



A development of a blended learning enhancement course based on grammar-translation and communicative language learning approaches to enhance pre-service teachers' English language competencies for university students in preparation for public service entrance examination in Thailand

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were to: study pre-service teachers' English language problems and needs, develop and assess the quality of a blended learning course based on grammar-translation and communicative approaches to enhance pre-service teachers' English language competencies, implement and compare preservice teachers' English language competencies and study pre-service teachers' satisfaction and perception towards the blended learning enhancement course. A paired-group pre-test/post-test design was applied in this study. The samples consisted of 73 students (sec. 1 = 35, Sec. 2 = 38) from the department of education, selected through clustered random sampling techniques from the faculty of Education, Naresuan University. Blended learning course, semi-structured interview, evaluation forms, course handbook, English competency assessment test, satisfaction assessment questionnaire and perception semi-structured interview all constituted the research instruments. Paired t-test was used for comparing students' language competencies while content analysis was used in analyzing data from semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that: (1) Pre-service teachers lack knowledge and understanding of grammatical structures/vocabulary, lack knowledge and understanding of communicative interactions and the inability to read and write using correct language structures, hence, the need to solve the problems; (2) A blended learning enhancement course was developed consisting of 6 components: principle, objective, learning content, learning activities, instructional media and assessment. The blended learning enhancement course was at the highest level of appropriateness ($\bar{x} = 4.83$, $SD = 0.17$) and feasible for implementation; and (3) Pre-service teachers' English language competencies after course implementation were enhanced and significantly higher than before for both samples ($\bar{x} = 41.80$ – $\bar{x} = 80.63$ with $D = 38.83$, $t = 29.14$ for sec.1 and $\bar{x} = 38.71$ – $\bar{x} = 80.39$ with $D = 41.68$, $t = 33.85$ for sec. 2). (4) Pre-service teachers' satisfaction towards the blended learning course was at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.95$, $SD = 0.19$) with positive perceptions and expressions of enhancement in the English language competencies.

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Introduction

English is a global lingua franca that is used for international communication. It is spoken by over 400 million people across 53 countries worldwide. It is a commonly used language, and the number of people studying English language continues to rise. The world has become a global village Karahan (2007), and with English language as a global language, technology, entertainment, books and music, commerce, and all sectors have experienced a dramatic change in language such that even countries that do not use English as a language of communication focus on developing their language competencies in order to compete in the world. English is currently the language of the computer and the internet. It is estimated that about 565 million people use the internet every day and about 52 percent of the world's most visited websites are displayed in English. The English language is used as a medium for communication in many regional and international organizations including the UNO and all its organs, European Union, World Trade Organization, UNESCO, and ASEAN. With Thailand being a member in some of these organizations such as ASEAN and UNO, where English is used for communication, there is a need to enhance English language competencies in order to meet the world's standards and in order to effectively participate and collaborate with other country members. For Thailand to compete at the world's standards, the country must be able to develop citizens who are able to interact using the English language. In Thailand, English is taught as a compulsory subject at all levels with the purpose of enhancing language competencies, helping them communicate in all forms, cooperating with global citizens, and giving them an open door to the world and (Ministry of Education, 2008; Wongsothorn, 2003). According to the Office of The Basic Education Commission (2015), pre-service teachers wishing to obtain a professional teachers' license must meet the professional standards by passing the English language competency test. The English proficiency test is for all students who will graduate from the faculty of education or from different faculties and wish to obtain a professional teacher's license. In a meeting held by The Higher Education Commission, Meeting No. 3/2016 on March 22, 2016, it was agreed that all teachers wishing to obtain a professional teacher's license require an English proficiency test score at B1 level according to the CEFR. From this meeting, it was stated that all Higher learning institutions must raise English language standards for

