

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of findings, implications of the study, and recommendations for further studies. They are presented in the following sections.

5.1 Summary of Findings

5.2 Implications of the Study

5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study can be summarized as follows.

5.1.1 The English language proficiency of all the subjects was at the intermediate proficiency level with the TOEIC score of 462 out of 990. The relatively low level of the subjects' English proficiency could be a limiting factor to their career prospects since their level of English proficiency might only qualify them for some working positions such as hotel room-service order taker, hotel waiter/waitress/bartender, airport information clerk, bookkeeper, or shipping and receiving clerk.

5.1.2 There were no significant differences between the subjects' English proficiency and their general background (gender, major fields of study, and future plans after graduation) and some aspects of their English language learning background (length of time spent on formal English language learning and experience on TOEIC). Nonetheless, significant differences and relationships were found between the subjects' English proficiency and their achievement on compulsory English courses, experience in an English speaking country, interaction with English-speaking friends, self-study in library or self-access centre, and e-mail writing activities. Furthermore, the study also indicated a clear correspondence,

■ though not significant, between English proficiency and the number of elective English courses taken, as the subjects who took a higher number of elective English courses tended to have a higher level of proficiency in English than those who did not.

5.1.3 The subjects' attitudes and intrinsic motivation on English language learning were significantly related to their English language proficiency. Although no statistically significant relationship was found between the subjects' anxiety and their English proficiency, their anxiety was indirectly related to their English proficiency since their anxiety was significantly related to their intrinsic motivation and attitudes, both of which were significantly related to English proficiency. In addition, a significant relationship was found between the subjects' integrative and instrumental motivation. Moreover, the highest level of significant relationship, among the variables under investigation, was found between the subjects' extrinsic and instrumental motivation on English language learning (Refer to Table 4.8, page 48).

5.1.4 There was a significant difference between high and low proficiency groups in their overall motivation, but not the overall motivational variables. In terms of each aspect of the overall motivation, it was found that the high proficiency group had a significantly higher level of intrinsic motivation than did the low proficiency group.

5.1.5 There were no significant relationships among motivation, motivational variables and English language proficiency of both the high and low proficiency groups of the subjects. However, in the high proficiency group, the highest level of significant relationship, among the variables under investigation, was between intrinsic and integrative motivation, while in the low proficiency group, the highest level of significant relationship, among the variables under investigation, was between extrinsic and instrumental motivation. In addition, facilitative anxiety

tended to be found in the high proficiency group, with debilitating anxiety being present in the low proficiency group. The high level of anxiety in the high proficiency subjects apparently contributed to the high level of their English proficiency, while the high level of anxiety in the low proficiency subjects may have contributed to the low level of their English proficiency.

5.2 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study may provide some useful information for EFL learners and teachers. Based on the findings, the implications are presented as follows:

5.2.1 The overall proficiency in English of the subjects in this study was at “intermediate” level, a relatively low level in terms of the overall results achieved internationally on the TOEIC. As English language proficiency is an indicator of career opportunities in the Thai workforce, such an attained level of English proficiency may limit the choice of career open to the subjects of this study. The subjects might only be able to work in some positions such as airport information clerk, bookkeeper, hotel head waiter/waitress/bartender, or shipping and receiving clerk in the Thai workforce. The average level of the subjects’ English proficiency suggests that students generally need to improve their English proficiency to widen their chances for future careers. Therefore, Prince of Songkla University, particularly the Faculty of Management Sciences, related departments of the university, and teachers need to raise students’ awareness of the significance of English proficiency and its importance in the Thai workforce since the first year of their studies so that the students, who plan to work for companies or organizations in which English is required, can improve their English proficiency to be qualified for their desirable working positions.

5.2.2 The results of this study indicate that the subjects’ achievement on compulsory English courses was significantly related to their English proficiency. Thus, it is important for teachers to make students aware from the start that their compulsory courses (FE I and FE II) play important roles in building up their proficiency.

