

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

English is an international and useful language for every citizen in the world. People use English as a tool of communication in globalization. For example, English is used to exchange knowledge worldwide in many sectors including medicine, engineering, education, tourism, political communication, and business. Moreover, when Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1997, the country was opened to welcome investors, tourists, and visitors from around the world. English is necessary for communication and development. Therefore, Lao government has paid attention to improve the English capacity among the civil servants in order to use it to communicate and exchange ideas with people in surrounding nations and in the world.

Based on the importance of English, the Lao government realizes that English should be taught from primary school to university level as a compulsory subject, and the key to achievement in teaching and learning English is qualified English teachers. Therefore, preparing undergraduate students to be qualified English teachers is very important. They need to be fluent and to have a good command in using four skills (i.e. Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking). Unfortunately, most Lao undergraduate students are not good at listening and speaking because of the different structures between Lao and English, inappropriate approaches in learning as well as

ineffective teaching techniques employed by teachers. In order to draw students' attention on learning English, teachers should teach their students by natural approach, which is developed by listening first and then other skills (i.e. speaking, writing and reading).

Furthermore, teaching English to students in Savannakhet Teacher Training College (STTC) is not only to prepare them to work as teachers in the primary and secondary schools in Lao PDR, some of them may work as interpreters, government officials in some government service sectors, tour guides, private tour companies, hotels, and Savan Vegas Casino...etc. In addition, when there is East-West Corridor passing Savannakhet where foreign visitors always drop by, English is necessary for communication with those visitors. Therefore, English is seen as fundamental and compulsory subject according to the general Education curriculum requirement, namely: English for communication, and English for learning information which focus on the ability to communicate and understand English in order to have a good career and continue higher education in a number of fields.

Foreign Language Curriculum in Savannakhet Teacher Training College established in 1996. The third year undergraduate students need to study General English 6 including 4 skills (i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) and grammar as compulsory subject. However, many students achieve very low performance in listening and speaking class, and they are frustrated. For example students could hardly understand what they are asked even though they are in the third year. The students' listening and speaking scores' report (2012), the average score was 1.75 out of 4. This can be the evidence for their low performance in listening and speaking. Low performances in listening and speaking may rely on the learning

environment that they hardly meet and practice English with foreigners as mentioned by Harmer (2003) that a scholar who believes that successful listening and speaking abilities acquire time, patience and a lot of practice.

From my own experiences of working as an English teacher for more than ten years, I have found that most students have low proficiency in English listening and speaking despite many years of learning. The situation of teaching English at STTC where the researcher has worked needs to be developed both in the aspects of students and teachers. Each year, low listening and speaking abilities can be seen in the results of their final test. According to researcher's classroom studies and observations, causes of the problem concern with the limitation of language, background knowledge, lack of awareness of significance in learning language and teacher's inappropriate or ineffective teaching approaches used.

Therefore, one way to build good capacity of learning the language is using authentic materials, especially to improve listening and speaking abilities. There are a number of significant reasons given when using authentic materials in adult classrooms. For example, using authentic materials has a positive effect on learners' motivation. Learners are being exposed to the real language. They feel that they are learning the target language as it is used outside the classroom. Using authentic materials in the classroom can provide opportunities for learners to use their knowledge, and they can apply that in their daily life (Stempleski. 1992). Moreover, authentic materials combined visual and audio stimuli are accessible to those who have not yet learned to read and write well, and provide context for learners (Fazey. 1999; Johnson. 1999). In addition, Bello (1999) states that a video is a type of authentic material, which has presented real language from native speakers with

cultural information. Learners are able to stop, pause, and repeat the video many times. Other kinds of authentic materials in language teaching classroom such as newspapers, magazines, menu, travel brochures, catalogs, maps, TV and radio programs, songs, ... etc were presented by Gardner and Miller (1999).

Authentic materials play important roles in teaching in the classroom, especially teaching foreign languages to the language learners who do not speak those languages as either mother tongue or second language. The authentic materials help the teacher explain the meaning of the context that the teacher expects the learners to achieve in their learning. For example, the learners can understand the lesson in context more quickly, and remember it longer. Because teaching by using authentic materials can create a picture of meaning about what the learners have learned in the classroom remain their head. The learner can recall what they have learned in the classroom from the picture in their head for use easily. In addition, to use authentic materials in teaching can improve the atmosphere in the class, which can make the learners more interested in participating in the classroom activities. Using authentic materials in teaching not only makes the lesson more interesting but also facilitates the teacher in an effort to deliver knowledge to the learners.

