CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a brief review of English as a global language together with the development of English language curriculum and problems in English language teaching in Songkhla.

2.1 English as a Global Language

Today's world is in a Globalization Age. It can be viewed as the connected community in terms of transportation and communication such as interaction via the Internet, international trade, international profession standard and new international political order (Brecht and Walton, 1995; cited in Charumanee, 2002). In such a worldwide communication, people need a language that most can use beyond the boundary of the countries; they need a global language as a tool for communication. A language achieves its role as a global language when its use is recognized worldwide. According to Crystal (1997), English has been increasingly used in the Outer Circle countries (ESL Countries like Singapore, India and Malawi) and even more in the Expanding Circle countries (EFL countries like China, Japan, Greece and Poland) (cited in Graddol, 1997). Bray (1992, p. 27) states that "the functions and uses of English by native speaker and non-native speaker alike become ever more numerous and unrelated to the nationality of the speaker". Broughton (1997) also states that over the last 400 years, English language has asserted itself as the main language of globalization. It has been developed from being a language spoken in only one country in the sixteenth century to being now the native language and the first or second, official language in some fifty countries, some of which contain one thousand million people speaking English. Moreover, Hasman (2002) supports that the global spread of English over the last 40 years is remarkable. It is unprecedented in several ways: by the increasing number of users of the language, by its depth of penetration into societies, by its range of function. Thus, it is considered the most used language in the world. In addition, Medgyes (1994) mentions that more people

speak English today than have ever spoken any language in the recorded history of the world. It is spoken by 700 million people in the world. Hawisher and Selfe (2000), McArthur (2001), and Crystal (2001) support that the global communication through the Internet in which English is the main language will be the mainstream of everyday life.

Many scholars also agree about the dominant role of English. Crystal (1997:111) states that

> English emerged as a first-rank language in industries which affected all aspects of society--the press, advertising, broadcasting, motion pictures, sound recording, transport and communications. At the same time, the world was forging fresh networks of international alliances, and there emerged an unprecedented need for a lingua franca. Hence too, there was a clear first choice. During the first half of the twentieth century English gradually became a leading language of international political, academic, and community meeting.

In addition, English has become the dominant language in many activities of various fields such as business and banking, industry and commerce, pop music, higher education, science and technology, international trade, politics and tourism (Kaplan, 1983; cited in Kachru, 1992, Edge, 1993, Medgyes ,1994 and Crystal, 1997) Tickoo (1991) states that English is the language of air controllers at international airports all over the world. It is also the language used most frequently for international mail and at international conferences. Furthermore, Mashabela (1975, cited in Crystal, 1997) states that English can lead us into exciting world of ideas and make it possible for us to share experiences with others in the world.

As a consequence, English is chosen as an official language or as a main foreign language in an education system. Pennycook (1995, cited in Mckay, 2002) points out that "English…acts as a gatekeeper to positions of wealth and prestige both within and between nations, and is the language through which much of the unequal distribution of wealth, resources, and knowledge operates". As such, there is no doubt that English has achieved the status of a global language.

The new global context for intercommunication has strong influence on the views of language learning and teaching, especially English Language Teaching (ELT). The 1995 global consultation exercise initiated by English 2000, a British Council project asked people professionally involved in ELT in some ninety countries to react to a series of statements concerning the role and future of the English language. Ninety-four percent agreed that English will retain its role as the dominant language in the world media and communication. Ninety-five percent agreed that English is essential for progress as it will provide the main means of access to high-tech communication and information over the next twenty-five years, and ninety-six percent agreed that English will remain the world's language for international communication for the next twenty-five years (Crystal, 1997). Besides, Hasman (2002) states that by 2010, the number of people who speak English as a second or foreign language will exceed the number of native speakers. Ninety percent of all information in the world's electronic retrieval systems is stored in English. Eighty-five percent of the world's mail is written in English. Over seventy percent of the world's scientists read English. In addition, Srisa-An (1998, p.1) states that "there is no more question regarding the immense importance these days of knowledge of the English language to all educational pursuits in all parts of the world".

In Thailand, English has spread into various domains. Since Thailand was transformed from an agricultural country to a newly industrialized one in which science and technology are emphasized, English has increasingly been used as the international language for science and technology--a medium to pursue advanced technology. Thailand's businesses were also transformed from local family-owned businesses to joint ventures with multinational corporations and English is the international language of business (Smith, 1988). In addition, Wiriyachitra (2002) mentions that the role of English in Thailand is important. New technology and the adoption of the Internet have resulted in a major transition in terms of business, education, science and technology progress, all of which demand high proficiency in English in the access. These are the key determinants for new developments for English teaching and learning in Thailand in this decade.

