

Thai Students and Teachers' Perceptions of Learning and Teaching English through the Communicative Language Teaching Approach

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Abstract

This study is designed to explore Thai students and teachers' perceptions of English learning and teaching through the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in Loei Primary Educational Service Area Office 2, and to compare the students and teachers' perceptions of English language learning and teaching through the CLT approach. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the study. The researcher used a quantitative questionnaire survey to explore 295 students and 20 teachers' perceptions of English language learning and teaching through the CLT approach. Semi-structured interviews with 10 students and 5 teachers to elicit their views on English learning and teaching through the CLT approach were also conducted. The results indicated that the students and teachers supported the CLT principles and displayed characteristics of the CLT approach through their reported perceptions. However, the results showed that the students and teachers in the context of this study had misunderstandings regarding the use of the CLT approach in class communication. Implications which could be used as strategies for exploring the students and teachers' perception of the CLT approach are suggested.

Keywords: communicative language teaching, English language teaching and learning, students and teachers' perceptions

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยในครั้งนี้ออกแบบเพื่อศึกษาแนวคิดของนักเรียนและครูที่มีต่อการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้วิธีการสอนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสารในสำนักงานเขตพื้นที่การศึกษาประถมศึกษาเลย เขต 2 พร้อมทั้งเปรียบเทียบความเหมือนและความแตกต่างของแนวคิดระหว่างครูกับนักเรียน เพื่อให้เข้าใจถึงแนวคิดของนักเรียนและครูกับการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้หลักวิธีการสอนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสาร ผู้วิจัยใช้หลักการทางสถิติเชิงปริมาณและการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพโดยใช้แบบสอบถามกับนักเรียนในระดับชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 3 จำนวน 295 คน และครูผู้สอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษพื้นฐานจำนวน 20 คน หลังจากนั้นผู้วิจัยใช้วิธีการสัมภาษณ์นักเรียน 10 คน และครู 5 คน เพื่อให้ได้ข้อมูลเชิงลึกสำหรับแนวคิดของทั้งครูและนักเรียนที่มีต่อการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษตามหลักการสอนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสาร ผลจากการศึกษาใน

ครั้งนี้แสดงให้เห็นว่านักเรียนและครูสนับสนุนให้มีการสอนภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้วิธีการสอนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสาร อย่างไรก็ตามนักเรียนและครูของสำนักงานเขตพื้นที่การศึกษาประถมศึกษาเลย เขต 2 ยังมีความเข้าใจคลาดเคลื่อนเกี่ยวกับการใช้วิธีการเรียนการสอนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสารที่ถูกต้อง

คำสำคัญ: วิธีการสอนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสาร การเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ ความเข้าใจของครูและนักเรียน

Introduction

Background and Rationale of the Study

According to communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, there are many advantages for students in terms of developing their communication skills. The teachers at Loei Primary Educational Service Area Office 2 applied this approach to their teaching process, creating CLT activities to stimulate students to learn English. For example, they applied songs and games in the learning process to develop speaking and listening skills. In fact, teachers experienced difficulties in the application of this approach because to the teaching process. The difficulties consist of time and classroom size, which might affect the students' achievement. The students might not use English for communication in the classroom or real-life situations. For information gap activities, for example, English is used less to complete communication tasks. Students might not communicate in English, choosing instead to use the Thai language to gain information because it is much easier to speak with others and it is more comfortable for communication. The researcher, therefore, intends to explore the students and teachers' perceptions of the CLT approach in Loei Primary Educational Service Area Office 2 to investigate how teachers and students think about CLT and how CLT could help students develop their English-language communication skills.

Research Objectives and Questions

From the background and rational, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1) To explore the students' perceptions of English-language learning through the CLT approach.

2) To explore the teachers' perceptions of English language teaching through the CLT approach.

3) To compare the students and teachers' perceptions of English learning and teaching through the CLT approach.

The research questions are based on the objectives as follows:

1) What are the students' perceptions of English language learning through the CLT approach?

2) What are the teachers' perceptions of English language teaching through the CLT approach?

3) What are the differences in students and teachers' perceptions of English language learning and teaching through the CLT approach?

