

## Development of English Speaking Ability Baedsed on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): Case Study in a Language Center

Pasutha Wongwan<sup>1</sup>, Simmee Oupra<sup>2</sup> and Somlak Liangprayoon<sup>3</sup>

### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ (1) ศึกษาสถานการณ์ในการนำแนวการสอนเพื่อการสื่อสาร (Communicative Language Teaching: CLT) ไปใช้ (2) ศึกษาการเปลี่ยนแปลงของทักษะการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนหลังเรียนผ่านบทเรียน CLT และ (3) ศึกษาทัศนคติของครูผู้สอนและนักเรียนที่มีต่อบทเรียน CLT หลังเรียนการเรียนการสอน การวิจัยนี้ประกอบด้วยสามขั้นตอนคือ ขั้นตอนการวิเคราะห์สถานการณ์ ขั้นตอนการวิเคราะห์ผลการพัฒนาการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียน และขั้นตอนการตรวจสอบทัศนคติของครูและนักเรียนหลังจากเรียนผ่านบทเรียน CLT โดยใช้วิธีวิจัยแบบเชิงปริมาณและเชิงคุณภาพ ประชากรที่ใช้ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้ประกอบด้วย ขั้นตอนที่ 1 ครูจำนวน 4 คนและนักเรียน 27 คน (จำนวน 4 ห้องเรียน) ขั้นตอนที่ 2 และ 3 ประกอบไปด้วย ครูจำนวน 4 คนและนักเรียนจำนวน 7 คน (จำนวน 1 ห้องเรียน) เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยในครั้งนี้คือ แบบสอบถาม คำถามสัมภาษณ์ บทเรียน CLT จำนวน 5 บทเรียนและแบบประเมินผลการเรียน เครื่องมือในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลในการวิจัยครั้งนี้ ประกอบด้วยการใช้ค่าเฉลี่ย ค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐานและ t-test (Dependent Samples) ผลการวิจัยพบว่าผลการวิจัยพบว่า (1) ครูและนักเรียนมีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อแนวการสอนเพื่อการสื่อสาร ทั้งครูและนักเรียนยอมรับบทบาทในแนวการสอนแบบ CLT ส่วนปัญหาหลักที่ทำให้ครูไม่สามารถใช้แนวการสอนแบบ CLT ในห้องเรียนได้ประสบผลสำเร็จคือ ครูไม่ได้สัมผัสกับการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นประจำ นักเรียนขาดทักษะการพูดภาษาอังกฤษและนักเรียนจำนวนมากเกินไปในห้องเรียน ปัจจัยสำคัญที่ทำให้เกิดปัญหาในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนคือ ขาดทักษะการพูดภาษาอังกฤษและไม่ได้สัมผัสกับการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นประจำ (2) หลังจากการใช้แผนการสอนแบบ CLT ในห้องเรียน ผลการศึกษาพบว่าทักษะการพูดของนักเรียนมีการพัฒนาขึ้น โดยคะแนนเฉลี่ยของการทดสอบหลังการเรียนผ่านบทเรียน CLT พบว่า นักเรียนทั้งหมดมีคะแนนสูงกว่าคะแนนการทดสอบก่อนการเรียน อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 นักเรียนมีคะแนนเฉลี่ยในการทดสอบหลังเรียน ( $\bar{X}$  = 28.83, S.D. = 2.12) มากกว่าคะแนนเฉลี่ยการทดสอบก่อนเรียน ( $M$  = 19.06, S.D. = 2.91) (3) อีกทั้งจากการศึกษาทัศนคติของครูผู้สอนและนักเรียนหลังจากการเรียนการสอนผ่านบทเรียนทั้งหมดของ CLT พบว่าครูผู้สอนและนักเรียนมีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อบทเรียน CLT

**คำสำคัญ :** การพัฒนา; ความสามารถทางการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ; แนวการสอนเพื่อการสื่อสาร; โรงเรียนสอนภาษา

<sup>1</sup>Department of Western Languages, English Program, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University

<sup>2</sup>Department of Western Languages, English Program, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University

<sup>3</sup>Department of Western Languages, English Program, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University