As we can see, English plays a significant role as a global language. It has asserted itself as the main language of globalization and has spread into many

countries (Broughton, 1997). In Thailand, English has played a highly important role in many aspects such as business, tourism, entertainment, international trade, education and so on. To prepare Thai students for this fast changing world, language teaching and learning should be performed under the effective curriculum in which its statements should also be related to a global context. This study examined the degree that the current English curriculum prepares students for the globalization era from the teachers' perspective.

2.2 The Development of English Curriculum in Thailand

English language curriculum in Thailand has been revised many times by the Ministry of Education to eliminate weaknesses and limitations and to serve the students' demand to cope with the changing world.

English teaching as a foreign language was first introduced during the reign of King Mongkut or Rama IV (1851-1865), who opened the first English school in the palace. After that, Mrs. Mattoon and another group of missionaries opened another school. By 1865, there was evidence that English was so popular that newer and larger schools were opened to accommodate the need to acquire the modern language both in Bangkok and the provinces. During this period, English was mainly used in communication with foreign dignitaries and it was used as a means to the acquisition of western style education. However, teaching English as a foreign language in this period was on a very limited scale because the country had very limited needs for English. Therefore, only few of the royalty and high aristocracy were selected to study English (Aksornkool, 1983).

During the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910), the needs for EFL study were more pronounced. It became clear that EFL education had to be expanded to accommodate more students. The educational system was supposed to be separated into two streams with one concentrating on English education and using English as a medium of instruction while the other continued teaching basic skills. In that period, English was very important for Thai people, especially for those who wanted to study in English speaking countries. The government goals for EFL instruction were using English as a means to communicate with native and non-native speakers of English

and using English as a primary tool for the acquisition of modern and scientific knowledge (Aksornkool, 1983).

The status of English had become more and more important during the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1921). In the 1913 curriculum, for instance, English lessons were given definite priority over other subjects, even Thai. The curriculum permitted an increase of the number of EFL classroom hours at the expense of Thai or any other subjects. The goals of teaching English in this period were to provide children with sufficient knowledge of English to be able to function in English speaking classrooms, particularly at the university level and to provide and promote members of the King's New Siamese Group.

In 1937, English became a major subject, and in 1955, English was compulsory in all grades beyond grade 4. The goals for EFL teaching during this period were to use English in every situation, to develop the basis for further study and to promote democratic principles.

In 1960, the goals and objectives were revised to provide a new curriculum. The 1960 curriculum emphasized the necessity of studying English as a medium of international communication, developing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, to realize the importance of English in daily lives, and to have positive attitude toward English so that they keep increasing their knowledge of English and encouraging students to continue their study of English at a higher level of education (Aksornkool, 1983). To achieve the goals and objectives stated in the curriculum, English was made compulsory for all students from Prathomsuksa 5 to Matthayomsuksa 3. Students had the opportunity to study English for at least 5 years. However, the level of students' achievement in English was found to be far from satisfactory (Suwankiti, 1979; cited in Chum-upakarn, 1985).

In the academic year 1978, the educational system was converted from 7 years of elementary level, 3 years of lower secondary level, and 2 years of upper secondary level (7:3:2) to 6 years of elementary level, 3 years of lower secondary level, and 3 years of upper secondary level (6:3:3). This new system began in 1978 and was extended to cover all levels in 1983 (Ministry of Education, 1980; cited in Chum-upakarn, 1985).

According to the new educational system, the English curriculum was also changed. The English subjects as well as French and German were specified as electives. The English curriculum of the upper secondary level was introduced in 1981. The aim of this curriculum was to encourage students to communicate in English in a variety of ways. The course descriptions suggested that students should practice the use of English in a variety of activities mainly conversations in different situations such as making appointments, making telephone calls, reading newspapers or journals, performing short plays, writing business or private letters and playing communicative games (Ministry of Education, 1980; cited in Chum-upakarn, 1985).

In 1990, the 1981 English curriculum was revised to suit the changing world. The 1990 English curriculum aimed to develop students' ability to use English as a tool for communication, to enable them to use language for further education and in their careers. The curriculum also aimed to encourage students to have positive attitude toward English and to understand more about other cultures in the world (Ministry of Education, 1996).