Literature Review

Definition and Principles of CLT

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT starts with a theory of language as communication, and its goal is to develop learners' communicative competence. The idea of communicative competence is considered to be the main concept of CLT. Communicative competence involves knowing what to say and how to say it appropriately based on the situation, the participants, and their roles and intentions. In addition, Littlewood (1981) stated that CLT emphasizes the functional as well as structural features of language. Teachers move beyond teaching structural rules of the target language, and create opportunities for learners to use the target language in a meaningful way. They also help their learners build communicative competence. Furthermore, Savignon (1991) said that individual learners have their unique interests, learning styles, needs, and goals that should be reflected in the design of instructional methods. Also, in a CLT classroom, students must be made to feel secure, unthreatened, and non-defensive. Thus, teachers should avoid taking on a teacher-centered approach.

Moreover, Richards (2006) noticed that language teachers teaching with the CLT methodology began to reorganize teaching, syllabuses, and classroom materials. In planning language courses within a communicative approach, grammar was no longer the starting point. It was claimed that meaningful communication provides the

learner with a better opportunity for learning than through a grammar-based approach.

Communicative Competence

According to Savignon (1998) and Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence refers to the ability to communicate in a personally effective and socially appropriate manner. According to Hedge (2000), a central concept of communicative competence is the ability to understand and to use language effectively to communicate in authentic social and school environments. Communicative competence consists of four areas of competency: (1) linguistic competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, (3) discourse competence, and (4) strategic competence. Accordingly, communicative competence is an essential element for teachers and students to communicate effectively in the classroom. Moreover, communicative competence can help students and teachers reduce listening and speaking barriers and encourage them to communicate with confidence in the classroom (Hedge, 2000; VanPatten, 2003; Yashima, 2004; Lung, 2010).

Classroom Activities in CLT

Based on various authors (e.g., Paulston, 1992; Celce-Murcia, 1991), the researcher summarized CLT activities used in the CLT classroom. The details of CLT activities can be listed as follows:

- 1) Information-gap activities: The concept of information gap is an important aspect of communication in a CLT classroom.
- 2) Jigsaw activities: These activities are also based on the information-gap principle. The class is divided into groups and each group has part of the information needed to complete an activity.
- 3) Communication games: These games primarily involve information-gap activities which are intended to provoke communication in the classroom. The games are generally in the form of puzzles, drawing pictures and putting things given in the correct order.
- 4) Discussion and debates: Discussion and debates are widely utilized activity types due to their low effort demanding nature on the teacher. Every now and then, an intimate atmosphere of discussion occurs in the classroom, however, when appropriately exploited, these discussions will undoubtedly result in speaking opportunities of extreme worth, both in terms of language presentation and practice.
- 5) Prepared talks and oral presentations: These are the talks which are prepared by students about a specific topic and given in the class with the

aim of persuading, informing students about a topic or just to entertain them.

Teachers and Students' Roles in CLT Classroom

For teacher's roles in CLT, Richards and Rodgers (1986) said that it is suitable for teachers to adopt a communicative approach to produce and use authentic teaching materials that meet the needs of their particular learners. In addition, teachers need to motivate their students, as well as provide them with a comfortable classroom atmosphere for language learning. Furthermore, Littlewood (1981) stated that the roles of teachers in CLT consist of coordinator and manager of activities, language instructor, source of new language, consultant when needed, as well as participant.

Likewise, in the descriptions of the roles of students and teachers in the CLT classroom, Matsuura, Chiba, and Hilderbrandt (2001) asserted that students focus on expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning while the teacher takes on more of a facilitator and participant role. In addition, Deckert (2004: 13) emphasized that "CLT approach features low profile teacher roles, frequent pair work or small group problem solving, students responding to authentic samples of English, extended exchanges on high interest topics, and the integration of the four basic skills, namely speaking, listening, reading, and writing." He further stated that CLT discourages pervasive teacher-controlled drills, quizzing of memorized material, and extensive explanation of forms of English.

Related Research

Exploring students and teachers' perceptions of the CLT approach has been important in Thailand. Thai teachers have applied the CLT approach to develop English skills for students. Teachers have constructed new instruments - activities, games, and songs for improving the four skills of English. For example, Muangkod (2000) constructed instructional plans for the development of English vocabulary learning of Prathom Suksa 4 students through the CLT model and studied the learning achievement of English vocabulary learning of grade 4 students after learning through the CLT model. The results showed that the CLT model could develop students' learning achievement of English vocabulary learning.

In addition, Polsombat (2006) developed students' English listening-speaking skills using the CLT approach emphasizing authentic assessment. She found that students could develop their listening and speaking skills simultaneously, including processing skills and desirable attributes. Additionally, Lakum (2013) developed

English writing drills based on CLT in the learning area of foreign languages for Prathom Suksa 6 students. The results showed that the English writing drills based on CLT were effective. The students' achievement after using the drills was higher than before the use of the drills. However, teachers still used Thai to teach English in the classroom. They could apply little CLT in their classrooms due to their large classes, lack of equipment, and time constraints, which were tremendous hindrances to teaching.