5.2.3 It was found that the subjects' self-study and e-mail writing activities were significantly related to their proficiency in English. This suggests that these two informal English learning activities should be promoted in English language learning. Teachers should encourage students to use English through e-mail writing activities. Additionally, self-study in a university library or self-access center which is another informal English learning activity, should be encouraged to promote students' English language learning and finally their independent learning as this has been found to be related to students' English proficiency.

5.2.4 As the relationships of English proficiency to the subjects' experience in English speaking countries and their interaction with their native English-speaking friends were found in this study to be significant, this would suggest that English exchange programs with other overseas universities, excursion programmes to English speaking countries, or university English language clubs may be helpful to motivate students' English language learning and then to develop students' English language proficiency. Not only would students have more opportunities to enhance their English skills and knowledge, but they could also become familiar with English language use. This familiarity with English could be a way to develop students' positive attitudes towards English language learning and similarly lessen anxiety in using the English language.

5.2.5 A significant relationship between the subjects' English proficiency and their intrinsic motivation and attitudes was found, though at a relatively low level. The implication of this relationship is that teachers should find any possible teaching techniques or/and interesting English learning activities that create and develop students' intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes towards English language learning to encourage higher levels of English proficiency. Promoting the authenticity of English learning activities by providing English learning tasks which are related to the learners' daily lives and require the students to use English such as e-mail writing or internet searching tasks could be among the potential means. However, teachers must be aware that the activities that promote students' intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes might vary among students. It would be better if a needs analysis is initially conducted on students before providing the learning tasks.

Not only is motivation related to English language proficiency, but other factors in English language learning (attitudes, anxiety, achievement in compulsory English courses, experience in English speaking countries, or out-of-class English learning activities) are also related to learners' language proficiency. As Noels et al. (2000), Gardner (1982, cited in Norris-Holt, 2001) and Noels (2001, cited in Chi-keung Kam, 2002) stated, motivation is a salient variable which combines with a number of factors in language learning influencing a learner's language success.

It is worth noting, for the implications of the study, that motivation is important but not in itself sufficient for making learners successful in their English language learning and their English proficiency.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

Based on the interpretations of the findings of this study, which should be considered informative rather than conclusive, several areas are recommended for further studies.

5.3.1 The present study was conducted only with the fourth-year university undergraduates of one faculty at PSU. In order to confirm the results of the study and to compare whether the relationships of English proficiency are related to motivation and motivational variables of other Thai students from different faculties and from different universities in Thailand, future research should be replicated with other fourth-year university undergraduates of other different faculties at PSU, and with those of other universities in Thailand.

5.3.2 The affective factors in this study cover the subjects' internal factors (motivation, attitudes and anxiety). To include as many learner variables as possible, future studies are recommended to further investigate factors external to the students' such as career goals. Future investigation should be conducted with students whose career goals are to work in organizations in which English is required, and with those whose career goals are to work in companies in which English is not required to determine whether the students' different career goals affect their English language proficiency.

5.3.3 Since a clear correspondence, though not significant, between the number of the elective English courses and the level of English proficiency was found in this study, a replication of this study should be further conducted with more faculties to see a significant relationship between the number of the elective English courses and English proficiency exists. If the results of further studies appear similar to the present result, this can be thus be generalized and provide PSU some useful implications for the university's future policy to promote their students to enroll in more elective English courses.

5.3.4 A tendency towards facilitative anxiety was found in the high proficiency group and that of debilitating anxiety was found in the low proficiency group of subjects. Thus, it is suggested that facilitative and debilitating anxiety should be investigated in future studies. There could be some useful results that could clarify more features of facilitative and debilitating anxiety on EFL students' English language learning.

5.3.5 That no significant relationship between the subjects' experience on TOEIC and their English proficiency was found in this study could be due to the small number of the subjects with experience in TOEIC tutoring courses and the TOEIC examination. However, this issue is an interesting issue for research to be conducted in further studies which may produce some different and useful results for the university TOEIC tutoring center and other related departments at PSU.