วารสารอิเล็กทรอนิกส์
ทางการศึกษา

การศึกษาแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับการสอนภาษาอังกฤษและการปฏิบัติจริงในชั้นเรียนตามทฤษฎีการสอน
ภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารของครูผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษ ระดับมัธยมศึกษา ในจังหวัดภูเก็ต
A STUDY OF CLT CONCEPTS AND APPLICATION THROUGH
SELF-MONITORING OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN PHUKET

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับแนวคิดกับการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารตามทฤษฎีการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารของครูผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษ ระดับมัธยมศึกษา ในเขตอำเภอเมืองจังหวัดภูเก็ต 2) ศึกษาการปฏิบัติการสอนจริงของผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษในชั้นเรียนตามแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับการสอนภาษาอังกฤษตามทฤษฎีการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสาร กลุ่มตัวอย่างประกอบด้วย ครูผู้สอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษระดับชั้นมัธยมศึกษา จำนวน 50 คน รวมทั้งครูจากกลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวน 5 คน สำหรับการสัมภาษณ์ในงานวิจัยนี้และทำการสังเกตการปฏิบัติการสอนจริงในชั้นเรียนกับผู้สอนทั้ง 5 คนหลังการสังเกตการปฏิบัติการสอนจริงในชั้นเรียน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ ได้แก่ แบบสอบถามวัดความเข้าใจตามแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารตามทฤษฎีการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสาร, คำถามสำหรับการสัมภาษณ์และแบบประเมินการปฏิบัติการสอนจริงในชั้นเรียน สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลคือ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน t-test และ one-way ANOVA

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า 1) ครูมีความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับแนวการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารตามทฤษฎีการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารค่อนข้างมาก 2) ผู้สอนได้นำแนวคิดการสอนเพื่อการสื่อสารไปปฏิบัติการสอนจริงในชั้นเรียน แต่ใช้วิธีการผสมผสานทั้งแบบดั้งเดิมกับแบบแนวคิดการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารโดยกิจกรรมที่จัดเป็นแบบคู่และกลุ่มอย่างไรก็ดีครูผู้สอนก็ยังคงเน้นการสอนตามหนังสือเรียนมากกว่าการทำกิจกรรมและคงใช้ภาษาไทยเพื่อการสื่อสารเป็นหลักจากการสัมภาษณ์พบว่าสาเหตุเนื่องมาจากเวลาที่จำกัดและจำนวนนักเรียนที่มากเกินไปทำให้การปฏิบัติตามแนวคิดการสอนเพื่อการสื่อสารไม่ดีเท่าที่ควร

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to: 1) examine high school teachers' understanding on the concepts of Communicative Language Teaching Approach; and, 2) examine high school teachers' CLT application in English instruction. The sample consisted of 50 high school English teachers from Muang district in Phuket province. Five of whom took part in semi-structured interviews immediately after the classes had been observed. The research instruments employed in this study comprised a series of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. The statistics computed from the data included the averages, standard deviations (S.D.), and percentages. Statistical techniques such as t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were also performed.

The results revealed: 1) the teachers who partook in this study exhibit a clear understanding of The CLT concepts. 2) They applied CLT in class but integrated with traditional teaching in their classrooms. The students got to work in pairs or in groups according to the CLT methodology but teachers still followed set materials from the books rather than encourage communicative activities in class. In addition, Thai language was used as the main medium of instruction. The responses from the semi-structured interviews suggested that the failure of applying strictly conform to CLT approach was mainly due to large class size and time constraints.

คำสำคัญ: แนวคิด/ ทฤษฎีการการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสาร/ ครูผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษระดับมัธยม ศึกษา/ การปฏิบัติจริงในชั้นเรียน

KEYWORDS: CONCEPTS/ COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACH/ HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS/ APPLICATIONS

Introduction

It has been widely documented that English instruction in Thai schools is mainly textbook-based with a focus on grammatical structures, vocabulary, reading, and learning methods rather than speaking or communicative skills. As Thai is used as the main medium of instruction in the classroom, students tend to have little exposure to real-life English communication (Prapphal, 2008). Seeking a better alternative to this type of instruction, a number or studies have been conducted to see if the Communicative Language Teaching approach or CLT can be applied effectively as a language teaching method in the English as a Foreign Language context (Ellis, 1996; Xiaoju, 1984; Li, 1998; Burnaby & Sun, 1989).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), students tend to not have much motivation and/or interaction in the traditional classroom as teachers who are viewed as authorities on the subject matter usually spend the majority of their time explaining the structure and usage of the language. Furthermore, students often use their mother tongue to communicate while conducting activities in class. As a result of such instruction, students are generally poorly equipped to use English outside of classroom. Also, as examinations are traditionally grammar-based, there is little focus on the communicative aspects of English.