their students if they wish to help them obtain a professional license. The Common European Framework of Reference categorizes the level of proficiency in English for communication into 6 proficiency levels, namely A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. The Teachers Council of Thailand defines as a framework for assessing student teacher's ability to use English for communication in accordance with the CEFR at B1 level considering listening, reading, spoken interaction, and written interactions. This test is based on assessing communicative competencies taking into consideration language structures, situational communication tests, and the ability to handle situations using the English language. For students to succeed in this language proficiency test, they must have full knowledge and understanding of language structure or grammar and vocabulary and also an understanding and ability to handle different spoken, reading, and written interactions using communicative language. The outbreak of the deadly COVID-19 in 2019 led to a fast spread and infections in all parts of the world including Thailand and resulted in many deaths. To contain the spread of COVID-19, many educational institutions moved their classroom teaching and learning activities to online platforms beginning in mid-February 2020. This led to digital transformations in all education systems such that online teaching and learning has become a prominent part of the education system as instructors and learners who never thought or believed in teaching and or learning online are faced with a situation where they are asked to teach and learn online, a new teaching and learning ecosystem called online learning. With all learning institutions closed and in order to prevent the spread of this pandemic, the researchers intended to develop a blended learning enhancement course based on grammar-translation and communicative approaches to enhance pre-service teachers' language competencies through blended instruction. Blended learning gives learners the opportunity to learn in face-to-face instruction with computer-based instruction environments. It involves a mixture of opportunities for online and traditional learning interaction and involves a combination of many technological resources and pedagogical approaches to enhance instruction. Blended learning is beneficial to students as it helps in developing language learners' autonomy, providing individualized language support, encouraging, increasing students' interaction and engagement, providing opportunities to practice the language beyond the class settings, giving learners the opportunity to learn at their convenience, and above all, enhancing learners' English language competencies.

Grammar translation emphasizes the enhancement of learners' language structures as an important component of language learning. According to Fish (2003), the grammar-translation approach enhances learners' accurate, meaningful and appropriate communication through an enhancement of learners' language structures. It gets straight to the point, it is time-saving, acknowledges the role of cognitive structures in language acquisition, and above all, it allows instructors to handle language points as they occur. Brown (1994) stated that grammar-translation is teacher-centered and ineffective in enhancing oral productions in learners as it doesn't give learners an opportunity to use the language in authentic situations. A combination of grammar-translation and communicative approaches become necessary in enhancing learners' language competencies in both oral and written forms.

The communicative approach is based on the premise that language learning is successful when learners are given the opportunity to make meaningful and authentic communications using the target language. It emphasizes the development of learners' oral competence through communicative activities and by giving the learners the opportunity to communicate rather than solely explain grammatical structures and rules. The communicative approach focuses more on the use of the target language and the improvement of oral communicative competency (Richards & Rogers, 2001). An important characteristic of the communicative approach is its authentic use of the English language in which activities and instructional materials utilized in the instructional process are all authentic. Richards (2006) sees the communicative approach as one that focuses on the use of language for a wide range of different functions with variations according situations, text, context and language users in a given environment. The communicative approach prepares learners for meaningful language usage in real-life situations (Thornbury, 2008). With the communication approach, language learners can practice through assigned tasks to enhance their language competencies (Littlewood, 1981). The grammar-translation and communicative approaches are effective in language instruction though they differ in terms of approach, objective and process. Grammar translation emphasizes the development of language structures and vocabulary while the communicative approach focuses on developing oral productions in authentic situations. Thus, combining grammar-translation and communicative approaches in blended instruction results in the development of a new approach that gives learners knowledge and understanding of language structures/vocabulary through online

platforms and at the same time gives them an opportunity to use their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in developing their English language competencies and ability to understand and handle spoken, written and reading interactions (communicative competencies), thereby getting ready for the English proficiency examination.

Research Objectives

1. To study pre-service teachers' English language competency problems and needs.
2. To develop and assess the quality of a blended learning enhancement course based on grammar-translation and communicative approaches to enhance pre-service teachers' English language competencies for university students in preparation for public service entrance examination in Thailand.
3. Implement and study the effectiveness of the blended learning enhancement course based on grammar-translation and communicative approaches to enhance pre-service teachers' English language competencies for university students in preparation for the public service entrance examination in Thailand.
4. Investigate pre-service teachers' satisfaction and perception towards the blended learning enhancement course based on grammar-translation and communicative approaches to enhance pre-service teachers' English language competencies.