The researcher may have a question in her mind like why should students learn about the hospitality industry? The learners of English language in English course are expected to be teachers in secondary school after they graduate. However, not all of them will go to work as teachers because of a limited quota from the government. Many of them have to find jobs by themselves in private sectors, especially in the service sectors. Therefore, it is very important to get the English language learners to take lessons of hospitality industry because it provides useful

service skills for them to use in their jobs. In addition, it can help to improve human resources in terms of developing service manners in communicating with people who they work with or face in their office everyday.

Based on the importance of using authentic materials mentioned above, the researcher aims to take the authentic materials, namely videos, travel brochures, menus, maps, and textbooks including CDs that are relevant to students' background knowledge and their interest to use in teaching undergraduate students at STTC. It is hoped to improve their listening and speaking abilities. The lessons contain various activities using authentic materials i.e. listening conversations about the hotel and tourism situations, practicing the dialogues using their own information, and watching videos. It is expected that these activities will highly motivate their interest of English listening and speaking in order to gain the knowledge of hospitality industry.

1.2 Purposes of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to explore the results of using authentic materials to improve listening and speaking abilities of undergraduate students in Savannakhet Teacher Training College, Lao PDR. The specific objectives of the research are:

1.2.1 To investigate the efficiency of using authentic materials in English listening and speaking lessons in hospitality industry.

1.2.2 To compare Lao undergraduate students' English listening and speaking abilities in hospitality industry before and after learning through authentic materials.

1.2.3 To study the satisfaction of Lao undergraduate students toward using the authentic materials to enhance English listening and speaking abilities in hospitality industry.

1.3 Research Questions

Three research questions are addressed in this study as follows:

1.3.1 What is the efficiency of lesson plans using authentic materials to enhance Lao undergraduate students' English listening and speaking abilities in the hospitality industry?

1.3.2 Does the use of authentic materials improve Lao undergraduate students' English listening ability in the hospitality industry before and after learning through authentic materials?

1.3.3 What is the satisfaction of Lao undergraduate students toward using authentic materials to enhance English listening and speaking abilities in the hospitality industry?

1.4 Research Hypothesis

The English listening and speaking abilities in the hospitality industry of Lao undergraduate students after learning through authentic materials will be higher than before learning.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research used authentic materials to enhance Lao undergraduate students' English listening and speaking abilities in the hospitality industry. The results of this study provide useful information for students, teachers, and language learners who are interested in improving English listening and speaking abilities.

1.5.1 The students can apply the knowledge of hospitality industry and the use of authentic materials in their daily teaching or their future career development.

1.5.2 Teachers can understand the link between English listening and speaking activities. They are able to use authentic materials in various activities in teaching English listening and speaking lessons, and they also know how to select the appropriate authentic materials that could develop their students' English listening and speaking abilities.

1.5.3 The results of this study can be useful for language learners as a source of information in improving their English on hospitality industry requirements.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

1.6.1 Population and Samples

The research participants included 214 third-year students who had enrolled on General English 6 Course in the academic year 2013. The experiment started from the first week of February to the first week of May 2014 at STTC, Kaysone Phomvihane district, Savannakhet province, Lao PDR.

The research participants were selected using simple random sampling technique. There were 41 students from the third-year "A" class who took on General

English 6 Course in the second semester of the academic year 2013. Two main reasons of choosing these students were: 1) researcher had taught the third-year “A” students by herself, so there was a chance to use the authentic materials in teaching, 2) students in the third-year “A” had mixed English proficiency: low, moderate and high in this class.

1.6.2 Variables

The independent variable of this study was the contents of lesson for the third-year “A” students. The dependent variables were students’ learning achievement and their satisfaction towards using the authentic materials in the hospitality industry.

1.6.3 Duration of the Study

This study was conducted in the second semester of the academic year 2013 for 36 periods (i.e. 32 periods for class lessons and 4 periods including classroom orientation, pre-test and post-test for listening comprehension, and questionnaire). Each period took 60 minutes.

1.6.4 Contents of the study

A researcher consulted eight topics with her major advisor and her colleague, Megan Fry (American Volunteer). She taught eight lessons herself. Each lesson took 4 periods (2 periods for listening and 2 periods for speaking). The topics were listed as following:

1.6.4.1 Lesson 1: Hotel – Checking in

Authentic materials used, namely two videos downloaded from YouTube about checking in hotel brochures about types of room, prices, facilities, and three handouts talking about checking in at the front desk.