Some researchers claim that the root of the problem in English learning for Thai students stems directly from the teachers. Similarly, some researchers in their study of English teachers in the three southern provinces of Thailand found a lack basic knowledge of

content, teaching methods, materials usage and experience in choosing appropriate in-class activities. Some studies that have focused on the application of Communicative Language Teaching to English teaching in Thailand have found that it has not been successful because of the teachers' lack of understanding of the concepts of CLT (Saringkanan, 1983; Wansahawetwisit, 1987). This ineffectiveness can be partially attributed to the lack of teachers regularly going through the process of self-assessment during their career. According to Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992), self-monitoring or self-observation entails observing and recording information about one's own behaviors for the purpose of achieving a better understanding and control over one's behaviors. Emphasizing the role of observation techniques, Millrood (1998) states that "there is a need for handy and time-saving observation techniques, which can be used to reflect on the lesson that is being observed". Richards (1990) introduces three major approaches for self-monitoring in teaching: personal reflection, self-reporting, and self-review. The focus of the present research focuses solely on the self-reporting aspect which will be described in further detail.

Self-reporting is an efficient approach which involves having teachers complete an inventory or checklist to indicate which teaching practices are used in a particular lesson. The teachers can then reflect upon the discrepancies between their planned lesson and the actual one. A teacher, for instance, can use self-reporting to find out about the kinds of teaching activities he has used regularly, the extent to which the primary learning goals are being met, and the kinds of activities that are effective or fail to work at all.

Fahim, Hamidi, and Sarem (2013) claim that self-monitoring via self-observation gives teachers an appropriate understanding of what they actually do while teaching. Therefore, through the process of self-assessment, the teachers will be able to discover their strengths and weaknesses.

Doughty and Williams (1998) support the emphasis on fluency and communication over form and accuracy. According to Chastain (1988), speaking plays multiple roles in language acquisition. Being aware of these roles will enable the teachers to deepen their understanding and view speaking as a major component in developing a particular language skill and acquiring cultural knowledge. Brown (2001) notes that fluency and accuracy are both important skills to have, but adds that fluency should be placed above accuracy in significance in order to keep learners engaged in the use of language. This is seen by Richards & Rodgers (2001) as being one of the major concerns of CLT as students have to apply the language willingly and effectively in a new context to gain fluency, defined by Harmer (2001) as the ability of a foreign language speaker to communicate in a way that makes him understood by his conversation partners whether they are native speakers.

CLT is one of the more intriguing approaches in English instruction with its strong emphasis on communication. Hymes (1972) proposes that knowing a language involves more

than knowing a set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules, adding that in order to use the language effectively, students need to develop their communicative competence, i.e., the ability to use language they are learning appropriately in a given context. In addition, Canale and Swain (1980) contend that communicative competence comprises grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. According to Canale (1983), communicative competence refers to the underlying systems of knowledge and skills required for communication. In fact, this approach is based on the presumption that if we want to communicate effectively in real life, we have to learn to communicate by doing so in classroom settings. Thus, the teachers need to stimulate the learning environment in the classrooms with meaningful and purposeful language uses. As a consequence, they should have a profound understanding of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to be able to apply the techniques properly. Also, they should know how to promote the use of English communication in class.

It is commonly accepted that students tend to acquire language most effectively via communicative activities. Larsen and Freeman (2001) observe that classroom activities such as role-playing and picture strip stories that match the principles of communicative approach are an integral component of a CLT classroom. Richards and Rodgers (2001) explain that the emphasis in communicative language teaching on the process of communication rather than the mastery of language form leads to a different role for learners from those found in a more traditional second language classroom. Brown (2001) believes that the teacher's role in the communicative classroom should be to encourage students to use the language willingly and effectively outside of classroom. Hence, classroom tasks must equip students with the communicative skills necessary to use in those contexts.

Breen and Candlin (1980) state that the CLT activities in class should be conducted mainly by the learners themselves; thus, the teacher's role is reduced to mentoring and observing. As can be seen, the CLT method highlights this learner-centered teaching. Savignon (1991) claims that communicative language teaching has become a term for methods and curricula that embrace both the goals and the processes of classroom learning for teaching practice. CLT provides learners with an opportunity to experience language through communicative activities which help them acquire communicative competence.