## ABSTRACT

The purposes of this research were (1) to investigate the situations in implementing CLT, (2) to examine the students' English speaking skill development through CLT lessons, and (3) to investigate the attitudes of the teachers and the students toward CLT lessons after studying through CLT lessons. This research consisted of three phases: investigating the situations, analyzing the students' English speaking development, and investigating the attitudes of the teachers and the students after studying through CLT lessons, using quantitative and qualitative methods. The participants were 4 teachers and 27 students (four classrooms) in Phase 1 and 4 teachers and 7 students (one classroom) in Phase 2 and 3. The research instruments were the questionnaires, the interview questions, the five CLT lessons, and the assessment form. The data obtained were analyzed by using Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test. The findings of the research revealed that (1) the teachers and the students had positive attitudes toward CLT. Both the teachers and the students acknowledged their roles in CLT. The main problems that impeded the teachers from implementing CLT were their lack of English exposure, the students' lack of English speaking skills and too many students in the classroom. The major factors that caused the problems in English speaking of the students were their lack of English speaking skills and English exposure. (2) After studying through the CLT lessons, the students' English speaking skills were significantly higher, significant at the .05 level. The students had significantly higher mean scores on the post-test ( $M=28.83$ ,  $S.D=2.12$ ) than the pre-test ( $M=19.06$ ,  $S.D=2.91$ ). (3) The findings also showed that the attitudes of the teachers and the students toward CLT lessons were positive after studying and teaching through CLT lessons.

**Keywords :** Development; English Speaking Ability; Communicative Language Teaching (CLT); Language Center

## Introduction

### Introduction and statement of the problem

In education, nowadays, including in Thailand, many students have studied English to improve their speaking skills, yet they seem not to be successful. In recent years, one of the teaching approaches that the teachers have used to improve their students' English-speaking skills is Communicative

Language Teaching (CLT). Many teachers and learners had positive attitudes toward CLT (Jafari, Shokrpour & Guetterman, 2015; Savignon & Wang, 2003; Taebi, Torabi & Farsani, 2016) because it is believed that CLT is aimed to develop learners' communicative competence, according to Richards (2006, p. 2). Nevertheless, there have been barriers to implementing CLT in English classes; for instance, the learners' and teachers' unwillingness to

practice and follow CLT instructional objectives and methods and learners' and teachers' being used to the traditional method (grammar-translation method) because grammar and reading comprehension exams still play a vital role in the educational system. The teachers' lack of English-speaking abilities, the learners' low English proficiency, the learners' lack of motivation to learn English, the inconsistency between what English learning students wanted to learn and what they actually learned in English class, and large classes are also the important barriers (Ozsevik, 2010; Savignon & Wang, 2003; Taebi, Torabi & Farsani, 2016).

From above, it can be seen that before implementing CLT in the English class only knowing the attitudes of the teachers themselves towards CLT and barriers preventing them from implementing CLT in English class was not enough. The teachers also needed to know the attitudes of the students toward CLT approach as well as the factors which affect their English-speaking skills. Then the teachers could develop the lesson plans of CLT that would enhance the students' English-speaking skills. Unfortunately, none of the studies has been found to investigate the aforementioned situations altogether, so the present study aimed to fill in this gap in order for the teacher to be able to develop and strengthen the CLT lesson plans that were consistent with the needs of the students at the private language center in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

## Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the situations in implementing CLT approach
2. To analyze the students' English speaking skills development through CLT lessons
3. To investigate the attitudes of the teachers and the students toward CLT lessons after studying through the lessons

## Scope of the study

The study was conducted in the Basic-English Conversation courses at the private language center in Chiang Mai, Thailand, which was used as the place to collect and analyze the data. The primary teaching instruments for the course were developed based on CLT, consisting of five CLT lesson plans: self-introduction, my hometown, my daily schedule, indoor/outdoor activity and cooking my favorite dish.

## Research Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied in the study. The followings were the details of participants, research instruments, data collection and data analysis.

### 1. Participant

#### 1.1. Quantitative method

Phase 1: Investigating the situations consisted of 4 teachers and 27 students who enrolled in English courses at the language center, Chiang Mai, Thailand. Phase 2: Analyzing the learners' English speaking skills development through CLT

lessons consisted of 7 students. Phase 3: Investigating the attitudes of the English teachers and students toward CLT lessons after studying through the lessons consisted of the 4 teachers and the 7 students.

### 1.2. Qualitative method

Phase 1 and 3 consisted of the 4 teachers and the 7 students. Phase 2 consisted of the 7 students.

The 7 students were purposefully selected as the sample of the population because they were in the classroom that the researcher taught.

