

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The notion "World Englishes" provides the major conceptual framework for a useful and reasoned understanding of the spread and functions of the English language in global contexts. The diffusion of English has resulted in the emergence of the three broad categories of regional varieties of English, which have been termed the Inner-Circle, the Outer-Circle and the Expanding-Circle (B. Kachru, 1985). From Kachru's framework, the total number of English speakers in the inner circle is as high as 380 million, and 300 million in the outer circle, while, the estimates of the users in the expanding circle has ranged to one billion. It shows that English is widely used as a communication tool around the world. In terms of communication, it is not necessary to stress every single word, but to get across the meaning. For achieving this goal, communication strategies seem very important as an auxiliary tool in solving the problems and improving communication effects.

As English is so widely spread and used, it is unavoidable for the worldwide people to use English in daily communication. Especially for Chinese people, which occupy quite a proportion in number of population. With the increasing economic cooperation with the world, Chinese users are required to integrate their skills and their specialized knowledge in order to obtain the edge in job market and stay in synchronous with the world. For achieving this aim, a good English communication competence is necessary in interacting with people in one's own field and with those from the other countries. As a result, most Chinese students begin their English learning since entering school.

However, after years of learning, the majority of students in China are neither fluent nor confident English speakers. Consequently, "Chinese English" appears while these learners communicate with native English speakers. Some may attribute this deficiency to the limited time for oral practice in the classroom, or the great number of students that a teacher is responsible for, or the lack of conversational opportunities outside of them. However, a large number of the students who perform well in English classes still find themselves at a loss when interacting with

native speakers in everyday life (Yang and Gai. 2010). In authentic communicative situations, language learners are often unable to retrieve a word, to use or comprehend an idiomatic expression, or to grasp a topic; consequently, communication breaks down (Willems. 1987). Troubles and difficulties occur frequently while Chinese students associating with English speakers, and misunderstanding comes out. In order to solve these problems, learners must develop specific communication strategies that enable them to compensate for their target language deficiencies, enhance interaction in the target language, and eventually develop communicative competence (Willems. 1987, Faerch and Kasper. 1983, Bialystok. 1990, Dörnyei. 1995).

Communication strategies play an integral role in language acquisition. As we know, communication strategies are strategies that learners use to overcome these problems in order to convey their intended meaning (Richards and Schmidt. 2009). As a result, with the using of various types of communication strategies, learners can find different ways to solve the problem they encounter, and the communication will become much smooth and effective. Willems (1987) also argues that introducing communication strategies allow weaker learners to develop a feeling of being able to do something with the language and thus drive language learning motivation. Strategies used may include paraphrasing, substitution, coining new words, switching to the first language, asking for clarification (Ellis. 1997) or some other types.

This research examines the types of communication strategies employed by the Chinese students and the role that strategies play in the maintenance of English conversation between the participants and the researcher. It seeks to identify what is common in the communication approaches of these students in authentic interactions. The effect of these strategies which may have on the acquisition of a language is also discussed. This research is carried out among 20 Chinese users of English, who have been studied in Huachiew Chalermprakiet University (HCU). It is hoped that this study will reflect students' oral proficiency, and the common communication strategies that used during English conversations. Moreover, teachers are able to understand the students' strategy use, so as to develop their communicative competence.

1.2 Research Question

What communication strategies do Chinese students use during oral English communication?

1.3 Objective of the Study

To find out the types of communication strategies that Chinese students use in oral English communication.

1.4 Scope of the Study

In this study, there are 20 Chinese students who have studied in Huachiew Chalermprakiet University (HCU). The participants come from three different majors, which are Tourism, Business Administration (BA), and learn English as a Second Language (ESL), and most of them are in their third or fourth year in college. All the participants in this study are Chinese nationality, and their mother language is Chinese. They all come from the South China, such as Yulin, Guangxi, and Yunnan provinces. The age of the students ranges between 20 to 27 years, and all of them have been learning English as a second language or foreign language for more than 10 years. Some of them began to learn English since primary school, and some even started since kindergarten. Most of these students speak English only during their English class time, or when associating with their English-speaking professors. Out of that, they do not have too many chances to communicate with others in English. Among the 20 participants, 5 of them are males, and the left 15 are females.

The questions used during the interview were classified into three main groups: participants' feelings about the school life in HCU and in China; their understandings and experiences about the Thai culture, which include the weather, food, people, animal and so on; some situation about their families. For the reason that there was no video equipment in the university and the author couldn't afford one, audio tapes were used for the interviews.

The interview of the first 13 tourism students took place in the separate rooms on the fourth floor of HCU library on March 6 morning, and 1 English major student interview was done in HCU campus in the afternoon on the same day. The

other 6 students were interviewed next to HCU Female students' dormitory in the afternoon of March 9. For the convenience of the participants, the interviews couldn't be arranged on the same day or same place.

Before the interview, the subjects did not receive any introduction of communication strategies since this could have affected their choice of strategies. During the interview, participants were told to answer the questions freely, and they were informed that the conversation would be audio-taped for research purpose. Due to the lack of suitable video-taping equipment, contextual information such as body language, facial expressions and gestures were not recorded for analysis.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

In this study, some aspects such as gender, age, major, and English proficiency were not analyzed as factors that would affect students' strategy use during English communication. Moreover, due to the shortage of audio equipment, some features could not be recorded, for example, facial expressions, eye contact, and body language which may be grouped as another type of communication strategy. Besides these points, some others factors should be considered also, such as the different time and place for interviews may have influence on the result.

1.6 Definition of Terms

1.6.1 Communication Strategy

Communication strategy is strategies that used by two or more interlocutors to solve the misunderstandings during communication in reaching a particular communicative goal.

1.6.2 Chinese English

Chinese English is a mix language which expressed in English ways and contains the characters of Chinese culture and patterns.

1.6.3 Chinese Users of English

Chinese users of English mean that Chinese speakers who learn English as a second or foreign language. In this research, it refers to the twenty Chinese students who have studied in Huachiew Chalermprakiet University.

1.6.4 World Englishes

World Englishes is the means and results of the spread of English from its historical boundaries to its current position as the preeminent global means of communication.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Chinese English appears very often when Chinese students communicate with others in English, and breakdowns occur if the interlocutors cannot solve the problems effectively. For improving these circumstances, communication strategies are quite necessary and widely used while Chinese people associating with others in English, especially the ones who share different cultures or language backgrounds.

People from different countries have their significant features when speaking English. This study will reveal some of the features that Chinese students use. The result is hoped to supply more materials for the further study about communication strategy used among Chinese users of English.

According to the result, language learners will learn some of the strategies that are mostly used by learners in authentic world. The language instructors also will get the Chinese students' weak point in their language learning, so they can increase the teaching amount or adjust the teaching methods to correspond with students' situation. Consequently, the English learner's language-study would be much easier and effective.