fifty students in a class, and the rooms are not big enough for certain activities. As a result of these two factors, teachers are not able to give individual attention to every student or to provide different activities to promote learning. Teachers do not have an opportunity to stimulate motivation or create a good learning environment. Students have no chance to show their interest of language and they lack confidence. As Littlewood (1988) points out, the development of communicative skills can only take place if learners have motivation and an opportunity to express their own identity and to relate with people around them. ISC is the place where students are able to practice language skills at any time because ISC has enough space for them to practise those skills they lack.

In addition, the commercial textbook selected for using in class does not provide enough practice and exercises for the four language skills. Also topics in the textbook are not relevant to the students' background and/or interest.

Finally, time in the classroom is quite limited. Students study English three hours a week and find that it is inadequate for practising their English.

In order to help students who take EN 101, the compulsory English course for the first year students at LCCT, to improve their English, it appeared that a CD-Rom with supplementary material would be useful. This CD-Rom would be beneficial for students at different levels of English language proficiency to learn independently at their convenience. This CD-Rom would also help students to achieve the learning objectives for EN 101. Students can learn to develop their language skills.

The advantage of these supplementary exercises is that it provides weak students the opportunity to practise their skills and good students the opportunity to further develop their abilities.

From the above situation, it seemed necessary to design and produce the supplementary exercises for the school self-study materials to support course EN 101 course.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

1. to analyse English 1 (EN 101) textbook written by Somporn Sittichai by using the textbook analysis (Brown, 1994),
2. to design supplementary exercises for EN 101, based on task - based learning for LCCT students use in the Independent Self-study Center (ISC),
3. to survey the students' response of the Supplementary Exercises on the CD-Rom for EN 101.

1.3 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study focused on the followings :

1. The supplementary materials exercises on CD-Rom were constructed to teach skills which are not presented in the textbook.
2. The analysis of the textbook English 1 (EN101) written by Somporn Sittichai based on the Principles of Communicative Language Teaching. (Brown 1994).

3. Supplementary materials of EN 101 were constructed based on the task-based learning.
4. The supplementary exercises covered four skills which help students to practise their English.
5. The supplementary exercises were recorded on the CD-Rom by using The Authware 5.1. software.
6. This CD-Rom is for LCCT students who study EN 101 to use in the ISC.

1.4 Significance of the project

1. Students are able to use the supplementary exercises to practise their lack of skills.
2. Students who study EN 101 are able to study independently.
3. Students are able to improve any of the four skills at any time in the ISC.
4. Students are able to study at any time they prefer.
5. Students are able to use new technology in English learning.

1.5 Definitions of terms

LCCT: Lampang College of Commerce and Technology, Lampang province, Thailand.

CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning. It is the latest series of modern aids to language learning used by teachers and students to describe the use of computers as a part of a language course.

ISC: The Independent Self-study Center at LCCT is where students are able to come in and practise their language skills at any time they want during the school days.

CD-Rom: A Computer disc with read-only memory. Data is saved onto the disc, which requires a special drive to access.

EN 101: The basic compulsory course that all vocational students in Thailand are required to study in the first semester of the first year.

Supplementary exercises: Exercises designed to be used to support the exercises for EN 101 and to encourage LCCT students to practise their language learning independently at the ISC.

Task-based learning: Refers to the organization of courses around communicative tasks that students need to engage in outside the classroom (Brown, 1994).

Self-access materials: Materials designed for learners to use independently (i.e., on their own without access to a teacher or a classroom). They are normally used by the learners at home, in a library or in a self-study center (Tomlinson, 1998).