Literature Review

The Oxford Advanced Dictionary defines competence as a person's ability, skills and authority established by knowledge and experiences in order to effectively and correctly perform a given task. According to Beams (2008); Colman (2009); and Richards and Rodgers (2003), competencies refer to a description of essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors required for effective performance of a given task. Lehmann (2007) defines competence as a bundle of cognitively controlled skills in some particular domain developed through effective and continuous practice and experience. Language competence refers to a person's comprehension or understanding of a language, cognitive aspect in language acquisition and the capability to use the language in various manifestations or forms to produce meaningful output and language performance (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Chomsky, 1965). Communicative competence in second or foreign language learning include grammatical

and sociolinguistic competence, which can be developed in language learners by using properly designed instructional activities (Canale & Swain 1980, as cited in Leech & Svartvik, 2006). Learners are said to have language competencies when they acquire grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistics competence and textual competence and can use the target language in handling real-life situations or problems when faced with such. According to Richards et al. (1992), Chomsky's competence theory focuses mostly on abstract grammatical knowledge and ability. Nonglak et al. (2020) developed a curriculum to enhance informative English-speaking ability based on competency-based approach for upper secondary school students, and the results revealed that students' informative speaking ability after learning through the curriculum was significantly enhanced. English language competencies can be enhanced through blended learning.

Blended learning is an approach to instruction widely adopted and implemented by instructors or teachers from different subject areas, and it is rapidly being used worldwide especially with the spread of Covid 19. Blended learning is intermixing of any instructional forms to achieve an educational objective (Driscoll, 2002). In Blended learning, classroom seat time is replaced by online learning activities that involve learners in achieving the goals of the course. Sharma and Barrett (2009) and Claypole (2003) see blended learning as a combination of face-to-face classroom component with an appropriate use of technology. According to Boelens et al. (2015), Horn and Staker (2014), and Bolandifar (2017), blended learning is an instructional teaching approach that combines online and face-to-face instruction with technology-mediated instruction or online learning. Horn and Stakers (2014) see blended learning as an important instructional approach as it enable students to control their activities. Lebrun et al. (2014) suggested a typology of 6 configurations of blended learning environments: "scene", "screen", "cockpit", "crew", "metro" and "ecosystem", which are classified into two instructional design approaches, namely: teacher-centered and student-centered learning. It is considered one of the most efficient approaches to support students' learning as it brings the benefits of online learning and face-to-face delivery of learning together (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Blended learning instruction and courses are becoming very popular in every academic sphere today (Bock et al., 2018) since it enables the use of computer-based instruction to enhance face-to-face interaction between the instructor and learners (Morris, 2010). Isti'anah (2017) stated that blended learning aims at providing effective and efficient learning

experience by combining learning environment which suits the students. According to Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013), blended learning appeared in the domains of English language teaching and learning as it facilitates collaboration and engagement among students to improve their skills in language learning as it is increasingly becoming a viewpoint for students in learning institutions. Akbarov et al. (2018); Alnoori and Obaid (2017); Behjat (2012); Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017); Liu (2013); Manan et al. (2012); and Zhang and Zhu (2018) investigated the effectiveness of blended learning in English language teaching and learning, and positive results were recorded stating that blended learning is an effective approach to language instruction with several benefits.

Grammar-translation focuses on second language grammar and vocabulary instruction and uses the learner's first language as the language of instruction in order to ease comprehension, knowledge acquisition and to enable learners know the meaning of what is referred in the target language (Brown, 2007; Cunningham, 2000). It involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attentions to some specific grammatical forms thereby enabling them either to understand it meta-linguistically, process it in understanding and/or production so that they can internalize it, giving learners the opportunity to analyze the language rather than use it (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Ellis, 2006). Grammar is taught deductively (Harmer, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2004; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Developing learners' language structures and vocabulary assures the production of correct structures in oral and written communication and helps learners get acquainted with target language literature structures as texts are translated using the learners' first language (Hedge, 2000; Thanasoulas, 2002). According to Ellis (2006) grammar instruction affects both acquired and learned knowledge. Damiani (2003) conducted a study on grammar translation approach, and the result asserts that it is the best approach for grammar and vocabulary instruction. Grammar translation provides learners with a wide range of vocabulary and language structures but unfortunately, it's not effective in enhancing learners' oral competencies (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). According to Brown (1994); Thuleen (1996), Widdowson (1978) the grammar translation approach does virtually nothing in enhancing learners' oral production as it teaches learners about language structures without an opportunity for authentic, meaningful and real-life language practice. This has led to the combination of communicative approach in enhancing learners' oral competency enhancement.

