

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale for the Study

The tourism industry in Thailand has grown up rapidly over the past three decades. It has contributed to the rapid development of Thailand's economy, society and political scene. The growth has been high and continuous. The number of foreign tourists visiting Thailand has increased annually from 1960 to 1995 at an average rate of 13.58 percent with 81,340 tourists in 1960 and 6,116,496 in 1994 (TAT 187).

It could be said that tourism is a branch of industry that develops Thailand's economic system most. The TAT has suggested that in the future the tourism industry in Thailand will grow and develop in appropriate and sustainable directions on the collaboration between all agencies both government and private. Both of them have to take part in the planning stages to accomplish the desired objectives. Furthermore, the tourism industry needs safety measures for tourists. It is a crucial component in the development of this business because there isn't enough safety for a tourist's life or property in any place or country.

In accordance, the private sector in cooperation with the TAT made a special request to the Royal Thai Police in 1976 concerning tourist safety. Starting with a staff of 60 policemen, it has now been elevated to the Tourist Police Division which operates with a task force of over 900 policemen throughout the country cooperating with another 80 or so tourist operators who are private personnel assisting in clerical duties, providing information and interpretation services 24 hours a day (Tourist Police Division 32). The background of the Tourist Police Division will be described in detail in the next chapter.

Another important factor of the tourism industry is communication. It is accepted that this is a crucial tool to succeed in every business. Hybels and Weaver II

stated that communication is vital in all areas of our lives. We use it for persuasion; to influence relationships; to inform; to share, discover and uncover information (5). Moreover, Emmert and Donachy described communication as an important process which we are constantly bombarded with from the time we awake in the morning until we go to sleep at night (3). In addition, Hybel and Weaver II further suggested that to communicate effectively is to enjoy life more fully (5). To support this idea, Murphy and Mass said that people who have good information and good sources of information are more successful than others (105). The human communication process is the most instrumental activity of all. Messages characterize and influence the ideas and attitudes of working people as they strive to achieve both personal meaning and financial success in their activities. Certainly, to succeed in the tourism business we must depend on effective communication. However, people can't succeed in communication if they don't have tools to transfer their messages. It is accepted in general that language is an important medium of communication. It is the most important means of conveying one's ideas to other people. It is necessary for everyone to know a language because human beings are social members who need to interact with each other and we cannot exist as separate entities. Therefore, language is necessary for our daily life. Lyons suggested that language is a system of symbols designed for the purpose of communication (8). Similarly, Bernstein and Tigerman described language as a tool that people used to communicate with one another (28). These ideas are supported by Rivers who points out that language is essentially a vehicle for communication of ideas, emotions and experiences (77).

In conclusion, human beings accept language as a crucial tool to transfer culture and technology among nations. It is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols and grammatical signals used for communication, interaction and culture transmission (Cook 12).

To communicate internationally, it is necessary for countries to have a common language to transfer their ideas to speakers of various languages. In other words, a world language is needed, especially during this time of globalization. It is undeniable that

English is accepted by most of the world's population as the international language. It is widely used in many countries as a tool for international communication and as a key for advanced technology. The fact is that most of the literature in areas such as chemistry, biology and engineering was published in English. Swales established that more than half of the research papers produced in the world are published in English (42). Indeed, after the Second World War, English became the international language for commerce because of the expansion of economies. In the last two decades, from 1970 to 1990, Thailand has entered the area of trading on a global scale. It has transformed from an agrarian society to an industrialized country. Rapid economic growth has occurred. It can be seen that business corporations, commercial organizations, multinational corporations engaged in various types of business are now widespread in Thailand. On its quest to become a newly industrialized nation Thailand has had to improve its infrastructure involving capital investment by both foreign and local investors. This has all increased the importance of English as a medium of communication in Thailand. In other words, English as a foreign language in Thailand is highly valued as a social, professional, and economic asset.

Therefore, a knowledge of the English language has become a necessity that requires a period of learning which may vary according to individual circumstances. It is now studied in Thai schools beginning with first grade and continuing on through university. In primary and secondary school students study about four periods of English per week. At the pre-university and college levels the number of hours per week depends on the field of specialization (Promsri 2). Although the English language has played an important role in Thailand for a long time, the learning and teaching English as foreign language has tended to be less than successful.

Pongthongchareon stated that considering English competency of Thai students it can be seen that although Thai students devote many years to studying English, they cannot be considered proficient(1). It could be said that apart from its importance in education, it is also an important factor in determining the person who is well qualified for a job, especially in a business. Consequently, it can be seen how important it is for Thai

students to learn English; not only to be able to understand, but also to be able to communicate through it.

In the tourism industry, English is needed to access career-related information, to communicate with English speaking colleagues, customers, visitors, to attend conferences, and to carry out many other tasks. English as a foreign language is very important for all tourist police whose tasks involve the prevention and suppression of crime and investigation of cases dealing with tourists both Thai and foreign who came from many countries. As the TAT's annual 1995 report stated in the year 1995 foreign tourists came from many countries such as Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, France, Italy, England and the United States of America (27). As a result, the English language is needed by the tourist police to succeed in their great responsibilities for the foreign tourists.