Incecay and Incecay (2009) conducted a case study to investigate the perceptions of 30 Turkish college students to find the appropriateness and effectiveness of communicative and non-communicative activities in their EFL classes. They proposed that EFL countries need to apply their teaching methods in a way that takes students' previous educational habits into consideration. In summary, if communicative and non-communicative activities were combined in English classrooms, students could benefit from CLT.

Furthermore, Yeom (2004) studied the application of CLT of Korean secondary teachers in terms of their understanding of CLT and CLT practices. She suggested that the integration of CLT into traditional instruction might be a thoughtful challenge for Korean teachers. In addition, Mitsui (2009) found that CLT is very effective in terms of giving Korean students more opportunities to use English to develop their speaking and communication skills in the classroom.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

In this study, there are two relevant theories, which are CLT approach and constructivism. According to constructivist theory, learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts following their current or past knowledge (Bruner, 1996). Learners select and transform information, construct hypotheses, and make decisions based on a cognitive structure. It could be said that learners could construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through their experience of learning in class and authentic situations.

Learners could develop their communication skill from their experiences. The CLT approach is one of the most effective teaching approaches for English language learning and teaching. According to the concept of constructivism (Nelson & Poulin, 1997), learners have a great deal of experience of English learning through lessons based on the CLT approach. When participating in CLT activities organized by their teachers, students have more opportunities to develop their communication skills. As

a result, they could construct knowledge of the language and learn how to use English for communication.

Sampling

There were two sample groups: those who completed a questionnaire survey and those who participated in a semi-structured interview. First, the questionnaire survey was completed by 295 students and 20 teacher participants in regular schools of Loei Primary Educational Service Area Office 2. The student participants were 83 males and 212 females studying in grade 9. In addition, teacher participants consisted of 5 males and 15 female teachers. Second, the researcher used a purposive sampling method to select 15 participants for the semi-structure interview from the participants of the questionnaire survey process. The interview participants were five teachers and 10 students.

Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire was developed based on the research objectives and research questions. In addition, the researcher constructed the questionnaire based on the definition and principles of CLT, communicative competence, the kinds of classroom activities, the roles of teachers and learners in the language classroom, and students and teachers' perceptions of the CLT.

Overall, two sets of questionnaires (one for student participants and one for teacher participants) consisted of three sections: background of the participant, questions concerned with CLT, and recommendations. For background of the participants, the questionnaire elicited basic information such as gender, age, educational information, and English learning or teaching experiences of participants. For the questions concerned with CLT, there were 26 statements based on CLT approach which included students and teachers' understandings toward the CLT approach, communicative English activities, role of students and teachers for English teaching for communication, and students and teachers' perception towards learning and teaching English for communication. In the recommendations section, participants could express their ideas or suggestions freely.

Semi-structured Interview

The two sets of interview questions were used to elicit the perceptions of students and teachers to the learning and teaching English through the CLT approach.

Ten opened-ended interview questions concerned with CLT approach including the definition and principles of CLT, communicative competence, the kinds of classroom, the roles of teachers and learners in the language classroom, and students and teachers' perceptions toward learning and teaching English for communication. The researcher used this method for eliciting in depth information from five English-language teacher participants and 10 student participants to reveal their individual experiences, opinions, and motives.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed both the quantitative and qualitative data through the following methods. First, for the analysis of quantitative data from the two questionnaire surveys of student and teacher participants, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. The data obtained from the 26 statements of students and teachers' perception of CLT were analyzed using descriptive statistics as presented in Table 1. Second, the researcher collected the data by asking 10 opened-ended questions related to English learning and teaching through the CLT approach. For the semi-structured interview, content analysis was used to analyze the data.

Findings

Students' perceptions of English-language learning through the CLT approach in response to Research Question 1

From the questionnaire survey, three significant points of students' perceptions toward the CLT approach were found. First, almost all of the students (95.25%) stated that the speaking and listening skill played an important role in the learning of English for communication. They also understood that CLT is only English-learning activity to develop speaking and listening skills. Second, 289 students (97.97%) emphasized that they gain a great deal of benefits in the learning of English through CLT activities including role-play and debate. The CLT activities could help them to develop communication skills. Third, students and teachers' roles of learning and teaching English for communication.