## 2. Research instruments

### 2.1. Quantitative method

Phase 1 consisted of four adopted questionnaires. The first two questionnaires were designed for the teachers: questionnaires concerning teachers' attitudes towards CLT and the barriers impeding the teachers from implementing CLT in the English classroom. The other two were designed for the students: questionnaires concerning learners' attitudes towards CLT and the factors causing English-speaking problems of the students. All the items of the questionnaires were rated by a five-point Likert scale. Phase 2 consisted of five CLT lesson plans: self-introduction, my hometown, my daily schedule, indoor/outdoor activities and cooking my favorite dish. These five topics were provided by the language center. The CLT lesson plans were reviewed by a thesis advisor first, and then validated by three experts in teaching English in the language center context for accuracy and appropriateness in the areas of objective,

content, types of activities and CLT teaching methods before implementing them in the class. The adapted rubric from Chomphookarwin (2010), Nanthaboot (2012) and Cambridge English Assessing Speaking Performance – Level A2 of CEFR (2011) was used to evaluate the students' pre- and post-English speaking tests. Phase 3 consisted of the adopted questionnaire concerning the students' attitudes toward CLT after studying through it.

### 2.2. Qualitative method

The questions for interview covered all the main points in the questionnaires in order to cross-check and complement the questionnaires' results.

All of the items in the questionnaires and the interview questions were reviewed by a thesis advisor for a start. After that they were validated by three experts in teaching English in the language center context for accuracy and appropriateness before distributing the questionnaires and interviewing.

## 3. Data collection procedures

### 3.1. Quantitative method

Phase 1: The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the teachers and the students at the language centre. Data collecting from the teachers and the students took place on different day. Phase 2: The students were pre-and post-tested individually. Each of them was audio-recorded for the tests. The pre-test took place before conducting each lesson plan in the class. The post-test took place after conducting each lesson plan in the class. In Phase 3, the first three teachers who reviewed the CLT lessons were asked to

complete the questionnaires after the course ended. Their answers were according to their position, the lesson plan reviewers. The teacher, also the researcher who developed the lessons and implemented them in the class also completed the questionnaire according to his point of view. As for the students, the seven students were asked to complete the questionnaires after the course ended.

### 3.2. Qualitative method

The seven students and the three teachers were singled out for the interview for approximately 15 minutes, and all the sessions were audio-recorded and notes were taken. The fourth teacher, the researcher who developed the lessons and implemented them in the class, answered the interview questions by himself as well. Thai language was used as a medium of the interview in order for the interviewees to understand and respond to the questions easily and clearly.

## 4. Data analysis

### 4.1. Quantitative method

Phase 1 and 3: The data were analyzed by using Mean and Standard Deviation. Phase 2: The data were analyzed by comparing the pre- and post- tests' scores by using t-test.

### 4.2. Qualitative method

Content analysis was used to analyze the obtained data from the interviews.

## Results

### 1. Investigating the situations

The followings were the results in order to complete the first objective of the

present study.

#### 1.1. Teachers' and students' attitudes toward CLT

The findings of the questionnaires and the interviews revealed that the teachers had positive attitudes toward CLT in terms of importance of grammar, importance of group works, error correction, roles of the teachers and the learners. In the same vein, most students liked communicative-base rather than grammar-based instruction. However, from the students' experience in their classroom, the teaching was more of grammar-based practices rather than communication-based practices.

#### 1.2. Problems preventing the English teachers from implementing CLT in the classes

The findings of the questionnaires and the interviews revealed that majority of the teachers lacked knowledge about the English culture, appropriate language in context, as well as English speaking skills. Other difficulties that the teachers encountered were lack of time to create some materials that could be used in the classroom. Other barriers that troubled their teaching were the students' low-level English proficiency and lack of motivation. All of the teachers agreed that the class was too large for conducting communicative activities was another reason that caused such a difficulty.

#### 1.3. Factors causing English speaking problems of the students

The findings of the questionnaires and the interviews revealed that the students showed that their teachers did not have the

interesting lessons, mainly focused only on the textbook and also did not have the communicative activities for them to learn and practice. Their teachers did not speak English most of the time. Moreover, the students were afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at when they spoke English. A large number of the students in the classroom were also a big issue when it came to learning communicative

English. The study also revealed that they lived in a family that they could not speak English with anyone and that everyone in the society used mainly Thai language for daily communication.

2. Analyzing the learners’ English speaking skills changes through CLT lessons

The following was the results of the second objective of the present study.

**Table 1** Results of the comparative analysis of the pre-test’s and post-test’s scores

Tests	Number of the students(N)	Score		t	Sig (2-tailed)
		Mean	S.D.		
Pre-test	7	19.06	2.91	14.91	.00*
Post-test	7	28.83	2.12		*.05

From the table above, it was found that the students had the mean score of the pre-test at 19.06; the standard deviation (S.D) was at 2.91, and the mean score of the post-test at 28.83; the standard deviation (S.D) was at 2.12. When comparing the pre- and post-test average scores by using Dependent Sample t-test, it was found that the value of t was at 14.91, and the value of sig (2-tailed) was at .00. It was concluded that English speaking skills of the students who learned English by using CLT lessons was significant higher after studying through CLT, significant at the .05 level. The students had significantly higher mean scores on the post-test.

