ABSTRACT

The research on “A Study of the Problems in Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language at the Upper Secondary School Level: The Case Study in Muang District, Suphanburi Province, Thailand,” attempts to study objectively the status of English Language Teaching in Suphanburi province, particularly in Muang district, in central Thailand. Although most students in Thailand have had years of learning English as a foreign language, the vast majority of them still cannot communicate in English effectively (National Education Act of B.E. 1999). At present, the foreign language instruction in Thailand remains ineffective due to two major causes.

The first cause is the teacher-centered education philosophy that dominates the country’s public and private education sector. In a teacher-centered classroom, the teacher lectures and asks questions. The students must listen to the teacher, take down everything, answer to the questions, and do written homework. There is no teamwork. Individual work is limited to answering the teacher’s questions. The teacher does not speak much in the classroom. Students can usually practice by answering questions or reading what they have written down during the lecture.

The second cause is the lack of opportunities to apply the knowledge of English in real life. There is no stimulating environment. There are no academic tasks to solve in English. Since the students can use Thai to get information from their teacher, they do not need to perfect their English (Alexandrovich Lapidus, 2002).

Among these problems, the problem of practising in appropriate teaching techniques is an important one since many English teachers are still devoted to traditional teaching techniques, which affect students’ motivation negatively.
The importance of English as a world language, the advance of technology and education reform envisaged by the new Thai Constitution are key determinants for new developments in English language teaching and learning in Thailand. The research focuses on the role of English language teaching in Thailand now and in the future. The role of English in Thailand is quite important as it is in many other developing countries. New technology and the adoption of the internet have resulted in a major transition in terms of business, education, science, and technological progress, all of which demand high proficiency in English.

Hypothesis of the Study
The English language teaching is beset with a lot of problems all over the country. Some of the major problems are lack of fluency in spoken English and that of accuracy in written English. There is a great scope for improvement of standards of English. It is, therefore, important that a thorough study of the problems of teaching English is undertaken. The proposed study would be an attempt of that kind. Thus, the hypotheses of the study are as follows:

1. There are problems for the students who learn English as a foreign language at the upper secondary school level in Muang district of Suphanburi province in Thailand.

2. The teaching techniques which are used may not be suitable for the students at the upper secondary school level in Muang district of Suphanburi province in Thailand.

Aims and Objectives of the Study
The proposed study attempts to investigate into the methods of teaching English in Thailand as well as methods of evaluation and means of improving the effectiveness of teaching English in Muang District, Suphanburi Province in particular and all over the country in general. The aims of the study are as follows:
1. To know the problems in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Muang district, Suphanburi, Thailand.
2. To find out the solution for the problems found.
3. To find out the teaching methods suitable for English learning to be adopted for the teaching purpose in Muang district, Suphanburi, Thailand.

The study also aims to approach the English Language Teaching (ELT) from the point of view of teachers who are teaching English and students who are studying English as a subject at Upper Secondary School level. The main objective, which has guided the study, is to obtain data related to independent variables such as the aims of ELT in Thailand and the process of teaching English that is operating to fulfill the goals of English language teaching.

It is due to the traditional methods of teaching English as a foreign language that the students and teachers are facing several problems in achieving communicative goals. Therefore, communicative approach along with technology-based audio-video aids will certainly help enrich the students as well as teachers in the use of English language.

**Chapterisation**

**Chapter I - Introduction**- introduces the background of the study. The introductory remarks are offered in order to put forward the significance of English as a global language. The present scenario of the learning and teaching English in Thailand is presented. The educational reforms in Thailand and the 2008 Curriculum and the Education Act of Thailand are introduced. The educational set up of Thailand in respect of Formal and Non-formal and Informal streams has been explained. The significance of issuing Teaching Licenses to all the teachers in Thailand is brought out. The break-up of the curse contents of English has been presented. The formal features such as objectives, hypothesis, methodology and cauterization have been introduced.

**Chapter II - Theoretical Framework**- deals with the theoretical framework of teaching. The chapter is devoted to the discussion of characteristics, merits and
demerits of different methods of teaching. The methods which are discussed are Direct Method, Grammar Translation Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Silent Way Method, Suggestopedia Method, and Total Physical Response Method. The approaches to teaching are also discussed in details. The approaches which are elaborated are Communicative Approach, Natural Approach, Notional-Functional Approach, Content-Based, Task-Based, and Participatory Approach, Community Language Learning Approach, Structural Approach and Eclectic Approach. The other aspects of the theoretical framework are dealt with in the second chapter.

**Chapter III - Research Methodology** - offers the details of the sample population. The preparations of both the Questionnaires- for Teachers and for Students are presented in details. The making and validation of the Questionnaires is presented. Both the Questionnaires are reproduced and their salient features are brought out in due details. The rationale behind sampling has been explained. The sample population is of 43 teachers that belong to six Upper Secondary Schools in Muang district in Suphanburi province in central Thailand. The other group of respondents is of 259 students, of which 79 students are from Class X, 100 students from Class XI and 80 students from Class XII.

**Chapter IV - Analysis of Data** - offers the presentation and analysis of data. The criterion of evaluation is elaborated by signifying the salve of each scoring item. The Teachers’ Questionnaire contains questions about personal details, participation in training courses and seminars, the proficiency in the four basic language skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing and other details about the methods of teaching English. There are four other parts in the Questionnaire which seek responses to questions on the problems involved in various aspects of teaching such as problems related to the curriculum, problems in the preparation of teaching, problems in the course contents of English as a foreign language, problems in teaching and learning activities including the teaching and learning of the four basic skills, problems in media and equipment,
problems in techniques or tools needed in English language teaching and some other related areas. The evaluation of the responses is offered. The Students’ Questionnaire has some questions on personal details and the second part is of thirty statements. Class-wise responses and total responses are presented and their evaluation is offered.

Chapter V - Conclusion- offers a brief synopsis of the five chapters. It is followed by Findings of the study and Suggestions for Improvement with regard to learning and teaching of English in Thailand. The pedagogical implications and scope for further research are the last two sections of the chapter.

Pedagogical Implications
The present study has several pedagogical implications.

1. The present study has dealt with the functions the teachers of English have to perform in particular in respect of motivation, encouragement, counseling, assessment of abilities, activities and actual performance and facilitation of learning through language learning activities. This has a significant pedagogic implication as the teachers have to follow a rigorous schedule to discharge their responsibilities towards their students and to carry out their functions as a pedagogue.

2. The present study has emphasized the use of various language learning activities in particular through the interactive and communicative methods and real English language use. The pedagogic implications indicate that the teachers of English in Thailand should concentrate on making their students practice these language learning activities.

3. The present study brings out the fact that games, songs and other extra-curricular activities need to be interlinked with the teaching and learning strategies. This interlink between academic and extra-curricular activity is vital for pedagogic purposes.
4. Teachers have to play the role of facilitators; ‘To help to learn’ is what they are required to do. Self-instructional strategies need to be encouraged. It is necessary to define teaching “in its new orientation and then suitable teaching or helping strategies for the learner to learn on his own need to be used. The present study has created this awareness about “Pedagogical Implications” as is noticed in the responses by teachers and students.

5. In the teaching of a foreign language, the printed text is not enough. The creation of the atmosphere relevant to the foreign language- situational, social and pedagogical- is the prime responsibility of the educational institutes and organizations. The printed page should be supplemented by activities relevant to language learning, language games, quizzes and “live” situations. The school executives and teachers should devote their, energies to teach a foreign language through ‘live’ performance of language acts.