Table1 Students' Perceptions of English language learning through the CLT approach

Item	Statement	Perception Level					Mean	S.D.	n
		Strongly agree	Agree	Un-decided	Dis agree	Strongly disagree			
		(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)			
1	Speaking and listening are the most important skills for communication.	281	12	2	0	0	4.96	0.22	295
9	You use English when participating in role-play and debate activities.	0	71	223	1	0	3.23	0.43	295
11	You gain a lot of benefits from communication activities.	59	230	5	1	0	4.19	0.44	295
13	Teachers encourage you to use English in the classroom.	218	74	2	1	0	4.74	0.47	295
15	Teachers suggest and support you when you are in communication troubles.	63	224	7	1	0	4.20	0.45	295
18	You can interact with the teacher in English.	0	234	60	1	0	3.79	0.42	295
20	You can use English to give your friends advices.	116	173	4	2	0	4.38	0.54	295
22	English for communication makes you enjoyable in the classroom.	74	218	1	2	0	4.29	0.49	295
25	English for communication is the most difficult subject for you.	186	11	97	1	0	4.17	0.98	295

A large majority of the student participants (75.93%) said that suggestions and supports could help students to develop communication skills when they had problems with learning English in the classroom. However, although students understood the teachers' role of teaching through the CLT approach, they did not understand their role. For example, 226 student participants (79.61%) felt undecided when asked about their role of using English to communicate with friends. Last, 186 students (63.05%) agreed that English for communication is the most difficult subject

for them. However, they enjoyed learning English for communication because they could gain more confidence and creativity.

Interview findings

In this section, the researcher presents the 10 students' perceptions. There were 4 males and 6 females. From the interview, all the students considered that the CLT approach was an English-teaching technique for developing only speaking and listening skills. Students perceived that speaking and listening skills were the most important for students to be successful in communication.

Most of the students (8 out of 10) had positive comments on learning English through the CLT approach. The students agreed that the aim of CLT is to help them develop their communication skills through listening and speaking practice.

As one student explained:

"I enjoy learning English because there are several learning activities in class. The activity I like most is a communication activity. I like it because I can apply communication skills to my real life. For example, when having a conversation in a shop, I can use English for buying things." (S4)

In addition, another explained:

"I like to learn English for communication very much because I have a lot of fun. Each activity gives me knowledge. I can remember a lot of vocabulary and I can speak English better now." (S2)

Apparently, almost all the students said in the interview that CLT approach could develop good English for communication for them. In the CLT classroom, students had opportunities to develop four skills of English including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. There were many activities, such as singing, role playing, and English rally games. They also enjoyed learning English by participating in various kinds of CLT activities.

Teachers' perceptions of English language teaching through the CLT approach in response to Research Question 2

From the questionnaire survey, it was found there were four significant points of teachers' perceptions toward CLT approach. First, the researcher found 18 teachers (90.00%) agreed that speaking and listening are the most important skills for communication. In addition, they stated that teachers need to understand meaning of

vocabulary, sentence structures and grammatical knowledge to succeed in communication. Second, all of the teachers (100.00%) agreed with item 10 that role plays and debates are the best activities for teaching English for communication. All the teachers also considered that role-play and debate could encourage students to develop communication skills effectively.

Third, “understanding education principles and theories of language for communication” and “advising and helping students when having communication problems” are important roles for teachers to teach English for communication. Likewise, students’ background knowledge of English learning (item 17) plays an important role as it could help them develop their communication skill. Last, the researcher found that all of the teachers (100.00%) strongly agreed that teaching English for communication is important for education in the current society. However, as shown in Table 2. 13 teachers (65.00%) said that CLT approach is not the best way to develop students’ communication ability.

Table 2 Teachers’ Perceptions of English-language teaching through the CLT approach

Item	Statement	Perception Level					Mean	S.D	n
		Strongly agree	Agree	Un-decided	Dis-agree	Strongly disagree			
		(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)			
1	Speaking and listening are the most important skills for communication.	1	18	1	0	0	4.00	0.32	20
10	Role plays and debates are the best activities for teaching English for communication.	0	20	0	0	0	4.00	0.00	20
17	Background knowledge of English is an important part of development of communication skills.	16	4	0	0	0	4.80	0.41	20
22	Teaching English for communication is the best way to teach students to develop communication skills.	0	7	13	0	0	3.50	0.51	20
25	Teachers should understand education principles and theories of language for communication.	20	0	0	0	0	5.00	0.00	20

Interview findings

From the interview, all the teachers supported the CLT approach because it was considered helpful for developing students' communicative competence. The teachers emphasized that the goal of CLT was to develop students' communicative competence.