The communicative approach to language learning emphasizes interaction and opportunities for learners to develop oral competencies through practice (Halliday, 1973; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). According to Brown (2007); Rai (2003) the communicative approach facilitates learners' vocabulary and oral competency acquisition through real, authentic and meaningful communication. In the communicative approach, grammatical structures and rules are presented and taught inductively and as such, learners should perceive them as parts of natural language (Newby, 2015; Pavlovych & Ivanova, 2016; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Thompson, 1996). The communicative approach has as an objective to enhance language learner's oral productions (Chang, 2011; Fauziati, 2008) and also, learners are provided with examples for a specific rule that facilitate practice, production and communication embraces a whole spectrum of language functions and notions. In this approach, instructional materials and learning activities reflect authentic and real-world meaningful communication (Richards, 2006) and shows a clear relationship between the target language and communication in terms of oral production competencies, which gives learners the opportunity to effectively speak out meaning in authentic situation which results from effective practice. Base on Harmer's (2001) view, there are two aspects of communicative language learning, namely: what to learn (content) and how it is learned (method). As such, in order to effectively enhance learners' language competencies, the communicative approach must pay attention to both functional and structural language aspects (Littlewood, 1981). The communicative approach is learner-centered focusing on developing learners' confidence through authentic communication as theoretical aspects and principles are effectively put to practice through oral meaningful and authentic communication (Demirezen, 2011; Ellis, 1996).

A combination of grammar-translation and communicative language learning approaches in blended learning instruction gives learners an understanding of language structures and language usage as well as the opportunity to learn grammatical structures/vocabulary as well as use the acquired grammar and vocabulary in developing their oral communicative competencies through meaningful oral practice. With the blended learning enhancement course based on grammar-translation and communicative language learning approaches to enhance pre-service teachers' language competencies, learners are given the opportunity to learn and fully comprehend grammatical structures and vocabulary as instruction is done in the learners' first language and developing their communicative competencies in an online and face-to-face learning

environment. Pre-service teachers are given the opportunity to use the acquired language structures in making meaningful oral practice. Shawana et al. (2017) analyzed an integration of the grammar-translation and communicative approaches in language teaching and concluded that the combination of grammar-translation and communicative approach is effective for second language learning.

Methodology

Studying Pre-Service Teachers' Language Competency Problems and Needs, Course Development, Implementation and Evaluation

This research was conducted using the following four research and development phases according to the research objectives:

Phase 1: Studying pre-service teachers' English language competency problems and needs: In order to study pre-service teachers' English language competency problems and needs, group interviews were conducted with 250 pre-service teachers from all departments in the Faculty of Education, Naresuan University. The problems and needs under study were in relation to teachers' proficiency in English language examination with emphasis on getting information that will lead to the preparation of pre-service teachers for the teacher's license English proficiency examination.

Phase 2: Developing and assessing the quality of the blended learning course:

2.1 The interview from phase 1 found students' lack of knowledge and understanding of grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing and communicative interactions (competencies), and they also expressed the need to develop their English language competencies with emphasis on the problems identified. With these problems identified, the researchers critically analyzed and synthesized various concepts consisting of blended learning, grammar-translation, communicative language approaches, in order to design the content and learning activities which were used as bases for developing a blended learning enhancement course to enhance pre-service teachers' English language competencies.

2.2 Quality assessment and validity check were done by 3 experts using a 5-level Likert rating scale and a pilot study was conducted with 32 third-year pre-service teachers from the Department of Computer, Faculty of Education, Naresuan University to study the feasibility of the developed blended learning English language competency enhancement course.

