

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rational for the Study

In this era of globalization, computers and information technology are becoming more essential in our daily lives. The more such technology advances, the greater the need for communication is required. In this globalized world, English has been regarded as the language that people from different countries should be able to apply and count it as the subject to be taught effectively.

Regarding daily communication, listening is the first skill we use before speaking, reading and writing. It is thus a basic skill through which we learn other skills, and in learning English we should make more effort to practice and develop this skill.

Nowadays, English teaching in Thailand has not yet improved at a satisfactory level (Duangrudee, 2003, p. 2) Even though the students spend an enormous amount of time studying English, they still acquire little understanding and comprehension. This is because they tend to remember only grammatical patterns of the language throughout the course of their study.

To teach listening more effectively requires essential components, appropriate lessons and techniques. In this Independent Study, the researchers are interested in the study of the effectiveness of teaching English listening skill through the use of songs.

A previous study of Sukhothai Vocational Students' English proficiency (Sukhothai Vocational College, 2002, n.p) it is found that the students lacked competency in listening and in retaining vocabulary. According to this research, it might be said that the teachers need to find a good technique to help the students acquire those skills. Most of the students are interested in songs. Moreover, songs encourage them to study because they create a

good atmosphere in the classroom (Merphey, 1993, p. 6). By listening to music, the students pay more attention and enhance their listening skill while they are studying English.

Statement of the Problem

The position of the English language in Thailand is obviously positive. EFL learners view English as the most important foreign language (Duangrudee, 2003, p.1). However, despite such an encouraging atmosphere, the language learning success of Thai EFL learners do not seem to correlate with the time and educational budget spent. Duangrudee also points out the problems of Thai English classroom that it is the lack of intrinsic motivation; one of them concerns the teaching method.

In this case, the method might have some effects on learners' motivation. That is, if they find it quite boring, they will probably become demotivated (Duangrudee, 2003, p. 2). On the other hand, if they feel positive in the method, they will probably find it motivating. Thus it is the teacher's duty to design, motivate and provide effective activities for his/her classes in order to facilitate English learning and to motivate students to practice English skill. As listening skill is considered important in EFL classrooms in terms of providing input for learners and being a basic skill of speaking, assisting students in developing listening ability is an important role of teachers. They probably create interesting material and activities to develop the students' listening skill.

Regarding this issue, music and song could be highly motivating to promote language learning (Merphey, 1993, p. 7). According to Schoepp (2002, p. 4), they are so readily available to the teacher as an authentic text, and immediately motivating to most students. Songs can also be immensely valuable for developing certain abilities. Moreover, the use of music and song in class can stimulate positive atmosphere to the study of language (Ridderford, 2004, p. 2)

Significantly, to teach listening more effectively requires essential component and active students. In Thailand, there has not been much study in the efficiency of using songs for EFL students in Thai classrooms. As a result, this study was conducted in order to investigate an effective way of using songs in developing the listening skill. The result of the findings will give an overview of teaching approaches and see how they could be applied to language teaching in EFL classroom, especially in Thai context.

Purposes of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the importance of songs in relation to foreign language learning, particularly in the development of listening skill. This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the view held by Sukhothai Vocational College's students towards the appreciation of music and songs?
2. Can songs possibly be used for instructional purposes in EFL classrooms to assist students in developing their listening skill ?
3. What are the views held by Sukhothai Vocational College's students about the significance of songs in English language learning ?
4. Do songs have the power to motivate students and create a positive and relaxing environment in EFL classrooms ?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will contribute to the teaching and learning of listening skill at vocational colleges in Thailand. Firstly, the study will indicate how important and effective songs to listening learning. It will be useful for people concerned with education to pay more attention to improving English listening skill and understand how to use songs effectively. Secondly, the findings of this study will be beneficial for students to develop their

listening skill. Thirdly, the findings of the study can be applied to other groups of learners who learn English as a second language. Lastly, owing to the very little relevant research conducted in Thailand, it adds further knowledge to EFL research and serves as the basis for further research.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study will consider the improvement in the vocational students' English listening skill through the use of songs. This study is based on the following conditions:

1. The target population are 160 students at Sukhothai Vocational College in Sukhothai.
2. The sample groups are 80 students of Sukhothai Vocational College in Sukhothai, studying English for communication in the first semester and are randomly selected.
3. In this study, there are two sets of variables. The first kind is independent variables where listening skill is taught through the use of songs. The second kind is dependent variables: the listening competency which the students attain from the songs' activities and the opinion of the students on learning English through songs.

Definitions of Terms

1. Song: The term *Song* refers to a relatively short musical composition for the human voice. The words of songs are typically made of poetic rhyme.
2. Listening skill: The term *listening skill* refers to the ability to discriminate between the significant sounds and intonation patterns of language.
3. EFL: The term *EFL* refers to English as a Foreign Language of which the role is considered as a subject in schools but it is not used as the medium of instruction in education or as a language of communication within countries.

4. Second Language: The terms *second language* refers to the role of English in countries where it is not " the first language."

Hypothesis

Songs can be used to reinforce and assist students in developing listening proficiency in an EFL classroom / instruction.