Brown (2001) states that the characteristics of the CLT approach are that 1) teachers act as facilitators or mentors, not the providers of knowledge, and 2) teachers are co-communicators, needs analysts, and organizers of resources. Activities in CLT are often carried out by students in small group size (Larsen-Freeman, 2001) and interactions are strongly encouraged among a small number of students in order to maximize the effectiveness of time available.

A number of studies in the CLT literature deal with its application in ESL contexts. For instance, Ellis (1996) notes that commonly in ESL classrooms, since many of the ELS students do not share the same L1, they have no choice but to speak in the target language, thus benefiting the learning and practicing of the target language considerably. Ellis further investigated the appropriateness of the application of CLT in Vietnam. He found that the main problem in Vietnam is related to the deep-rooted conventional way of teaching a second language. The issue, according to Ellis, is due to the focus on grammar and translation in the formal examination system. The very same problem also occurs in China as mentioned by Burnaby and Sun (1989), who also report that teachers in China find it difficult to apply CLT. The problems encountered stem from the wide-ranging context of the curriculum, the conventional teaching method, class size, heavy workload, and the inadequacy of resources and equipment.

According to Mustafa (2001), Indonesia has experienced similar difficulties when it comes to adopting the communicative approach in EFL classes since the everyday environment is not conducive to acquiring English. He has also identified several factors contributing to this failure. First, the teachers themselves lack confidence in using the language in front of their classes. Also, time constraints limit student interaction in the classroom. The large classroom size is another key issue since it makes it harder for the teachers to manage the class effectively. Finally, the teachers place greater emphasis on teaching grammar and syntax since they are the focus of the exam. Other relevant factors include the lack of language usage outside of classroom.

According to Chowdhury (2012), there are mixed opinions about the application of CLT in an EFL context in Bangladesh. These studies indicate that half of the teachers had the misconception that CLT requires a lot of time from teachers in order to prepare lessons. The other barriers identified by the respondents were large class size, insufficient resources in the classroom, traditional teacher-centered grammar teaching methods, traditional grammar-based examinations, lack of support from the administration, lack of teacher training, lack of fluency of the teachers, lack of time to prepare communicative materials and lack of authentic materials and audio-visual materials. The misconceptions about CLT, however, were found to act as the main hurdle to the adoption of the communicative method (Chowdhury 2012).

As many researchers believe that the English teachers themselves are a major contributor to problems in English language learning, the teachers' understanding of the CLT concepts and applications should be further investigated through self-monitoring in order to determine the level of their knowledge and understanding of the communicative language teaching approach.

Objectives

The two research objectives of this study were:

1) To examine high school teachers' understanding of the concepts of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach; and,

2) To examine high school teachers' application of CLT in English instruction.

Methodology

Research Design

This study was a survey research conducted using a combination of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and class observations. The subjects consisted of 50 high school teachers from Muang district in Phuket in 2014. The computed statistics were the averages, standard deviations, and percentages. Statistical techniques including t-tests, and one-way ANOVAs were also performed.

Population and Participants

The population for this study consisted of 50 high school English teachers teaching in the 2nd semester of 2014 in Phuket Province. All of them were from the Muang district area. Of the 50 respondents, 40 were female and 10 are male; five out of the 50 took part in semi-structured interviews immediately after their classes had been observed.

Research Instruments

This research employed a series of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations to examine the high school teachers' understanding of the concepts of Communicative Language Teaching.

The questionnaire was composed of closed and open-ended questions and consisted of four parts as follows. Part 1 contained background information such as gender, age, and the number of years of English language teaching at the high school level. Part 2 was a 13-statement True/False checklist describing the six characteristics of CLT including objectives, content, teaching, learning activities, teachers' and learners' roles, assessment, and materials. These aspects are based on Hymes (1972), Breen & Candlin (1980), Brown (2001), Richards and Rodgers (2001), and Savignon (1982). Part 2 was adapted from Saringkanan (1983) and Chowdhury (2012). In Part 3, participants were asked to choose which activities they thought were communicative exercises for a language class. This part was adapted from Md. Khaled Bin Chowdhury (2012). The final part required the participants to design a learning activity based on the CLT approach under the topic of "My favorite food".

The instruments used in the observation consisted of classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The classroom observations were adapted from Chowdhury (2012) and they contained 15 statements of Yes/No responses. The questions prepared for the semi-structured interviews consisted of five questions adapted from Al-Magid (2006).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face. The advantage of these interviews was that it should more accurately reflect the teachers' true feelings.