English subjects according to the 1990 English curriculum could be classified into Fundamental English and English for English Concentration. Students had to study Fundamental English continually from Prathomsuksa 5 to Matthayomsuksa 6 and they had to study 4 periods a week. As for English for English Concentration, students could make a decision themselves to select subjects that they were interested in such as English Listening-Speaking and English Project Work. These subjects required students to study 2 periods a week. The main objectives of Fundamental English were to encourage students to communicate in English through four skills. Also, students were expected to understand the culture of English native speakers and other cultures in the world. Students were also expected to have positive attitude toward English, to see the value of using English for further study and in their careers. English for English Concentration aimed to develop learning process for students. Students were encouraged to use English in real situations and to use English to gain more knowledge. Students were also expected to have positive attitude toward using English in careers (Ministry of Education, 1996).

However, the research into the Development of Curriculum and Instruction Development showed the failure of the 1990 English curriculum. Students still cannot

use English to communicate (Ministry of Education, 2001). Therefore, the curriculum was revised in 1999 due to the weaknesses and limitations of the 1990 curriculum.

The Basic Education Curriculum 2001 is the result of an educational reform and it is the current curriculum for elementary and secondary education. According to this curriculum, English subjects are placed as core subjects required for all levels and it is also placed in the curriculum to enhance students' interest in learning it. "Students will gain a positive attitude in learning English language and be able to communicate more fluently as well as understand more about other cultures and be able to promote Thai culture to the world" (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 117).

The structure of the curriculum is based on learners' proficiency (proficiency-based) which is divided into four levels. 1) Preparatory Level (Prathomsuksa 1-3), 2) Beginner Level (Prathomsuksa 4-6), 3) Development Level (Matthayomsuksa 1-3) and 4) Expanded Level (Matthayomsuksa 4-6). The Basic Education Curriculum determines the intellectual content, learning process and moral values that learners should have after the basic 12 years of schooling.

The curriculum also provides substances, standards and benchmarks as guidelines to develop courses and to assess quality and progress of learners. There are four main substances stated in the curriculum: 1) Language for communication 2) Language and culture 3) Language and other subjects and 4) Language and its relationship with the community and the world. Each substance acts as a goal of the curriculum. The curriculum also provides standards as the objectives and benchmarks as descriptors. In foreign language curriculum, there are 8 standards and 28 benchmarks. Both standards and benchmarks are guidelines for teachers to design courses.

Standards and Benchmarks for English Language Learning at Expanded Level

Substance 1: Language for communication

Standard 1.1: Understand the listening and speaking process. Be able to understand a story from listening and reading various media and apply the understanding logically.

Benchmark: 1. Understand the tone and feelings of speakers as well as explanations, narration, introductions, information and technical terms.

2. Read lessons out loud correctly and properly based on principles of pronunciation.

3. Understand and give opinions on text and non-text information that is more complicated. Translate texts using own words.

4. Understand, analyze and give opinions on more complicated texts, news, information passages and documentaries from the print and electronic media.

Standard 1.2: Gain communication skills to exchange news and information, express thoughts and opinions by using the proper technology and management for lifelong learning.

Benchmark: 1. Use proper language to communicate and build relationships by employing the learning media available in and outside school.

2. Express opinions and needs, provide service to others, negotiate and plan studies by using technology in or out of school.

3. Ask and give information and explanations, exchange ideas or discuss current issues in the community and society. Build up knowledge by practicing skills. Plan education and career.

4. Use language to express own feelings about past, present and future events and foreign language learning method for themselves.

Standard 1.3: Understand the speaking and writing processes. Gain communication skills to present information and express opinions. Summarize contents creatively and effectively.

Benchmark: 1. Present information using short narratives, describing daily routines, experiences and general events.

2. Present concepts concerning various events, activities, merchandise or services in their locality.

3. Creatively present ideas and opinions about various events in different communities and the world.

4. Present poems or skits adapted from original plots or self created.

Substance 2:   Language and Culture

Standard 2.1: Understand the relationship between the language and culture of English native speakers. Behave properly for the occasion.

Benchmark: 1. Use the foreign language, appropriate manners and gestures when communicating with different people consistent with the culture of the native speakers.

2. Know the history behind the traditions, national, and religious holidays in the culture of the native speakers.

Standard 2.2: Understand the similarities and differences in the cultures and languages of the English native speakers and Thais. Apply these understandings appropriately.

