

The Development of an English Self-Study Audio Book for Thai Massage Therapists with and without Visual Impairment

Nitiwadee Sawaddee
Silpakorn University
ghychee@yahoo.com

Massage therapy has been increasingly popular with foreigners for the past decade. With Thailand joining the AEC in 2015, massage therapists see the need to improve their English in order to be competent in a wider market. Furthermore, personal interviews revealed that massage therapists with visual impairment are more motivated to learn English because they have to depend more on verbal communication. They also thus have a greater demand for learning resources and materials. The objectives of this research were therefore firstly, to develop an audio book which would enable learners with visual impairment to self-study and practice the English necessary for their profession regardless of their educational background, and secondly, to examine their feedback for further improvement. The prototype audio book was created in MP3 format. The content of each unit was designed and revised according to feedback and new findings from field research. It was assumed that since learning from an audio book would require only the sense of hearing, massage therapists with normal vision should also be able to benefit from the final product. Participants were divided into three groups: massage therapists and apprentices with normal vision who self-studied the audio book, massage therapists and apprentices with visual impairment who self-studied the audio book, and massage therapists and apprentices with visual impairment who studied the audio book with an instructor in a classroom environment. The pre-post tests showed that the average scores of every group were higher. The average increased scores and personal interviews suggested that although the audio book was designed for a self-study approach, it worked better with an instructor or assistance to provide motivation and facilitate the lessons. Data collected through class observation, class discussion, interviews, and participation in the life of the group were used for the improvement of the final version of the audio book, which was incorporated as part of the school curriculum and language training programme for massage therapists with visual impairment, and was distributed to massage centers and schools in Bangkok.