Data Collection Procedures

To examine the teachers' understanding on the concepts of CLT, questionnaires were given to 50 high school teachers from Muang district in Phuket. The teachers were asked to complete the questionnaires and the responses were verified by the researcher. As for the interviews, five classes were chosen to be observed and interviews were conducted immediately after the classes. Each interview lasted between five and ten minutes and every exchange was audio recorded.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using statistical software to compute the means, standard deviations, and percentages of participants with correct or incorrect responses. The scores from parts 2 and 3 of the questionnaires were used to examine high school teachers' understanding of the concepts of the Communicative Language Teaching approach. As for classroom observation, the researcher sat in and observed from the back of the room. Each participant was observed for approximately 50 minutes and the subsequent interview lasted around five to ten minutes. The information from the observations and interviews was used to validate the teachers' application of CLT in English instruction in greater detail.

Results

Research question 1: To what extent do high school teachers understand the concepts of CLT through their reflection?

Questionnaires were used to examine high school teachers' understanding of the concepts of CLT through self-monitoring. The questions were made up of four parts as follows:

Part 1 contained background information of the respondent which includes gender, age, grade-level of their students, highest education and major, and the number of years teaching English at the high school level. Part 2 consisted of 13 statements designed to cover CLT conceptualization in all six aspects including objectives, content, teaching, learning activities, teacher's and learner's roles, assessment, and material. The teachers were asked to respond simply by writing T (True) in front correct CLT conceptualization statements, and F (False) in front of incorrect ones.

Table 1: CLT conceptualization statements

CLT conceptualization statement	True Percentage	False Percentage
1. The teachers should correct all the grammatical errors students make. If errors are ignored, this will result imperfect learning.	28	72
2. Group work activities take too long and waste a lot of valuable teaching time.	8	92
3. CLT means verbal interaction between teacher –student and student –student.	88	12
4. The role of the teacher in the language classroom is to impart knowledge through activities such as explanation, writing and example.	62	38
5. CLT means not teaching grammar.	60	40
6. CLT focuses on meaning rather than form.	84	16
7. Students do the best when taught as a whole class by the teacher.	34	66
8. Teachers are facilitators.	90	10
9. Language and culture are closely related in CLT and the knowledge of culture contributes positively to acquiring and using language for real communication.	100	0
10. Activities encourage students to use language for carrying out meaningful tasks.	100	0
11. The activities support students to learn English and have real communication.	98	2
12. CLT focuses on teaching the four skills but can be separated the skills depending on learners' needs.	88	12
13. Evaluation of CLT focuses on fluency more than accuracy.	72	28
Mean Sum of Scores	9.12	

The results from Table 1 indicate that most participants performed well in this part ($\overline{X}$ = 9.12), which means that their understanding of the concepts of CLT was rather good. In this study, statements 1 and 8 emphasize the role of the teacher regarding the concepts of CLT. For statement 1, 72% of participants believed that the teachers should not correct all the grammatical errors students make. For statement 8, 90% of participants agreed that teachers should act as facilitators. Statement 4, however, shows that 62% of the teachers agreed that the teacher's role is to impart knowledge through activities such as explanation, writing and examples.

As for the responses in the semi-structured interviews with regard to the role of the teacher in classroom, three out of five respondents thought that the role of the teacher according to CLT was to be a facilitator or guide; however, others thought that the role of the teacher was to convey knowledge. These results reveal that the participants still have some misunderstanding of the concepts of CLT.

Part 3 was composed of nine items and both communicative and traditional language-teaching activities were listed. The teachers were asked to select the activities they think are communicative in nature.

Table 2: CLT activities

CLT activities	The percentage of respondents who answered.
1. Having a debate or role-play	100
2. Group discussion	100
3. Reading dialogues	42
4. Speaking in pairs	98
5. Story telling in front of the class	82
6. Grammar exercise	16
7. Describing a picture to a partner	92
8. Fill in the blanks	24
9. Explaining textbook	12
Mean Sum of Scores	7.14

The majority of teachers selected the communicative activities correctly ($\overline{X}$ = 7.14). The activities that every respondent viewed as communicative are "having a debate or role-play" and "group discussion" (100%). These were closely followed by "speaking in pairs" (98%) and "describing a picture to a partner" (92%). The outcomes revealed that the teachers had a good understanding of the concepts of CLT with regard to communicative activities.