Phase 3: Implementing and studying the effectiveness of the blended learning course:

3.1 A pre-test was administered to the sample groups (paired sample)

3.2 The course implementation was done with a paired sample of 73 students (sec. 1 = 35, Sec. 2 = 38) from the Department of Thai language in the Faculty of Education, Naresuan University. The sample was selected through clustered random sampling. The course was implemented for a total of 36 hours for each sample group. Since all educational institutions were closed down due to the spread of Covid 19, the course implementation process was done using an online platform (Microsoft team). A paired-sample pretest-posttest design was used to compare pre-service teachers' English competencies before and after the blended course implementation. During the implementation process, a variety of activities were used focusing on enhancing pre-service teachers' language structures/rules, vocabulary, reading and oral communication competencies. Pre-service teachers were actively involved in the implementation process. Throughout the learning process, worksheets were provided to assess learners' progress in terms of grammar, vocabulary, situational test items and oral communication.

3.4. An English competency assessment test (posttest) consisting of 100 multiple choice questions was administered to assess pre-service teachers' competency after implementation.

Phase 4: An investigation of pre-service teachers' satisfaction and perceptions towards a blended learning course was conducted using a satisfaction assessment questionnaire and a perception assessment semi-structured interview with emphasis on input, process and output. The questionnaire was completed and interviews were conducted after the course implementation process. The research procedures are summarized in [Figure 1](#) as follows.

Research Participants

The blended learning enhancement course was implemented with 73 students (sec. 1 = 35, Sec. 2 = 38) from the Department of Thai language, selected through

clustered random sampling techniques from the Faculty of Education, Naresuan University in the first semester of 2021 academic year.

Research Instruments

The research instruments consisted of: (1) a blended learning enhancement course consisting of 6 components (principles, objective, learning content, learning activities, instructional media and assessment and evaluation); (2) a blended learning course handbook; (3) a blended learning enhancement course and handbook evaluation forms; (4) an English language competency assessment test consisting of 100 multiple choice items with two parts (part 1 consisted of 50 multiple choice grammar-based questions while part 2 consisted of 50 multiple-choice communicative language-based questions); and (5) a satisfaction assessment questionnaire consisting of 9 items with the perception assessment semi-structured interview consisting of 9 items. The researchers studied documents on how to develop semi-structured interviews, English language competency assessment test and satisfaction assessment questionnaire, and perception assessment semi-structured interviews. After studying related documents, the instruments were developed and submitted to experts for evaluation and validity check. Some corrections were made based on the comments of the experts, and a pilot study was conducted to ensure the feasibility and reliability of the instruments.

Data Analysis

The *t*-test dependable (paired *t*-test) was used to compare pre-service teachers' English language competencies between pre-and post-test, whereas descriptive statistics were used to analyze data from the evaluation of the blended learning course, course handbook and pre-service teachers' satisfaction assessment questionnaire. Content analysis was used to analyze results from studying preservice teachers' language problems and needs and the perception from semi-structured interviews.

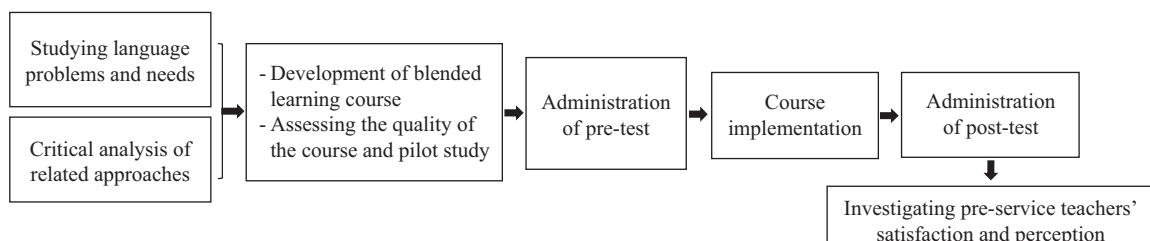


Figure 1 Summary of research procedures

Results and Discussions

The Results of Studying Pre-Service Teachers' English Competency Problems and Needs

The results of studying preservice teachers' language competency problems and needs revealed a lack of knowledge and understanding of language structures, vocabulary inability to read and write correctly and inability to use language structures correctly in communicative interactions. Pre-service teachers expressed the need to enhance their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and ability to handle communicative interactions with correct language structures and vocabulary and ability to read and write.

Results of Blended Learning Course Development and Quality Assessment

The results of blended learning course development and quality assessment revealed that the developed blended learning course based on grammar translation and communicative approaches consisted of 6 components, namely: principle, objective, learning content, learning activities, instructional media and assessment. The learning activities included: systematic explanation of language structures through online platform, online presentation and explanation of communicative task with new grammar structure in form of conversations, online assignment and practice of communicative task using new language structures (transitional procedure) and online presentation of communicative task and feedback provision (Figure 2).