1.6.4.2 Lesson 2: Restaurant – Ordering Food and Drinks

1.6.4.3 Lesson 3: Directions – Asking for and Giving Directions

1.6.4.4 Lesson 4: Shopping – How to Make a Deal

1.6.4.5 Lesson 5: Transportation – Types of Transportation

1.6.4.6 Lesson 6: Tourism – Visiting Savannakhet's Historical Sites

1.6.4.7 Lesson 7: Festivals – Savannakhet Festivals Celebration

1.6.4.8 Lesson 8: Cultures – Cultural Activities in Savannakhet

Province

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined in this study:

1.7.1 Listening is the interpretative action taken by the listener in order to understand and potentially make meaning out of the sound wave.

1.7.2 Speaking Ability is to state about learners themselves in development of the relationship between speakers on his/her hearer. Speaking is seen as communication skill. Students who need to improve their speaking ability would prepare various aspects such as performance, expression, intonation, stressing, pronunciation, grammar and confidence to explore their ideas or opinions.

1.7.3 Listening and Speaking Abilities refer to the capacity of having conversation effectively and capacity of understanding the spoken language during the lessons on hospitality industry.

1.7.4 Authentic Materials refer to pieces of teaching materials created by native speakers of English such as audio/video recordings downloaded from the Internet includes a discourse or a conversation. In addition, authentic materials refer to the materials that teacher brought them to use in the lesson. In this study, authentic materials include hotel English and tourism English students' guidebooks, CDs, newspapers, pictures, menus, travel brochures, catalogs, maps, etc.

1.7.5 A Lesson plan refers to the detailed description of the course and instruction about the hospitality industry that a researcher uses to teach English third-year class "A".

1.7.6 Hospitality Industry is the service oriented and closely related to the tourism industry. Some of business establishments under its umbrella are travel, tours, hotels, restaurants, spas, music lounges, bars, nightclubs, etc. And these will be introduced various topics including Hotel-booking a room, Restaurant- ordering food, Direction- asking and answering direction, Shopping- how to make a deal, Transportation- mode of transportation, Tourism- visiting historical sites, Festival- name of holidays and how to celebrate them and Culture- gestures. Some information would relate to the students' background knowledge or experiences. Students are also able to use what they have learned in the daily life.

Traditionally, the word 'hospitality' refers to a social interaction, which relates to activities for entertaining visitors in one's home where no payment is involved. At the present time, the tourism and hospitality industry is a modern, competitive one.

The concept of 'hospitality' has changed to be more business 'commercial hospitality' (Blue and Harun, 2003). Hotel front desk needs to directly present hotel services and facilities to all guests at that hotel. Tourist information staffs need to willingly provide such useful information for tourists (e.g. local information, directions, transports).

1.7.7 An Achievement Test refers to Pre-test and Post-test that was organized to check Lao undergraduate students' listening and speaking abilities after using authentic materials in teaching. High achievement scores usually show a mastery of grade-level materials, and the readiness for advanced instructions. On the other hand, low achievement score can indicate the need for remediation or repeating a course grade.

1.7.7.1 Pre-test is a 50 items (25 points for listening in parallel and 25 points for speaking test working individually) that students do before the lessons using authentic materials in hospitality industry.

1.7.7.2 Post-test is a 50 items (25 points for listening in parallel and 25 points for speaking test working in pair) that students do after the lessons using authentic materials in hospitality industry.

1.7.8 Satisfaction refers to the Lao undergraduate students' positive attitude toward teacher-students rapport, or the feeling of students toward the authentic materials in hospitality industry. Elliot and Healy (2001) define that student satisfaction is a short-term attitude, derived from the education of the receive education service. Furthermore, satisfaction is the feeling of the learners that indicated favorableness, pleasure, and gladness which learners will reveal towards learning through the lessons using authentic materials in the hospitality industry.

1.7.9 The Efficiency refers to the statistics that present third year “A” normal course students’ progress from learning hospitality industry through authentic materials. The scores obtained from the activities and post-tests were calculated to find out the efficiency of process (E_1) and the efficiency of the outcomes (E_2), respectively.

1.7.10 Lao Undergraduate Students refer to teacher-students who take teacher training course at Savannakhet Teacher Training College, Lao PDR in academic year 2013.

1.8 Summary of the Chapter

Chapter One is presented various aspects, namely statement of the problem, purposes of the study, research questions, research hypothesis, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, definition of key terms. Chapter two indicates a brief overview of the existing literature related to the present study.