Benchmark: 1. Understand the differences between Thai and foreign languages regarding sounds, vowels, consonants, words, sentences and more complicated texts. Apply it appropriately.

2. Understand the cultural similarities and differences between Thais and English native speakers that influence language use and apply it appropriately.

3. Be aware that foreign language study is useful for gaining knowledge, socialization and a career.

4. See the merits of participating in interesting language and cultural activities according to one's interests.

5. See the merits of language and culture studies. Apply them to oneself, one's family, one's community and the society.

Substance 3:   Language and Other Subjects

Standard 3.1: Use the foreign language to connect knowledge with other learning areas. This is the basis for opening up and developing students' vision.

Benchmark: 1. Analyze and synthesize foreign language content related to other learning groups.

2. Use a foreign language to seek knowledge related to other learning groups from a variety of sources, so as to expand one's worldview.

3. Discuss the experience of using foreign language to seek knowledge in the other subjects.

Substance 4:   Language and its Relationship with the Community and the World

Standard 4.1: Be able to communicate in foreign language in various situations, such as school, community and society.

Benchmarks: 1. Communicate in a foreign language in different situations at school and in the various of more complicated methods and formats.

2. Communicate in a foreign language with people in school, the community and society.

Standard 4.2: Be able to use the foreign language as a tool for learning, for further study, career and for cooperation within society.

Benchmark: 1. Employ simple foreign language in communicating about work, job applications, asking for and providing information in actual or simulated situations.

2. Communicate in a foreign language in situations where students learn to work together. Exercise self-control, listen to others' opinions, express one's own opinions and negotiate reasonably.

3. Employ foreign language to disseminate information in one's community and society. Manage studies for higher learning or professions.

4. Use a foreign language to disseminate as well as understand community or national news and encourage social cooperative and react appropriately.

                                        (Ministry of Education, 2001, pp. 121-128)

The aims of the English courses according to the new curriculum are to provide students learning opportunities to use English in communication, to learn and to understand the culture of native speakers, to know the differences between Thai and English in terms of language and culture, to use English to gain information for other subjects, to use English for lifelong learning, and to use it in their work. The new curriculum also encourages students to think critically and creatively together with having positive attitude towards English language (Ministry of Education, 2001). Only the description of substances, standards (content and performance standards) and benchmarks for each level are specified in the national curriculum. Teachers are expected to write their own courses with the content related to real-life situations in the community. The course should suit student's ability, skills and interests, and the

courses should encourage students to achieve their full potential by providing them supplemental help or resources from the school.

From the objectives of the 2001 curriculum, it seems that English curriculum will prepare students for the era of globalization with emphasis on English as a global language. Also the curriculum is based on the communicative approach. According to this approach, teachers are expected to enable students to communicate in English based on students' needs to cope with the current world and also to provide them opportunities to use English both inside and outside classroom as much as possible. Hence, in order to implement the curriculum, English teachers are expected to be able to interpret and put the curriculum into practice.

However, it is not clear whether English teachers can follow what is stated in the 2001 English curriculum or whether they agree with the statements in the curriculum. Moreover, the curriculum has just been implemented for a few years and its feasibility and effectiveness have not been investigated yet. This study, therefore, attempted to investigate the current English teaching situations under this curriculum in government secondary schools in Songkhla. The results of this study may reveal the current teaching situations which reflect the implementation of the curriculum.

2.3 Problems in English Language Teaching in Thailand

In Thailand, the English curricula have been revised many times by the Ministry of Education. However, teachers cannot implement the curriculum effectively. Students also cannot reach the communicative competence stated in the curriculum even though they have studied English at least for 6-9 years. Hence, it can be assumed that there are some problems in implementing English language teaching curricula.

Many scholars assert that there is a gap between policy and practice. According to Wiriyachitra (2002), English curricula in Thai universities cannot cater for the need to use English in the workplace. She also states that English language teaching in Thailand has not prepared Thais for the changing world. Wongsothorn (2001) also states that a large gap between the curriculum and the actual practice is one of the problems in English language teaching. The gap occurred from many

factors such as teachers' misunderstanding or unfamiliarity with the curriculum. So teachers teach language by adopting only the teaching-learning process that they feel comfortable with. Kaewkong (2001) shows the result of his study that there is the gap between the policy and the practice in Thaksin University. Teachers still teach English using the traditional approach instead of the communicative approach that is required from the policy. In addition, the EFL policy statements are not implemented in the compulsory English courses in Thai public universities (Charumanee, 2002). This lack of congruence is due to an over-emphasis on grammar, a lack of practice of the four English skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), large class size, and inappropriate course books. Therefore, the implementation of EFL policy is hampered. Chum-upakarn (1985) mentions the problems related to the curriculum. For example, teachers cannot interpret objectives in the curriculum and they think that the curriculum is too difficult to follow. Musigrungsi (2002) also states that the curriculum is not appropriate for some local schools. In short, the incongruence between policy and practice occur both at school and university levels.