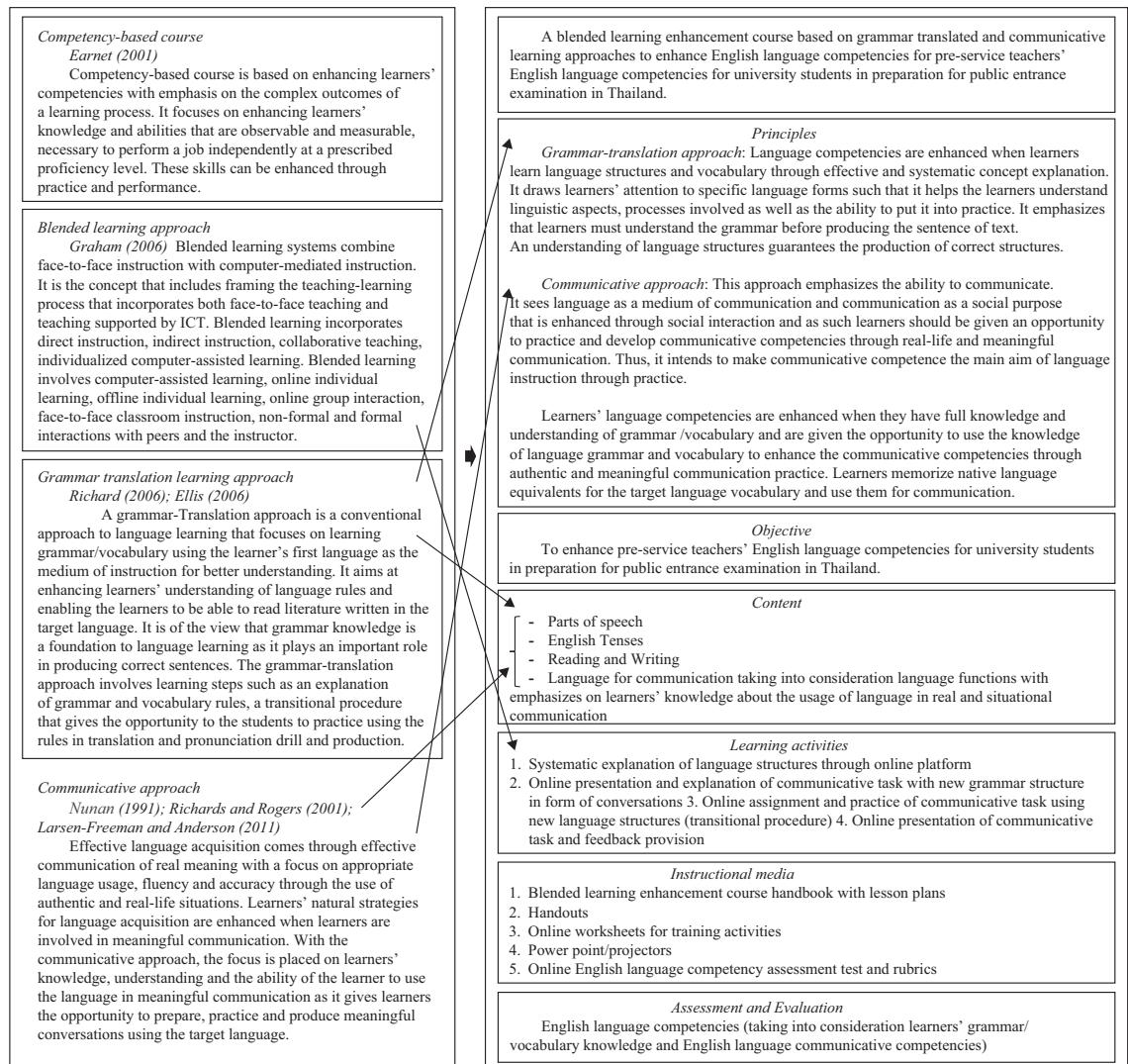


Figure 2 A conceptual framework to enhance preservice teachers' English language competencies