3. Investigating the attitudes of the teachers and students toward the CLT lessons

The followings were the findings in

order to complete the last research objective of the study.

3.1. Teachers’ attitudes toward CLT lessons

The finding of the questionnaires and the interviews revealed that the teachers had positive attitudes toward CLT lessons after teaching through the lessons. In term of the classroom environment, the entire teachers had a positive attitude toward the small classroom because they could conduct the communicative activities easily and the students had more chance to participate in the class activities. Moreover, the teachers agreed that the students gained more confidence to speak English with their classmate and teacher after finishing this course.

### 3.2. Students' attitudes toward CLT lessons

The findings of the questionnaires and the interviews revealed that most students had positive attitudes toward CLT lessons after studying through the lessons. The students preferred the teachers using English in the class most of the time and the communicative activities designed from their preferences. In term of the classroom environment, the entire students had a positive attitude toward the classroom which contained less than 10 students because they had more chance to participate in the class activities. After studying through the lessons, most students had more confidence to speak English with their classmates and teacher.

### Discussion and conclusion

This section discussed the findings of the first research objective.

#### 1. Investigating the situations

##### 1.1. The attitudes of the teachers and the students toward CLT

The results indicated that the teachers had a positive attitude toward CLT in terms of importance of grammar, group work, error correction, teachers' and students' attitudes toward CLT. Also, the teachers believed that applying CLT in the classes develops the students' ability to use language more effectively. The findings agreed with previous researchers (Jafari, Shokrpour and Guetterman, 2015, p. 716; Taebi, Torabi and Farsani, 2016, p. 45). They stated that the teachers had favourable attitudes toward CLT because CLT will develop and improve their

students' English speaking skills. In the same vein, the majority of the students favored communicative base. They liked their teachers to speak English to them and have them speak English in the classroom most of the time, and the communicative activities that were employed in their classroom were based on their preferences. These findings were consistent with the previous researchers (Savignon and Wang, 2003, p.238; Taebi, Torabi and Farsani, 2016, p.43). The learners agreed that they liked their teachers to speak English in the class. Also, they liked communicative activities where we could interact in English with their peers. However, from their experience, their class was more of grammar-based practices, and the communicative activities were inconsistent with their preference as similarly found in Taebi, Torabi and Farsani's study (2016, p.47). They stated in their study, "With regard to the attitudes and attitudes of the language learners toward classroom instruction, the results of the current study depict an inconsistency between the needs and preferences of English language learners in Iranian private institutes and their attitudes of actual in-class behavior."

#### 1.2. Problems preventing the teachers from implementing CLT in the classes

The major reasons that hindered the teachers in implementing CLT in their communicative classes were their proficiency in spoken English that was not sufficient as well as their lack of English culture knowledge which might cause inappropriate language use. The findings in the present study agreed with Ozsevik (2010, p.

67), Jafari, Shokrpour and Guetterman (2015, p. 716). They all had a consensus that English teachers could not teach English-speaking skills effectively because they hardly had chances to speak English as they were learning English. They studied grammar for their tests. Therefore, they lacked knowledge about the appropriate use of language in context.

### 1.3. Factors causing English speaking problems of the student

The findings of the study revealed that the major obstacles that caused their English speaking problems were the grammar-based practices in English conversation class, the students' low of English skills, a size of the classroom which was too large, and exposure to English. This was recursively claimed as one of the factors by other researchers in the literature as well (Noom-ura, 2013, p. 143; Ozsevik, 2010, p. 67-76). These researchers stated that the teachers mostly emphasized grammar-based learning method for teaching English conversation. Also, the students did not like speaking English with their friends in the classroom because they think that they had the same level of English speaking competency. In addition, the size of the class which was too large was one of the problems for doing communicative activities. More importantly, the students did not have opportunities to use English in their daily lives as they lived in the society where the English language was hardly used.

### 2. Analyzing the learners' English speaking skills development through CLT lessons

This section discussed the findings of research objective two. From the results, the students had significantly higher mean scores on the post-test than the pre-test. It can be interpreted that the CLT lesson plans which were developed by the researcher were effective and eventually helped the students improve their English speaking skills. However, there should be another teacher implementing the CLT lessons in his/her classroom so that the results can be compared because the researcher implemented the lessons only in his classroom in the present study.

### 3. Investigating the attitudes of the teachers and students toward CLT lessons after studying through the lessons

This section discussed the findings of the last research objective.

