

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Overview (Research Background)**

In recent years, the issue of unemployment has become a general concern in Taiwan. The unemployment rate of college degree and above is higher than the unemployment rate of low educational background. According to Apple Daily newspaper (2014), the unemployed population of Taiwan is about 443,000 people, including 148,000 university graduates.

Li (2014) stated that the rapid expansion of higher education depreciates educational background. The construction of society and economy has altered and the value is utterly different from the past. It is still hard to find a good job even though people have a higher education. Higher education does not guarantee a good employment. However, people have less opportunity to get a job if they do not have any educational background. This situation makes this generation stuck between a rock and a hard place (Li, 2014). As a result, in the job market, because of the high unemployment, people are willing to take any job positions that are available, even if it is irrelevant to their degree, including English majors.

#### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

There are many college students with different majors being affected by the

issue of unemployment. However, English major graduates are one of the main concern. It is generally believed that students who study English in university have more opportunities to get a better job. On the contrary, English majors have difficulty in finding a decent job in recent years. Despite having strong English ability increase the desirability for employment, they still need to have skills or knowledge in professions. People may discover that they are not able to perform well in their job if they only have excellent English without any professional knowledge. Huang (2014) declared that English ability is only a tool. It is meaningful to apply English with other professional fields mutually.

### **1.3 Purposes of the Study**

Nowadays, English has become a world language. With an increase in population of learning English, more and more people are good at English, such as having various English certificates. This situation causes a huge impact for English majors to seek a good job. In addition, within the extensive literature on the employment circumstance of university graduates, comparatively little research has focused on the employment of English major graduates. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate English graduates perspectives of unemployment and career development.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions were designed to explore English major graduates' perspectives of unemployment and career development. To that end, the following questions were posed:

RQ1: How do English major graduates perceive the issue of unemployment?

RQ2: What ideal jobs do English major graduates want to do in the future?

RQ3: What difficulties will English major graduates encounter when they are in the job market?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Chou (2010) stated that with the international trend, the ability of English could have a great impact in the workplace. Based on this situation, English certificates not only become an essential qualification for employment in companies, but also the most effective guarantee to increase people's competitiveness in the job market. Kenichi Ohmae, the famous managing master in Japan, believes that "English ability is power." It means, in this globalization era, English is a great strength to possess. The above point of view has built a strong concept in people's mind. There are more and more people believing that English ability guarantees the advantages when seeking a job. Therefore, many people specialize in English in college.

However, according to the Global Education Association in Taiwan (GEAT)

(2014), recently, there are some issues that are concerned by the academics in Taiwan, such as “Is English major a necessary option for college students?” and “Beside becoming an English teacher, is there any other career path for English majors?” Nowadays, among 161 colleges in Taiwan, there are 126 colleges that offer English-related programs. According to the statistics provided by the GEAT (2014), in 2013, the population of English majors was 51,482 (including 3,432 students who were studying for the master and doctoral degree). In 2012, the population of graduates was 11,535. Thus, it should be noticed that whether the future development of English department will affect the development of industry-academic cooperation, the recruitment rate of English majors, and the career paths of graduates. (GEAT, 2014)

As a result, the significance of this study can be introduced in two points. First, this study may lead to a better understanding of what major should be chosen for senior high school graduates. In addition, this study could be useful for English majors to have ideas when preparing for future jobs.