As one teacher elaborated:

"I notice that using the CLT teaching approach is very useful for my students. My students can speak English more. They have more confidence to speak English in real situations." (T1)

Another teacher asserted:

"I saw the benefits of CLT as it can help my students develop their communication ability. For example, they can use more words, phrases, and produce many short sentences. They can ask and answer question concerning their personal information." (T4)

In addition, two teachers were in favor of the CLT approach because it focused on the development of the students' abilities to use the target language. The teachers believed that it is essential to expose students to the target language in order to acquire the language. To accomplish this goal, group or pair work activities are designed to promote communication. Communicative activities can create authentic situations where communication takes place.

As one teacher explained:

"I always use CLT activities for my classroom. For example, I used a role play activity for teaching them how to buy things in a shop. My students have a good interaction." (T3)

In addition, another supported:

"CLT is a very useful technique for teaching communication. In real life situation, people have to speak and listen to each other, so CLT is a good material for teaching students in classroom. I like to teach my students how to communicate appropriately. Communication becomes an essential factor for everyone in this decade." (T2)

Overall, the teachers had positive comments on learning English in general. The responses to the semi-structured interview revealed that the teachers agreed that the aim of CLT is to help students to communicate in authentic situations. In addition, most of the teacher participants expressed support for CLT as it was the best teaching

approach to help learners know how to use English for communication appropriately and effectively.

Students and teachers' response to Research Question 3

It was found that students and teachers had different perceptions of the CLT approach. The different perceptions of students and teachers consisted of background knowledge of CLT, and students and teachers' role of English teaching through CLT approach. For example, the students gave a view that the CLT approach focused only on oral skills for learning English in Thai primary school classrooms while teachers emphasized that the final goal of the CLT approach was to cultivate four skills of English, namely, reading, listening, speaking, and writing in order that the students can communicate not only fluently, but also accurately. In addition, the students perceived that teachers are important persons who could help them gain more development of communication skills. In contrast, the teachers gave a view that students play an important role in the learning of English for communication in the CLT classroom. They could do all activities by themselves with teachers' advice.

Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the students' perceptions of English-language learning through the CLT approach?

Almost of the students understood that CLT is English learning activities aimed to develop speaking and listening skill for students in the classroom. They stated that CLT is an activity that emphasizes interaction among students and teachers to develop students' communicative competence through communicative activities which involves group work, pair work, games and so on (Liao, 2000; Ying, 2010). In these activities, English language was used to communicate with a focus on listening and speaking skills. Communicating successfully refers to passing on a comprehensible message to listeners. One of the main factors of the students regarding the CLT approach was that they always had activities such as role-plays or debates when learning English for communication.

Research Question 2: What are the teachers' perceptions of English-language teaching through the CLT approach?

In this research, many teachers stated that it is difficult to use the CLT approach in because almost all students and teachers focused on only developing

speaking and listening skills. In terms of communication, they stated that they always focused on speaking and listening skills to communicate in the real world. They also agreed that speaking and listening played an important role for communication. In addition, teachers preferred using a grammar approach to evaluate students' achievement and to prepare them for obtaining a desirable score in the national examination rather than gaining more ability of English for communication. As a result, they used a traditional grammar-based program to prepare their students for the national test. This echoes Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) and Thompson (1996) who found that if teachers do not have a thorough understanding of CLT, they can hardly develop practices appropriate to their context, and easily return to traditional teaching.

Research Question 3: What are the differences in students and teachers' perceptions of English-language learning and teaching through the CLT approach?

According to teacher's and students' roles in a CLT classroom, both students and the teacher had different perceptions. Students understood they were learners and could not develop communication skills by themselves, stating that teachers are important people who can teach them to communicate in English. In contrast, the teachers believed that students played a more important role in learning English for communication and that students could participate in activities by themselves. English-language teachers served as advisers and facilitators to help guide students to use English for communication. In addition, they stimulate and encourage their students to develop communication skills. It is helpful for teachers adopting a communicative approach to produce and use authentic teaching materials that meet the needs of their groups of learners.

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), teachers are monitors of the CLT teaching process, as well as facilitators providing students with a comfortable classroom atmosphere for English-language learning. In the classroom context of this study, for instance, teachers prepared and organized lesson plans and activities for students to develop their communication skills. While they were participating in CLT activities, teachers would be like monitors and facilitators who helped guide their students to communicate properly. Also, they gave students advice and encouraged them to develop communication skills. In similar veins, Littlewood (1981) states that the roles of teacher in CLT consist of coordinator and manager of activities, language instructor, source of new language, consultant when needed, as well as participant. Hu (2002) also recommended that the roles of students in the CLT classroom are supposed to be communicators, discoverers, and contributors of knowledge and information. That is to say that both students and teachers had different perceptions of the role of learning and teaching English based on the CLT approach.