#### 3.1. The attitudes of the teachers toward CLT lessons

From the findings, it can be inferred that providing the communicative activities that the students are interested in and can use in their real-life situations is useful and effective as it was stated in the research findings of Taebi, Torabi and Farsani (2016, p. 43). It revealed that the students will use the language effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something fun, not for studying. Moreover, the teachers had a positive attitude toward the small classroom because they could conduct the communicative activities easily and the students had more chance to participate in the class activities. This finding accords with previous empirical literature (Jarari, Shokrpour & Guetterman,



2015, p. 716; Ozsevik, 2010, p. 68-69; Nanthaboot, 2012, p. 59). They all stated that CLT would be effective when implemented in a small classroom.

3.2. The attitudes of the students toward CLT lessons

From the findings, it can be interpreted that the students are expecting the teacher to speak English most of the time because they want to speak English with the teacher. Also, they like to practice speaking English through communicative activities. The findings were consistent with the findings of the previous researchers (Taebi, Torabi and Farsani, 2016, p. 48; Nanthaboot, 2012, p. 57). The research stated that the students preferred their teachers to speak English with them and to provide them a number of communicative activities so that they could practice speaking English with their teachers and peers. Moreover, the students liked the classroom that contained a small number of the students because it gives more chances for the students to speak and participate in the class activities. These findings were consistent with the studies of Jarari, Shokrpour & Guetterman (2015, p. 716), Ozsevik (2010, p. 68-69), and Nanthaboot (2012, p. 59). The studies suggested that CLT should be used in a small class because it would be more effective. After studying through the CLT, the students gained more confidence in speaking English as they practiced speaking English in various situations for a number of times. These findings were similar to the previous study (Nanthaboot, 2012, p. 53). Her study revealed that the

communicative activities make the students more confident in speaking English.

## Conclusion

The present study can be concluded that after having used the lesson plans of CLT, the post-test's score of each student was greatly increased from the pre-test's scores. It means that the CLT lesson plans were effective and helped the students improve their English speaking skills eventually.

Before and after studying through all the lessons, all of the students had positive attitudes toward CLT lessons. They indicated that with all the communicative activities they participated in and practiced for a number of times, including the teacher using English most of the time, they were able to speak English more fluently and gained more confidence. In the same vein, the teachers had favorable attitudes toward CLT before and after implementing CLT in the class. More specifically, the teachers had positive attitudes toward the communicative activities; they helped the students develop their fluency in English speaking. Also, the teachers agreed that the small class was an ideal for them to conduct the activities.

## Suggestions for further studies

1. This study investigated only the English conversation course. There should be a study of other courses related to communication; for instance, English for tour guide and English for hotel staff.

2. There should be a comparison between an English conversation class that uses CLT lessons and a regular English conversation class so that the results can be compared.

## References

- Chomphookarwin, K. (2010). **Use of Task-based Activities on Tourist Attractions to Enhance English Listening-Speaking Abilities and Self-confidence of Higher Vocational Level Students**. Master's thesis, Chiang Mai University.
- English Language Institute, Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education. (2015). **CEFR Manual for Primary Level2**. Retrieved November 25, 2017, from <http://english.obec.go.th/english/2013/index.php/th/2012-08-08-10-26-5/74-cefr>, p. 1-171.
- Jafari, S. M., Shokrpour, N., & Guetterman, T. (2015). A Mixed Methods Study of Teachers' Perceptions of Communicative Language Teaching in Iranian High Schools. **Theory and Practice in Language Studies**, 707-718.
- Karavas-Doukas, E. (1996). Using attitude scales to investigate teachers' attitude to the communicative approach. **EFL Journal**, 50(3), 187-198.
- Nanthaboot, P. (2012). **Using Communicative Activities to Develop English Speaking Ability of Matthayomsuksa Three Students**. Unpublished master's thesis, Srinakharinwirot University.
- Noom-ura, S. (2013). English-Teaching Problems in Thailand and Thai teachers' Professional Development Needs. **English Language Teaching**, 6(11), 139-147.
- Ozsevik, Z. (2010). **The Use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): Turkish EFL Teachers' perceived difficulties in Implementing CLT in Turkey**. Master's thesis, University of Illinois.
- Richards, J. C. (2006). **Communicative Language Teaching Today**. New York : Cambridge University Press.
- Savignon, S. J., & Wang, C. (2003). Communicative Language Teaching in EFL context: Learner Attitudes and Perception. **International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching**, 41(3), 223-249.
- Taeabi, I., Torabi, Z., & Farsani, A. M. (2016). Depicting EFL Learners' and Teachers' Perceptions toward Communicative Language Teaching: Voices from Iran. **Iranian EFL Journal**, 12(4), 28-53.