It is obvious that the implementation of the curriculum leads to other problems that are the main factors that obstruct the success of the curriculum. A great deal of research involving the problems in language teaching has been conducted. The research results generally share common problems. They are the problems related to students, teachers, teaching aids, the wash-back effect and large class size.

2.3.1 Student-related problems

As for problems related to students, Unpikul (1981), Chum- upakarn (1985), Biyaem (1997) and Musingrungsi (2002), agree that student factor is one of the most serious problems in English language teaching. The problems involve low English competence, insufficient English language skills, different background knowledge, being too shy to speak English, being afraid of making mistakes, being passive learners, interference from their mother tongue, lack of opportunity to use English in their daily lives, not realizing the importance of learning English and lack of responsibility for their own learning. Hiranyapruek (2002) elaborates that because of students' below average English competence, they cannot make much progress in terms of science and technology (cited in Wiriyachitra, 2002). Similarly, Sastramitri

(2002) mentions that tourism students cannot communicate with foreigners because they have poor command in English (cited in Wariyachitra, 2002).

2.3.2 Teachers-related problems

The second problem is related to the teachers themselves. Their problems are insufficient English language skills, not having cross-cultural knowledge and lack of knowledge about teaching methodology (Chum-upakarn, 1985; and Biyaem, 1997).

2.3.3 Teaching aids problem

The third problem in English language teaching is related to teaching aids. According to Unpikul (1981), Chum-upakarn (1985), and Musigrungsi (2002), there are the problems of insufficient teaching aids such as language laboratory and audio visual aids' being out of date and not suitable for the present situation.

2.3.4 Wash-back effect problem

The fourth problem is the wash-back effect—that is the main factor that influences English teachers especially in Expanding Level (M.4-M.6). Biyaem (1997) and Musigrungsi (2002) mention that the wash-back effect is caused by the demand for tutorial teaching and for the purpose of taking the university entrance examination. Musigrungsi gives more elaboration that many teachers think grammar is emphasized in the university entrance examination and that understanding grammar can lead to the communicative ability.

2.3.5 Large class size problem

The last problem involves large class size. Unpikul (1981) and Wongsothorn (cited in Wariyachitra, 2002) mention that it is the most serious problem. In some classes, there are 45-60 students. Hayes (1997) states that teachers face five problems resulting from large class. Firstly, teachers are not able to promote student interaction because there is no room to move about. This is connected to the problem of 'control'. Teachers cannot control classes when there are too many students and the classes become too noisy. These will disturb those who try to concentrate in studying. In addition, teachers are unable to cope with the needs of their students as individuals. They do not have time to help all students. The fourth problem is teachers cannot check all of their students' work. The final problem concerning large class is learning effectiveness. Teachers are not sure that their students exactly understand what they

are taught. Some students may not understand certain things but teachers cannot help them within class time.

The previous studies show that problems concerning curriculum implementation exist in Thai situations. They are factors that inhibit the success of the curriculum. Although many investigations have been conducted to find out the problems in English language teaching, there are no studies that investigate English teaching problems resulting from the 2001 English curriculum particularly at the Expanded Level. It is interesting to investigate whether those factors in previous studies are still the problems that influence the implementation of the current English language curriculum. To obtain the results which will reflect the final goal of the basic education, this study took Expanded level in Songkhla province as the context of study because this is the final level of basic education from which students may start their careers or continue their tertiary education. The uncovered problems will be useful for curriculum developers to take into consideration.

In summary, English language plays an important role as a global language in many fields. The 2001 English language curriculum statements seem to prepare Thai students to cover this fast changing world and English teachers are expected to implement the curriculum statements effectively. However, the questions of whether English teachers agree with the curriculum statements, the extent to which the curriculum statements have been reflected in classes, if there is the gap between policy and practice, and whether there are problems obstructing the implementation under this curriculum have not yet been investigated. This study, thus, was conducted to find out answers to those questions.