Implications

As seen in the findings, this study has implications based on the students and teachers' perceptions of English learning and teaching through the CLT approach in order to achieve the goals of communication. Through the students and teachers' responses about their knowledge of the CLT, both groups have misunderstanding regarding the CLT approach. They understood that the CLT approach is one of the teaching techniques for communication aiming to develop students' speaking and listening skills. This is in accordance with Hymes' (1971) remark that the CLT approach aims to develop communicative competence.

Nevertheless, all the teacher participants did not thoroughly understand the CLT teaching approach and how they could make use of this approach for their students' learning. In this regard, they need more training on the approach in order that they can see the real importance of this approach and know how to put the approach into practice. In particular, the English Department of Loei Primary Educational Service Area Office 2 might hold another CLT training course for teachers. In addition, the English Department should have a CLT-advisor team to observe and help teachers when they organize their classroom activities. Moreover, teachers should give students more opportunities to participate in a variety of activities in order for students to understand and see how the CLT approach is useful for improving their communicative competence. Thus they will recognize what the CLT approach is and learn how to develop communication skills successfully.

In addition, the difficulties in applying the CLT approach for students and teachers in schools of Loei Primary Educational Service Area Office 2 related to the requirement for students to sit the National Test. The teachers said that the CLT approach could not help students gain higher scores in the National Test. Thus, teachers prefer using a grammar translation method for teaching students to develop English skills. In fact, the CLT approach cultivates all four English skills and could help students develop communicative competence consisting of linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence.

Limitations

The first limitation is related to the number of student and teacher participants. It should be noted that the number of participants are of too few to draw wider conclusions. Another limitation is the data analysis: the students and teachers were asked to give responses to the questionnaire and interview. Had it been possible to

discover students and teachers' perceptions of classroom participation, communication processes and reactions to classroom activities, the study may have provided a better understanding of teachers' perceptions toward CLT, as well as their implementation of communicative activities in English classrooms. Finally, the researcher spent considerable time translating the interview questions from English to Thai with appropriate meanings in order for the interviewees to understand the questions and to answer in Thai. During the interview, some teachers and students did not answer the questions. They also took one and a half hours to complete all of the questions.

Recommendations

This research revealed the students and teachers' perceptions toward the CLT approach and the different views of students and teachers on the CLT approach. The researcher hoped that the key findings would contribute to the field of English-language teaching in Thailand. However, further researcher in this area will shed light on important issues. There can be explorations on the following recommendations. Firstly, in this study, the researcher found the differences of students and teachers' roles of the CLT when they were in communication class. Further studies should explore students and teachers' roles of the CLT in English classrooms at different school levels. This approach could offer important information for researchers attempting to understand the needs and interests of students and teachers to develop communication skills.

Secondly, the findings reported that almost all the teacher participants still used the grammar translation method to teach English. Further studies should examine how Thai EFL teachers balance communicative competence and grammar instruction in their language classrooms. Based on the findings of this study, almost all the teachers agree that CLT is a useful approach to develop students' communication skill. However, they wanted to help their students to achieve high scores in the National Test which is focused on reading and writing skills. They also used both the CLT and the grammar translation method to develop communication skills for students. To explore how teachers balance communicative competence and grammar instruction will provide more direct support for classroom English teachers since Thai EFL teachers believe that grammar instruction is necessary.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore students and teachers' perceptions of the CLT approach, especially English teaching for communication. The participants involved 295 students and 20 teachers of Loei Primary Educational Service Area Office 2. To explain the phenomenon of this study, the researcher used a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to discover students and teachers' perceptions of learning and teaching English through CLT. The researcher summarized the findings based on three research questions. Firstly, the researcher found that almost all of the students believed that the CLT approach could develop communication skills. They also stated that they had opportunities to participate in a variety of CLT activities in their English class such as role plays and debates that helped them develop communication skills. In addition, they also enjoyed learning English for communication by using CLT activities. Secondly, most teachers understood the goals of the CLT approach. They could apply this CLT teaching technique to develop students' communication skills. In addition, the teachers made positive comments toward learning English in general. The teachers agreed that using the CLT approach could help students develop communication skills in authentic situations.

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