At the Tourist Police Division 3 Sections 4, the researcher talked with the chief director about the tourist police's task. The chief director confirmed that all of the tourist police at Division 3 Section 4 know basic English to communicate with the foreigners. Moreover, they have passed an English training course "English for Tourist Police".

Statement of the Problem

As noted before English is accepted by the world's population as the international language. Its roles appear in many fields and every day life of people in many nations. In Thailand, it is a required part of the curriculum for Thai students and it is accepted as a foreign language which is necessary in many cases. In the case of the tourism industry, it is also necessary for any people who relate with the foreign tourists such as taxi drivers, tour guides, receptionists, shopkeepers, waiters, etc. For the tourist police, English is also important because the Tourist Police is a group of people who have a direct duty in taking care of the foreign visitors. Thus, English competency is needed especially for listening and speaking skills which are prominent as the first two skills that human beings use as means of communication. Most researchers agree that of the

four skills of English language: listening, speaking, reading and writing, most Thai people lack skill in listening and speaking. As Widdowson and Allen described:

Students studying English in newly developed countries are faced with problem of language use. They cannot use the language to communicate effectively: this is due to lack of use and practice in real situations (117).

Kanchanasatit (1980) in her investigations of the problems of English found that the officers of the first class hotels in Bangkok lacked skill in listening and speaking (qtd. in Tipkanok 2). It has also been found that vocabulary is necessary to communicate successfully. James Brown (1959) suggested that people who have inadequate words can not complete their communication (qtd. In O'Rourke 4). As a result, English vocabulary competency of the tourist police is very important and necessary because vocabulary competency is a means to effective communication.

This study will therefore be conducted to investigate the English vocabulary competency of the tourist police in the lower central region of Thailand. The results of this finding can offer suggestions to the persons responsible for the in-service English training course namely, "English for Tourist Police". In addition, the findings of this study will be useful for further development of the tourism industry in Thailand.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the English vocabulary competency and problems with using English in the special situations faced by the tourist police in the lower central region of Thailand. The instruments used were a vocabulary test and a questionnaire. Furthermore, this study sought to obtain analyzed data that could help provide the suggestions to solve the problems of the tourist police in communication with the tourists as well as to provide recommendations to the Tourism Authority of Thailand in order to improve the in-service English language programs for the tourist police.

In conclusion, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent are the tourist police competent in English vocabulary overall and as classified by vocabulary categories ?

2. What kind of vocabulary problems and problems in English language usage are encountered by the tourist police in the lower central region of Thailand when communicating with tourists?

Significance of the Study

This research intended to study the English vocabulary competency of the tourist police in the lower central region of Thailand. The result of this study can provide input for language trainers to design a syllabus to develop English proficiency of the tourist police and in turn contribute to the tourism industry of Thailand.

Limitation of the Study

This study confined itself to the tourist police in the lower central region of Thailand who work in the provinces of Nakhon Pathom, Sumut Sakhon, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Kanchanaburi, Suphan Buri, Samut Songkhram, Petchaburi and Ratchaburi. The English vocabulary tests and questionnaires were based on "English for Tourist Police" of Thammasart University Press (2-171).

Definition of Terms

To clarify particular terms that were used in this study, the following definitions are provided:

1. TAT: The Tourism Authority of Thailand.
2. Tourist Police: A group of police who are responsible for taking care of tourists both Thai and foreign and whose tasks cover the areas of the lower central region of Thailand.
3. Lower Central Region: An area comprising the provinces of Nakhon Pathom, Sumut Sakhon, Prachuap Kiri Khan, Kanchanaburi, Suphan Buri, Samut Songkhram, Petchaburi and Ratchaburi.
4. ESP: English for Specific Purposes
5. Vocabulary: English words used by the tourist police when they communicate with the foreign tourists as represented by the vocabulary in the textbook namely, English for Tourist Police.

6. Vocabulary Categories: Vocabulary categories under which the vocabulary for tourist police was classified:

- 6.1 Greeting and Offering Help
- 6.2 Answering Phone Calls
- 6.3 Checking/ Confirming / Denying
- 6.4 Giving Directions
- 6.5 Giving Advice and Instructions
- 6.6 Complaining and Showing Sympathy
- 6.7 Explaining the Situation / Apologizing
- 6.8 Describing People
- 6.9 Asking for Information: Loss, Robbery, Getting a Refund
- 6.10 Translation
- 6.11 Police Administrative Position
- 6.12 Numbers / Days / Months / Years
- 6.13 Occupations
- 6.14 Countries / Nationalities / Citizenships
- 6.15 Tourist Attractions
- 6.16 Legal Terms
- 6.17 Precious Stones and Ornaments