Part 4 contained one open-ended question, which asked the respondent to design a learning activity based on the CLT approach under the topic of "My favorite food". Few participants responded to this part. Nonetheless, the few who did respond exhibited a correct understanding of CLT as they provided lots of communicative activities such as discussion in groups or pairs, giving a presentation in front of the class, or debate.

Research question 2: To what extent do the high school teachers apply the CLT approach in English instruction?

The class observation checklist was adapted from Chowdhury (2012). It contained 15 statements to be selected with a YES or NO response. The observation was used together with note taking of teachers' in-class behaviors. Class observation included some of the important features of CLT.

Table 3: Class observation

ITEMS	The percentage of participants who did these statements in classroom
1. The teacher used warm-up activities at the beginning of the lesson.	60%
2. The teacher used a variety of authentic materials.	60%
3. The teacher encouraged students to interact with fellow students.	80%
4. The teacher organized pair/group works.	80%
5. The students were speaking most of the time.	40%
6. The teacher was speaking most of the time.	80%
7. The teacher provided form in context.	40%
8. The teachers corrected selected errors.	100%
8. The teachers encouraged learners to correct each other's errors.	80%
10. The teachers encouraged learners to self-correct themselves.	100%
11. The teachers monitored the classroom situations.	60%
12. The teachers dominated the classroom situation.	80%

ITEMS	The percentage of participants who did these statements in classroom
13. The teachers used minimal of L1.	20%
14. The lesson was mainly teacher- centered and showed explicit focus on form.	80%
15. Activities focused on reflection of classroom-based language use.	80%

Table 3 shows that the participants used a mixture of both Thai and English to give instructions. During the listening part of the lesson, the teachers generally played a CD for students, and afterwards, the students repeated what was played on the CD. The teachers used Thai to explain the meaning of the texts when students had trouble understanding. With regard to grammar teaching, the majority of teachers were found to teach grammar by explaining the rules and structures. Only some of them used the content of student books to teach grammar points. The grammar was usually presented to the students by the teachers referring to or describing the rules and definitions of grammar. A few teachers used warm-up activities in the class such as using pictures or playing games; other teachers started the lessons straightway without warming up. Many teachers assigned the students to work in pairs or set groups work but this was not effective as most students spoke about other topics. All teachers encouraged the learners to first correct themselves before finally explaining the errors on the board. It should be noted that the teachers usually dominated the classroom by starting the lessons and explaining grammar rules. Students could only speak when they were called on or chosen among volunteers to speak.

The semi-structured interviews revealed that all five teachers showed some confusion about the concepts of CLT since their responses were quite similar in all five questions. They were convinced that a teacher-centered classroom is appropriate for CLT and that lots of materials are needed for use in learning activities. They also felt that studying English from Native speakers or having adequate equipment in the classroom was particularly useful. After they were invited to consider exploratory teaching, they had discovered some of their misconceptions on CLT as there were mismatches between practice activities and the concepts of CLT. The teachers were of the opinion that students need to study under realistic situations. In addition, students must do everything by themselves so they can communicate in real-life. In dealing with errors, their responses were that they should interrupt students for any mistakes they made and correct them after they finished speaking. They felt that teachers should explain when students make mistakes and encourage them to solve the errors by themselves first before giving suggestions about the

errors. However, the learners preferred to wait for the correct answers from the teachers most of the time. The final interview question asked for their suggestions on how to successfully implement CLT. The responses ranged from using authentic materials in lessons, letting students practice in the real situations, and letting students speak more than teachers. However, these suggestions could be difficult to manage in a large class and in the allotted timeframe.

Additional finding

Table 4: Comparison of CLT conceptualization statement score and CLT activities score between respondent with difference Level of education

Variable	Service year of English language teaching	N	Mean	S.D.	F	Sig.
CLT conceptualization statements	Under 5 years	19	9.63	.955	1.725	.161*
	6-10 years	9	8.89	1.364		
	11-20 years	3	9.00	1.000		
	21-30 years	10	9.10	1.729		
	30 years more	9	8.33	1.225		
CLT activities	Under 5 years	19	7.16	1.015	.182	.947*
	6-10 years	9	7.00	.866		
	11-20 years	3	7.33	1.528		
	21-30 years	10	7.00	1.247		
	30 years more	9	7.33	1.000		