An evaluation of the developed blended learning enhancement course revealed that the course was generally at the highest level of appropriateness ($\bar{x} = 4.83$, $SD = 0.17$). This is an indication that all curriculum components were in line with the criteria of enhanced course development and the needs of pre-service teachers. The highest level of appropriateness was because the course was systematically developed from studying pre-service teachers' problems and needs, critical analysis-synthesis of related approaches before designing learning activities before course development. After development, the course was checked and corrected by experts and a pilot study was conducted and modifications made, thus, making the course highly appropriate. The results were in conformity with Suphakit and Nillapun (2020), who developed an enrichment curriculum to enhance science English bilingual education competency for elementary education teacher students. The results of curriculum evaluation revealed that it was at an excellent level ($\bar{x} = 4.67$, $SD = 0.82$). The results were also in conformity with Khaopray and Keawurai (2018), who developed a curriculum based on authentic instruction to enhance the ability in environmental education instruction of teacher students. The results on curriculum evaluation and pilot study proved that the curriculum was suitable and potentially practical for implementation.

Based on the pilot study, it was found that the content, learning activities, instructional media, and timeframe were appropriate and important in enhancing student teachers' English language competencies.

The Results of Blended Learning Enhancement Course Implementation

The development and implementation of a blended learning enhancement course based on grammar-translation and communicative approaches to enhance pre-service teachers' language competencies focuses on developing preservice teachers' language competences

through systematicity explanation of language structures and organization of learning activities where learners apply the learned language structures in meaningful, authentic and real-world communication as in **Table 1** as follows.

After the implementation of the blended learning enhancement course, the findings revealed that pre-service teachers' English language competencies were greatly enhanced and significantly higher than before for both samples ($\bar{x} = 41.80 - \bar{x} = 80.63$ with $D = 38.83$, $t = 29.14$ for sec.1 and $\bar{x} = 38.71 - \bar{x} = 80.39$ with $D = 41.68$, $t = 33.85$ for sec. 2). Several factors accounted for the significant enhancement of pre-service teachers' English language competencies. During the course implementation process, learning activities were systematically planned, language concepts and structures were comprehensively explained and speaking enhancement activities were based on the course objectives. The learning activities were organized with a focus on language structure, communicative interactions, and reading and writing. Students were taught how to read, and make understanding of situations, use correct language structures and vocabulary, understand different interactions in communication situations as well as write with an understanding of a situation. The content, learning activities, and instructional media were critically selected and placed within learners' range and in line with the objectives. Learning activities focused on the systematic explanation of language structures through an online platform, online presentation, and explanation of communicative task with new grammar structure in the form of conversations, online assignment and practice of communicative task using new language structures (transitional procedure) and online presentation of communicative task and feedback provision. The implementation of the course utilized practical activities to enhance learners' language knowledge/structures, vocabulary and oral competencies. Learners actively participated in all learning activities in learning grammar, vocabulary and oral competency with the use of real-life and meaningful communication; thus,

Table 1 Comparison of pre-service teachers' language competencies before and after blended learning enhancement course implementation

Pre-service teachers' English language competencies	\bar{x}	SD	D	SD_D	t	(n = 73) p
Sample group 1 (n = 35)						
Pre-test	41.80	7.05	38.83	7.88	29.14*	.000
Post test	80.63	4.75				
Sample group 2 (n = 38)						
Pre-test	38.71	6.86	41.68	7.59	33.85*	.000
Post test	80.39	4.52				

Note: **p < .01.

developing their language competencies. The findings were in conformity with Damiani (2003), who asserted that grammar translation is the best approach for grammar and vocabulary instruction. The results were also in line with Shawana et al. (2017), who integrated the grammar-translation and communicative approaches in language teaching and concluded that there is a ray of hope to succeed, that the combination of grammar translation and communicative approaches proved effective for second language learning. Equally, the results were consistent with Nonglak et al. (2020), whose results after developing a curriculum to enhance informative English-speaking ability based on competency-based approach for upper secondary school students found that students' informative speaking ability after curriculum implementation was significantly higher than before at .05 level and also in line with Chatuporn (2018), who found that the English speaking ability of the participants in terms of answer and response, grammar and structure were averagely rated at 2.90 and 2.50 respectively after the post-test, both higher than the pretest after the development and implementation of an English for communication course for tourist-Boat Paddlers at Damnoen Saduak Floating Market.