According to the results of One-way ANOVA analysis shown in Table 4, the CLT conceptualization statements' significance level was (Sig= 0.161) and the CLT activities' significance level was (Sig=0.947), (p*>0.05). This indicates that there were no significant differences in the CLT conceptualization statements and CLT activities at the confidence level of .05. It also suggests that the service years of English language teaching had no impact on the understanding of CLT conceptualization and CLT activities.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that the high school teachers from Muang district in Phuket could correctly identify the concepts of Communicative Language Teaching and had a correct understanding of the concepts of CLT. However, they also had some misconceptions about CLT as well, and these misunderstandings did not help them in applying CLT in English instruction. Some of the correct concepts of CLT included "language and culture are closely related in CLT", "the knowledge of culture contributes positively in acquiring and using language for real communication", and "activities encourage students to

use language for carrying out meaningful tasks" (100%), followed by "the activities support students to learn English and have real communication" (98%), and "teachers are facilitators" (90%).

On the other hand, the misconceptions of CLT among these participants were "teachers corrected selected errors" (100%) and "the lessons were mainly teacher-centered and showed explicit focus on form" (80%). As can be seen from their responses in the questionnaire, the respondents show both correct and incorrect understanding of CLT. The average score from Part 2 in the questionnaires was quite high which means that the participants may have had some familiarity about the concepts of CLT before so they were able to answer the questions and select communicative activities correctly.

Some past studies have found that English teaching in Thailand has not particularly successful because of the teachers' lack of understanding of Communicative Language Teaching (Saringkanan, 1983; Wansahawetwisit, 1987). Nevertheless, the results in Table 1 show that the mean sum of CLT conceptualization statements is 9.12 out of 13.00, which indicates that the problems with English teaching in Thailand are not due to the teachers' lack of understanding of the concepts of CLT. The researcher did find, however, that the teachers do hold many of the usual misconceptions about CLT, which have been reported in the research literature as the barrier for the practice of CLT in the EFL context. Some studies have cited different education levels and practices as the main reasons for difficulties in implementing CLT in each country, along with the misconceptions of CLT among teachers (Li, 1998 and Ellis, 1996). However, in the semi-structured interviews of this study, teachers most often cited the number of students in the classroom and time constraints as the factors hindering the use of CLT. This is similar to the findings of Burnaby and Sun (1989), who revealed that Chinese teachers believed that CLT curriculum contains time-consuming lessons and activities and they seemed prefer games rather than serious learning materials. Gamal and Debra (2001) stated that the teachers in Egypt believed if they used games or role plays in class, they might not be able to carry out their teaching plans. Prapphal's (2008) contention that if the teachers use mostly Thai in class, students would have less exposure to English communication is supported by the result of this study regarding participants using L1 in classrooms (80%).

The findings from the class observation and semi-structured interviews revealed that the participants who possessed good understanding of the concepts of CLT managed their classes differently than those who did not. The latter participants appeared to focus on grammar points more than using language for communication. Similarly, Sakui (2002) found that Japanese teachers focused on grammar instruction and were concerned more about examinations. This is a situation closely related to the Thai context as most tests still focus on form. It should be noted that the CLT method does not intend to restrict the teachers

from teaching grammar; however, it is clear that the way the teachers who taught grammar in this study while being observed by the researcher was reflective of their knowledge about the traditional way of teaching grammar.

The teachers who understood CLT well seemed to manage their classrooms in a more communicative manner compared to those with lower understanding. However, the participating teachers did identify large class size and time constraints as major hurdles to applying communicative activities in class (Li, 1998; Mustafa, 2001; Burnaby and Sun, 1989; and Gamal and Debra 2001).

To conclude, the participants in this study were able to correctly identify CLT activities but they still had some misunderstandings about the concepts of CLT. These misconceptions were similar to those identified in other EFL countries such as China, Japan, and Vietnam as mentioned above. Though most of the respondents showed a solid understanding in the concepts of CLT, the main reasons why CLT has not been successful so far, according to the participants in this study, were unmanageable class size and time constraints.

Recommendation for Future Research

The focus of this study is on the design of learning activities for CLT. Hence, more questions on each of the six aspects of CLT can be provided to investigate further the teachers' understanding of the CLT concepts. In addition, the final part of the questionnaire can be designed such that the questions are not so open-ended to encourage higher participation in answering them. Also, the checklist for classroom observations on CLT application should be more comprehensive so that the roles of the teachers and students in the class can be better understood. For optimal outcomes in terms of gaining cooperation from the subjects of the study, arrangements should be made in advance with the teachers. Finally, certain wordings and questions should be tested beforehand to ensure common understanding among participants and avoid off-topic or unclear responses

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