Results of Investigating Pre-Service Teachers' Satisfaction and Perception towards the Course and Implementation Process

An investigation of learners' satisfaction and perception towards the blended learning course focuses on studying how pre-service teachers perceive the course to be effective or ineffective in achieving the stated objectives. An investigation of pre-service teachers' satisfaction and perception were conducted using a 5 level Likert rating scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) and a perception assessment semi-structured interview.

It was found that pre-service teachers' satisfaction ($\bar{x} = 4.95$, $SD = 0.19$) towards the blended learning enhancement course based on grammar-translation and communicative language learning approaches to enhance pre-service teachers' English language competencies for university students in preparation for public service entrance examination in Thailand was at the highest level. Pre-service teachers' perceptions towards the course and implementation process were positive. Students expressed an understanding and ability to use correct language structures and vocabulary, ability to interact in communication and ability to read, write and understand reading and writing activities. The highest satisfaction level and positive perception towards the course and implementation process is

accounted for by some factors. Learning activities were learner-centered, comprehensive, slow and step-by-step explanation of language structures, interactive learning activities, motivation, systematic organization of learning activities and above all, the learning environment was relaxed with the use of content, which was directly related to learners' needs, and the use of varied instructional media. Pre-service teachers were encouraged to carry out meaningful communications using authentic and real-life situations. Pre-service teachers worked in pairs and in small groups, which gave them a secure and relaxed learning atmosphere. Equally, the instruction was blended, students learned online and could follow up the activities at their convenience. The findings were in line with Thanyalak (2013), who developed an English oral communication marketing course using the project-based learning approach and a study of students' attitude towards the course were positive.

Conclusion

This research had as the focal point to enhance pre-service teachers' English language competencies through the development of a blended learning enhancement course based on grammar-translation and communicative language learning approaches and to investigate pre-service teachers' satisfaction and perception towards the course and implementation process. From the research findings, the blended learning enhancement course was appropriate and effective in enhancing pre-service teachers' language competencies. Grammar instruction enhances learners' knowledge and understanding of language structures, vocabulary while the communicative approach enhances learners' oral competencies. The results revealed that pre-service teachers' language competencies were significantly enhanced at .05 level, pre-service teachers' satisfaction was at the highest level of satisfaction ($\bar{x} = 4.95$, $SD = 0.19$) with positive perception towards the blended learning enhancement course and the implementation process. Thus, an enhancement of language competencies should involve design and implementation of theoretical and activity-based instruction where learners are given an opportunity to take control of their learning, effectively understand the language structures as well as put them into practice through authentic and real-life meaningful communication to enhance both their knowledge, understanding and competencies. An enhancement of language competencies requires effective theoretical concept explanation

and practice with varied learner-centered and competency development approaches. In order to comprehensively achieve the stated instructional aims, steps such as systematic explanation of language structures, presentation and explanation of speaking task with new grammar structure in the form of conversations, assignment of speaking task, practice speaking task with new grammatical structures and production or presentation of speaking task are necessary.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the implementation of the blended learning enhancement course based on grammar-translation and communicative learning approaches to enhance pre-service teachers' English language competencies, such should take into consideration learners' problems, needs and level of readiness, learning activities should be organized in pairs or small groups as learners have the tendency to feel relaxed, learn effectively when working in small groups or pairs. Instructors must be flexible, motivating and also provide authentic and interactive activities with authentic instructional materials for effective learning. Teacher training institutions and other educational institutions should focus on developing language competencies for pre-service teachers in order to prepare them for public service employment and effective professionalism.

The research scope focused on enhancing pre-service teachers' language competencies considering only grammatical knowledge and communicative competency for examination purpose. Further research should concentrate on developing other competency-enhancing courses in order to enhance other language competencies such as writing, listening, and reading using other learning approaches as all language competencies are important and required for job acquisition. Moreover, in order to generalize the research findings, future studies should expand the sample to other institutions with different characteristics as this study considered only a small sample from the faculty of Education, Naresuan University.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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